



Genes in Development: Re-reading the Molecular Paradigm (Science and Cultural Theory)

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In light of scientific advances such as genomics, predictive diagnostics, genetically engineered agriculture, nuclear transfer cloning, and the manipulation of stem cells, the idea that genes carry predetermined molecular programs or blueprints is pervasive. Yet new scientific discoveries—such as rna transcripts of single genes that can lead to the production of different compounds from the same pieces of dna—challenge the concept of the gene alone as the dominant factor in biological development. Increasingly aware of the tension between certain empirical results and interpretations of those results based on the orthodox view of genetic determinism, a growing number of scientists urge a rethinking of what a gene is and how it works. In this collection, a group of internationally renowned scientists present some prominent alternative approaches to understanding the role of dna in the construction and function of biological organisms.

Contributors discuss alternatives to the programmatic view of dna, including the developmental systems approach, methodical culturalism, the molecular process concept of the gene, the hermeneutic theory of description, and process structuralist biology. None of the approaches cast doubt on the notion that dna is tremendously important to biological life on earth; rather, contributors examine different ideas of how dna should be represented, evaluated, and explained. Just as ideas about genetic codes have reached far beyond the realm of science, the reconceptualizations of genetic theory in this volume have broad implications for ethics, philosophy, and the social sciences.

Contributors. Thomas Bürklin, Brian C. Goodwin, James Griesemer, Paul Griffiths, Jesper Hoffmeyer, Evelyn Fox Keller, Gerd B. Müller, Eva M. Neumann-Held, Stuart A. Newman, Susan Oyama, Christoph Rehmann-Sutter, Sahotra Sarkar, Jackie Leach Scully, Gerry Webster, Ulrich Wolf

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Deborah Wilkerson:

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