

Do Genes Have Agency?

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ABSTRACT: Contemporary science has discovered increasing evidence that validates theories of genetic centrism, leading to more literature supporting ideas that suggest genes ultimately motivate evolutionary processes. This literature legitimizes not only valid ideas regarding genetic centrism but also implicitly propagates genetic agency and anthropomorphism. Across most scientific literature discussing scientific centrism, genes are described as things with agency. Genes are constantly anthropomorphized for the sake of simplicity within scientific language. This language is justified as linguistic shorthand and we are assured that this language is not representative of the nature of genes. But if this is the case, then why do we constantly describe genes with fallacious language? Even in *The Selfish Gene*, the original source on genetic centrism, Dawkins notes that such “sloppy language” enables us to engage with the nature of genes (Dawkins, 1989). He suggests this language enables us strictly linguistically, not conceptually. Despite the constant anthropomorphism of genes, there is no literature explaining the universal need for this language. This paper is an exploration of existing ideas of genetic agency and how notions of genetic agency contribute to the concept of a gene.

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