

Summaries

► *Wannes Dupont*
A sterile debate on (homo)sexuality?

Epistemological and ethical debates on human nature date back to the dawn of philosophy itself. Throughout the nineteenth century however, increasing emphasis was laid on sex as the most natural, yet also the most mysterious thing about us. The notion that the truth about sex and the sexed body would resolve the ancient question of identity, divided society and its researchers along political lines. Once sex emanated as a fully-fledged part of general debate, (identity-based) sex politics polarized with adapted evolutionist rhetoric gaining ascendancy in liberal opinion and common beliefs. In the academic arena the disagreements between essentialists and social constructionists – especially on the ‘nature’ of homosexuality – have spawned a considerable body of militant literature in recent years. When trying to surmount the sometimes one-sided politicization of (homo)sexuality, only a critical approach of both traditions can prove successful. By queering our own assertions on the social functioning and finality of (knowledge of) sex, we might put an end to what seems to have become an outworn standoff.

► *Greta Noordenbos*
Are men overlooked? Sex difference in diagnosis and treatment of depression

This article reviews sex differences in the characteristics, causes, experiences and treatment of depression. Gender asymmetry in the development of depression, with a sex ratio between women and men of 2:1, is a main-

stay in feminist debates and psychological research. This gender asymmetry might be a consequence of gender bias in the diagnostic criteria of depression, that show a better fit with the way women express sad feelings. Moreover, because of internalized ideas about masculinity, men have not learned to express sad feelings and to ask for help in case of emotional problems. They tend to develop an alcohol problem more often than women and tend to ask for help for their depression only at a later stage. Men prefer to explain feelings of depression as a biological problem, to be treated with medication. However, research shows that for men psychotherapy might be the better option to reduce the risk of relapse. To reduce the gender bias in the diagnostic criteria it is suggested that diagnostic characteristics should be developed specifically geared to depressed men. Furthermore, a gender-sensitive treatment in which clients are able to express their preference for a male or a female therapist, and in which gender-specific problems are discussed, should become available.

► *Veronica Vasterling*
Evolutionary psychology: a reductive story about genes

There are several reasons why gender theorists should start paying attention to evolutionary psychology. First, gender and sexuality play an important role in the explanatory model drawn up by evolutionary psychology. Second, over the past decade evolutionary psychology has become a popular and respected branch of research. Its articles are published in distinguished journals like *Psycho-*

logical Inquiry and *American Psychologist*, and the science sections of quality newspapers regularly report on its research. Third, there is a growing number of feminist advocates whose critique of sexist reasoning and introduction of new gender sensitive approaches has brought significant improvements to the theory and research of evolutionary psychology. Finally, and most importantly, gender theorists should put their habitual biophobia behind them and engage with these new fields of research in order to learn about and be able to critically assess the implications for conceptions and practices of gender. The aim of the article is to make a contribution towards that end by outlining the key features of evolutionary psychology, followed by an overview of the criticism it has generated over the past ten years. Despite the wide range of topics and variety of disciplines contributing to it, the criticism appears to have one common denominator: reductionism.

► *Saskia Wieringa*
The admonishment of Vegetarian Great Aunt

Women's samesex relations have been the topic of individual studies and some anthologies but they have as yet not been systematically studied. In this inaugural the focus is on institutionalised women's samesex relations, such as the Chinese anti-marriage sisterhoods, the African women marriages and urban b/f communities. How come that in some societies women whose relationships are usually abjected can become centre stage? What are the cultural epistemes that make such relations understood?

► *Kaat Wils*
Afraid of biophobia? An apology of cultural studies

Recently, feminist scholars like Elisabeth Wilson and Joan Wallach Scott have called for a thorough exploration of the possible contributions of biological explanations to feminism. Instead of stressing the cultural construction of the female body through science, feminists themselves should – according to this critique – apply rigorous scientific methods to that body. This will, according to some, enable the exposure of evolutionary biology as 'bad' science. In this contribution, Kaat Wils shows the weaknesses of these 'naturalist' positions and suggests that a well-informed culturalist approach *does* help to make science – and evolutionary psychology in particular – aware of its own situated character. Doing so, it serves both the case of science and of feminism.
