

## BOOK REVIEW

### Sexism and Science

BY EVELYN REED

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**Reviewed by:** Ursula Franklin, Faculty of Engineering, University of Toronto

#### How biased are Scientists?

First of all, let me say that this is an enjoyable book. Don't be misled by the title; the book does not deal with the sort of sexism that women scientists encounter in their working lives. Evelyn Reed's collection of eight essays is concerned with the products of scientific activities, particularly activities in the wider field of anthropology—(i.e. the science of people as they develop biologically and socially). And most of all she is concerned with the prejudices and biases that are incorporated in these products of science.

It may be that science, in the sense of assembling facts and evidence, can be a reasonably objective undertaking; but the scientists who engage in these activities certainly are not unbiased or neutral parties. Reed shows, clearly and beautifully, how the mind of the scientist—usually male, white and middle-class—filters and processes the so-called facts so as to prove that, “of course,” the roots of aggressiveness, male domination, and ruthless competition already existed among the primates.

Reed had earlier drawn attention to the important phase in which the groupings of operating females of evolution and their young were the distinctive and determining mode. The major work of Evelyn Reed, —*Woman's Evolution*, is a most important scholarly book, and the essays in the volume under review here, are a direct part and continuation of it.

The role of women in the early history of humanity has long been neglected in scholarly discussion. It is only now, through the influence of female anthropologists, such as Evelyn Reed, that this aspect begins to take its rightful place in the reconstruction of human and social evolution.

One fact of the book that I found especially appealing is that it is so intensely readable for non-specialists, but also stimulating for those who are not unfamiliar with the subject. Since it is a collection of essays, there is inevitably some repetition.

Although the subject of the book is profound, the book is not heavy, and there are many really amusing parts. I particularly like two essays. One is a debate between Evelyn Reed and Dr. Howard Haymes, and the other is a beautiful discussion on the theories of innate aggressiveness as put forward by Morris and Lorenz. The stress on the inherent survival value of co-operation, and the development of cooperative techniques by groups of females from the very beginning of human history is a particularly attractively described feature of several of these essays.

*Status of Women* |

This is the sort of book that one should own, one should read, and one should pass along. We all owe Evelyn Reed and her co-workers a very warm vote of gratitude. Her contribution will last, both in the hearts and in the heads of women.