

increases as long as there exists genetic variation in fitness in the population. In other words, the adaptation of the population for the environmental circumstances continuously increases.

In the regime of human culture, the sources of variation are certain acts based on human creativity, such as innovations for instance. In cultural evolution imitation and certain more advanced forms of learning constitute the equivalent of heredity of biological evolution. An important difference between biological and cultural evolution is the fact that in the former the inheritance of acquired characteristics is denied while in the latter it is an integral part of the theory. Moreover, in biological evolution the transfer of genetic information is unidirectional and vertical occurring from the parental generation to the offspring only, and occurs only once in each case. In cultural evolution on its part, the transfer of information is mainly based on immaterial spoken or written concepts, is bidirectional, and can also be horizontal or oblique i.e. network-like. Cultural information can also be stored, and the transfer of it can be repeated at will. These differences between biological and cultural evolution make the latter to be far more rapid than the former.

In cultural evolution a third form of selection is effective. This form of selection, termed social selection, involves competition on other social resources than the members of the opposite sex. In social selection, an important role is played by the feedback given by the members of the social group in which the individual in question lives. Therefore, in practice, in social selection the act of selection is performed by other individuals than the one whose fitness will be affected by the selection.

Cultural fitness deals with cultural characteristics such as thoughts and ideas, and is defined as a function of time. The longer a cultural characteristic is preserved in the population, the better its cultural fitness.

The importance of language as a necessary condition for cultural evolution should be stressed, language being the cultural replicator corresponding to the gene in biological evolution. Human creativity and mind reading, the specific human capacity of being aware what other people have in mind, are motors specific for cultural evolution.
