

Eliminating Objects Across the Sciences

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Arguments to the effect that the notion of individual object is problematic in physics are well-known. In their more radical form they have been taken to motivate the conclusion that this notion should be eliminated altogether. In this paper I shall quickly consider the metaphysical basis for this conclusion before examining the prospects for motivating a similar conclusion in biology. Here too, I shall suggest, a form of eliminativism can be motivated, although the arguments are, not surprisingly, different. Eliminativism typically generates vigorous responses but I shall try to assuage concerns in this regard by indicating certain metaphysical tools that are available for accommodating it. I shall conclude by noting that this exemplifies the 'Viking' approach to metaphysics which emphasises the range of metaphysical 'goods' that are available for the philosopher of science to plunder.