

The Organism in Developmental System Theory (DST)

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Abstract

In this paper, I address the question of what the Developmental Systems Theory (DST) aims at explaining. I distinguish two lines of thought in DST, one which deals specifically with development, and tries to explain the development of the individual organism, and the other which presents itself as a reconceptualization of evolution, and tries to explain the evolution of populations of developmental systems (organism-environment units). I emphasize that, despite the claiming of the contrary by DST proponents, there are two very different definitions of the 'developmental system', and therefore DST is not a unified theory of evolution and development. I show that the DST loses the most interesting aspects of its reconceptualization of development when it tries to reconceptualize evolutionary theory. I suggest that DST is about development per se, and that it fails at offering a new view on evolution.

Keywords: Development; Organism; Developmental System Theory; Evolution and Development.

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