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Gender and the Biological Sciences

Feminist critiques of science provide fertile ground for any investigation of the ways in which social influences may shape the content of science.

Oh jeez, this is gonna be a fun discussion

Argue that sexist bio is an excuse for the suppression of women.

Kathleen's Hierarchy of sciences: Physics -> Biology -> Social sciences (or reversed, it's unclear)

Argues that feminist critiques of "the social sciences are dismissed out of hand by philosophers of science on the ground that the social sciences aren't science anyways," then says: "it is, however, not quite so easy to dismiss biology as pseudo science." Despite the fact that she *just drew a distinction between biology and social sciences*.

Calls case study of outdated model of fertilization process – says that sexism has blinded scientists to the truth, the previous model being the "Sleeping Beauty/Prince Charming" model. > The egg waits patiently ... the sperm heroically battles ... (yatta yatta)

this model "appeared as early as 1795." In 1895, electron microscopy on sea urchins revealed that the egg grows "finger like projections ... but this has been largely ignored until recently.

The original model appeared 100 years earlier, of course it was widely known in 1895. The new model barely changed the previous model. What does "largely ignored" even mean? To my knowledge, this isn't a very hotly debated or discussed topic. Is that what she means by ignoring it?

She goes on to say that the new theory is still controversial, and they don't know if it's entirely correct!

Of course people stuck with teaching the old model then! And the electron microscope was invented in 1931! She claims this was discovered using electron microscopy in 1895!

wtbf is this reading?

Gives examples of clearly incorrect biological explanations of why men are more intelligent than women from specific scientists, and uses them to generalize all of male biologists. *Nice*.

Drawings that updated skeletons to be gender specific were "favored for just that (the fact that they reflected cultural ideals of masculinity) over drawings that were in some sense more accurate."

What exactly does "in some sense more accurate" mean?

A science based upon women would be an improvement over the current science, according to standpoint epistemology.

Essentially argues that between two choices, scientific theory cannot guarantee that one is true. Yeah, that's the point.

Argues that since theories are based upon one another, and since original theories were created in deeply sexist times, the sexist theories persevere regardless of the current state of cultural sexism.

This is reasonable, but we scientists do backtrack significantly when new evidence is presented. It's not as if these sexist theories have tainted modern theories forever.

Reflection

Well, that was certainly interesting.

Discussion Point:

I wonder what the author means by “in some sense more accurate” when referring to the conflicting skeletal models on page 198.

All I have to say about this reading. Holy hell.