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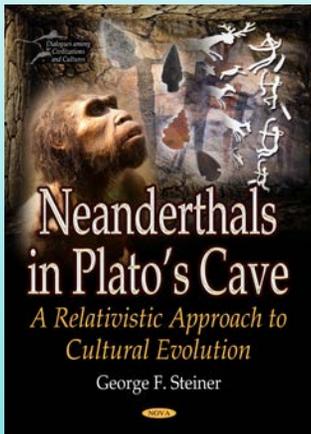
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Book Description:

Dual inheritance theory (DIT) recognizes the fact that for the last 50 millennia cultural evolution has had a marked impact on our anatomy, behavior and cognition. Unfortunately, by considering 'cumulative cultural evolution' as the 'natural choice' of all cognitively modern humans, DIT implies that technological innovation is the index of progress, and that the 'ratcheting' of innovations becomes the 'goal' of cultural evolution. This is accomplished by developing a certain degree of social complexity in which the biased copying of cultural models becomes a technique of cultural transmission. Small and isolated populations are therefore 'doomed,' and the 'treadmill model' takes effect, in which the lack of demographic strength results in impaired social learning and loss/infidelity in copying. However, the anthropological literature documents small and isolated groups that have—despite these 'handicaps'—developed intricate exchange networks that do not necessarily rely on technological innovation and function only in low demographical settings. Not only that the parameters upon which cultural transmission is based in DIT—prestige, skills, success—are unknown, but certain 'leveling mechanisms' ensure that these parameters become eliminated and thus, no cultural models can rise to prominence. Interestingly, these societies do not seem to be plagued by cultural 'loss' and, instead of hopelessly running the treadmill and living in poverty, they have developed egalitarian and, to an extent, 'affluent' societies. The cultural evolution of these groups does not rely on accumulation, but rather on 'reduction.' The reductive cultural orientations of such 'primitive' societies are not an ancestral developmental stage, but rather an independent achievement.



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