

***From Property to Patriarchy:***  
*Thomas Spence and Women's Economic Rights*



**BACKGROUND**

- Women lacked proper education, property rights, and freedom in marriage. Radicals wanted social change, but most ignored women's economic rights.
- Thomas Spence didn't ignore women in his proposals, and that set him apart from the others.

**METHODS**

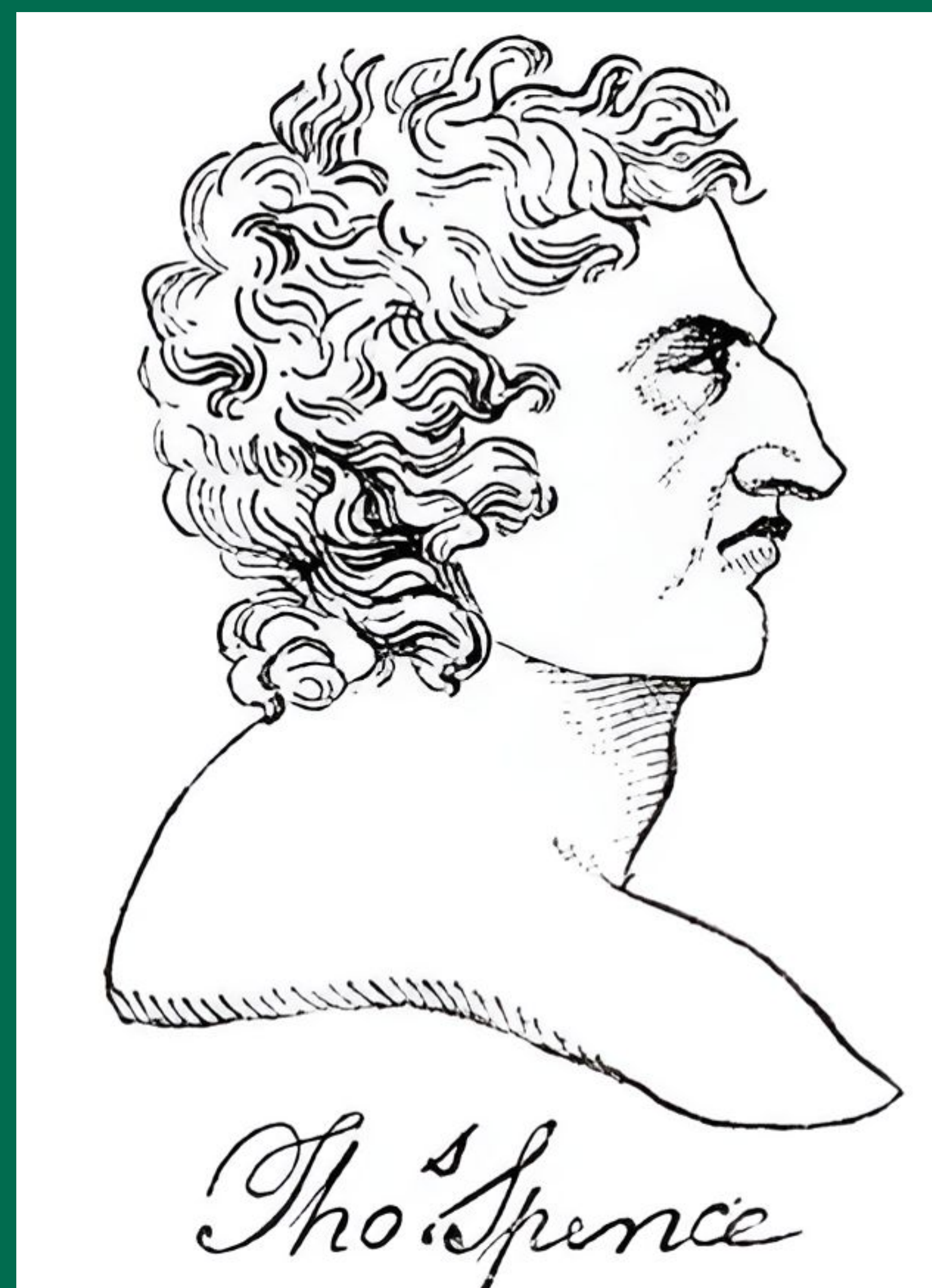
1. Studies proto-feminist critiques of the 1790s to establish core concerns about women's economic dependence.
2. Analyzed Spence's key writings to trace his evolving stance on gendered economic rights.
3. Compared the two to assess whether Spence's vision for economic justice included a genuine commitment to women's rights.

**MAIN RESULT**

- Since Spence's works focused primarily on class-based reform, his ideology diverges significantly from the major middle-class feminist critiques of the time.

# The 18th century inventor of basic income once championed women's rights — did his later works backtrack from this commitment?

Thomas Spence  
(1750–1814)



Illustrated by  
Thomas Bewick

## Primary Terms & People

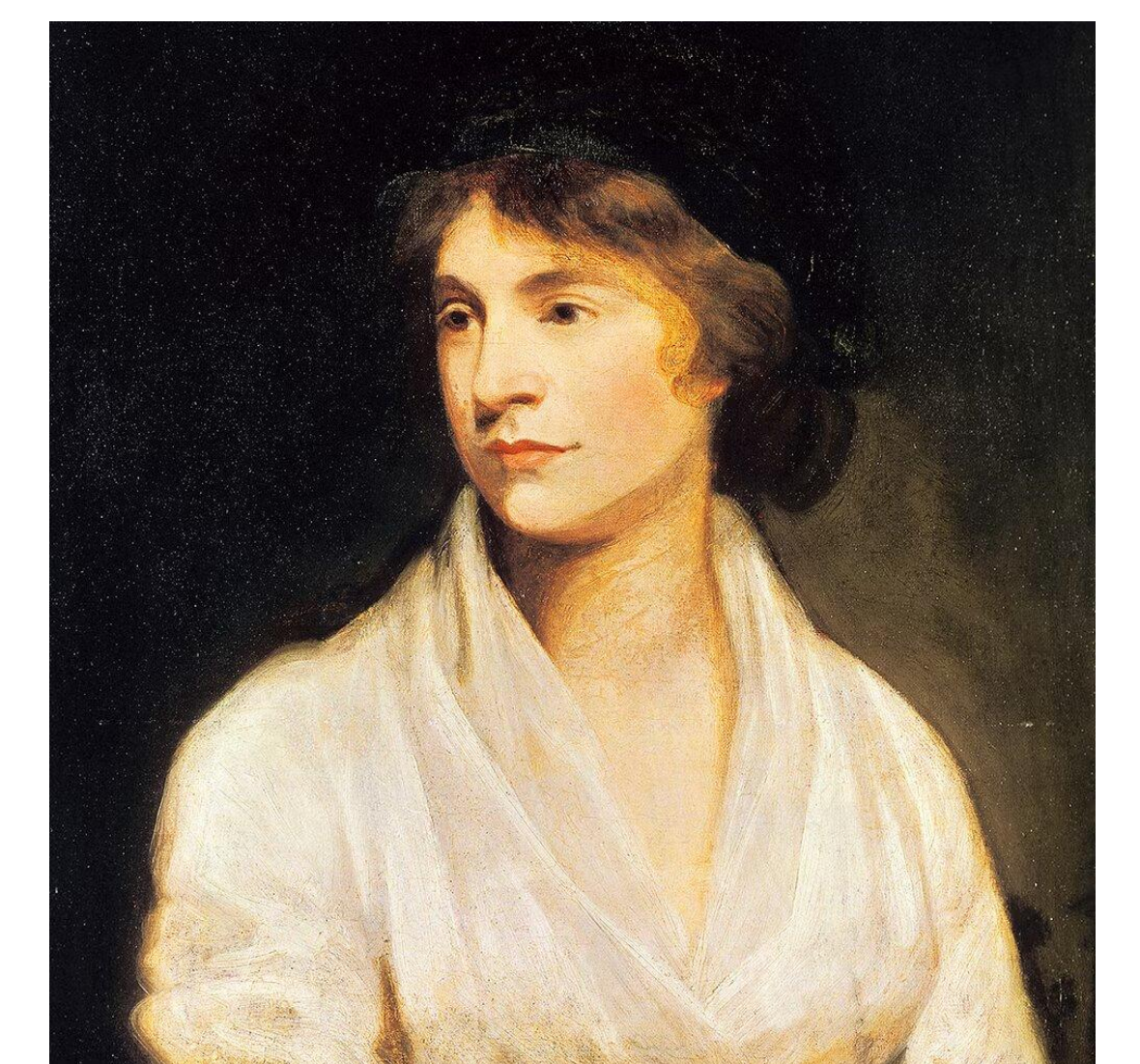
**Basic Income:** A government program that provides its citizens with a regular and unconditional sum of money, regardless of income.

**Thomas Spence:** An 18th-century radical thinker who advocated for a common ownership of land and a system of rent sharing.

**Mary Wollstonecraft:** An early 18th-century feminist philosopher who argued for a better system of education for women.

## KEY INSIGHTS

- Spence's viewpoint on gendered economic roles changed significantly over time, which includes backtracking on his radical proposals.
- Different feminist thinkers highlighted different points of concern.
- The failure of the French Revolution to usher in a new age of equality helps to explain the failure of the 1790 radical feminists to kickstart real change.



Mary Wollstonecraft, author of *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*

## EARLIER VS. LATER VERSIONS OF SPENCE'S *THE RIGHTS OF MAN*

### 1783 Version:

The rents throughout that happy state,  
Each parish deals so fair,  
That every housholder therein  
Does get an EQUAL SHARE.

### 1807 Version:

The rents throughout that happy state,  
Each parish deals so fair,  
That old and young, that dwell therein  
Do get an EQUAL SHARE.  
The women, yes, and Children too,  
Alike share with the Men,  
For why? They of the Species are,  
And as such owned again.