

# PROBLEMS OF WOMEN'S LIBERATION

By Evelyn Reed

*Problems of Women's Liberation* is a Marxist approach to the oppression of women. It traces the history of women back to the time when inequality between the sexes was unknown, showing how changes in the productive process led to class distinctions and the relegation of women to a position of servitude and subordination.

The author also deals with aspects of modern life and the pressures that are currently used to keep women in a subordinate role. One chapter exposes the role of fashion and cosmetics in helping to keep women "in their place."

After recounting how women became an oppressed sector of society and how this history has been concealed, the author indicates the way women can throw off their oppression, and once more as equals play a full productive role in society.

This book has become one of the principle guides to current theoretical discussions in the women's liberation movement. It has been widely adopted in college courses on the subject of the role of women in society.

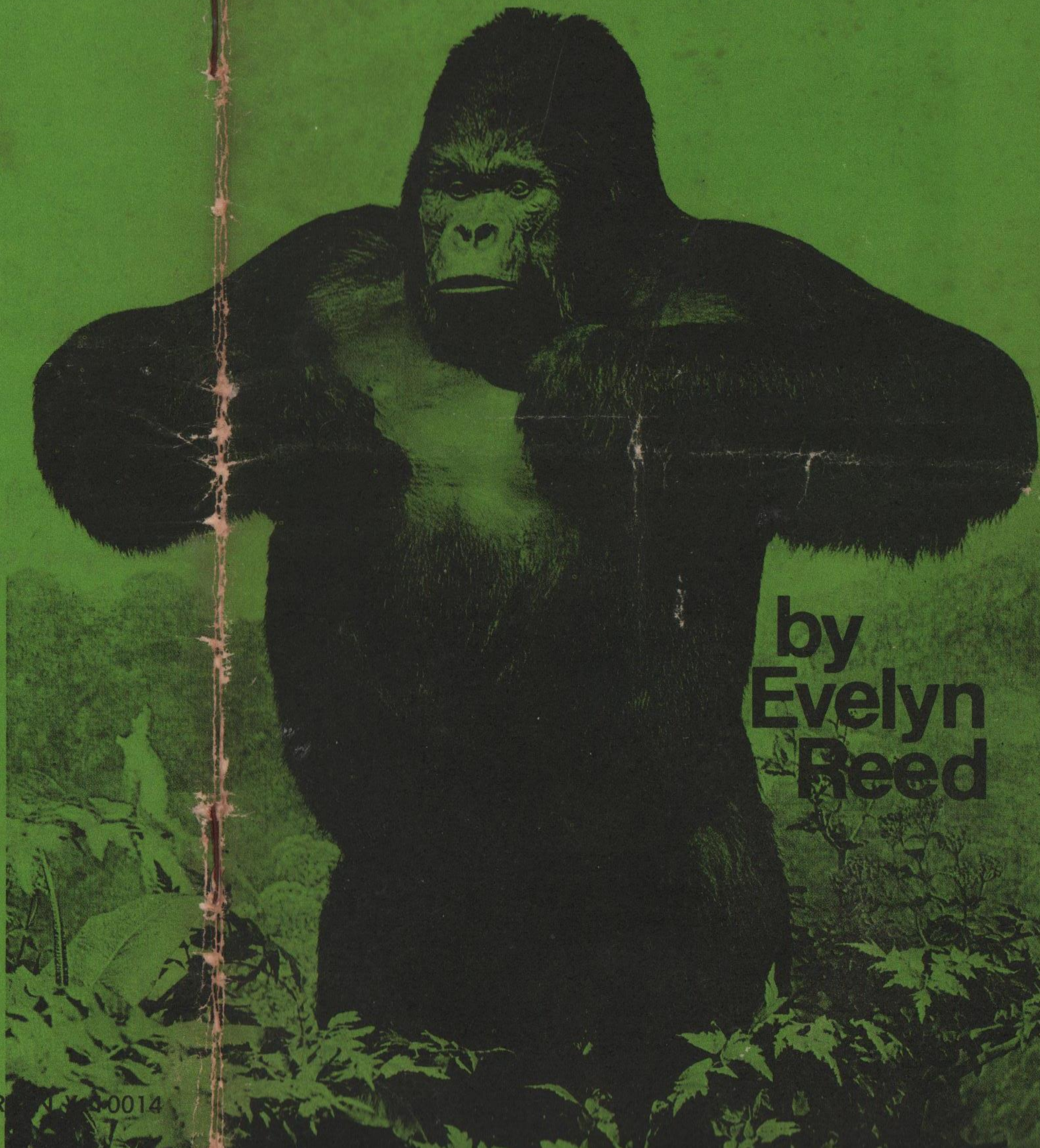
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# An Answer to "The Naked Ape"

AND OTHER BOOKS ON AGGRESSION



by  
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She is the author of *Problems of Women's Liberation*, which has become one of the principal guides to current theoretical discussions in the women's liberation movement.

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## An Answer to "The Naked Ape" and Other Books on Aggression

Since the early 1960s the United States, the most powerfully-armed nation on earth, has been conducting an onslaught against Vietnam, a tiny nation far from its shores. This long drawn-out, genocidal war has produced wave upon wave of revulsion among the American people.

Massive, unprecedented antiwar demonstrations have been accompanied by an intense interest in the root causes of military conflict. Many Americans who once trusted the word of the capitalist Establishment that it waged wars only to "safeguard democracy" rightly suspect that they have been hoodwinked. They are coming to see that the only gainers from such conflicts are the monopolists who seek to safeguard their empire and expand their power, profits and privileges through them. Under the impact of the most hated war in our nation's history, a political awakening is taking place with regard to the real causes of imperialist aggression which are embedded in the drives and decline of the capitalist system.

In the same time period a set of writers has come to the fore whose books present a wholly different view of the causes of organized warfare. They claim that man's\*

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\* Ever since written history began a few thousand years ago male historians and other scholars have used the term "man" or "mankind" as equivalent to "human" or "humankind," which left "woman" or "womankind" entirely out of the picture. Other women in the liberation movement besides myself recognize the impossibility of eradicating the sexist terminology all at once and particularly under our capitalist system. Consequently the term "man" in this article is used in the generic sense following the general usage of this term throughout the history of class society.



biological heritage and his "killer" instincts are responsible for wars, absolving the predatory capitalist system of all responsibility. Their paperbacks are bought by the hundreds of thousands and have been high on the best-seller lists. They obviously influence the thinking of many readers who are anxiously searching for answers to the problems of war and other social evils.

The principal figures among these apologists for the crimes of capitalism have produced six such books in the decade. The pacesetter is Robert Ardrey who brought out *African Genesis* in 1961 and its sequel, *The Territorial Imperative*, five years later. A third, *The Social Contract*, has just been published. Konrad Lorenz published *On Aggression* in 1963 which was translated into English in 1966. In 1967 *The Naked Ape* by Desmond Morris appeared, followed two years later by its companion, *The Human Zoo*.

The authors come from different countries and have dissimilar backgrounds. Ardrey was an unsuccessful playwright who became a dabbler in anthropology. Lorenz is an Austrian naturalist, sometimes called the "father of ethology"—the science of animal behavior in the wild—who specializes in the study of the greylag goose and certain other bird and fish species. The Englishman Morris was formerly curator of mammals in the London Zoo.

However much these writers differ in background, training and temperament, they agree that modern wars are not brought about for economic and social reasons but stem from the biological aggressiveness of human nature.

Their method consists in obliterating the essential distinctions that separate humans from animals and identifying the behavior of both through gross exaggerations and misrepresentations of the part played by instincts in human life. They argue that since mankind came out of the animal world, people are at bottom no better than animals; they are inescapably creatures of their biological impulses. Thus modern warfare is explained by man's "innate" aggression.

This extension of animal aggressiveness to account for

imperialism and its military interventions is absurd on the face of it. No animal has ever manufactured an atom bomb and there are no apes standing ready to hurl them and blow up the planet. The small group of aggressive men who control the nuclear warheads are not in the zoos or the forests but in the White House and Pentagon.

To equate animal behavior with imperialist warmaking is to slander not only animals but the vast majority of humans who wish only to live in peace. The Vietnamese have not threatened or invaded the territory of the United States; the opposite is the case. And the average GI has so little warlike spirit against these distant "enemies" that it requires heavy pressure and unremitting patriotic indoctrination to convince him that he must become aggressive against them.

To the new school of writers, however, wars are not made by big business and its agents in Washington; the real culprit is the ape nature of man. With this biological fig leaf, they attempt to cover up the criminal course of the imperialists, and dump responsibility for their aggressions upon "man" in general.

These writers refuse to recognize that, while mankind has grown out of the animal world, we are a unique species which has outgrown animality. A whole series of distinctive attributes divides us from all lower species. Humans alone have the capacity to *produce* the necessities and comforts of life, humans alone possess speech and cultures; humans, therefore, have their own history. The laws of social evolution, applicable to mankind alone, are fundamentally distinct from the laws of organic evolution applicable in nature.

This point is made by the eminent paleontologist, George Gaylord Simpson, as follows:

The establishment of the fact that man is a primate, with all its evolutionary implications, early gave rise to fallacies for which there is no longer any excuse (and never was much) . . . These fallacies arise from what Julian Huxley calls the "nothing but" school. It was felt or said that because man is an animal, a primate, and so on, he is *nothing but* an animal, or *nothing but* an ape with a few extra tricks. It is a fact that man is an animal, but it is



not a fact that he is nothing but an animal . . . Such statements are not only untrue but also vicious for they deliberately lead astray enquiry as to what man really is and so distort our whole comprehension of ourselves and our proper values.

To say that man is nothing but an animal is to deny, by implication, that he has *essential* attributes other than those of all animals . . . His unique nature lies precisely in those characteristics that are not shared with any other animal. His place in nature and its supreme significance to man are not defined by his animality but by his humanity.<sup>1</sup>

According to Dr. Simpson, man represents "an absolute difference in kind and not only a relative difference in degree" from all animals. Ardrey, Lorenz and Morris are clearly at odds with these statements on the qualitative distinctions between humans and animals.

The crudest of the three is Robert Ardrey who reduces science to fiction writing. An adroit name-dropper, he sprinkles his books with references to prestigious scientists, to endow his work with their sanction. He does this, for example, with Simpson, who is far from sharing Ardrey's views about mankind.

Man is only a "fraction of the animal world," says Ardrey, and human history no more than an "afterthought" of natural history. We are not, therefore, "so unique as we should like to believe."<sup>2</sup> This is exactly the opposite of the views expressed by Simpson on the subject.

## Killers and capitalists

Ardrey's books are designed to demonstrate not only that man is a born killer, a "legacy" bequeathed by our killer-ape ancestors, but that animal nature is also at the bottom of the capitalist nature and the lust for private property. He takes exception to Darwin's observation that male animals compete and fight for sexual access to females in the mating season. According to Ardrey, animals, like people, compete and fight for the private ownership of property which begins with one's own territory. This is the central theme behind his "territorial imperative."

To substantiate his thesis he cites a bird specialist who "observed throughout a lifetime of bird watching, that male birds quarrel seldom over females; what they quarrel over is real-estate." The females, for their part, are sexually attracted only to males possessing property. "In most but not all territorial species," we are told, "the female is sexually unresponsive to an unpropertied male."<sup>3</sup> A mockingbird, it seems, can only get a mate after having fought for and won sufficient holdings in property.

Highlighting this absurdity, Ardrey further assures us in *The Territorial Imperative* that "many animals," such as lions, eagles and wolves, "form land-owning groups." He makes no distinction between the use of land, sea or air by creatures in nature for their habitats, and the exclusive private ownership of land and other resources by rent-collectors. Thus he concludes, "Ownership of land is scarcely a human invention, as our territorial propensity is something less than a human distinction."

According to Ardrey, man has inherited his capitalistic proclivities from his ape ancestors and this legacy explains human "killer" instincts in defense of possessions and territory. This justifies not only the capitalist way of life but also the imperialist aggressions that are waged by the U.S. to maintain its system. Ardrey thereupon appeals for a less negative attitude on the part of Americans today toward war, urging them not to imitate those who despise wars and warmakers.

"Generals in the time of my growing up were something to be hidden under history's bed, along with the chamber pots," he complains. "Anyone who chose the army for a career was a fool or a failure." Indeed, after the first world war, "certain words almost vanished from the American vocabulary, among them such fine patriotic words as '*honor*' and '*glory*.'" And he sorrowfully adds, "Patriotism, naturally, was the last refuge of the scoundrel."

Bent on changing this attitude, Ardrey warns that the same "territorial imperative" that is embedded in our instincts likewise motivates the "enemy." So if we are to save ourselves and our property we must fight, fight, fight. He writes:



The territorial imperative is as blind as a cave fish, as consuming as a furnace, and it commands beyond logic, opposes all reason, suborns all moralities, strives for no goal more sublime than survival . . . But today's American must also bear in mind that the territorial principle motivates all of the human species. It is not something that Americans thought up, like the skyscraper or the Chevrolet. Whether we approve or we disapprove, whether we like it or we do not, it is a power as much an ally of our enemies as it is of ourselves and our friends.<sup>4</sup>

What are we to say to this most unnatural history? It is obvious that living creatures congregate in specific habitats on the land or in the sea which provide them with food and mating grounds. But these habitats are not "territories" in the sense of landed estates that they permanently own. It is also true that animals may become aggressive in the struggle to satisfy their basic needs. But they are just as capable of tolerating one another's presence in a common habitat as they are of squabbling over any given spot at any particular time.

Aggressiveness in defense of a habitat is imposed upon animals because for survival each species is adapted to the particular food and climate of specific areas. Thus trooping animals may defend the region occupied by the group; solitary animals defend only the particular spot each occupies at any given time. In all cases, the "imperative" is not for "territory" but for satisfying the most basic needs of the animal within the restricted framework of its particular living space.

Conditions of life are entirely different in the human world, however, where mankind is not chained to any special food or climate and can produce what is needed anywhere on the globe. Unlike the polar bear which cannot live in tropical Africa or the tropical ape that cannot survive in icy Newfoundland, human beings can roam and inhabit the whole planet, together producing and sharing the necessities of life. Humans can act consciously and collectively to eradicate war once they become aware of its causes.

More to the point, the capitalists are not so much in-

terested in protecting "their" territory, as such, from alleged enemies; what they want to maintain at all costs is "their" system of exploitation. That is why the United States, whose current war is against the "enemy" in Southeast Asia, also has military bases on other peoples' territories all around the globe. A capitalist ruling class will even temporarily yield sovereignty over its territory, if need be, as the French monied men did to Hitler during the second world war, to preserve their properties from the insurgent masses.

The American people do not decide who their enemies are; these are singled out for them by the shifting needs of the capitalists. During the second world war the Germans and Japanese were the enemies whereas the Soviet and Chinese allies were friends. Since then these respective nations have been switched as friend and foe. What has changed is not the territorial relations but the diplomatic and strategic aims of American imperialism. Its propaganda machine tells the country who is to be hated and who is to be liked at any given time. Contrary to Ardrey, there is nothing instinctual in these attitudes; all of it is learned behavior, instilled by the capitalist ruling class.

Lorenz and Morris who, unlike Ardrey, have some claim to the title of scientists, go as completely wrong when they try to biologize history. This is as great an error as it would be to reduce biology and botany to chemistry and physics, even though animal and vegetable life have a physico-chemical origin and basis. In the case of human life it produces grotesque distortions of the truth.

Desmond Morris, who has less of a scientific reputation than Lorenz, is particularly crude in this respect. "I am a zoologist and the naked ape is an animal. He is therefore fair game for my pen," he declares in his first book, *The Naked Ape*. To this zoo-keeper, man differs from the ape by virtue of two amplified biological organs, a bigger penis and a bigger brain, and because our species is "naked" while apes are hairy. Nothing essential has been altered by humans either in themselves or their society; they were and still remain the creature



of their ape instincts: "So there he stands, our vertical, hunting weapon-toting, territorial, neotenous, brainy, Naked Ape, a primate by ancestry, and a carnivore by adoption, ready to conquer the world . . . for all his environment-moulding achievements, he is still at heart a very naked ape."<sup>5</sup>

These writers who see no qualitative distinction between man and ape ignore the extent to which man himself has changed in the course of his million-year history. People today who are only now becoming aware of the social jungle that has been foisted upon them by the capitalists are not the same as the people of precivilized society who conquered their animal heritage and conditions of life, reconstituting themselves into the tribal brotherhood of men. Indeed, the very existence of that primitive system of collectivism and their cooperative relations testifies to how profoundly men were emancipated from their earlier brute instincts.

### Instincts or learned behavior

**T**he proposition upon which Ardrey, Lorenz and Morris build their case for the innate aggressiveness of mankind, i.e., that humans are governed by irrepressible, unmodified, inherited instincts, is today rejected by most authoritative scientists. Let us examine this aspect of the matter.

The degree to which humans have shed their original instincts is so great that most of them have already vanished. A child, for example, must today be taught the dangers of fire which animals flee from by instinct. According to anthropologist Ralph Linton, instincts or "unlearned reactions" have been reduced to "such things as the digestive processes, adaptation of the eye to light intensity and similar involuntary responses." He adds: "The fewer instincts a species possesses, the greater the range of behaviors it can develop, and this fact, coupled with the enormous capacity for learning which characterizes humans, has resulted in a richness and variety of learned behavior which is completely without parallel in other species."<sup>6</sup>

Except for reactions in infants to sudden withdrawals of support and sudden loud noises, Ashley Montagu likewise denies that any significant aspect of human behavior is purely instinctive; all of it is conditioned by life experiences. Furthermore, as animal experiments and domestication disclose, many of the reactions of living creatures below the level of mankind, which have been conventionally classified as instinctive, can be considerably modified by mankind and environmental conditioning.

Lorenz, who is far more prudent and scholarly than Morris, is embarrassed by his colleague's crudity. Although he upholds the thesis that man is subject to his animal instincts, he acknowledges that people are set apart from the animals by their possession of culture and language. "That's why," he commented in an interview in the July 5, 1970, *New York Times Magazine*, "I don't like my friend Desmond Morris' title, 'The Naked Ape.'" Morris, he says, disregards the fact that man is "an ape with a cumulative tradition." But the mere existence and weight of such a tradition in social development proves that mankind is human, not ape!

Unable to grasp the full import of this fact, Lorenz sides with Morris in the matter of the innate aggressiveness of humans. To him there is no essential difference between a cockfight and a nuclear war; the one follows in a continuous evolutionary sequence from the other. There is, he says, "the alarming progression of aggressive actions ranging from cocks fighting in the barnyard to dogs biting each other, boys thrashing each other, young men throwing beer mugs at each other's heads, and so on to barroom brawls about politics, and finally to wars and atom bombs."<sup>7</sup>

Note how Lorenz leaps from animal fights to human quarrels, disregarding the decisive differences between them. Then, on the human level, he refuses to distinguish between the petty personal encounters of people and the massive military operations conducted by governments in which men are ordered to kill in cold blood other men they have never even seen before, much less had any personal quarrel with.

Animal fights, personal squabbles and imperialist wars



are all dumped into the same sack to substantiate the falsification that humans are nothing but animals and have never passed beyond that stage of development.

This theme is only a variation of the tiresome old argument that "you can't change human nature"—another piece of capitalist propaganda designed to avert revolutionary change in our social system. Their special twist is that "you can't change animal nature" since in their view humans are nothing but animals. History, however, demonstrates that just as the ape became man, so did man radically transform his ape nature and convert it into human nature.

Furthermore even this human nature has changed drastically in the course of social history, and will continue to acquire new and different traits as humanity begins to emancipate itself from capitalist thralldom. What man needs to throw off today is not animal nature—which he shed a million years ago—rather, he must throw off the capitalist nature which has been imprinted into its conduct and psychology by this society.

This is precisely the point that the "instinctual" school of theoreticians seeks to gloss over or cover up. They fear that an acknowledgment of a changing human nature logically clears the way for a radical change in our social system. Thus Lorenz, who is most forthright in this respect, is careful to dissociate himself from the position of Marx and Engels.

In the *Times* interview he said, "Marx was very aware of the need to conserve the whole heritage of culture. Everything he said in *Capital* is right, but he always made the error of forgetting the instincts. For Marx the territorial instinct was only a cultural phenomenon."

But the founders of socialism were completely right in rejecting the "instinctual" approach to social history. As they pointed out, the main motor forces in human progress are not biological but social. Humans possess that crucial characteristic which no other species possesses: the capacity to labor and develop the forces of production. Laboring humanity has the ability to anticipate, imagine, reason, pursue goals and advance the whole sphere of culture. All this not only gives humans increasing control

over their own lives and destinies, but also constantly modifies their own human nature. The renowned archaeologist V. Gordon Childe wrote on this point:

In human history, clothing, tools, weapons, and traditions take the place of fur, claws, tusks, and instincts in the quest for food and shelter. Customs and prohibitions, embodying centuries of accumulated experience and handed on by social tradition, take the place of inherited instincts in facilitating the survival of our species . . . it is essential not to lose sight of the significant distinctions between historical progress and organic evolution, between human culture and the animal's bodily equipment, between the social heritage and the biological inheritance.<sup>8</sup>

The irreconcilable differences between the two schools of thought on the nature of aggression in history have more than an academic or literary interest. To say that man is governed by his ape nature and that humans are born mass murderers has important political consequences. It diverts attention from the real instigators of war, the capitalist magnates, and leads people to blame themselves for their "evil" instincts. This self-blame feeds a despairing, apathetic attitude and produces a fatalistic outlook. It tends to dissipate the social anger of masses of people who can band together in revolutionary action against those who are really to blame—the dangerous warmakers.

This mood is explicit in both Morris and Lorenz, who, seeing no revolutionary solution to capitalist-made problems, present prophecies of doom. Morris believes "there is a strong chance that we shall have exterminated ourselves by the end of the century." Lorenz is equally pessimistic and says in *On Aggression*: "An unprejudiced observer from another planet, looking upon man as he is today, in his hand the atom bomb, the product of his intelligence, in his heart the aggression drive inherited from his anthropoid ancestors, which this same intelligence cannot control, would not prophesy long life for the species."

Marxists do not deny that all humanity is threatened with extermination by the nuclear arsenal and other death-



devices controlled by the overkillers in Washington. But we believe that working men and women and their allies can be aroused and organized to take economic, military and political power away from the capitalist atom-maniacs and thereby eradicate the causes of war. This conviction that a socialist revolution can and will put a permanent end to imperialist slaughters is the basis for Marxist optimism — as against the prophets of doom of the "instinctual" school.

## The critics speak out

There has been no lack of competent critics to challenge Ardrey, Lorenz and Morris for drawing sweeping and reactionary conclusions about humans on the basis of limited, specialized, specious and erroneous data about animal life. These scholars reject the premise that mankind is the blind creature of instincts. Most of them agree that instincts have long been supplanted by learned behavior as the dominant factor in social and cultural life. For those who may be unaware of the broad scope of the criticisms, here is a brief summary of the views of many well-known naturalists, anthropologists and sociologists who have taken issue with these writers.

The pacesetter was Marshall Sahlins, University of Michigan anthropologist, who reviewed *African Genesis* in the July 1962 *Scientific American*. "Ignoring the million years in historical development of cultural forms," he wrote, "Ardrey typically takes as *human* the conditions he finds at hand, reads them into vertebrate sociology and so accounts biologically for human behavior."

Indeed, Ardrey makes a double error in methodology without knowing that he is doing so. First he takes the behavior of human beings in capitalist society as *natural* and falsely applies it to animal behavior. Then he illegitimately projects this invalid interpretation of animal behavior back on to "man" in general. This enables him to obliterate the crucial distinctions between the natural animal and social mankind.

Following Sahlins, many other criticisms were published in *The New York Times Magazine*, scientific journals and other media, bearing down heavily on the falsification that wars are virtually implanted in man's genes. In 1968 Columbia professor M. F. Ashley Montagu compiled fifteen articles specifically directed against Lorenz and Ardrey in the anthology *Man and Aggression*.<sup>9</sup>

These critics conduct their polemics along two lines. First, they assail and expose the dubious and misleading data offered in the name of science by Lorenz and Ardrey which they regard as more fictional than factual. Second, they are incensed by the thesis that wars are unavoidable because of the innate depravity of man as an instinctual killer. They point out that animals which kill for food act simply to satisfy their hunger; they are not warmakers. Nor were primitive peoples warmakers.

"Organized warfare between states is, of course, a very modern human invention," says the British anthropologist Geoffrey Gorer. The raids and skirmishes of precivilized peoples cannot be compared either in quantity or quality with the massive wars between nation-states in our times. Gorer summarizes Ardrey's "oversimplifications, questionable statements, omissions and plain inaccuracies" in stinging terms:

Ardrey shows only the most superficial knowledge of contemporary events, practically no knowledge of the history of the old world or of contemporary sociology and social anthropology. His categories and preferences are bound to give comfort and provide ammunition for the radical Right, for the Birchites and the Empire Loyalists, and their analogues elsewhere . . . *The Territorial Imperative* demands a wrapper: "Handle carefully; Read with critical scepticism."<sup>10</sup>

Some of the critics are gentler with Lorenz, who has made certain contributions to natural science. But they do not exculpate him for resorting to pseudoscientific arguments to buttress the myth that warmaking is innate. Further, they question his qualifications as an authority on either primate or human behavior.

Lorenz is not a student of anthropoids that stand in



the direct line of human ascent, nor even of the mammalian species. He has studied only birds and some fish — creatures which are far removed from mankind in the sequence of evolution. J. P. Scott, of Bowling Green (Ohio) University, says that Lorenz knows little outside his limited field; that he is "a very narrow specialist who primarily knows the behavior of birds and particularly that of ducks and geese on which his book has an excellent chapter."<sup>11</sup>

Similar criticisms were made at an international meeting held in Paris in May 1970 under the auspices of UNESCO (The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) where a score of scientists discussed the problem of aggression and war for a week. According to a report in the May 23, 1970, *New York Times*, they unanimously opposed the views of Lorenz and Morris that aggression is innate, inevitable and even beneficial. They state that aggressive behavior is learned. People act violently because they have been taught to do so or are made to do so, not because they are born or ordained to be aggressive toward their fellow men.

Dr. Adeoye Lambo, director of the Behavior Science Research Institute at Ibadan, Nigeria, gave several examples of societies where aggressiveness in young children is consistently rewarded, to illustrate how aggressiveness is learned rather than instinctive. Several other participants pointed out that a murder or some other act of violence takes place on American television screens every eight seconds. Television also shows daily newsreels of the violence committed by the colossal United States military machine in Southeast Asia.

Professor Robert A. Hinde, Director of Animal Behavior Studies at the University of Cambridge, said that both Lorenz and Morris are "very ignorant of the major chunk of literature about both animals and man." He said Lorenz reads nothing outside his specialty, and "his emphasis upon the inevitability of aggression is a gross exaggeration." He branded Morris' two books as a "dangerous intertwining of fact and fiction."

These scholars and scientists are especially concerned about the damaging effect such ignorant and irresponsible assertions can have upon the millions of people who accept them as scientific gospel. As Sally Carrighar, the British naturalist, says in *Man and Aggression*, a social evil can only be eradicated if its true causes are recognized. But "the incentive to do it is lacking while people believe that aggression is innate and instinctive with us."<sup>12</sup> And the economist Kenneth E. Boulding correctly stresses that "human aggression and human territoriality are products of social systems, not of biological systems. They must be treated as such."<sup>13</sup>

A number of these critics recall that there is nothing new in this "tooth and claw" approach to human history. The ideas propounded by Ardrey, Lorenz and Morris are a re-edition in modern dress of the Social Darwinism that was propagated in conservative circles in the last part of the nineteenth century and up to the end of the first world war, when it faded away.

Ralph Holloway notes that the phrase "Social Darwinism" never appears in *The Territorial Imperative*. "Too bad," he remarks, "for that is essentially the message of the book. Ardrey is uninformed if he thinks that there have never been attempts to reduce human group behavior to a few animal instincts."<sup>14</sup>

## Neo Social Darwinism

Every epoch-making discovery can be perverted by the masters of class society and their spokesmen-servants. The capitalists, for instance, misuse machinery which is designed to lighten man's work by making humans into sweating appendages of the machine. Darwin's findings on the origin of species and the theory of evolution, which revolutionized the study of biology and threw light on the genesis of mankind, have been similarly perverted. Conservative ideologues misapplied them to the nineteenth-century social scene as a rationale for capitalist competitiveness, greed and inequalities.

The catchwords of "struggle for existence," "natural selec-



tion," and "survival of the fittest" were invoked to uphold the practices of *laissez faire*—let things run their course as they are, and the fittest will survive. This gave the sanctity of natural law to the social jungle created by capitalism at home and to its wars and territorial conquests in foreign lands.

T. K. Penniman, the British historian of anthropology, described this gospel as follows:

Imperial developments appeared to show that the "lesser breeds without the law" were bound to go to the wall, and that such events were but the working of the law of nature. . . . The idea that one nation subdues another or annexes territory because it is superior, or that a man who gains more ease and money for less work than another, is therefore the fitter to survive and progress, are ideas begotten, not of Darwin, but of the competition for mechanical efficiency . . . people reduced to fighting for a living wage, or those who contemplated the struggle, must give the palm not to those who could take pride in what they made, or did, but to those who most successfully exploited their fellows.<sup>15</sup>

The new Social Darwinists have refurbished these discredited doctrines to again eternalize bourgeois relationships and justify imperialist violence. Montagu says, "There is nothing new in all this. We have heard it before. . . . As General von Bernhardt put it in 1912, 'War is a biological necessity . . .'"<sup>16</sup>

One example from Lorenz should suffice to show how they revive Social Darwinism. He equates the intraspecies competition among animals for food and mates with the socio-economic competition of men today. Competition is indeed the hallmark of capitalism. The big aggregations of capital push the weaker to the wall and workers are forced to bid against one another for the available jobs. But Lorenz views this capitalist-made competition as the result of inborn animal attributes.

"All social animals are 'status seekers,'" he informs us in *On Aggression*. Birds, like men, compete with one another for status and possessions and the "stronger" or fittest wins out over the "weaker" or less fit. Thus there

are "high-ranking" jackdaws who have more status and wield "authority" over the lowly jackdaws who lack both status and authority.

To Lorenz there is great "survival value" in this "pecking order" of man, bird and beast, providing the weaker submit to the stronger. "Under this rule every individual in the society knows which one is stronger and which weaker than itself, so that everyone can retreat from the stronger and expect submission from the weaker, if they should get in each other's way." Every boss today would certainly like to establish this rule with regard to the workers. Unfortunately for him, they are not birds or beasts—but men who can organize and fight back.

It is true that a wasteful method of species survival and development prevails in nature where, under conditions of limited food and space, competition prevails and the less fit are eliminated to the benefit of the fittest.

But such wasteful methods are unnecessary in human society today where people can plan their lives and control their own destiny—once they get rid of the exploitation and anarchy of capitalism. As Engels commented, "Darwin did not know what a bitter satire he wrote on mankind, and especially on his countrymen, when he showed that free competition, the struggle for existence, which the economists celebrate as the highest historical achievement, is the normal state of the *animal kingdom*."<sup>17</sup>

## Racist and sexist

Prejudices of a feather flock together. So it should come as no surprise that those who degrade humanity to the animal level are also racist and sexist in their outlook. Whereas Ardrey denies that male birds or animals fight over anything as unimportant as females but rather fight over real-estate, Lorenz takes a different tack. He says that females are "no less aggressive than the males," and in particular display hostility toward members of their own sex—presumably just as women do in competitive capitalist society.



This generalization is based on observations of certain rare fish, such as the East Indian yellow cichlids and Brazilian mother-of-pearl fish, where not only are males hostile to males, but females are apparently unfriendly to females.

It is well known that in many species, above all the mammals, females will fight in defense of their offspring. Males, on the other hand, fight one another for sexual access to females. This trait is not duplicated in the female sex. A female fighting another female for access to males is conspicuous by its absence in the animal world. In herding species, one bull is quite sufficient for a herd of females, and a "pride of lions" is composed of a pack of lionesses to which usually only a solitary adult male is attached. Lorenz does not make clear the considerable differences involved in these types of aggression on the part of the animal sexes.

What is worse, he uses certain exceptional phenomena in nature as the basis for drawing sweeping conclusions about women in our society. Because certain female cichlids eat the male at their "marriage feast" and some show unfriendliness to other females, Lorenz draws from this a pattern of human behavior. He offers the following illustration:

While there was still a Hapsburg monarchy and well-to-do women had servants, his widowed aunt never kept a maid longer than ten months. To be sure, his aunt did not attack or eat the maids; she merely fired one and hired another. Her conduct, however, presumably testifies to the everlasting, innate aggressiveness of females toward other females. Lorenz mistakes the class-conditioned temper and capriciousness of a woman with her servants in capitalist society for female aggression against other females in nature, which is exceedingly rare.

**D**esmond Morris displays a much more profound animosity toward women than does the paternalistic Lorenz. He informs us that the beauty aids purchased by women are only modern adaptations of the

"sexual signalling" of our animal ancestresses. By implication all females, both animal and human, are unattractive and ugly to males and therefore must resort to sexual lures.

As a zoo-man, Morris must know that while humans can mate all year round, animal mating is restricted to the oestrous or sexual seasons. Both males and females are quiescent in the nonoestrous seasons. It is only when the next sexual season opens that males are again reactivated sexually, and this occurs in response to the "sexual signalling" of the females. For it is the females who determine the opening of the sexual season. But Morris equates this natural phenomenon with the multibillion dollar cosmetic and fashion industries in capitalist society by which the human female is assisted in the competitive struggle to snag her man.

He spells this out in considerable detail. From the "padded brassiere" to improve "sagging breasts" and the "bottom-falsies" for "skinny females" to the lipstick, rouge and perfume—these and other devices enable women to entice the men they are after. And he pumps sex into his sexist book by devoting many pages to spicy accounts of the private parts and private lives of primate females and the kind of erotic stimuli that move naked apes into their body-to-body contacts, with added tidbits on voyeurism and prostitution.

Ardrey, the outspoken jingo, is likewise the least disguised racist and sexist. In the title of his book, *African Genesis*, he popularizes the fact established by scientists that mankind had its origin a million years ago not in Asia as previously thought, but in Africa. This highly significant fact could be used to help shatter the myth of African inferiority which has been peddled by white supremacists. If mankind had a single point of origin in Africa, it follows that, regardless of race or nation, we are all ultimately descendants of the Africans, who were the creators of the first social organization of mankind.

But this is not Ardrey's interpretation of our African genesis. According to him, it is precisely this heritage which



taints us with the "killer-ape" instincts from which "man" has never recovered. This is the same old racist slander in a somewhat different form. It is reinforced when he refers to "a troop of brown lemurs in a Madagascar forest" in the same context as the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, implying that non-Caucasians are not quite human.

Ardrey loves white South Africa where, despite a tiny "degree of tyranny," the country has attained "peaks of affluence, order, security and internal solidarity rivalled by few long-established nations." By contrast, he states in *The Territorial Imperative*, the Black African states "stagger along on one side or the other of the narrow line between order and chaos, solvency and bankruptcy, peace and blood."

Ardrey's male supremacism matches his white supremacism. He wants women to stay in their place which, for him, is the middle-class white home and family. He cannot understand why these favored housewives are discontented. Why, he complains querulously, does she have a "rowdy approach to the boudoir which will bring her nothing but ruin"; why does she "downgrade the care of children as insufficient focus for feminine activity," and why does she desire "masculine expression" in social life for which she possesses no "instinctual equipment?"

His answer to these questions is most revealing:

According to every American ideal . . . she lives in a feminine Utopia. She is educated. She has been freed of the dust-mop cage. No social privilege is denied her. She has the vote, the bank account, and her entire family's destiny gripped in her beautifully manicured hands. Yet she is the unhappiest female that the primate world has ever seen, and the most treasured objective in her heart of hearts is the psychological castration of husbands and sons.<sup>18</sup>

There it is, spread out for everyone to see. Man is a killer-ape and woman is a sneaky, nasty primate that castrates men.

These neo Social Darwinians are pushing the most pernicious prejudices of class society under the label of biological and anthropological "science." The enterprise is highly lucrative for them and their publishers. But unwary readers should be warned that they are receiving large doses of poison in the same package with a few facts.

## FOOTNOTES

1. George Gaylord Simpson, *The Meaning of Evolution* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1969), pp. 282-83.
2. Robert Ardrey, *African Genesis* (New York: Dell Publishers, 1963), p. 9.
3. Robert Ardrey, *The Territorial Imperative* (New York: Dell Publishers, 1966), p. 3.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 236.
5. Desmond Morris, *The Naked Ape* (New York: Dell Publishers, 1967), p. 48.
6. Ralph Linton, *The Tree of Culture* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1955), p. 8.
7. Konrad Lorenz, *On Aggression* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1966), p. 29.
8. Gordon Childe, *Man Makes Himself* (New York: New American Library, 1951), p. 16.
9. M. F. Ashley Montagu, ed., *Man and Aggression* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969).
10. Geoffrey Gorer, "Ardrey on Human Nature: Animals, Nations, Imperatives," in *Man and Aggression*. p. 82.
11. J. P. Scott, "That Old-Time Aggression," in *Man and Aggression*. p. 52.
12. Sally Carrighar, "War Is Not in Our Genes," in *Man and Aggression*. p. 50.
13. Kenneth E. Boulding, "Am I A Man Or A Mouse—Or Both?" in *Man and Aggression*. p. 88.
14. Ralph Holloway, "Territory and Aggression in Man: A Look at Ardrey's Territorial Imperative," in *Man and Aggression*. pp. 97-98.
15. T. K. Penniman, *A Hundred Years of Anthropology* (New York: Humanities Press), pp. 94-95.
16. Ashley Montagu, "The New Litany of 'Innate Depravity,'" in *Man and Aggression*. p. 10.
17. Frederick Engels, *Dialectics of Nature* (New York: International Publishers, 1940), p. 19.
18. *On Aggression*. p. 165.