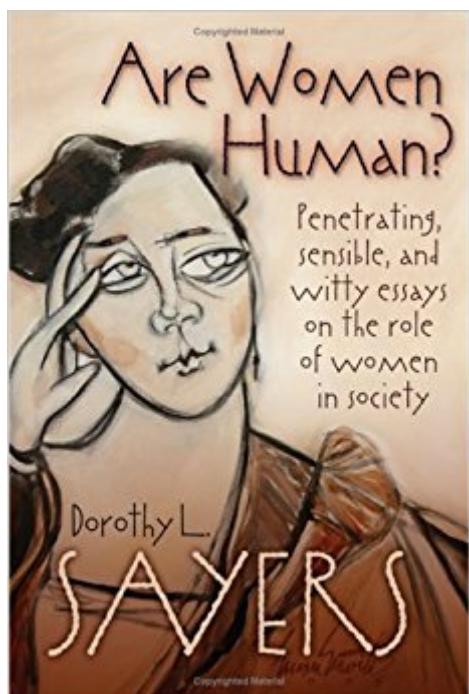


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# Are Women Human? Penetrating, Sensible, And Witty Essays On The Role Of Women In Society



## Synopsis

Introduction by Mary McDermott Shideler One of the first women to graduate from Oxford University, Dorothy Sayers pursued her goals whether or not what she wanted to do was ordinarily understood to be "feminine." Sayers did not devote a great deal of time to talking or writing about feminism, but she did explicitly address the issue of women's role in society in the two classic essays collected here. Central to Sayers's reflections is the conviction that both men and women are first of all human beings and must be regarded as essentially much more alike than different. We are to be true not so much to our sex as to our humanity. The proper role of both men and women, in her view, is to find the work for which they are suited and to do it. Though written several decades ago, these essays still offer in Sayers's piquant style a sensible and conciliatory approach to ongoing gender issues.

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The New York Times Book Review "Forthright and commonsensical. Christianity Today Offers pointed and witty arguments for treating women as individuals, not as a homogeneous class."

One of the first women to graduate from Oxford University, Dorothy Sayers pursued her goals whether or not what she wanted to do was ordinarily understood to be "feminine." Sayers did not devote a great deal of time to talking or writing about feminism, but she did explicitly address the issue of women's role in society in the two classic essays collected here. Central to Sayers's

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Anyone who has read Dorothy Sayers' mysteries featuring Lord Peter Wimsey should not be surprised that she seriously studied the roles assumed by people in her world and how those roles were viewed. She was one of the first women to graduate from Oxford and pursued goals that were not usually thought of as feminine. In the two essays in this 69-page pamphlet, Sayers responds to the idea that there are women's roles and men's roles. In Sayers' mind, being human was more important than being female or male. Based on that concept, she felt that individuals should pursue employment that best suits them without regard to societally based roles. In spite of progress that has been made since her day (these essays were originally published in a work titled *Unpopular Opinions*, copyright 1947) the subject is still of interest today. As far as women have come in the more than 60 years, there is still much discussion about whether or not women should enter traditionally male employment. What makes the idea of gender-specific roles almost laughable is that most of the male-dominated roles were originally those of women, from cooking to planting to serving at table. Her view of the history of these ideas has to make anyone pause and consider how much things have changed and whether assigning gender roles has truly been overcome.

Being a fan of Sayers' Lord Peter stories for many years, I decided to try her essays too. "Are Women Human?" consists of two essays--the title essay and another called "Human Not-Quite-Human." Both are well-written, and more importantly, well-reasoned. Reading her I found myself smacking my head more than once and thinking "Why did I never think of that? It makes such sense!" Sayers' arguments are both to the point and made with humor. She makes her points from history and from the Bible, and her warnings against generalizing are excellent. Not all men are the same. How can all women be? This is an easy, fun read from which one can take away a lot of excellent ideas.

Without Dorothy L. Sayers where would we be as Christians and civilized human beings? Read the book, send it to your female relatives, friends, acquaintances. Sayers asks the right question and answers it with wit, charm, and intelligence. Even if you disagree, you will have to give her credit for

the best prose, the most elegant of styles, and the great debate. She smashes everyone's sacred cow and then some. And, don't stumble over the examples from another generation. Apply the analogy to your time and circumstance. She gives you a tool of learning so use it.

In Dorothy Sayers book "Are Women Human," which was a short story on how women were treated in England in the early 1900s. It was her thoughts on gender notions and how women were treated in society, but asserting why she was not a feminist to the cause. She argues that women and men are all humans that have the same needs, or different ones depending upon the individual.

However, nevertheless it shows how women are associated and still compared to our male counterparts. Miss Sayers continues the argument that women and men are all humans that have the same needs, or different ones depending upon the individual. It's ok to have a certain amount of classification, which is necessary and presents no harm in doing so. In her second short story entitled "The Human-Not-Quite-Human," she focused on women acting more like men than anything else. She compared the human factor of Vir being the male, Femina the female and Homo being both male and female. She described that men have always dealt with Vir and Homo while women only dealt with Femina. Sayers argue the point that men (Vir) have always demanded that women (Femina) shall act lady like at all times; regardless if she's engaged or in a Homo relation or not. Men have always been attracted to women and will appropriate it without any regard to having scruples. Based on her concept of this last statement; it still holds true within today's society. However, if women acted as such; she labeled them as being unworthy or a scamp. Overall, both short stories were amusing and delightfully funny as Sayers poked fun about being human. Reading this book provided some insight on how things were then and now. It's worth reading.

This is a quick read - I read it the very evening I received it. I think she would be a little more progressive if she had lived in a later period, but I think that it was pretty progressive for her time. I appreciate her critique of the brand of feminism that is single-mindedly trying to copy men, or claiming women to "be as good as men." We are all individuals and excel at different things, depending on our interests and abilities, regardless of our gender. All we need is a world where we are able to pursue our aspirations without so much emphasis put on gender. Not to say we are exactly the same, but our gender differences don't determine whether we should be at home with the kids or in the courtroom as a judge. My favorite part was when she described what it would be like for a man to be in a woman's world, much like women are in a man's world. Very funny.

Dorothy L. Sayers states Jesus' treatment of women so eloquently and objectively. There is a unique relationship Jesus had with women, and as much as some sects of religion try to downplay it, it will always shine through. Jesus valued women for more than their bodies, more than their gender, more than their motherhood and more than their housekeeping abilities. The church tries to limit women in so many ways, but hopefully they will see how much Jesus valued women and stop their segregation, pigeonholing, and putting women in ineffective boxes.

Dorothy Sayers is an outstanding researcher and authority on the challenges and roles of women in society. She does a nice job of providing insights in a way that is factual. She is challenging without making the reader uncomfortable. Its a very satisfying publication on a topic that society, particularly U.S. society, is struggling with.

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