Correcting Mesoudi's Failed Concept of Societal Culture

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The following is a direct response to the specific work cited below.

"Cultural Evolution: How Darwinian Theory Can Explain Human Culture & Synthesize the Social Sciences – Chapter 1: A Cultural Species" published 2011 University of Chicago Press.

By the author(s): **Alex Mesoudi**

Abstract: The natural species homo sapiens are not a cultural species. Homo sapiens instead artificially segregates itself into many artificial species (i.e., cultures) for competitive advantage in natural intraspecies competition – warfare, economics, etc. These artificial species are defined and categorized based on the distinct combination of artificial genomes, artificial structural adaptations, and artificial behavioral adaptations. Homo sapiens organize collectively as it typically affords the majority of the natural organisms enhanced access to scarce evolutionary resources in the natural struggle for existence. And the majority of homo sapiens artificial adaptations align with the two-core natural evolutionary value streams – survival and reproduction. This is the case because all artificial adaptations produced by homo sapiens are logically an extension of natural evolution itself. This is so because the mechanism of natural selection draws no practical distinction between natural and artificial adaptations at the point of selection. The failed science of cultural evolution does not frame the artificial adaptations produced by homo sapiens in this practical way. This is why cultural evolutionary science has been unable to integrate successfully with the practical patterns of natural species, to include homo sapiens, in the fields that surround it academically. This makes the field of cultural evolution fatally flawed necessitating a replacement of their theoretical framework. My discovery of The Unified Framework of Evolution – Natural & Artificial is the Kuhnsian paradigm shift that will replace their failed framework. A unified framework that has successfully shown to have both explanatory and predictive value for the patterns of human competition in warfare, politics, business, etc. And this has been demonstrated by great theorists in their field such as Sun Tzu and Machiavelli. The field of cultural evolution must now either

self-disrupt or be disrupted by this paradigm shift – or risk literal intellectual extinction of all their works.

Keywords: Cultural evolution, natural evolution, artificial evolution, cultural selection, artificial selection, natural selection, cultural species, natural species, artificial species, cultural information, artificial genome, natural genome, cultural adaptation, artificial adaptation, natural adaptation, cultural reproduction, artificial reproduction, natural reproduction, natural mutation, artificial mutation, individual learning, artificial punctuated equilibrium, natural punctuated equilibrium, Thomas Kuhn, Paradigm Shift, Philosophy of Science

Section 1: Artificial Species, Not Cultural Species

Cultural evolutionary scientists such as Alex Mesoudi and Joseph Henrich have posited that homo sapiens are a "cultural species" (Mesoudi 2011, Henrich 2016). The natural species homo sapiens is not a cultural species. We are the one natural species of homo sapiens. This natural species natural varies like any other natural species on earth because of the process of natural evolution (Darwin 1859). However, this does not amount to a material difference in practical reality.

The modern-day concepts of 'race' and 'culture' are just artificial constructs invented by homo sapiens. These concepts only possess meaning to the degree that we artificially recognize there is a difference between us as natural organisms. However, we do segregate ourselves into artificial species – like ancient Rome and Carthage. And then compete in the struggle for existence in "the war of nature" – warfare (Goldsworthy 2019). We do so as it provides practical competitive evolutionary value to us both collectively and individually. Let us methodically and systematically analyze this phenomenon on earth. We will begin by properly defining what the concept 'species' means.

It was the ancient Greek philosophers who invented the concept of 'species'. It is an artificial adaptation they used to classify like kinds of 'things' – species of ideas, species of business, species of organisms, etc. (Aristotle 4th century). It is simply just a rough working model, not some precise pattern. There are technically no species on earth. It was invented by Homo Sapiens as a matter of convenience in the context of organizing our understanding of the objects, natural & artificial, in the world around us (Wood 2023). So, the concept of 'species' is simply just an artificial adaptation that is a means to a practical end – like all other adaptations on earth.

On the other hand, there is no single universal definition of what the concept of "cultural" means when cultural evolutionary scientists define us as "cultural species". The reason is that the cultural evolutionary science field has been unsuccessful in working out the second pattern of evolution (Lewens 2011). So, in this conceptual vacuum, predictably all the other sciences such as the social sciences that deal with human activity have defined the concept of "culture" relative to their field's unique context (Mesoudi 2011). They have done so because the concept of

"culture" just like the concept of "species" are simply a means to the end they are pursuing in their own field. This situation is both a result of, and a reflection of, the dysfunctional organizational silos between academic fields within the university system. So, next we will clear up what the concept of culture practically means in practical reality.

Section 2: Correcting the Concept of Culture

The modern-day concept of "culture" is an attempt to mark subgroups within the natural organisms we have classified as the natural species homo sapiens. However, this concept is fatally flawed as this concept focuses on the 'things' rather than the natural organisms that make use of the 'things'. Almost all adaptations, natural or artificial, are simply 'things' produced on earth to provide evolutionary competitive value for the two-core natural evolutionary value streams – survival and reproduction (Wood 2025).

Once an adaptation, natural or artificial, is produced the mechanism of natural selection no longer draws a practical distinction between which process of evolution produced it – natural or artificial. It is practically irrelevant as the mechanism of natural selection determines whether each individual natural organism is selected for existence or non-existence (Darwin 1859). And this is proved by the evolutionary history of the natural species homo sapiens. Homo sapiens are naturally selected for continued existence because we possess the natural adaptation of imagination and the myriad number of artificial adaptations it allows us to produce daily (Wood 2025). The artificial adaptation of the modern-day vaccine is a perfect example of this fact. If not for this artificial adaptation, many more individual homos sapiens annually would be naturally selected for non-existence.

We roughly classify natural organisms across the planet into distinct species such as wolves based on the set of natural behavioral and structural adaptations (Darwin 1859). The natural adaptations each natural species' possess was produced by an underlying natural genotype. And there is no logical reason for us not doing the exact same thing for the natural organisms that comprise the natural species homo sapiens. The concept of "culture" at its highest level is really that of a species – an artificial species (Wood 2024). The reason is that homo sapiens produce adaptations that are significantly different in from each other – they are just artificial adaptations. But, as I logically stated previously, once the adaptation is produced, naturally or artificially, the mechanism of natural selection no longer draws any practical distinction between them.

The concept of culture is really an artificial variation of the concept of natural species – artificial species. Homo sapiens segregate themselves intentionally into distinct subgroups based on our distinct artificial adaptations (Wood 2024). We do so as it provides us each competitive evolutionary value in the struggle for existence. These artificial adaptations are at their highest level; 1) artificial genome, 2) artificial structural adaptations, 3) artificial behavioral adaptations (i.e., artificial instincts). These artificial species then engage in natural intraspecies competition as segregated groups of natural organisms – homo sapiens. We will now roughly describe each of

these adaptations for clarity's sake. If you wish to review a much more exhaustive definition before continuing, please see my four books referenced below.

The artificial genome is all the available information a given group of homos sapiens has access to at any one point in time. This information, just as in natural evolution, is then utilized to conceive new patterns in our mental "womb" – the mind (Wood 2023). In addition, this information is also critical because it then shapes the artificial adaptation of a perceptive framework by which each individual homo sapiens perceives reality. The artificial structural adaptations are the physical objects homos sapiens produce such as language, spears, clothes, chariots, books, etc. Artificial behavioral adaptations are the predefined actions we repetitively perform as artificial instincts such as tactics, manners, processes, making citations, etc.

Based on these three different types of artificial adaptations we segregate the natural species homo sapiens into different artificial species. And then the subgroups (e.g., English vs Welsh, Southern vs New England, Greek vs Roman, etc.) under each artificial species are further broken down into artificial variations. This is the exact same as how we classify the distinct natural species and natural variations found in nature. And we as the natural species homo sapiens are also found in nature (Aristotle 4th century). It also meets the test of Occam's razor – the simplest explanation is usually the correct one.

Why? It is because everything on earth is simple such as the elegant simplicity of the process of natural evolution itself. And it was this process that is the source of all adaptations produced on earth. And this process, natural or artificial, always tends towards relative perfection (Darwin 1859). So, the relatively perfected products of evolution, natural or artificial, are always simple as this is how you eliminate the most evolutionary waste – like my scientific discovery will do in time intellectually.

We have an anacronym for this in the United States Army – Keep It Simple Stupid (KISS). Essentially, we know in the army that the simplest plans and tactics are always the best ones – just as with explanatory/predictive models in science. It is essentially the other side of the same conceptual coin of the concept Occam's razor – one scientific and one competitive.

Section 3: The Evolutionary Advantage of Societal Artificial Species

All adaptations produced by evolutionary processes, natural or artificial, are means to an end, not ends in themselves. The ultimate end for all adaptations is the two-core evolutionary value streams of natural evolution – survival and reproduction (Wood 2025). What is the basis purpose of organic life on earth? – to persist. All adaptations ultimately align with these two evolutionary value streams – all roads eventually lead to Rome (Wood 2025).

The segregation of the natural organism homo sapiens into artificial species is no different. Ancient Rome established its culture to gain competitive advantage in the form of the 'mos maiorum' – meaning the way of the ancestors. This was a set of artificial adaptations directly aligned with the two-core value streams of survival and reproduction in the struggle for existence (Darwin 1859, Goldsworthy 2019). For example, a key artificial instinct for ancient

Romans was that of self-restraint. This artificial instinct would literally override the natural instinct for flight in the heat of battle. This caused the Roman legionnaire to hold their position in battle even if it meant certain death. However, by doing so they ensured the survival of their entire family and society.

So, just as in natural inheritance, the artificial genomic information (i.e., the way of the ancestors) for this artificial instinct was intentionally and systematically passed down by the ancient Romans through the process of artificial inheritance (Wood 2025). The military artificial instinct for self-restraint spans across almost every artificial species on earth across geological time. The reason is that it is a necessity for collective success in "the war of nature" (Wood 2025).

In fact, cultural evolutionary scientist should have done analysis of military science for this very reason – warfare is generally the same everywhere. This would have bridged the gap between Eastern and Western Thinking that Alex Mesoudi discussed in his book Cultural Evolution (Mesoudi 2011). The mind of a warrior is always the same because the natural survival of the fittest context homo sapiens compete in on earth is always the same for billions of years (Wood 2025). The "error" that Mesoudi described existing in Western psychology would not have been tolerated in warfare (Mesoudi 2011). The reason is that the mechanism of natural selection quickly punishes such wasteful thinking on the battlefield – it is because logically warfare is the natural intraspecies competition of the natural species homo sapiens (Darwin 1859). One has only look to the merciless punishment the British Army suffered at the *Battle of Isandlwana* as an example. They British too made an "error" in judging the differences between artificial species (Wood 2025).

Section 4: Artificial Evolution as an Extension of Natural Evolution

The process of artificial evolution by means of artificial selection is an extension of the process of natural evolution by means of natural selection. The adaptations produced by artificial evolution are then leveraged, just as with natural adaptations, for competitive advantage in "war of nature" (Wood 2025). And once any adaptation is produced it will be competitively evolutionarily selected like all the adaptations that came before it – natural or artificial. And these adaptations were both produced by transforming information (i.e., genotype, conceptual model) into adaptations (i.e., eyeball, eyeglasses).

The ancient Roman state is a great example of how both natural genomic and artificial genomic information was passed down generation to generation. The Roman paterfamiliases would sexually select the young male and female Romans for marriage – thus selecting the natural genomic information. They did so intentionally and conscientiously as the family, they called gens (i.e., genetic line), a Roman descended from provided competitive advantage socially. And then the Roman family then intentionally and conscientiously transmitted the artificial genomic information of the way of the ancestors to each child. This was the intentional natural evolution of the gens and then subsequent artificial evolution of each child's mine, especially males, for competitive success – at the ballot box and on the battlefield.

The learning theorists Mesoudi discusses are correct – it is immaterial where the artificial genomic information comes from that artificially mutates your own personally possessed artificial genome. And currently it does not seem there is any way to precisely delineate exactly where the advantages of natural adaptations end, and the advantages of artificial evolution begin. So, this makes the ancient Roman system all the wiser – why bother making such a distinction in practical terms. They simply ensured that they were evolutionarily perfecting both sets of adaptations towards the natural evolutionary value stream of survival in "the war of nature" – warfare (Wood 2025).

As for the impact of "cultural influence" Mesoudi discusses I think he is logically correct to a degree that exposure to diverse information in the world around could, but might not, artificially mutate an individual's artificial genome. And as a result alter the artificial evolutionary trajectory of any given homo sapiens preceptive framework. This then logically by extension would impact the individual's their thoughts, behaviors, and creation of adaptations (Wood 2025). In my personal experience the impact would be dependent on factors both objective (i.e., the value of information to achieve an end to the individual) or subjective (i.e., the person's individual self-esteem) in nature.

For example, if in a sales pitch a customer executive can clearly see the advantage of a new strategy, they will be highly likely to artificially select that adaptation of competitive advantage (Wood 2024). In contrast, if a person who has low self-esteem is charismatically influenced emotionally by a narcissist establishing a new cult, then that person will be highly likely to intentionally, not passively, artificially select the organization of the cult as created by the cult leader. This individual would do so in order to in gain access to a community of homo sapiens to ensure their personal survival. This is the difference between a predator (i.e., the corporate executive) artificially evolving to gain a new evolutionary advantage to "hunt" for access to new resources. And a prey animal (i.e., low self-esteem individual) artificially evolving their thoughts and behaviors to gain access to evolutionary advantages and resources from being part of the group. Neither is passive – it is a question of whether you are playing offense or defense in life.

As for children, they are biologically designed to artificially evolve their artificial genome and artificial perceptive framework to align with whoever is providing them immediate evolutionary benefit for the evolutionary value stream of survival. Children are well aware they are unsafe in a dangerous world and are almost totally dependent on adults for their survival. You must think of this in the context of our prehistoric past – not our modern world. So, our brains and theirs are biologically designed to allow for varying degrees of direct artificially co-adaptive relationships with each other. And children will always artificially evolve in the direction of the relationships that provide the most emotional and material resources – thus making them feel safe in the world.

Children partly learn faster than adults because their mind is a tabula rasa. This means they have nothing to unlearn in order to learn. You might want to consider that our ancestors made scientific discoveries thousands of years ago that I only unconcealed recently because they too possessed a form of mental tabula rasa. Any of the adults to whom I provided my scientific

discovery could have learned it quickly if they desired it. But they were unable to because it required them to unlearn what they had learned. Children have no such artificial limitation – they don't think they know everything about the world yet and are eager to learn. In a way, children possess the curiosity and humility of Socrates while adults do not. The Bible does say "from the mouth of babes" for a reason. Sometimes the relative tabula rasa of a child's mind can wisely perceive a pattern in nature adults are artificially checked from seeing due to their existing artificial genome.

Section 5: The Problem is Cultural Evolutionary Science, Not Other Fields

The social and behavioral scientists are logically accurate in their view of the existing cultural evolutionary framework as meaningless. They are attempting to work out practical problems so the cultural evolutionary scientists should have adapted their framework to those fields' patterns. This is literally what I did evolutionarily reframing military science (Wood 2025), political science (Wood 2024), and IT service management via the ITIL 4 Framework (Wood 2025). To his credit, Mesoudi partially acknowledges the logical validity of these other field's positions on the practical applicability of the current cultural evolutionary framework (Mesoudi 2011).

The Unified Framework of Evolution – Natural & Artificial I have discovered, and mostly completed, now resolves this conceptual problem (Wood 2025). The best practices frameworks of The Art of War, The Prince, and ITIL 4 Foundation are all adaptive systems that have repeatedly proved successful in real world evolutionary competition (PeopleCert 2019). So, there is no debate or analysis required by academia – the discovery is self-confirming. I can also produce this result again and again with most field's top conceptual theorist's framework. The presence of underlying evolutionary concepts embedded in most texts is literally why they are considered the top theorists. However, the use of quantitative measurements makes no sense to achieve that end. The pattern that was to be discovered was a conceptual pattern. So, what was needed was imaginative creativity, a priori reasoning, and deductive logic to work it out – it is exactly how I did figure it out.

The ethnographic field is not moored to any scientific theoretical basis in fact. It is unclear which evolutionary value streams of actual homo sapiens' competition that field is aligned with, if any. So, I don't think the effect caused by observing or the ethnographer's personally possessed assumptions matter when there is no hard scientific objective being pursued. From an impartial view, it is all seems so vaguely subjective which means that any research effort can be honestly considered "successful" from different perspectives. This is diametrically opposed to Darwinian logic.

The other branches of more "hard science" like economics are more scientifically rigorous and thus reject the undefined protean concept of "culture" as defined by modern cultural evolutionary science. And they are right to do so because their fields of scientific inquiry would not long tolerate them using a random variable in their equations to use a mathematical metaphor. The are logically correct as well in asserting that the evolutionary framework for the

second process of evolution is conceptually static – just like Darwin's conceptual framework. This is why Sun Tzu, Aristotle, Machiavelli, and PeopleCert all leverage the same underlying static conceptual framework in their best practice frameworks (Wood 2025).

Mesoudi's comparison of Western artificial species as "analytic/independent" and the East Asian artificial speices as "holistic/interdependent" is the result of the different artificial genomes that each artificial species artificially inherited was artificially mutated by their ancestors' worldviews shaped by science and religion. And it is likely the artificial instincts that drive the behaviors of these two artificial species will be found in a combination of their ancient philosophy and/or religions.

The reason that Nelson and Winter struggle to account for changes in economic systems over time is because they have not been provided The Unified Framework of Evolution – Natural & Artificial. Once they are then they will be able to fully evolutionarily reframe economic theory to account for incremental evolution and punctuated change – just like Kuhn and Siebel (Kuhn 1962, Siebel 2019, Eldrige & Gould 1972, Wood 2023, Wood 2025).

The fragmentation of the social sciences, the applied sciences, and military science will end once The Unified Framework of Evolution – Natural & Artificial is fully implemented across all academic fields (Wood 2025). The reason they are fragmented is only because no one until me had yet worked out this conceptual pattern in nature. This must now begin in earnest so we may accelerate the rate of scientific discovery and technological change to produce breakthrough benefits for society.

Section 6: Cultural Evolution is Fundamentally Flawed & Now Obsolete

Cultural evolution was leveraging a theoretical framework that did not conform to the practical competitive patterns of earth that have existed for billions of years. So, no other fields were able to make practical use of it in their research. Quantitative methods are meaningless if you have not accurately defined the conceptual framework of the ecosystem you are studying and its conceptual dynamics. We see this in information technology all the time. Professionals produce impressive quantitative analysis of patterns that are not accurately understood. This then leads to statistical data that is literally meaningless in making strategic, operational, or tactical decisions. It is the same in scientific analysis as well it seems.

So, all the quantitative methods that follow in Mesoudi's text do not really matter in practical reality. I do not really blame Mesoudi as he is simply working off the artificial genome he artificially inherited from older academics (Mesoudi 2011). And the academics before him artificially inherited from academics that came before them – and so it goes on and on. They never understood that all adaptations, natural and artificial, can both be simultaneously an advantage and a constraint. This is exactly what the artificial genome they artificially inherited truly is – both an advantage AND a constraint on their thinking (Wood 2023.

However, they are looking from the inside-out from academia so they cannot see this fact. And I, as an outsider, am looking from the outside-in can clearly see this obvious fact.

Machiavelli described this conceptual pattern logically at the end of his Dedication of his text, The Prince (Wood 2024). The flaw in their thinking is they don't see the information they have all generated as a constraint on their thinking. But this is exactly what Thomas Kuhn asserted in his text, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions (Kuhn 1962). And I am literally in the process of leading a scientific revolution as I write this paper. The only question remains is how long will it take the academics to unlearn what they have learned? So, that as Laozi once asserted, they can follow the path toward the fountain of all wisdom – the way (Wood 2025).

Section 7: Conclusion – Cultural Evolution Must Self-Disrupt or Necessarily Be Disrupted

The field of cultural evolution must now self-disrupt its own field by replacing their failed theoretical framework with my already successful practically proven conceptual framework – The Unified Framework of Evolution – Natural & Artificial. There is no debate to be had – this is a Kuhnsian paradigm shift on par with the paradigm shift from a geocentric to a heliocentric astronomical worldview (Kuhn 1962). And those cultural evolutionary scientists who make this professional leap with me now in the direction that Alex Mesoudi espoused toward a Darwinian reframing of their field, will be well positioned for continued professional success (Mesoudi 2011).

Those that do not will simply have their work decimated by the legion of artificial evolutionary scientists that are about to emerge as a new competitive artificial variation in their field. An artificial variation that will possess superior scientific artificial adaptations that will more accurately describe and predict the practical patterns in nature on earth. This will be the intellectual equivalent of sea level dropping causing an island to be reconnected with the mainland. This removes an evolutionary check on the migration of species up to that point. The academics are on the island on campus. And the artificial evolutionary scientists are the migrating species (Darwin 1859).

So, my Unified Framework of Evolution fits the evolutionary pattern of an invasive species that has been victorious in the survival of the fittest contest on the mainland. Its set of conceptual adaptations have proven practically a match for the patterns of the practical fields of warfare, political science, business, and information technology. And therefore possesses superior adaptations to those theoretical species of ideas on the campus island. The intellectual species on the island will not be able to compete and therefore will be evolutionarily selected for non-existence. The choice is clear for the cultural evolutionary scientists – either the partial survival or complete extinction of their works.

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