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# The Operational Imperative: Sense and Nonsense in Operationism

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## Abstract

Several important terms in biology have recently been criticized for not being “operational.” In this paper the course of operationism in physics,

psychology and genetics is sketched to show what effect this particular view on the meaning of scientific terms had on these disciplines. Then the biological species concept and the concept of homology are examined to see in what respects they are or are not “operational.” One of the primary conclusions of this investigation is that few terms in science are completely operational or completely nonoperational. Some scientific terms, especially theoretical terms, are a good deal less operational than others; but, far from being regrettable, this situation is essential if theoretical terms are to fulfill their systematizing function and if scientific theories are to be capable of growth.

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