

Individuals and adaptations

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What is the relationship between organismality (the property of being an organism, or biological individual) and bearing adaptations? What does G C Williams' famous analysis of group adaptation commit us to? Recent papers - Gardner and Grafen 2009, Sober and Wilson 2011, and Okasha and Paternotte 2012 - dispute the optimal way to define each of a tightly interrelated set of concepts in evolutionary biology – 'group adaptation', 'group selection' 'policing mechanism' and 'superorganism'. In this talk I will try to unravel these debates by bringing out the differing conceptual commitments underlying each position.