

Re: Theories, models, and simplifications

Source: <http://sci.tech-archive.net/Archive/sci.bio.evolution/2005-02/0277.html>

From: Jim McGinn (jimmcginn_at_yahoo.com)

Date: 02/08/05

Date: Tue, 8 Feb 2005 14:30:20 -0500 (EST)

Perplexed in Peoria wrote:

- > *Jim McGinn wrote*
- > > *John Edser wrote:*
- > > > *JE:-*
- > > > *On several different occasions over the last*
- > > > *year I have outlined a key experiment*
- > > > *that can test Total Darwinian Fitness*
- > >
- > > *Are you retarded. This phrase, "Total Darwinian*
- > > *Fitness" has no meaning to anybody but yourself.*
- >
- > *Not true. It has meaning for me. I would disagree with*
- > *John as to whether it is the only defensible notion of*
- > *fitness, and I would disagree as to whether it is the*
- > *best notion of fitness. But it is clearly a definition*
- > *that works as a first step.*
- >
- > *John's definition is actually the same one that Hamilton*
- > *started with in his 1964 paper. You can measure individual*
- > *fitness by counting offspring over a generation.*

I suspect everybody that first read Darwin (or were introduced to his theory) first assumed this simplistic conception of fitness. But eventually we grew up to the realization that reality isn't so simple. John just doesn't want to grow up.

- > *The*
- > *question is whether you count conception-to-conception,*
- > *birth-to-birth, or fertility-to-fertility. The only weird*
- > *thing about John's idea is his insistence that his way*
- > *is the ONLY way.*

To me it's wierd anybody would insist on such a simpleminded notion. Obviously lifeforms can achieve their fitness in ways other than just their own survival and their own reproductive

success. If such actually was (or could be) the case then—obviously—these behaviors (altruism, symbiosis, group behavior) could not possibly exist.

- > *And, even that insistence is not so weird, if you accept*
- > *John's right to reject the notion of kin selection. The*
- > *second paragraph of Hamilton's 1964 paper begins:*
- > *Sacrifices involved in parental care are a possibility*
- > *implicit in any model in which the definition of fitness*
- > *is based, as it should be, on the number of adult*
- > *offspring.*
- > *That is, John's definition was the state-of-the-art, when*
- > *Hamilton wrote his second paragraph.*

John just doesn't want to deal with the fact that reality is relativistic.

- > *However, by the*
- > *time Hamilton got to his final paragraph, John's definition*
- > *was no longer the only possible one. We can now*
- > *define fitness conception-to-conception and explain*
- > *parental care using Hamilton's rule. But John doesn't want*
- > *to do that, so OF COURSE he continues to insist on the*
- > *old definition of individual fitness.*

All John does is insist that he's right and when you ask him to provide a rational argument in support of his position all he does is insist harder.

Jim