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Lecture Date: Tuesday, September 11, 2007

Announcements:

- Professor Provine will pay a student \$7.50/hour to help with organizing his reprint collection. Any interested students should talk with him directly.

I. Struggle for Existence

- A. Darwin defines the struggle for existence as "...dependence of one being on another, and including not only the life of the individual, but success in leaving progeny" (p. 490). Therefore, those who leave the most offspring will out-compete others and be most fit.
- B. Darwin uses this definition in a "large and metaphorical sense."
- C. Darwin argues that the struggle will be greatest among members of the same species and closely allied species. He says that the most competition will come from fellow beings.

II. Darwin and Natural Selection

- A. Daniel Dennett (philosopher and evolutionist) calls natural selection Darwin's "most dangerous idea." He argues that natural selection is a very corrosive idea.
- B. For Darwin, natural selection means evolution of organisms without any guidance whatsoever. Natural selection is the outcome of the struggle for existence.

III. Natural Selection as a "mechanism"

- A. Professor Provine argues that natural selection is NOT a "mechanism" or a cause; it does not "do" things as implied by Darwin. Darwin describes natural selection as "doing" things, much like a God.
- B. Rather, natural selection is a result of the same causes that produce the struggle for existence.
 1. Causes produce natural selection as a result. These causes are hard to delineate in nature, thus there are few examples of natural selection in nature.
 2. Natural selection does nothing – it results from the real causes of evolution.
 3. Saying natural selection "did it" is just as explanatory as saying that God "did it." You need to know the causes of natural selection.
- C. Natural selection, if viewed as a mechanism that acts, shapes, causes, etc., becomes a "mechanistic God" who explains all. This view of natural selection invites others to substitute their gods for the "mechanistic God" and neither explanation is much better than the other.