

Virginia Woolf on War

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Biography, 1882-1941

- Father was a scholar and biographer
- Women were not allowed at major universities
- Bloomsbury Group, 1904-41
- 1917– She and husband Leonard started Hogarth Press: Pub. Freud, Woolf, E.M. Forster, Katherine Mansfield, T.S. Eliot
- Battled Manic-Depression; 1941, she drowned herself

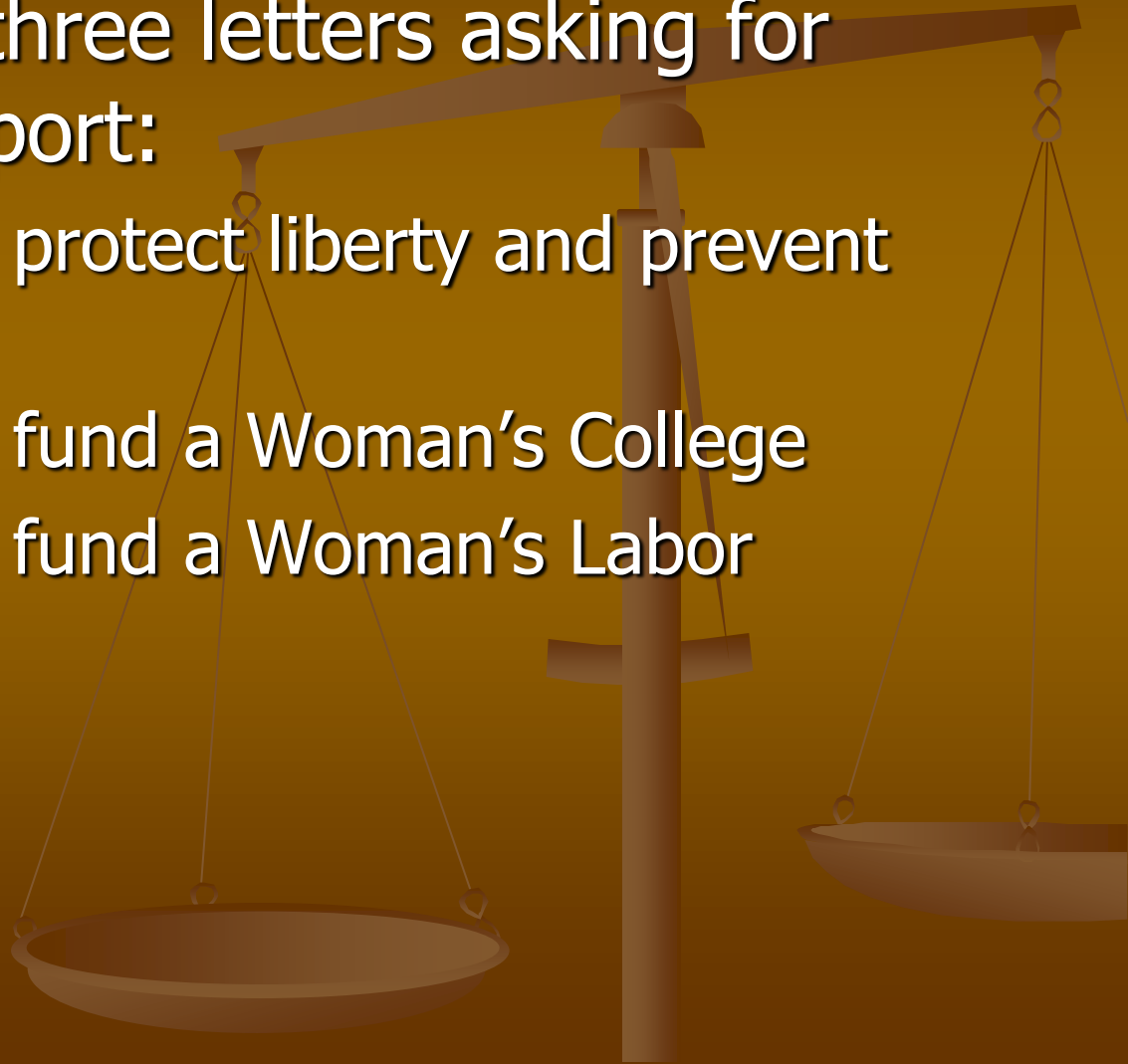


Literary Importance

- Stream of Consciousness narrative
- Multiple Levels of Meaning
- Reader Required to construct meaning
- Past, Present, and Future mix together
- Use of Central Metaphor as a Recurring Motif
- Major Works:
 - *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925); Contrasts a lady organizing a party to a man returning from war
 - *To the Lighthouse* (1927); Civilization
 - *Waves* (1931); Six friends as they grow up

Three Guineas, 1938

- Woolf receives three letters asking for money and support:
 - Organization to protect liberty and prevent War
 - Organization to fund a Woman's College
 - Organization to fund a Woman's Labor Organization



What Can a Woman do to Prevent War?

- “a letter perhaps unique in the history of human correspondence, since when before has an educated man asked a woman how in her opinion war can be prevented?” (3)
- Contrast between life of Educated English Man and the Educated Man's Sister: Mary Kingsley and “Arthur's Education Fund”

Psychology of War

- What sort of knowledge and education is necessary in order to understand and prevent war?
- “Marriage, the one great profession open to our class since the dawn of time until the year 1919; marriage, the art of choosing the human being with whom to live life successfully, should have taught us some skill in that.” i.e.; psychology
- “But...to fight has always been the man’s habit, not the woman’s. Law and practice have developed that difference, whether innate or accidental. Scarcely a human being in the course of history have fallen to a woman’s rifle;” (6)
- Can a woman understand and prevent war?

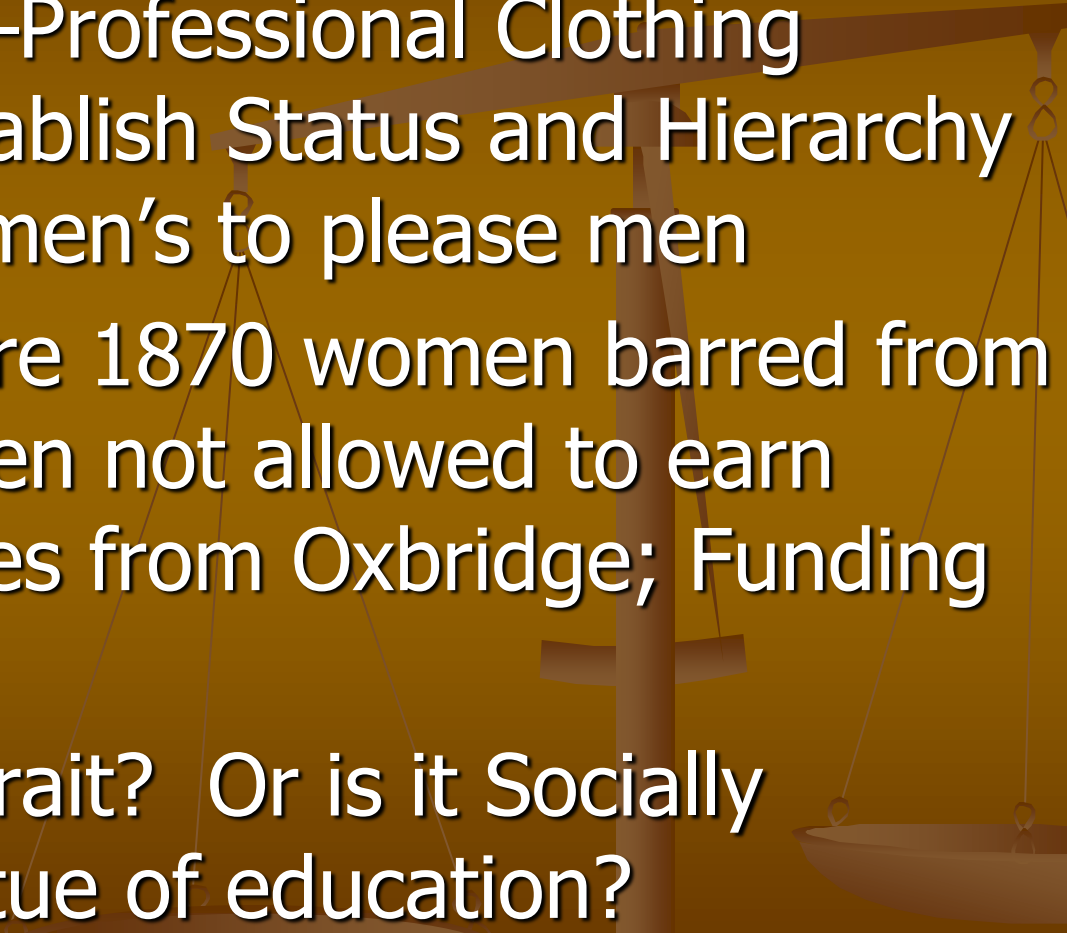
Why Fight?

- A certain Manly Glory?
- Examines Biography for an answer
- Quotes an airman on the League of Nations: "The difficulty to which he could find no answer was that if permanent peace were ever achieved, and armies and navies ceased to exist, there would be no outlet for the manly qualities which fighting developed, and that human physique and human character would deteriorate." (7)
- Yet, Wilfred Owen, Poet of the War: "one of Christ's essential commands was: Passivity at any price! Suffer dishonor and disgrace, but never resort to arms. Be bullied, be outraged, be killed, but do not kill...Thus you see how pure Christianity will not fit in with pure patriotism."

Money Talks

- Despite conflicting views among men, England spent 300,000,000 on arms in 1937.
- How can women influence war and politics?
- Letter Suggests: Sign a letter to the newspapers; join a certain society; donate to its funds.
- Women cannot serve in military; women have no money; women cannot preach against war from pulpit; women cannot negotiate treaties
- Response: 'exert your influence upon educated men.'

Men and Women are Fundamentally Different

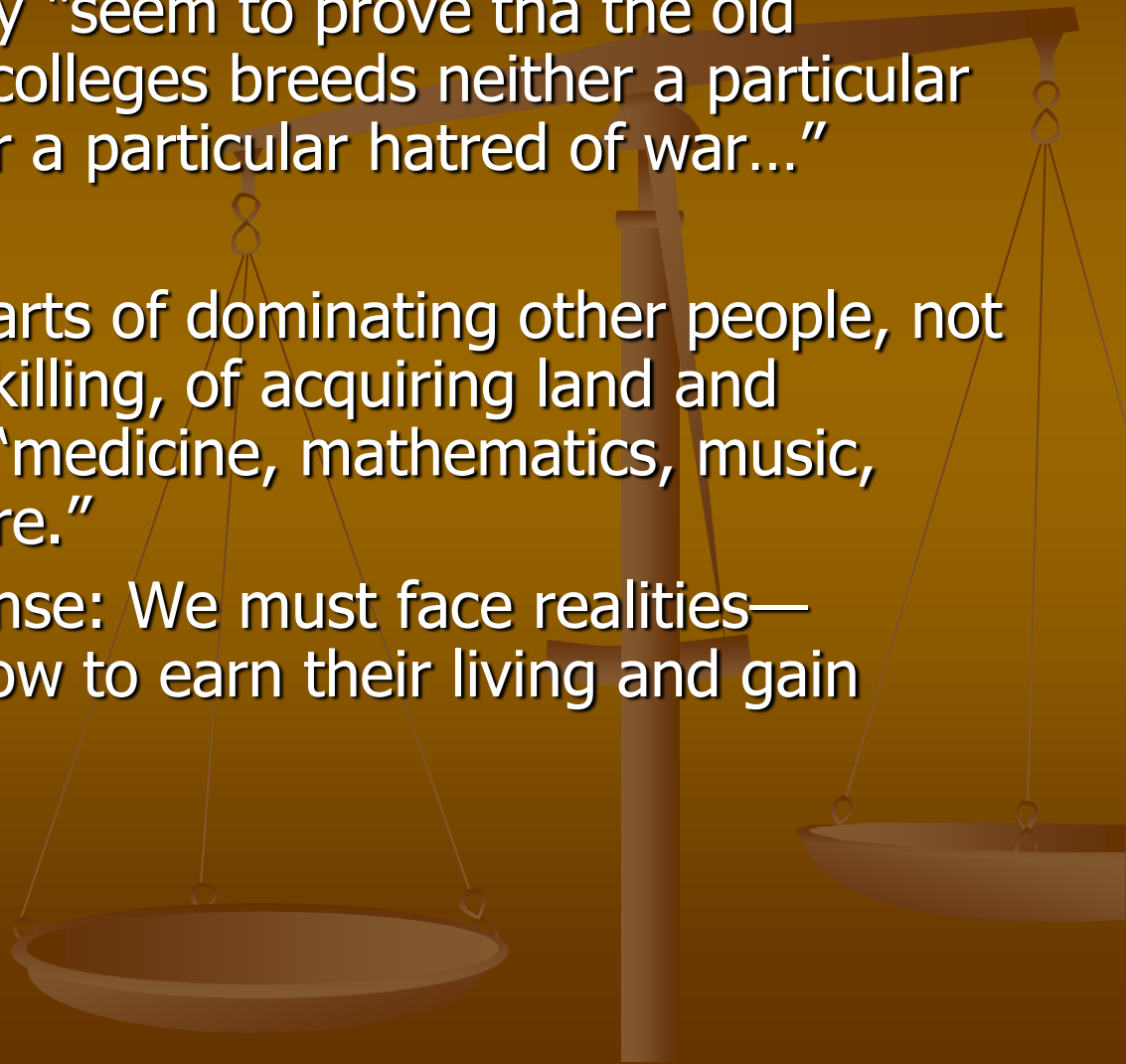
- Men's Clothing—Professional Clothing Designed to Establish Status and Hierarchy and Power; Women's to please men
 - Education: Before 1870 women barred from Oxbridge; Women not allowed to earn degrees and titles from Oxbridge; Funding differences;
 - Is War a Male Trait? Or is it Socially ingrained by virtue of education?
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Letter to College

- If she funds the college rebuilding fund, will that help women to prevent war? Will educated women be better able to stop war?
- "I will send you a guinea with which to rebuild your college if you can satisfy me that you will use it to produce the kind of society, the kind of people that will help to prevent war."

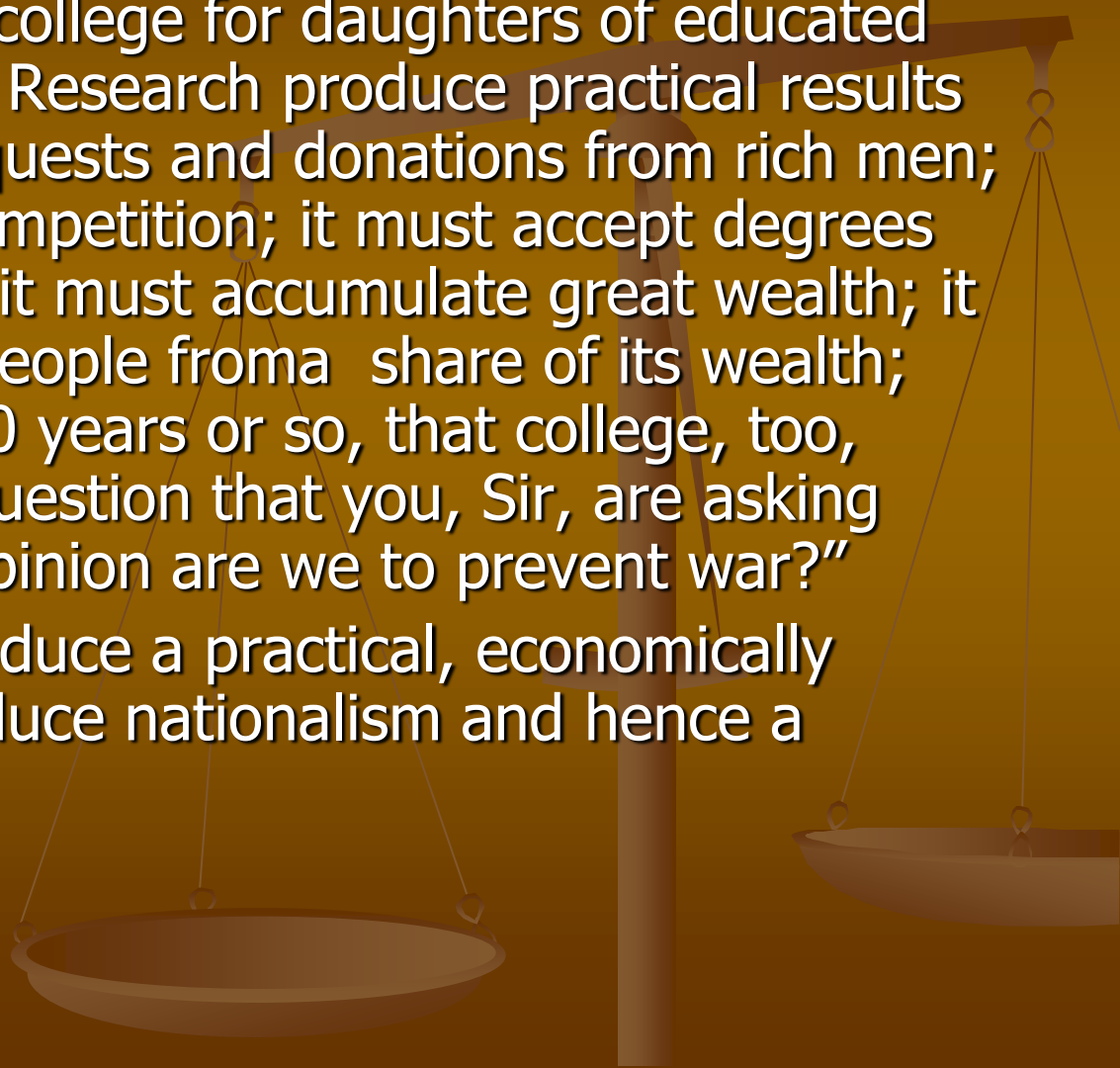
What kind of curriculum?

- Biography and History “seem to prove tha the old education of the old colleges breeds neither a particular respect for liberty nor a particular hatred of war...”
- No chapels
- Let it teach “not the arts of dominating other people, not the arts of ruling, of killing, of acquiring land and capital.” Let it teach “medicine, mathematics, music, painting, and literature.”
- Head mistress’ response: We must face realities—women must learn how to earn their living and gain appointments.



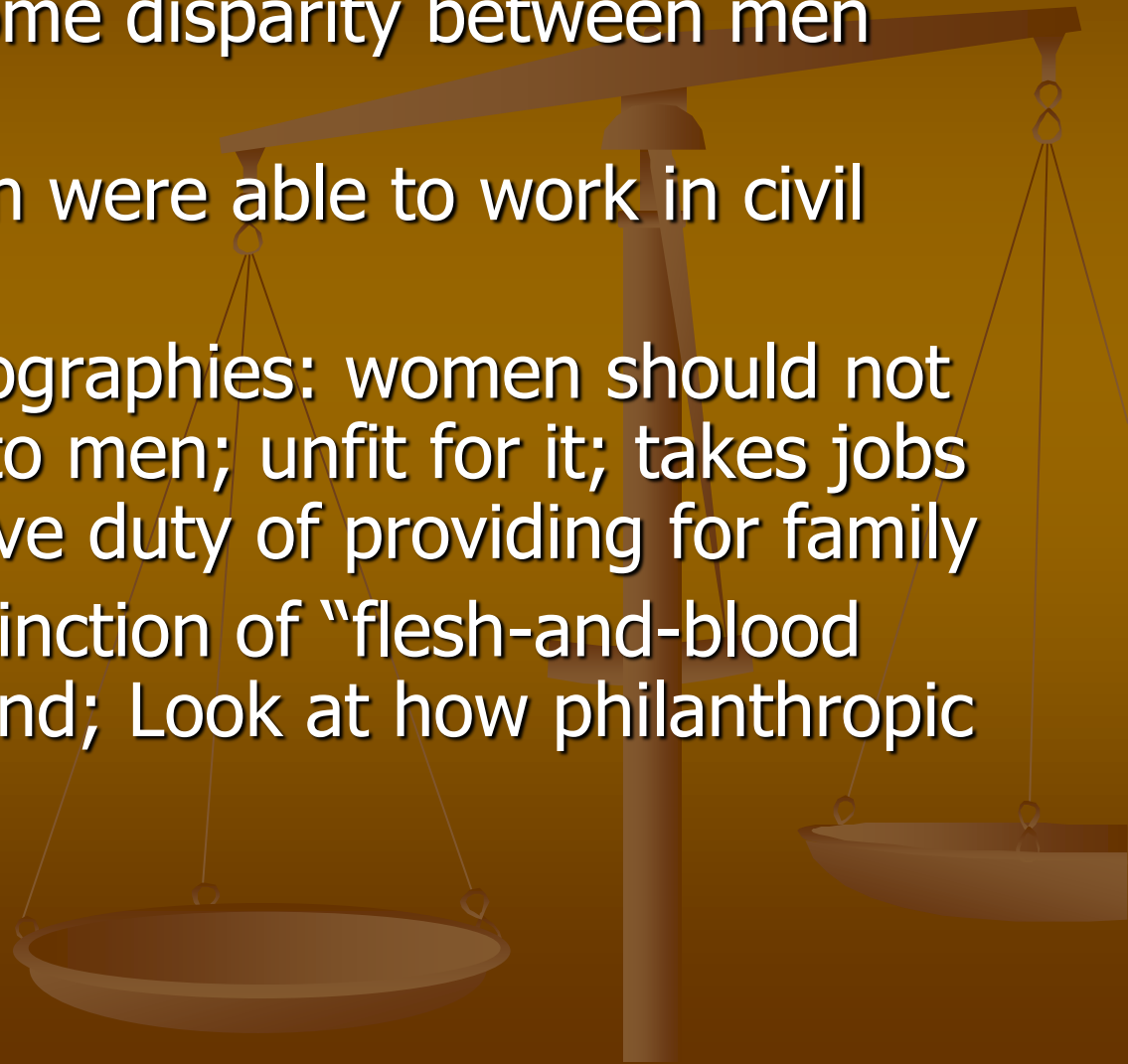
What will become of Women's Colleges?

- “It followed that the college for daughters of educated men must also make Research produce practical results which will induce bequests and donations from rich men; it must encourage competition; it must accept degrees and coloured hoods; it must accumulate great wealth; it must exclude other people from a share of its wealth; and, therefore, in 500 years or so, that college, too, must ask the same question that you, Sir, are asking now: “How in your opinion are we to prevent war?”
- Does the need to produce a practical, economically viable education produce nationalism and hence a propensity for war?



Women and Work

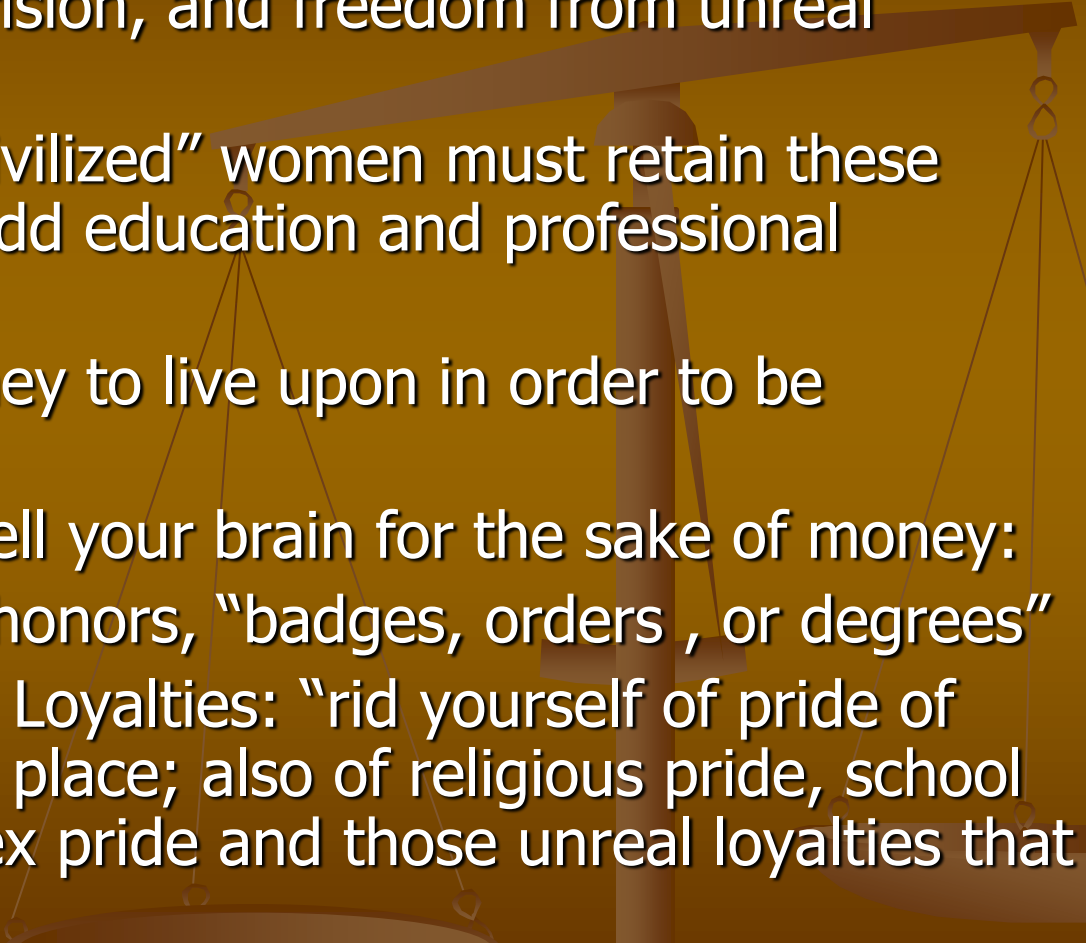
- Examines the income disparity between men and women
- Since 1919 women were able to work in civil service, but...
- Quotes various biographies: women should not work; distracting to men; unfit for it; takes jobs from men who have duty of providing for family
- Questions the distinction of “flesh-and-blood share” with husband; Look at how philanthropic money is spent



Will Work Change Women?

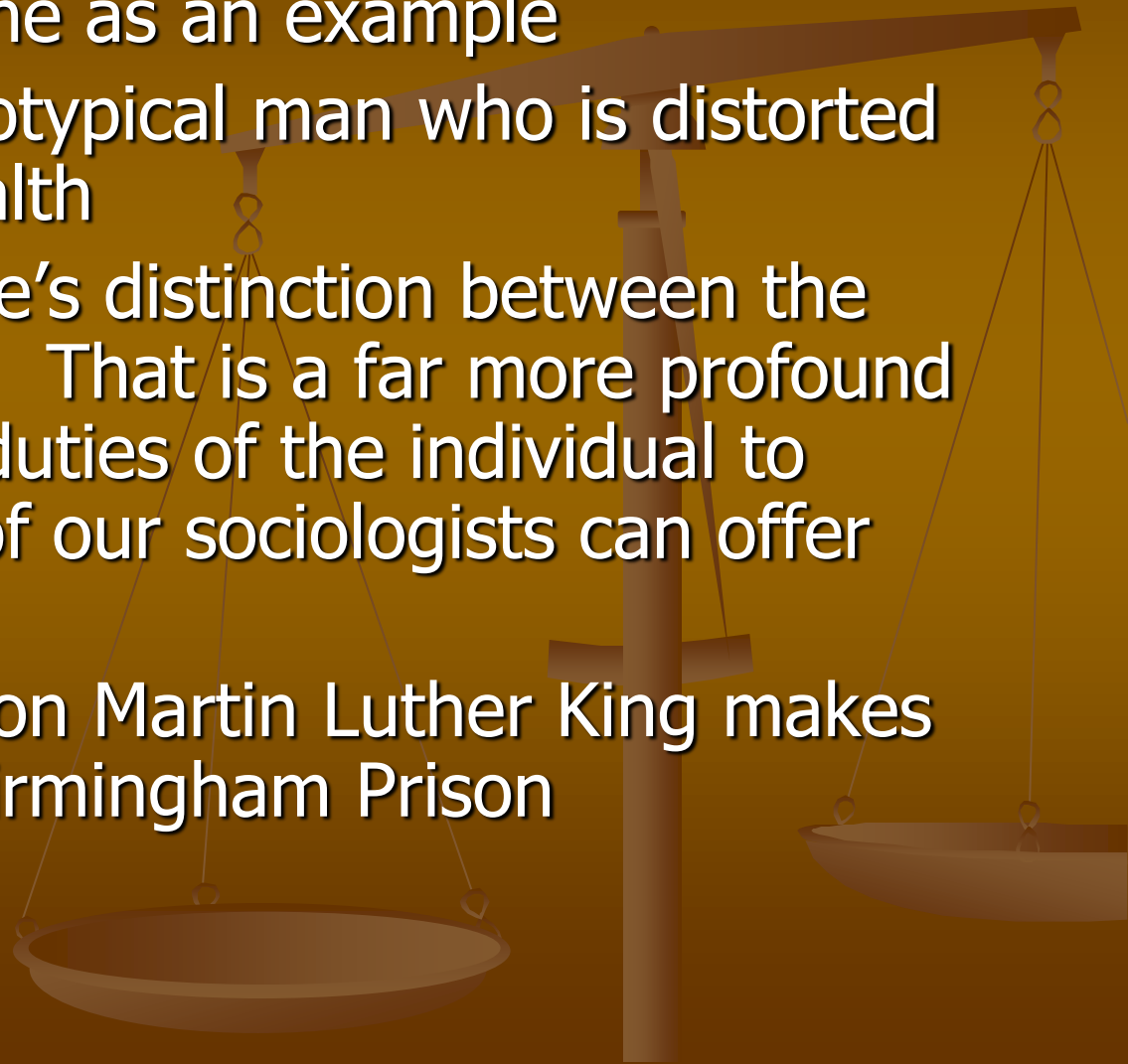
- “You will have to leave the house at nine and come back to it at six. That leaves very little time for fathers to know their children. You will have to do this daily from the age of twenty-one or so to the age of about sixty-five. That leaves very little time for friendship, travel or art. You will have to perform some duties that are arduous, others that are very barbarous. You will have to wear certain uniforms and profess certain loyalties. If you succeed in those professions the words ‘For God and Empire’ will very likely be written, like the address of a dog-collar, round your neck. And if words have meaning...you will have to accept that meaning and do what you can to enforce it. In short you will have to lead the same lives and profess the same loyalties that professional men have professed for many centuries.”
- Margaret Thatcher; Madeline Albright; Condoleezza Rice; Hillary Clinton

Women's Four Great Teachers

- Poverty, Chastity, derision, and freedom from unreal loyalties
 - In order to remain “civilized” women must retain these teachers while they add education and professional experience
 - Poverty: enough money to live upon in order to be independent
 - Chastity: “refuse to sell your brain for the sake of money:
 - Derision: Disdain for honors, “badges, orders , or degrees”
 - Freedom from Unreal Loyalties: “rid yourself of pride of nationality in the first place; also of religious pride, school pride, family pride, sex pride and those unreal loyalties that spring from them.”
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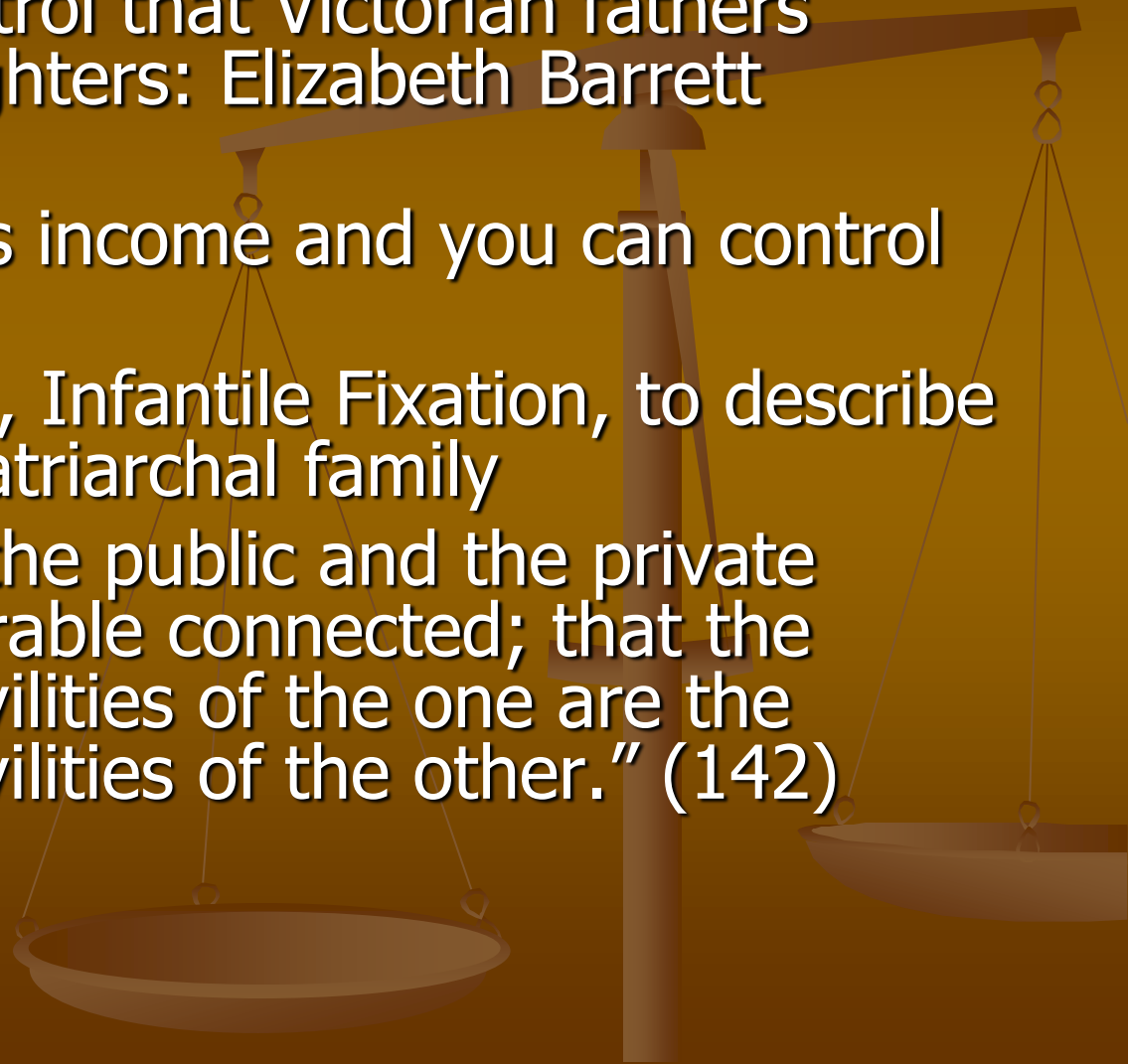
Warning: The effect of Power and Wealth on the Soul

- Sophocles' Antigone as an example
- Creon as the prototypical man who is distorted by power and wealth
- "Consider Antigone's distinction between the laws and the Law. That is a far more profound statement of the duties of the individual to society than any of our sociologists can offer us."
- Similar to distinction Martin Luther King makes in a Letter from Birmingham Prison



Tyranny of State Mirrors Tyranny of Home

- Discusses the control that Victorian fathers exerted over daughters: Elizabeth Barrett Browning
- Control a woman's income and you can control her
- Uses Freud's term, Infantile Fixation, to describe the state of the patriarchal family
- "It suggests that the public and the private worlds are inseparable connected; that the tyrannies and servilities of the one are the tyrannies and servilities of the other." (142)



Conclusion to *Three Guineas*

- “We can best help you to prevent war not by joining your society but by remaining outside your society but in cooperation with its aim. That aim is the same for us both. It is to assert “the rights of all—all men and women—to the respect in their persons of the great principles of ‘Justice and Equality and Liberty.’”
- Returns the form unsigned but gives a guinea
- Asserts that all three letters have the same cause, which are inseparable
- Peace, then, is linked to women’s education and women’s professional equality

Summary

- Legacy as a Writer: leader of the modernist movement
- Leader in Feminist movement: expressed the connection between money, leisure, and professional and creative productivity
- In *Three Guineas*, championed the cause of women's education and professional equality
- Explored the cause of War and whether it is gendered
- Cautioned women about becoming too much like men as they seek the honors and rewards of the male life