

Coherence, Consistency, and Cohesion: Clade Selection in Okasha and Beyond.

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Abstract

Samir Okasha argues that clade selection is an incoherent concept, because the relation that constitutes clades is such that it renders parent-offspring (reproduction) relations between clades impossible. He reasons that since clades cannot reproduce, it is not coherent to speak of natural selection operating at the clade level. We argue, however, that when species-level lineages and clade-level lineages are treated consistently according to standard cladist commitments, clade reproduction is indeed possible and clade selection is coherent if certain conditions obtain. Despite clade selection's logical coherence, however, we share some of Okasha's pessimism. Whether or not clades are a unit of selection is ultimately a question of empirical support and theoretical import, but we offer reasons to be skeptical about clade selection as a research programme.

Keywords: Reproduction, Clade Selection, Extinction

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