Genetic Information: A Metaphor in Search of a Theory

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Abstract

John Maynard Smith has defended against philosophical criticism the view that developmental biology is the study of the expression of information encoded in the genes by natural selection. However, like other naturalistic concepts of information, this 'teleosemantic' information applies to many non-genetic factors in development. Maynard Smith also fails to show that developmental biology is concerned with teleosemantic information. Some other ways to support Maynard Smith's conclusion are considered. It is argued that on any definition of information the view that development is the expression of genetic information is misleading. Some reasons for the popularity of that view are suggested.

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