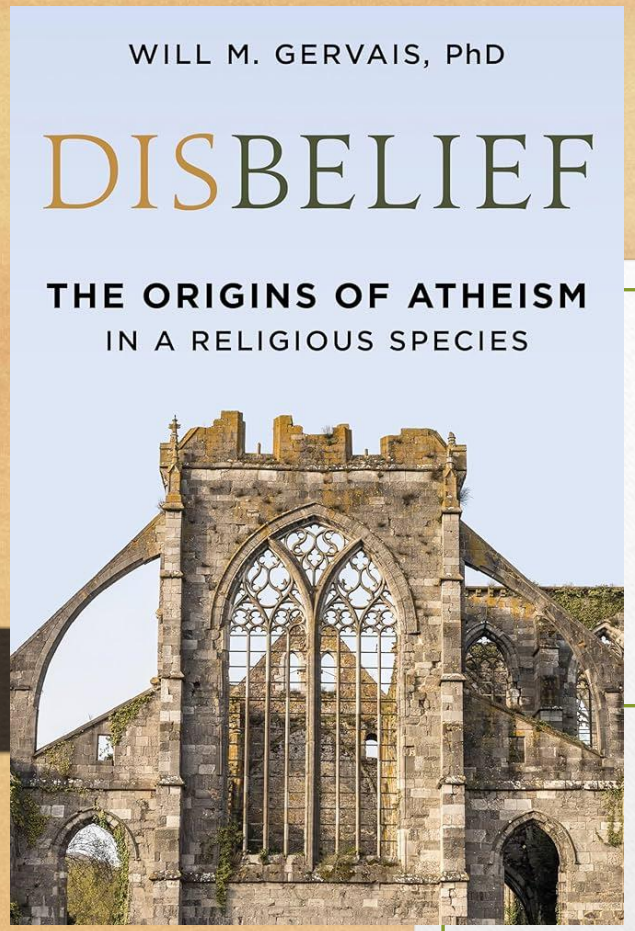


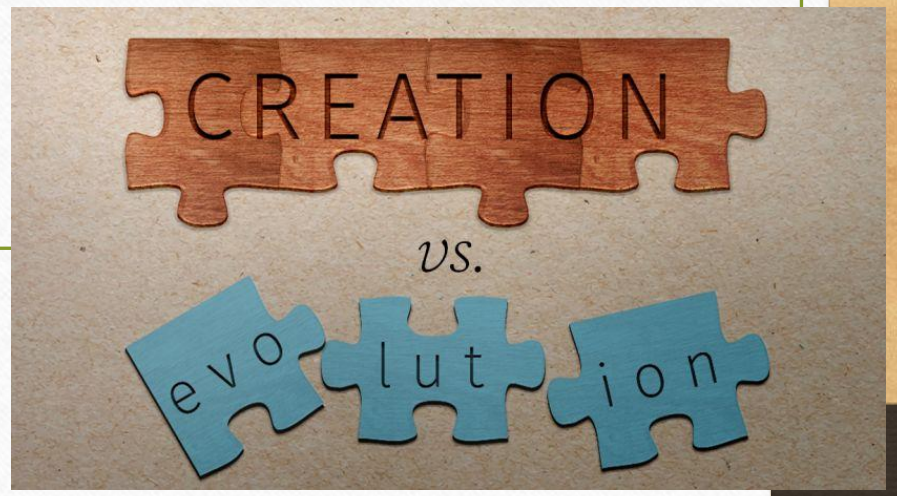
Scientific Study of Religion 5

Dr. Saeed Garmaroudi



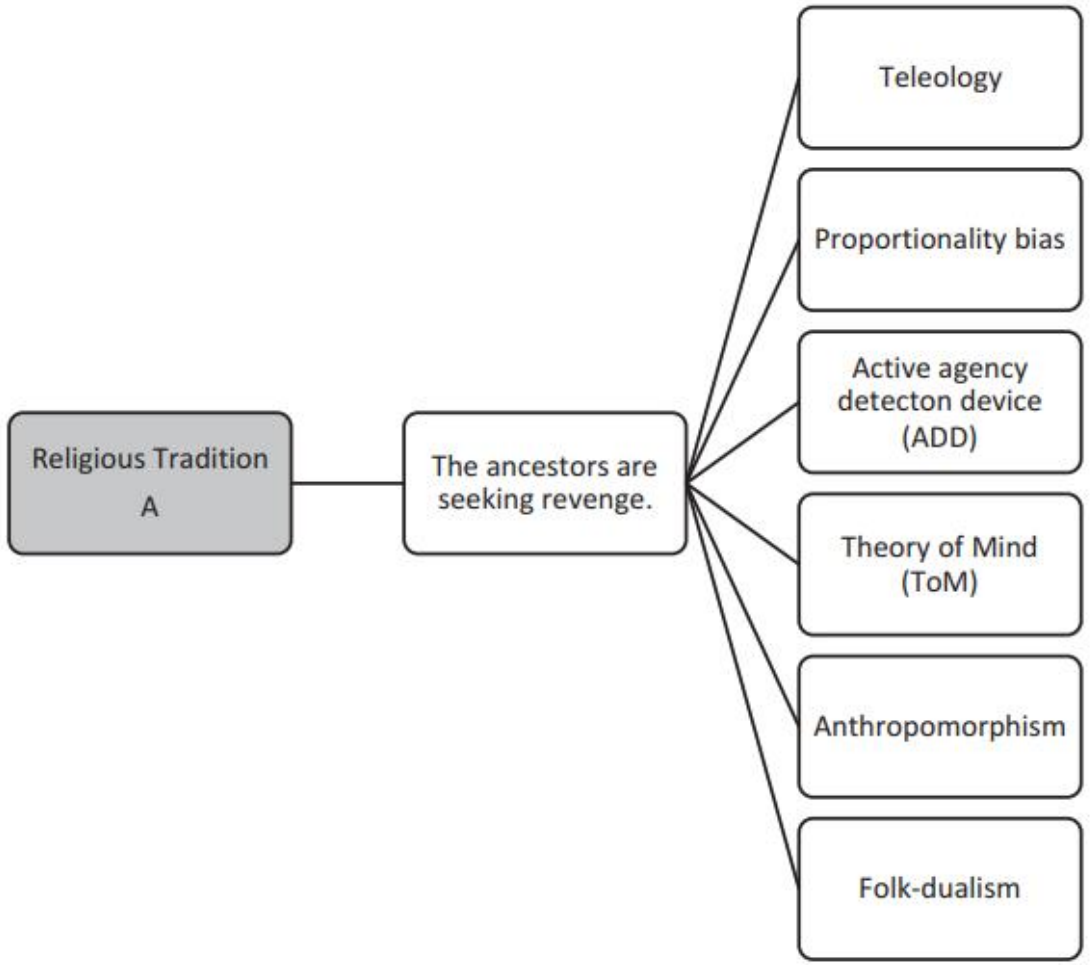
Previously discussed

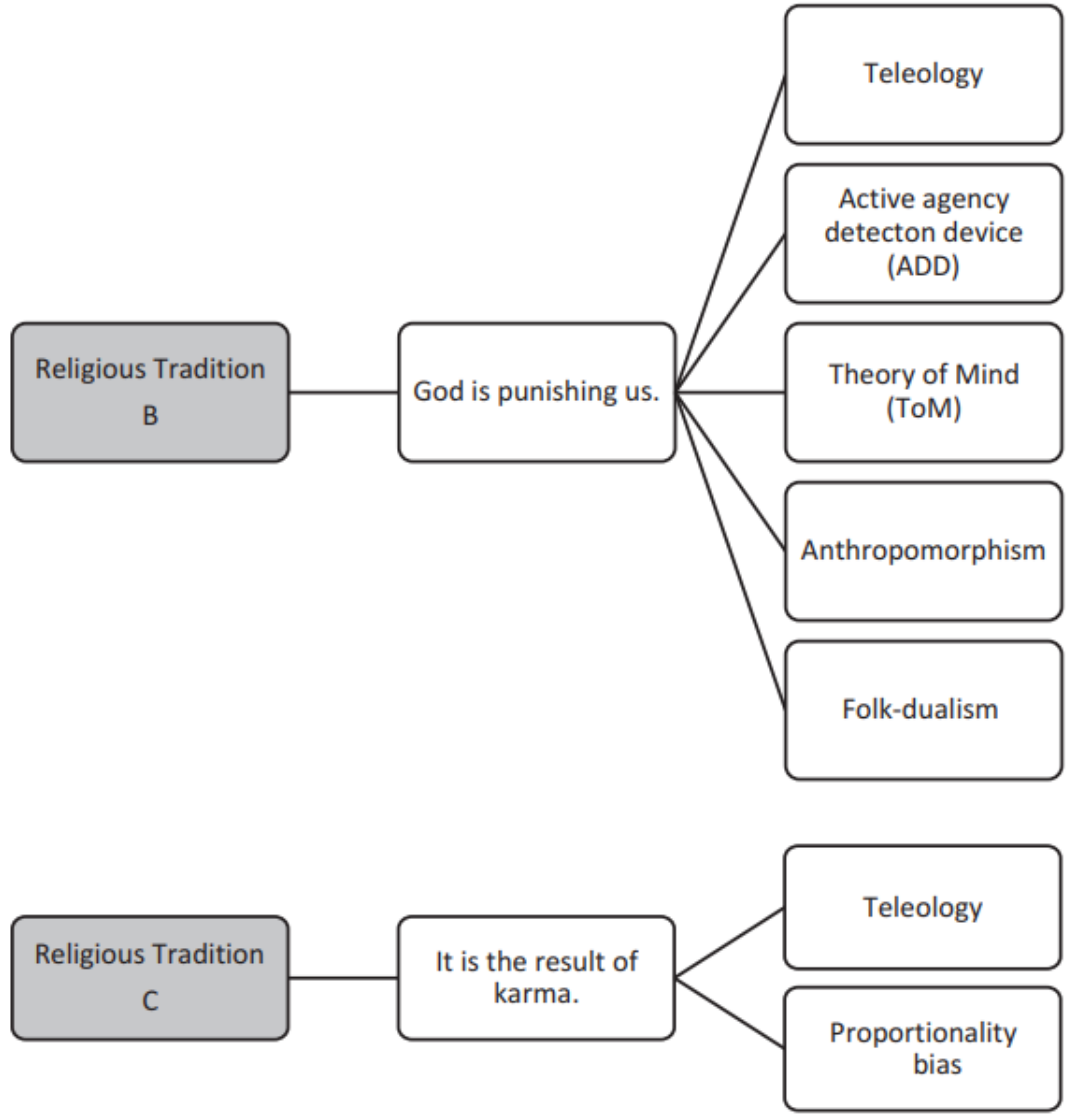
- Adaptationist view
- By-product view
  - Mentalizing
  - Minds and Bodies
  - Agency Detection
  - Minimally Counterintuitive Agents
  - Teleology and intuitive creationism
- Religion as Natural
- Criticism
- Miss one defining feature of religion

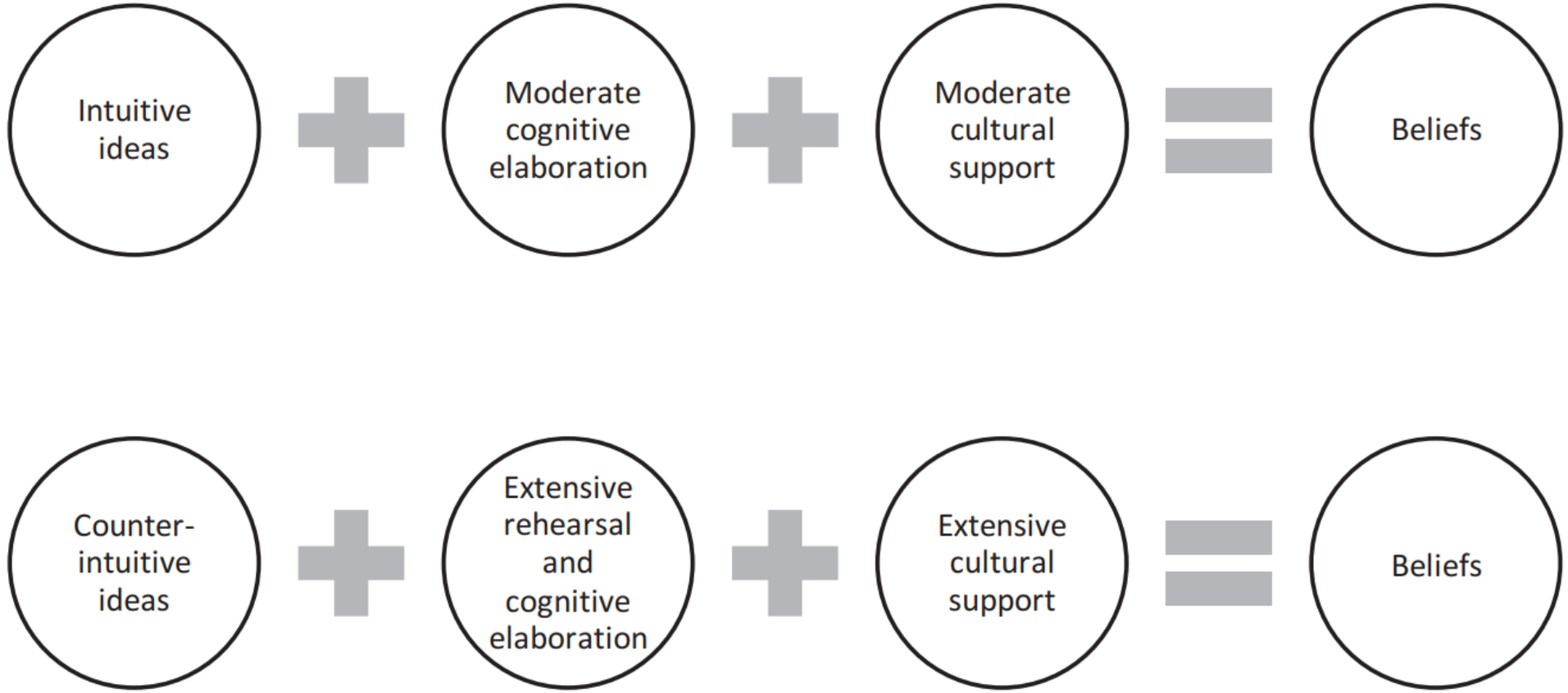




Core assumptions about religion and belief






Intuitive ideas
Moderate cognitive elaboration
Moderate cultural support
Beliefs
Counter-intuitive ideas
Extensive rehearsal and cognitive elaboration
Extensive cultural support
Beliefs

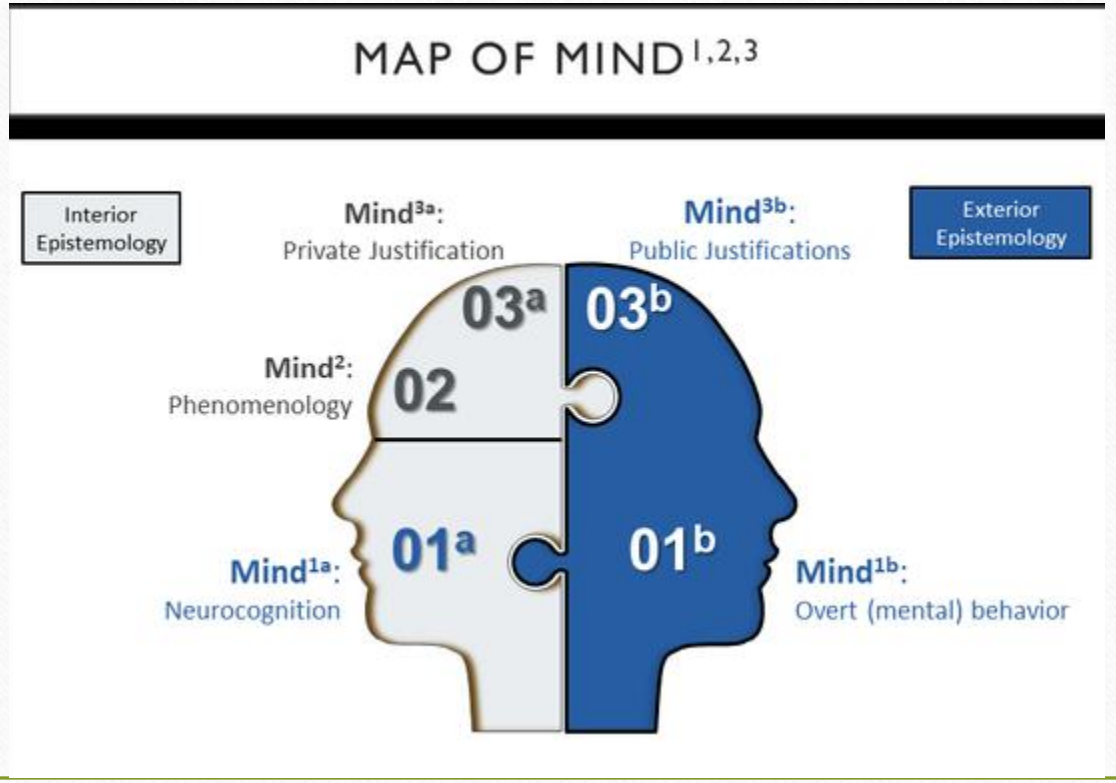
Culture

- Map of mind and culture

New atheism

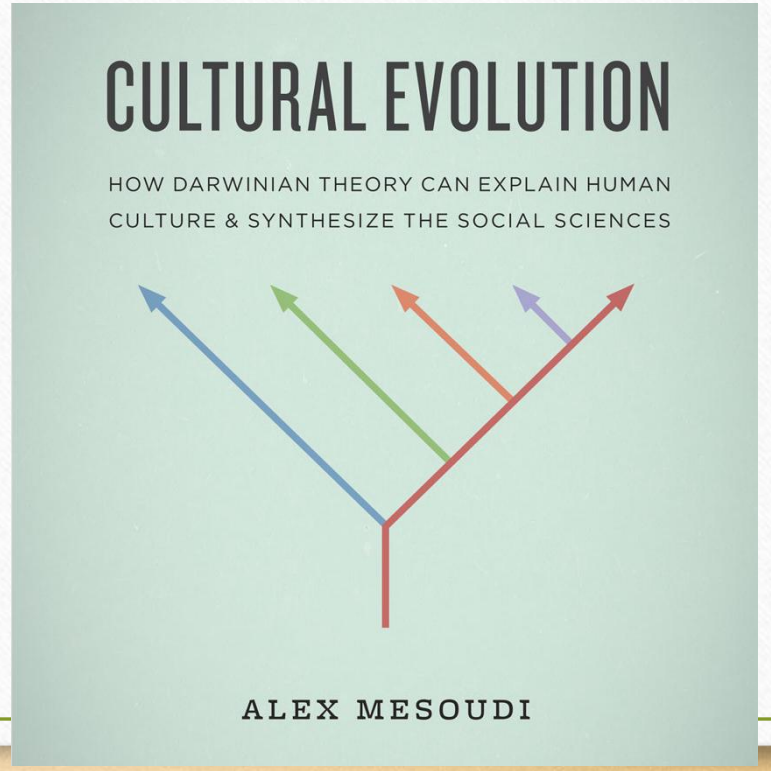
Cognitive science of religion

Cultural Evolution



Cultural Evolution

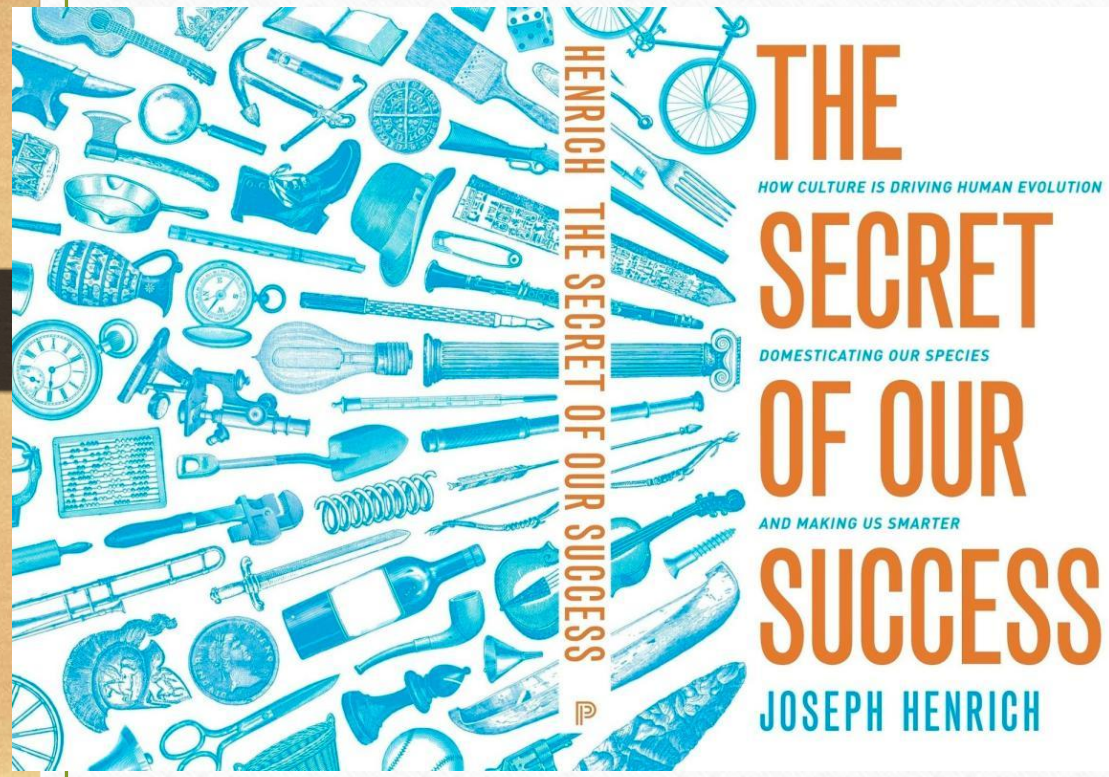
- Culture operates via principles of evolution
- Tools of evolution
  - Rigorous mathematical models
  - Computer simulations,
  - Empirical observation



What is not cultural evolution

- Social Darwinists
  - Survival of the fittest
- Memes
  - Discrete information units
  - "Memes" in direct analogy to genes
  - Goofy images and jokes circulating around social media

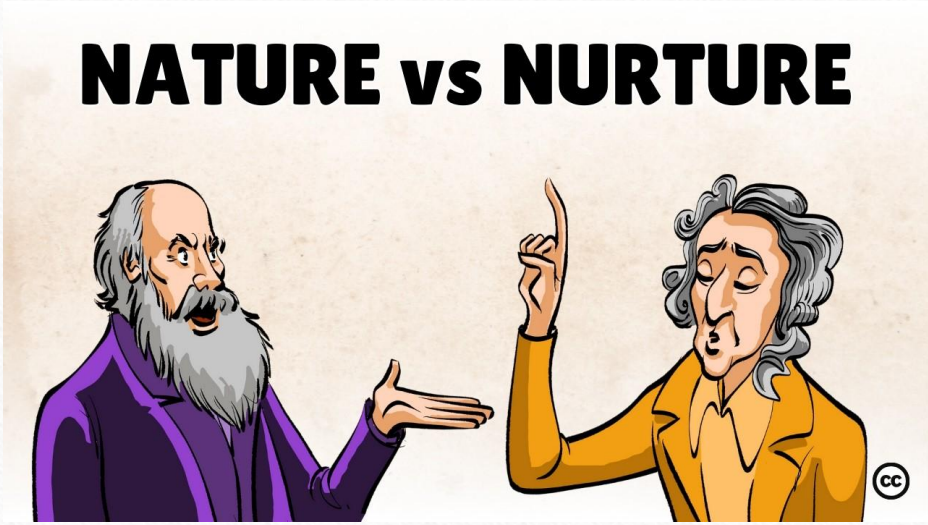



HENRICH THE SECRET OF OUR SUCCESS
THE
HOW CULTURE IS DRIVING HUMAN EVOLUTION
SECRET
DOMESTICATING OUR SPECIES
OF OUR
AND MAKING US SMARTER
SUCCESS
JOSEPH HENRICH


not by
HOW CULTURE TRANSFORMED HUMAN EVOLUTION
genes alone
Peter J. Richerson and Robert Boyd

Nature vs. Nurture

- Evolutionary psychology and human nature
- "Standard social science model"
  - Postmodernists conception of culture as an answer for everything
  - Human nature is nonexistent
  - "blank-slatism,"
  - Leftist political ideology
- He was wrong about cultural evolution.



Not a blank slate

- A rich cognitive architecture that has evolved to enable culture
- Strategies for cultural learning
- Related to the success of our species
- cultural learning
  - Beliefs, practices, technologies, norms
- Evolutionary theory is taken seriously in cultural evolution
  - Formal mathematical models
  - Computer simulations of evolutionary processes



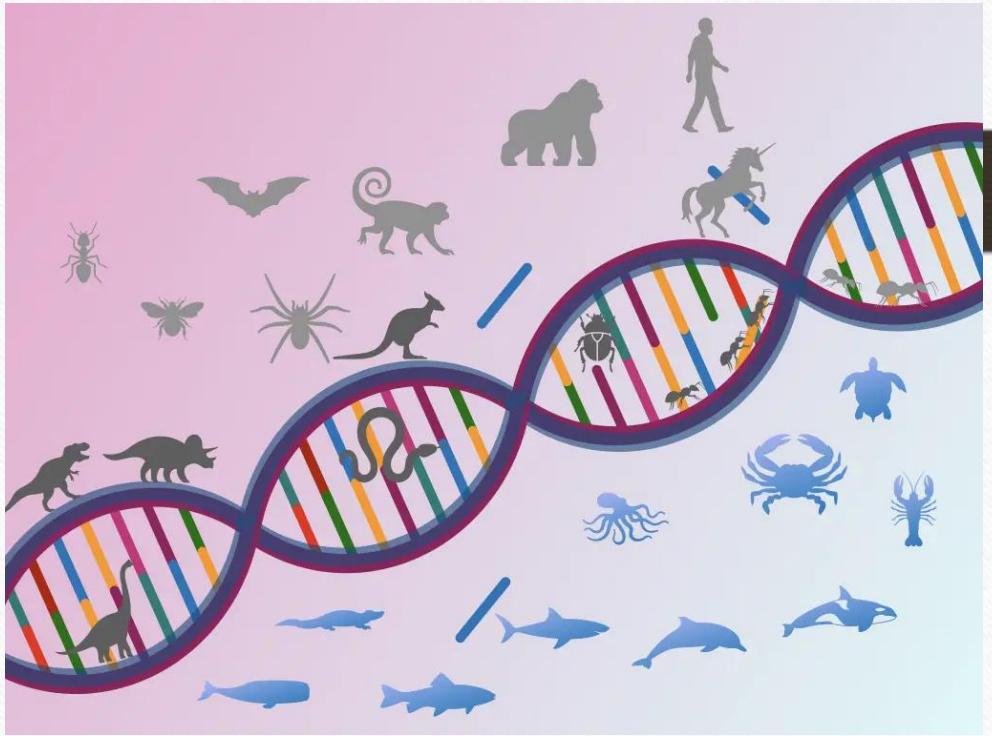
Sister disciplines

- Evolutionary psychology and cultural evolution
- Deal with it!



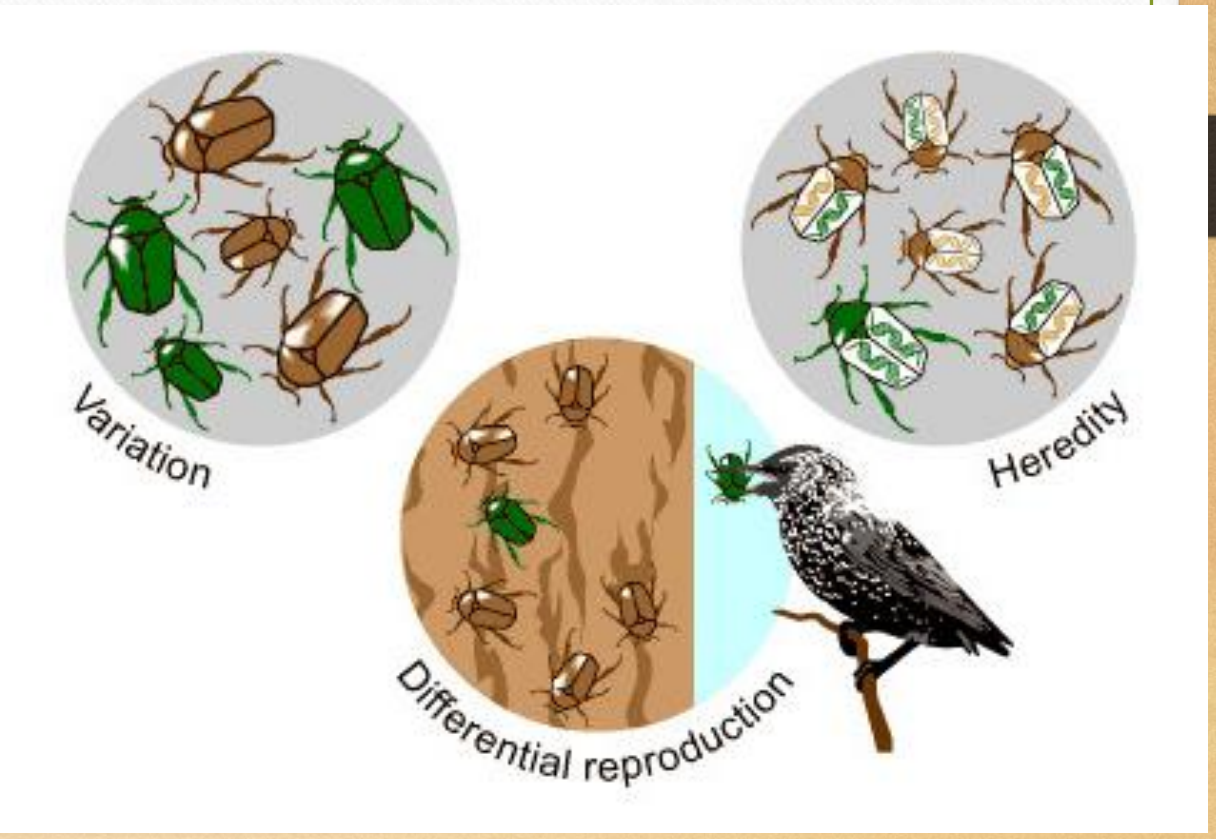
Genetic vs. cultural evolution

- Genetic material, DNA.
- Offspring's body and behavior
- Cultural transmission is messy compared to genetic transmission
  - Low fidelity
  - Innovation, memory
  - Standard education can help



Evolutionary Theory

- General Darwinian evolutionary principles
  - He did not know about Genetics
- General features of evolution?
  - Variation
  - Selection
  - Inheritance



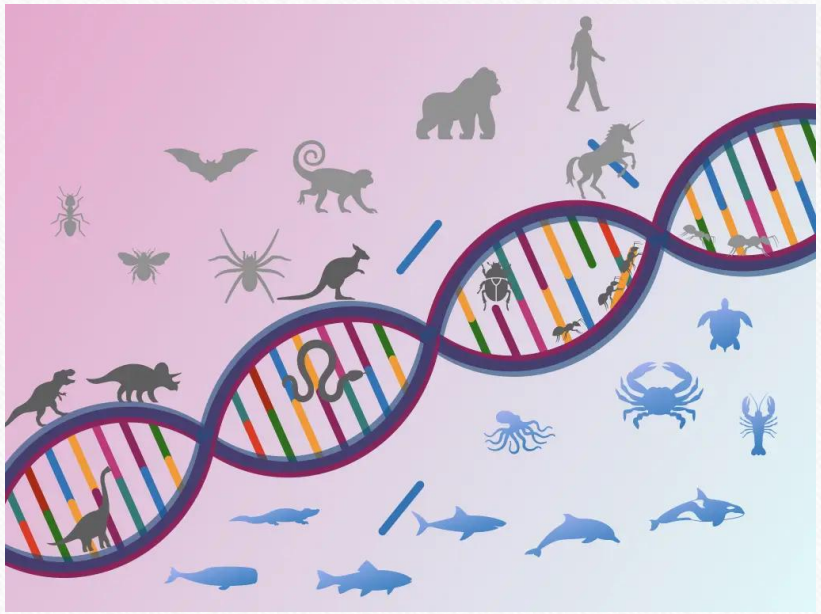
Evolutionary Logic

- Evolution does not require genes or DNA
  - Incidental and contingent
  - Deeper necessities
- Examples
  - Conferences
  - The opponent processing between DMN and TN in the brain



Critique of memes theory

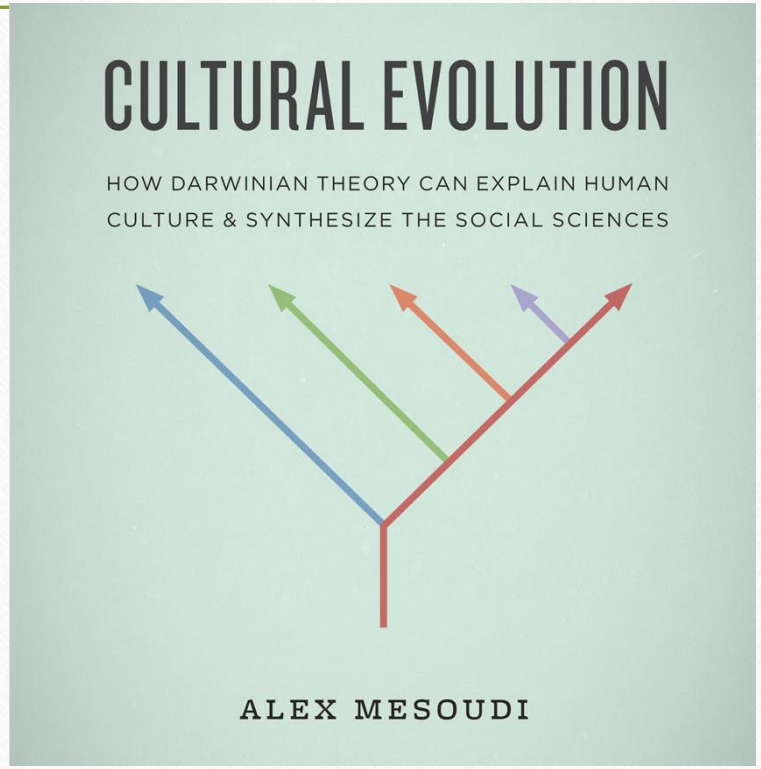
- Memetics Theory
  - Taking incidental and contingent feature for a universal feature of evolution
  - Unnecessary analogy between genes and memes
  - But Culture has the necessary structure of evolution



Cultural evolution

- Variability- Cartesian mind
- Selection – Works better/more memorable
- Inheritance – learning and teaching

- Pre-modernity/Modernity/Post-modernity



Three metaphors

- Sponges
  - No filtering
  - Children have no defenses against “bad” cultural information
  - Childhood gullibility, memetics, and the standard social science model : Colonizing susceptible minds.
  - Pinker and Dawkins difference
  - War of ideas
    - Culture wars



Three metaphors

- Sieves
  - Minds have a natural architecture
  - some concepts are just natural fits
  - Minimal counterintuition
  - human mind as a collection of mental adaptations
  - More automatic
  - But it still doesn't require much agency on our part.



Three metaphors

- Strategic Seekers
  - Grants cultural learners some agency
  - Actively scour our worlds to find the best, most relevant information.
  - Evaluation of the source
  - **Dominant narrative** in cultural evolution
    - This has allowed us to conquer the world



Strategic Seeker

- Some teachers better than others
  - More trustworthy, Competent, Knowledgeable, Skillful.
- Survive in our world, and thrive if possible
- we've evolved lots of different strategies to profitably trade in it
  - "go get some culture." ?
  - Just copy
  - The most successful people to imitate
  - Blend together?



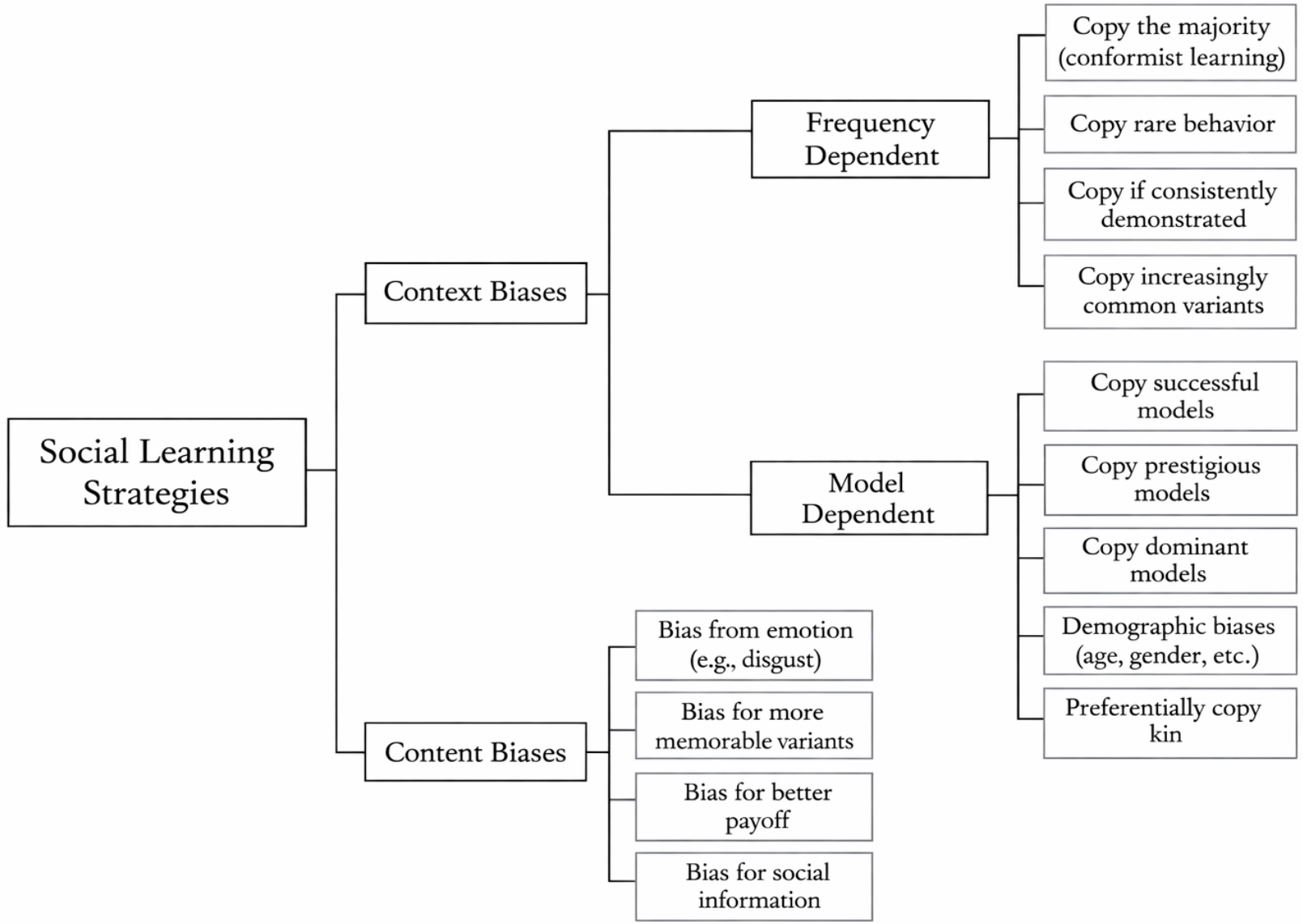


Figure 5.1. Social learning strategies. *Source:* R. L. Kendal, N. J. Boogert, L. Rendell, K. N. Lala, M. Webster, and P. L. Jones, "Social Learning Strategies: Bridge-Building between Fields," *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 22, no. 7 (2018): 651–65.

- افرادِ برخوردار از پرستیژ معمولاً گروهی از پیروانِ داوطلب را به خود جذب می‌کنند که برای به‌دست آوردن فرصتِ یادگیری از بهترین‌ها، احترام و تبعیت نشان می‌دهند. بنابراین، یادگیرندگانِ فرهنگی می‌توانند از این‌که ببینند دیگران به چه کسی احترام می‌گذارند، به‌عنوان نشانه‌ای استفاده کنند برای تشخیص این‌که چه کسی احتمالاً منبعی معتبر و ارزشمند از دانش است.

- یادگیریِ فرهنگیِ مبتنی بر پرستیژ اساساً دربارهٔ این است که بفهمیم چه کسی احتمالاً آگاه‌ترین فرد است، و سپس هر کاری لازم است انجام دهیم تا به اندازهٔ کافی به او نزدیک بمانیم و راز موفقیتش را یاد بگیریم. جالب این‌که مردم معمولاً رهبرانِ دارای پرستیژ را بیش‌ازحد تقلید می‌کنند. چون یادگیرنده دقیقاً نمی‌داند چه چیزی باعث موفقیت آن فرد شده است، بهتر است تا حد ممکن جزئیات بیشتری را کپی کند. ممکن است راز موفقیت او در برنامهٔ روزانه، رژیم غذایی، انتخاب لباس، یا حتی باورهای فراطبیعی‌اش باشد؛ پس برای اطمینان، بهتر است همهٔ این‌ها را تقلید کرد. این احترامِ افراطی و تقلیدِ بیش‌ازحد از افرادِ پرستیژدار همان چیزی است که در قلبِ صنعتِ روبه‌رشدِ تبلیغات و تأییدِ سلبریتی‌ها قرار دارد.

Tendency to follow

- Comparing kids to chimps experiment

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JwwclyVYTkk



CREDS

- Credibility Enhancing Displays
  - Walking the talk
  - Costly signaling

