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Categories of analysis in the social sciences include the binary pair 'nature' and 'culture', as defined by western societies. Anthropologists have often imputed these categories to the world-views of non-western people and the construct has acquired the status of a universal. It has been further argued that culture (that which is regulated by human thought and technology) is universally valued as being superior to nature (the unregulated); and that female is universally associated with nature (and is therefore inferior and to be dominated) and male with culture. The essays in this volume question these propositions. They examine the assumptions behind them analytically and historically, and present ethnographic evidence to show that the dichotomy between nature and culture, and its association with a contrast between the sexes, is a particularity of western thought. The book is a commentary on the way anthropologists working within the western tradition have projected their own ideas on to the thought systems of other peoples. Its form is largely anthropological, but it will have a wide appeal within the social sciences and the humanities, especially among those interested in structuralist thought and women's studies.

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Review

"Professor MacCormack had done a superb job of exhausting the sources and establishing his case for his thesis that aspects of Confucianism he emphasizes has a profound influence on the codes....His book is a great step forward for the field....this is an illuminating book." The American Journal of Legal History

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