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- Latest Additions

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- About the Archive
- Archive Policy
- History
- Help
- FAQ
- Journal Eprint Policies
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# Metaphors as surrogate variables. The case of adaptive radiation

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## Abstract

We develop a new metaphor account where metaphors become surrogate variables for different but related phenomena. As we will argue, subrogation is the result of the interplay between the things inspired by the metaphor and the empirical dynamics that result from such inspiration. In particular, we focus on adaptive radiation, a major concept of evolutionary biology. Our study suggests that there is no distinct phenomenon, process, or pattern in nature than can be identified as adaptive radiation. What we have instead is a grouping variable that has surrogated different evolutionary phenomena into one expansive label. We believe this analysis of metaphors helps better understand the value of metaphors for science not only as a provider of epistemic and cognitive virtues but most importantly, as a crucial research tool that can both help and divert scientific experimentation.

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