Are Women as Smart as Men?

Midwives and Medical Men in Seventeenth-Century France
Bridgette Sheridan, PhD

Engraving of Louise Bourgeois from a German edition of her birthing manual, 1644-52



Woodcut of women attending to a pregnant woman from German birthing manual, 1554



CONTEXT

- The Woman Question or the Querelle des femmes
 - René Descartes (1596-1650)
 - François Poulain de la Barre (1648-1723)

Scientific Revolution

- Hippocrates (450-370 BCE)
- Galen (129-200 CE)

LOUISE BOURGEOIS (1563-1636)

* Royal midwife to Queen Marie de Médicis beginning in 1600.

* Birthing manual:

Louise Bourgeois, *Diverse Observations on Sterility* . . . *deliveries, and illnesses of women* & *newly-born infants, treated and happily practiced by* L. Bourgeois (Written in French, 1609-1626).

Manual was translated into several languages:

1619 - Latin; **1628 -** German; **1658 –** Dutch; **1659 –** English

BOURGEOIS vs. PHYSICIANS AND SURGEONS

❖ 1627 - The Death of the Royal Princess Marie de Bourbon-Montpensier following childbirth (Wife of Gaston d'Orléans, King Louis XIII's brother)

❖ Publications:

- ❖ Bourgeois, Louise (Boursier). *Apologia of Louise Bourgeois* . . . *Midwife to the Queen Mother of the King, & to the deceased Madame [Princess]*. *Contrary to the Report of the Physicians*. Paris: Chez Melchior Mondiere, 1627.
- ❖ Guillemeau, Charles. Remonstrance to Madame [Bourgeois] concerning her Apologia against the Report that the Physicians had made about what caused the deplorable death of the Madame [Princess]. Paris: J. Jacquin, 1627.

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF LOUISE BOURGEOIS'S LIFE & WORKS

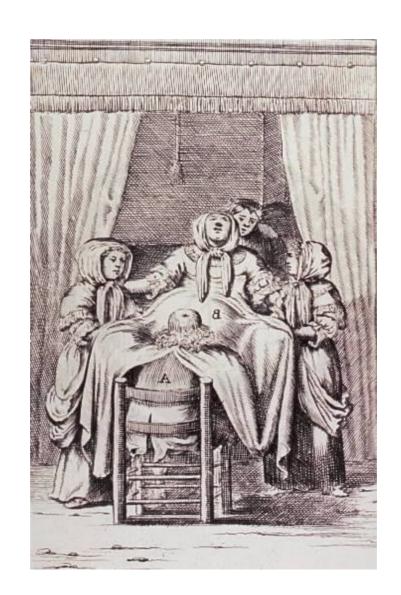
Scientific Revolution

The Woman Question and the Problem with Difference

Etching of a "Man-midwife" from English Birthing Manual, 1793-5?



Engraving of woman in labor being delivered by a surgeon from Dutch edition of Louise Bourgeois's Birthing Manual, 1701



Der Frauwen



