

Re: specialization momentum

Source: <http://sci.tech--archive.net/Archive/sci.bio.evolution/2005-06/msg00571.html>

- *From:* "Perplexed in Peoria" <jimmenegay@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxx>
 - *Date:* Mon, 27 Jun 2005 12:26:22 -0400 (EDT)
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"g" <gillawton@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxx> wrote in message [news:d9o3nb\\$1ej\\$1@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx](mailto:news:d9o3nb$1ej$1@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx)
> (This is a tentative conceptual effort to arrive at some terminology whereby
> evolutionary biology can be discussed by author with others, and whereby
> others might translate what they mean on the subject into words author is
> sure have mutually understood meanings with regard to discussion of
> evolutionary biology. This is a formidable challenge. Renowned authors have
> done this, but others have muddied the water behind them to the point I need
> new terms for them. Nothing taken away from better authors, and renowned
> scholars.)

You seem hopeful that "others" will be willing to "translate what they mean" into your language. I am skeptical. Especially as you seem so unwilling to express what you mean in the accepted terminology.

I was particularly put off by the word "specie". Is this your own coinage? (Pun intended, sorry about that!).

I was also annoyed by the claim that "there seems to be an abundance of evidence of vertical linearity of specialization in plants and animals, over time". Now, there may well be evidence, but it is hard for me to judge that evidence, since I don't have a clue what you mean by "vertical linearity". Are you simply saying that specialization has increased in many lineages over time? Or are you also claiming that it has increased at a constant rate? Your "momentum" metaphor suggests that this might be your claim, and it is quite standard to use the word "linear" with regard to constant rates of change. But then what could "vertical" possibly mean?

Your use of "symbiosis" to describe the relationship between two organs in the same organism is also very non-standard, but at least it was clear what you meant there.

You may be disheartened that I have chosen to direct my criticism to matters of style, rather than substance. Well, OK, sorry about that. But I would point out that a large fraction of your essay consists of your own discursive discussion of your own motivation and style. That discussion gets in the way of the ideas. For example, you write:

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- > Nothing is more exhilarating for a concept surfer than catching a conceptual
- > tall wave -- a synthesis of disparate facts and relationships and
- > subordinable smaller concepts -- and riding on that big wave for a while.
- > Such a concept is what might be termed "specialization momentum."

I initially read this to say "I will use the term 'specialization momentum' to describe those exciting concepts that you can surf on." It took me far too many re-readings before I hit upon the intended meaning: "I am going to talk about a concept I call 'specialization momentum'. I am quite excited about this concept."

Perhaps if that last sentence has read "One such concept is SM." Or maybe "SM is that kind of concept".

But that is enough criticism (and enough SM). Have a nice day.

- *Follow-Ups:*

- ◆ *Re: specialization momentum*
◇ *From: g*

- *References:*

- ◆ *Re: specialization momentum*
◇ *From: Perplexed in Peoria*
- ◆ *Re: specialization momentum*
◇ *From: g*

- Prev by Date: *Re: specialization momentum*
- Next by Date: *Re: Essay: What is Life?*
- Previous by thread: *Re: specialization momentum*
- Next by thread: *Re: specialization momentum*
- Index(es):
 - ◆ *Date*
 - ◆ *Thread*