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Why the Redefinition of the Word “Woman” Matters

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The Cambridge Dictionary now defines woman as “an adult who lives and identifies as female though they may have been said to have a different sex at birth.” Pictured: Queer Liberation Pride March in Manhattan, New York, June 27, 2021. (Photo: Erik McGregor/LightRocket/Getty Images)

Samuel Johnson’s *Dictionary of the English Language*, first published in 1755, defines the word “woman” as “the female of the human race.” And until Oct. 2022, the word “woman” was still defined as “an adult female human being” in the *Cambridge Dictionary*.

What transpired on the topic during the intervening 267 years? Not much. Science confirmed what men and women have known since Adam and Eve began talking past each other—not only do the sexes have immutable physiological differences, down to their genetic matter, but they observe, act, and think differently as well.

Yet Cambridge now says the definition of a woman is “an adult who lives and identifies as female though they may have been said to have a different sex at birth” (and the

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definition of a man is someone who “identifies as male though they may have been said to have a different sex at birth.”)

How does one use “woman” in a sentence? One of Cambridge’s examples is, “Mary is a woman who was assigned male at birth.” Who assigned Mary’s sex? Her parents? God? Evolution? The SRY (sex-determining region Y) gene? And what other human characteristics does Cambridge believe can be altered according to one’s feelings? Lexicographers have a responsibility to offer clarity and accuracy—which is, of course, impossible in this case.

When asked about the change, Sophie White, a spokeswoman from Cambridge University Press, told *The Washington Post* that the editors had “carefully studied usage patterns of the word woman and concluded that this definition is one that learners of English should be aware of to support their understanding of how the language is used.” This is tautological gibberish. Though, in fairness to White, “Wokeish” is a relatively new language.

The Post, for instance, claims Cambridge updated its definitions for “woman” and “man” “[to include transgender people](#).” (Incredulous italics mine.) This also makes zero sense. If Cambridge changed the definition of “black” or “Caucasian” to incorporate “Asian people,” it would not be including a new group; it would be altering the fundamental facts of what makes someone black or white or Asian. “Woman” is not a neologism. Our understanding of “woman” hasn’t been altered by new scientific discoveries. Nothing has changed.

At first, these liturgic declarations of one’s “pronouns” seemed relatively harmless to me. And, not that it matters much, but I’ve been perfectly willing to refer to adults in whatever manner they desire. It’s a free country. Pursue your happiness. It’s [not like gender-bending](#) is some new idea. In my real-world experience, I find that most people try to be courteous.

It’s one thing to be considerate and another to be bullied into an alternative reality. But that’s where we are right now. Placating the mob has led to the rise in dangerous euphemisms like [“gender-affirming care,”](#) a phrase that means the exact opposite of what it claims.

In today’s world, “gender-affirming therapy” means telling a girl she can be transformed into a boy, but “conversion therapy” means telling a girl she’s a girl. The corruption of reality has led to the rise of a pseudoscientific cult that performs irreparable mutilation on kids, with puberty blockers and cross-sex hormones and life-altering surgeries.

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And in their never-ending campaign to smear political opponents, Democrats have latched onto this idea as if it were a universal truth. If a person contends that [gender is an unalterable feature](#) of human life these days—a belief shared by all of civilization until about five minutes ago—they might as well be Bull Connor holding a firehose.

Only this week, after signing the same-sex marriage bill, our octogenarian president claimed that Republicans had passed “hundreds of callous and cynical laws introduced in the states targeting transgender children, terrifying families and criminalizing doctors who give children the care they need.”

Speaking of cynical. Does the president really believe these troubled teenagers “need” mastectomies, facial surgery, and genital removal to feel loved? Or would it be more prudent to let them wait for adulthood to make life-altering surgical decisions? Has anyone ever asked him?

Joe Biden is, of course, right that Americans should be free from threats of violence. That includes kids who are now subjected to abuse at the hands of people who have adopted this trendy quackery.

I simply refuse to accept that most Americans, or even more than a small percentage, believe children should be empowered to choose their sex. Rather, in their well-intentioned effort to embrace inclusivity—and avoid being called bigots—they’ve allowed extremists to, among many other things, circumvent debate by corroding fundamental truths about the world. And that’s what these dictionaries—once a place we collectively went for definitions and etymologies—have shamefully helped them do.



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