Cultural Evolution

In this book, Kate Distin proposes a theory of cultural evolution and shows how it can help us understand the origin and development of human culture. Distin introduces the concept that humans share information not only in natural languages, which are spoken or signed, but also in artefactual languages like writing and musical notation, which use media that are made by humans. Languages enable humans to receive and transmit variations in cultural information and resources. In this way, they provide the mechanism for cultural evolution. The human capacity for metarepresentation – thinking about how we think – accelerates cultural evolution, because it frees cultural information from the conceptual limitations of each individual language. Distin shows how the concept of cultural evolution outlined in this book can help us understand the complexity and diversity of human culture, relating her theory to a range of subjects including economics, linguistics and developmental biology.

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