

## “How culture transformed human evolution”.

The human species is exceptionally good at adapting. Since emerging from Africa only 60,000 years ago, humans have spread to virtually every terrestrial habitat, utilizing a wider range of subsistence and social systems than any other mammal. The usual explanation for our capacity for rapid adaptation is that we have superior cognitive ability, we are just smarter than the average bear. In this talk I will argue that our capacity of rapid adaptation also depends on our unique ability to acquire important components of their behavior by observing the behavior of others.

This ability allows human populations to rapidly evolve superb culturally transmitted adaptations to local conditions that are far beyond the inventive capacity of individual human cognition. To take advantage of these adaptations, individuals have to be credulous, for the most part adopting the beliefs, values, and technologies that they observe around them, and this means that maladaptive ideas can spread. Thus, cultural adaptation entails a trade-off: it vastly amplifies our ability to generate complex local adaptations, but it also leads to outcomes that seems at odds with normal accounts of adaptive evolution.

**Robert BOYD**



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The theme for 2013 is “Origins”. The very first lecture will be held on **September 19, at 18:00 at University Toulouse 1 Capitole** (Amphitheater CUJAS - 2 rue des Puits-Creusés - 31000 Toulouse).

**Robert BOYD** an internationally renowned anthropologist from UCLA and Arizona State University will talk on “How culture transformed human evolution”.

*You are requested to confirm your presence by sending an email to the address: [contact@iast.fr](mailto:contact@iast.fr)  
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*Looking forward to welcoming you.*



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