



The Selfish Meme: A Critical Reassessment

By *Kate Distin*

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Culture is a unique and fascinating aspect of the human species. How did it emerge and how does it develop? Richard Dawkins suggested culture evolves and that memes are cultural replicators, subject to variation and selection in the same way as genes are in the biological world. Thus human culture is the product of a mindless evolutionary algorithm. Does this imply, as some have argued, that we are mere meme machines and that the conscious self is an illusion? This highly readable and accessible book extends Dawkins's theory, presenting for the first time a fully developed concept of cultural DNA. Distin argues that culture's development can be seen as the result of memetic evolution and as the product of human creativity. Memetic evolution is perfectly compatible with the view of humans as conscious and intelligent. This book should find a wide readership amongst philosophers, psychologists, sociologists and non-academic readers.

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Editorial Review

Review

'Distin's discussion is even-handed and informative for those wishing to update themselves on the current state of play in the field.' Scientific and Medical Network Review

'A model of clarity, the book's appeal is wide - from philosophers to sociologists, anyone interested in how cultures change will benefit from reading The Selfish Meme. Her rigorous approach makes her theory more palatable than other theories of cultural evolution.' Philosophy Today

The Selfish Meme is a very readable and thought provoking book, and I would have no hesitation in recommending it to open-minded students and scholars in any biological, anthropological or sociological field.' Cambridge (the Magazine of the Cambridge Society)

About the Author

Kate Distin was educated at Cambridge University and the University of Sheffield. She is the author of The Selfish Meme: A Critical Reassessment (Cambridge University Press, 2005) and the editor of the award-winning Gifted Children: A Guide for Parents and Professionals (2006).

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