

Functional Properties and Convergence in Biology

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Abstract

Evolutionary convergence is often appealed to in support of claims about multiple realization. The idea is that convergence shows that the same function can be realized by different kinds of structures. I argue here that the nature of convergence is more complicated than it might appear. Broad claims about convergence are made by biologists during general discussions of the mechanisms of evolution. In their specialized work, though, biologists are more limited in the claims they make. This paper looks at biologists' specialized work to show why claims about convergence made by philosophers can be oversimplified.

Keywords: Function, Convergence, Biology, Multiple Realization

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