

Dysoc/NIMBioS Webinar Series on Cultural Evolution

Questions from *Outreach for the Cultural Evolution Society: Everybody needs to know a little bit about cultural evolution with Peter J. Richerson*

1. Cultural Evolution and Social Evolution, are these defining the same thing? or What are the differences?
2. Could you make a distinction between culture and social learning? It seems to me that social learning is necessary for culture, but not sufficient.
3. A Humanology 1 course is such a great idea – how to overcome the lack of math background (and in many cases aversion to quantitative reasoning) among many humanities/social science students? Related to this, how can this goal overcome the handicap of social science and humanities students that results from a lack of funding and prestige when compared to STEM disciplines?
4. How do you define culture in rats and other animals? Is behavior the same thing as culture?
5. Please say more about the how and why of Humanology 1, particularly the role of the social sciences and humanities.
6. Is culture a "state" and learning a mechanism? And therefore, are they ontologically different and not comparable?
7. What are some of the pitfalls in translating the field of cultural evolution to policymakers and the general public? How can we diffuse publicly the idea that we can select for better cultural practices (as DS Wilson has described before)? and can this be done on multiple scales?
8. I'm on board with the bemused attitude of contempt towards traditional disciplines, and building more interdisciplinary programs - I was wondering two things:
 - 1) Do you have any ideas that have proven particularly useful on how to sell this idea or operationalize it to get university administrators on board?
 - 2) Do you have any thoughts about how to bring in and incorporate the humanities?
9. I'm interested in the applied sciences. Do you see practical applications of cultural evolution in dealing with cultural maladaptations?
10. Could you say something about the importance of wider public understanding of cultural evolution - what effects it might have and how it might be achieved?
11. You mention differential and difference equations. But if cultural evolution takes its cue from biological evolution, then besides systematics the main methods used are optimization for evolutionary ecology (i.e. re physical environment and other species) and game theory methods for evolutionary socioecology (i.e. other members of the same population). No?
12. Cultural evolution theory attempts to understand the evolution of human societies, but how do we overcome the shadow of Social Darwinism?
13. For example, humankind created a ball and created and developed lots of games and game culture along with it. So can this whole process be considered to be a cultural evolutionary process?

14. How will evolutionary biology work to get rid of human exceptionalism, uniqueness and special creation? Why are there authors who don't bother about human exceptionalism while others are abolitionists, like those working with critical animal studies?
15. Where do you see cultural evolution going? What are the new/open questions?
16. How are the efforts of the THIRD WAY unifying the humanities and evolutionary biology working to avoid repeating the errors of "social Darwinism" in the past?
17. Something I think is important in terms of relations between science and humanities is that the underlying goals are different: in science, we try to work toward a comprehensive theory that is the best possible at the time. In humanities the idea is to continue discussion. There is no unique way to interpret Hamlet, for example.
18. Usage of the current terms can be confusing. Which term is more accurate to adopt in publications in the field of biology: humanimal, nonhuman animal, multispecies, or simply humans?