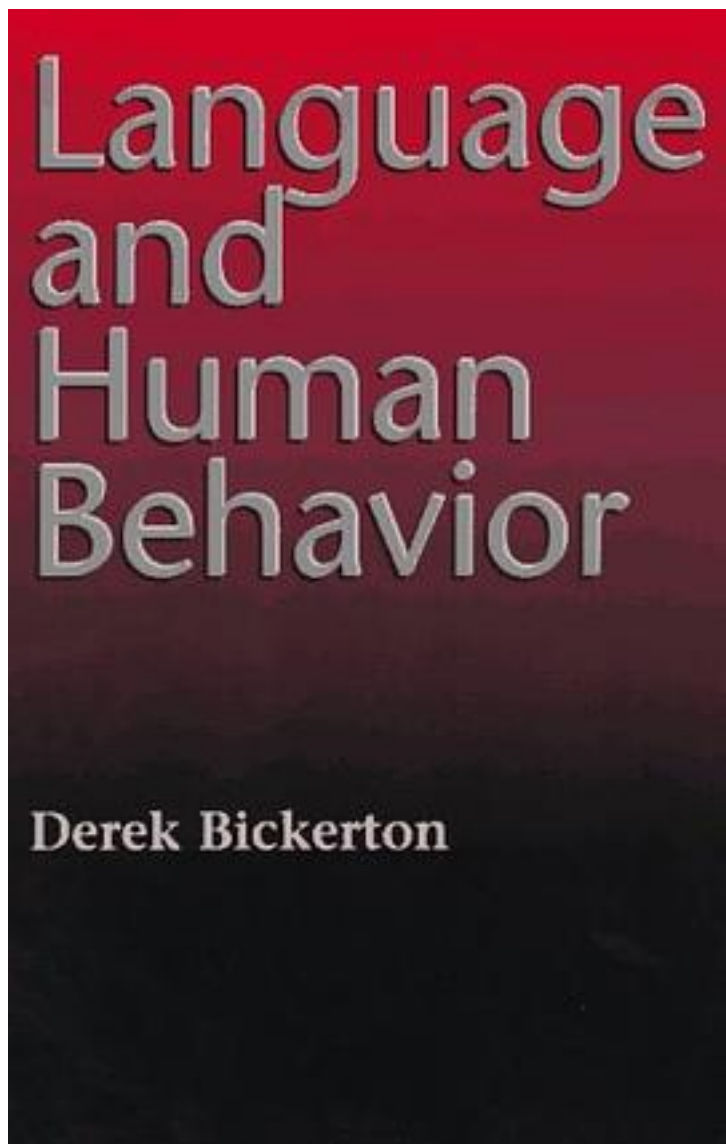


Language and Human Behavior



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出版者:University of Washington Press

出版时间:1996-3-1

装帧:Paperback

isbn:9780295974583

According to Bickerton, the behavioral sciences have failed to give an adequate account of human nature at least partly because of the conjunction and mutual reinforcement of two widespread beliefs: that language is simply a means of communication and that human intelligence is the result of the rapid growth and unusual size of human brains. Bickerton argues that each of the properties distinguishing human intelligence and consciousness from that of other animals can be shown to derive straightforwardly from properties of language. In essence, language arose as a representational system, not a means of communication or a skill, and not a product of culture but an evolutionary adaptation. The author stresses the necessity of viewing intelligence in evolutionary terms, seeing it not as problem solving but as a way of maintaining homeostasis - the preservation of those conditions most favorable to an organism, the optimal achievable conditions for survival and well-being. The term protolanguage is used to describe the stringing together of symbols that prehuman hominids employed. "It did not allow them to turn today's imagination into tomorrow's fact. But it is just this power to transform imagination into fact that distinguishes human behavior from that of our ancestral species, and indeed from that of all other species. It is exactly what enables us to change our behavior, or invent vast ranges of new behavior, practically overnight, with no concomitant genetic changes." Language and Human Behavior should be of interest to anyone in the behavioral and evolutionary sciences and to all those concerned with the role of language in human behavior.

作者介绍:

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