

**SIMILUM, A CONCEPT OF FLEXIBLE SYNCHRONOUS CLASSIFICATION
REPLACING RIGID SPECIES IN EVOLUTIONARY THINKING**

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The concept of species seems to be incompatible with the logic of the theory of evolution, i.e. continuous changes within lineages (Henneberg and Keen, *Evol. Theory* 9:214, 1990). There is an obvious need for classification of synchronous biological variation. A species as a classificatory category has strictly defined boundaries and requires that individuals belonging to it conform to an idealized type. This is especially true with respect to dead specimens whose breeding abilities cannot be tested. Actual biological diversity displays groups (*simila*) of individuals whose members are more similar to each other in the multivariate sense than to anyone else. Members of a *similum* are not copies of some idealized type nor does their variation have rigid boundaries. As lineages go through time, at each moment the pattern of individual variation is slightly different and thus the variants forming consecutive *simila* will not be identical. Unlike species *similum* has no holotype, it is defined only by mutual similarities of individuals (*similars*). In the case of fossils the first individual who is clearly dissimilar to other fossils is given a nickname. When other fossils resembling this one are discovered they may be designated similars of this individual if they do not resemble fossils described earlier. A collection of similars (a *similum*) is given a name of the first individual and is a "slice" of a lineage. While species can be created for a single individual by a process of deduction it takes a minimum of two individuals to define a *similum*.

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