

THE GREAT DEBATE

in association with the **RSA** present

Genes, Memes, Minds

What can evolutionary theory tell us about the human mind?

One of the great triumphs of the late 20th century was the application of Darwinian theory to animal behaviour. This led to many attempts to apply the same methods to human beings and to explain the human mind in evolutionary terms.

The theory of the meme rejects the notion that genes are sufficient to explain cultural evolution. A *meme* is a unit of cultural transmission or imitation. Like the gene, it is a replicator - when a meme is imitated it has replicated itself. Meme theorists argue that human beings are determined by social factors, not just by genetic code and that there is a new unit of selection at work - the meme. What both these approaches have in common is the idea that the notion of natural selection can lead to an understanding of our minds.

What are the strengths and weaknesses of these approaches? Why are some theorists ambivalent about the explanatory value of genes and memes when it comes to the mind? Is there something fundamental that an evolutionary approach cannot provide?

Come along, hear the arguments and have your say

Chair: Caspar Hewett

Panel:

Susan Blackmore, author *Consciousness: An Introduction*, *The Meme Machine*

Kenan Malik, author *What Is It to Be Human?*, *Man, Beast and Zombie*

Raymond Tallis, author *The Hand: A Philosophical Enquiry into Human Being*

**The Grainger Suite, Life Conference Centre,
Times Square, Newcastle upon Tyne**

Admission **FREE**

Advance booking necessary

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6pm Tuesday 30 November