

Aristotle: On a Good Wife, from *Oikonomikos*, c. 330 BCE

The following is an excerpt from a larger work by the ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle.

For brief background info on Aristotle and his ideas, see: <http://www.ucmp.berkeley.edu/history/aristotle.html>

A good wife should be the mistress of her home, having under her care all that is within it, according to the rules we have laid down. She should allow none to enter without her husband's knowledge, dreading above all things the gossip of gadding women, which tends to poison the soul. . . . But in all other matters, let it be her aim to obey her husband; giving no heed to public affairs, nor having any part in arranging the marriages of her children. Rather, when the time shall come to give or receive in marriage sons or daughters, let her then hearken to her husband in all respects, and agreeing with him obey his wishes. It is fitting that a woman of a well-ordered life should consider that her husband's wishes are as laws appointed for her by divine will, along with the marriage state and the fortune she shares. . . . Let her refrain from all complaint, nor charge him with the wrong. . . . Such then is the pattern of the rules and ways of living which a good wife will observe. . . . Now a virtuous wife is best honored when she sees that her husband is faithful to her, and has no preference for another woman; but before all others loves and trusts her and holds her as his own. . . . Therefore it befits not a man of sound mind to bestow his person promiscuously, or have random intercourse with women; for otherwise the base-born will share in the rights of his lawful children, and his wife will be robbed of her honor due, and shame be attached to his sons. And it is fitting that he should approach his wife in honor, full of self-restraint and awe; and in his conversation with her, should use only the words of a right-minded man, suggesting only such acts as are themselves lawful and honorable.

Xenophon:

On Men and Women from *Oikonomikos*, c. 370 BCE

For brief background info on Xenophon and his ideas, see <http://www.livius.org/articles/person/xenophon/>

"God from the first adapted the woman's nature, I think, to the indoor and man's to the outdoor tasks and cares. For he made the man's body and mind more capable of enduring cold and heat, and journeys and campaigns; and therefore imposed on him the outdoor tasks. To the woman, since he has made her body less capable of such endurance, I take it that God has assigned the indoor tasks. And knowing that he had created in the woman and had imposed on her the nourishment of the infants, he meted out to her a larger portion of affection for new-born babes than to the man. And since he imposed on the woman the protection of the stores also, knowing that for protection a fearful disposition is no disadvantage, God meted out a larger share of fear to the woman than to the man; and knowing that he who deals with the outdoor tasks will have to be their defender against any wrong-doer, he meted out to him again a larger share of courage. But because both must give and take, he granted to both impartially memory and attention; and so you could not distinguish whether the male or the female sex has the larger share of these. Thus, to be woman it is more honorable to stay indoors than to abide in the fields, but to the man it is unseemly rather to stay indoors than to attend to the work outside."

Thus your duty will be to remain indoors and send out those servants whose work is outside, and superintend those who are to work indoors, and watch over so much as is to be kept in store, and take care that the sum laid by for a year be not spent in a month. And when wool is brought to you, you must see that cloaks are made for those that want them. You must see too that the dry corn is in good condition for making food."