
From cohesion to collaboration: how to define biological individuality

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Abstract

Recent works in contemporary philosophy of biology such as Pradeu's *The Limits of the Self: Immunology and Biological Identity* (2012) examine the definitional slides that have occurred between three different categories: organism, living thing and biological individual. The consequences that have arisen from this mishap in definitions constitute the privileging of organisms when reflecting about biological individuality in general. However, more recently, certain difficulties have imposed themselves in regards to this biased privileging. On the one hand, Dupré and O'Malley, in their article *Varieties of Living Things: Life at the Intersection of Lineage and Metabolism* (2009), focus on the collaborative aspect of the processes of life in order to argue that a large diversity of things other than organisms is alive. On the other hand, Haber, in his article *Colonies Are Individuals: Revisiting the Superorganism Revival* (2013), emphasizes on the notion of cohesion and maintains the inexistence of a paradigmatic biological individual by holding that organisms may comprise marginal cases of biological individuals. In this presentation I try to show that Haber's position is not only compatible but also complementary to Dupré and O'Malley's by arguing that the concepts of collaboration and cohesion highlight similar properties. By doing so, this analysis renders explicit the limitations of the concept of organism in biology as well as philosophy.

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