

# Purposive Behaviour And Teleological Explanations

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in aristotle s teleological view of the world natural things come to be and are present for the

sake of some function or end for example wings are present in birds for the sake of flying whereas much of recent scholarship has focused on uncovering the meta physical underpinnings of aristotle s teleology and its contrasts with his notions of chance and necessity this book examines aristotle s use of the theory of natural teleology in producing explanations of natural phenomena close analyses of aristotle s natural treatises and his posterior analytics show what methods are used for the discovery of functions or ends that figure in teleological explanations how these explanations are structured and how well they work in making sense of phenomena the book will be valuable for all who are interested in aristotle s natural science his philosophy of science and his biology

this volume distinguishes between two main traditions in the philosophy of science the aristotelian with its stress on explanation in terms of purpose and intentionality and the galilean which takes causal explanation as primary it then traces the complex history of these competing traditions as they are manifested in such movements as positivism idealism marxism and contemporary linguistic analysis hempels s theory of scientific explanation the claims of cybernetics the rise of an analytic philosophy of action and the revival of hermeneutics are all discussed the volume also deals with causal explanation intentionality and teleological explanation and explanation in history and the social sciences the author concludes that explanation of human actions cannot be reduced to simple causality and discusses the implications of this conclusion for the disciplines of history and sociology

monte johnson examines the most controversial aspects of aristotle s natural philosophy his teleology is teleology about causation or explanation does it exclude or obviate mechanism determinism or materialism is it focused on the good of individual organisms or is god or man the ultimate end of all processes and entities is teleology restricted to living things or does it apply to the cosmos as a whole does it identify objectively existent causes in the world or is it merely a heuristic for our understanding of other causal processes johnson argues that aristotle s aporetic approach drives a middle course between these traditional oppositions and avoids the dilemma frequently urged against teleology between backwards causation and anthropomorphism although these issues have been debated with extraordinary depth by aristotle scholars and touched upon by many in the wider philosophical and scientific community as well there is no comprehensive historical treatment of the issue aristotle is commonly considered the inventor of teleology although the precise term originated in the eighteenth century if teleology means the use of ends and goals in natural science then aristotle was rather a critical innovator of teleological explanation teleological notions were widespread among his predecessors but aristotle rejected their conception of extrinsic causes such as mind or god as the primary causes for natural things aristotle s radical alternative was to assert nature itself as an internal principle of change and an end and his teleological explanations focus on the intrinsic ends of natural substances those ends that benefit the natural thing itself aristotle s use of ends was subsequently conflated with incompatible teleological notions including proofs for the existence of a providential or designer god vitalism and animism opposition to mechanism and non teleological causation and anthropocentrism johnson addresses these misconceptions through an elaboration of aristotle s methodological statements as well as an examination of the explanations actually offered in the scientific works

andrew woodfield s detailed survey examines the descriptions and explanations of purpose goal end and function

the philosophy of action an anthology is an authoritative collection of key work by top scholars arranged thematically and accompanied by expert introductions written by the editors this unique collection brings together a selection of the most influential essays from the 1960s to the present day an invaluable collection that brings together a selection of the most important classic and contemporary articles in philosophy of action from the 1960 s to the present day no other broad ranging and detailed coverage of this kind currently exists in the field each themed section opens with a synoptic introduction and includes a comprehensive further reading list to guide students includes sections on action and agency willing and trying intention and intentional action acting for a reason the explanation of action and free agency and responsibility written and organised in a style that allows it to be used as a primary teaching resource in its own right

this book brings together for the first time philosophers of biology to write about some of the most central concepts and issues in their field from the perspective of biology education the chapters of the book cover a variety of topics ranging from traditional ones such as biological explanation biology and religion or biology and ethics to contemporary ones such as genomics systems biology or evolutionary developmental biology each of the 30 chapters covers the respective philosophical literature in detail and makes specific suggestions for biology education the aim of this book is to inform biology educators undergraduate and graduate students in biology and related fields students in teacher training programs and curriculum developers about the current state of discussion on the major topics in the philosophy of biology and its implications for teaching biology in addition the book can be valuable to philosophers of biology as an introductory text in undergraduate and graduate courses

in science mechanistic and teleological explanations differ in their account for why a phenomenon occurs a mechanistic explanation presents events within the phenomenon s causal history while a teleological explanation presents the function or benefit of the phenomenon these explanation types present two different types of causal coherence relations a cause consequence relation for mechanistic explanations and an enabling relationship for teleological explanations the purpose of this study was to examine the role of the causal connective because in inference generation for the relations present in each explanation type two first experiments show that readers accept because as an appropriate causal connective to convey both cause consequence and enabling relationships in scientific explanations while the mediating ideas necessary for making sense of those relations differed between them a third experiment used an inference verification task to evaluate to what extent reading because influenced the inference of those mediating ideas online verification time and causal sentence reading time were measured to evaluate whether inference generation is driven more by a fixed schema related to the connective because or by the explanatory schema inherent in the context verification times did not differ significantly by connective use suggesting that inferential processing was unaffected by the inclusion of because however a non significant trend revealed opposite patterns in verification times for each explanation type when because was included results are discussed in light of the hypothesized accounts for inference generation in both explanation types and regarding the processing of scientific explanations generally

presents a collection of twelve essays on teleological explanation in the natural sciences dealing with considerations regarding teleological concepts in biology to the role of teleology in the human sciences and even in cosmology co published with the center for philosophy of science

this book explores the notion of organismal agency from the perspective of both philosophy and biology the two sections of the book delve into parallel themes including distinctions between organic and inorganic nature self organization autonomy self presentation memory umwelt and environmental influence the philosophical part focuses on the influential thinkers who shaped our perception of living entities beyond mere mechanisms it scrutinizes the concepts of organism and nature in the works of aristotle kant schelling and various processualists each chapter explores facets of their ideas that directly or indirectly foreshadowed or contributed to the formulation of the concept of agency the biological part of the book investigates various concepts associated with agency such as experience meaning attribution and phenotypic plasticity as well as reproduction organisational constraints modularity development of integrated phenotypes organismal choices or self representation through animal organisation in essence this work offers a comprehensive examination of organismal agency and its philosophical and biological foundations collaboratively authored by individuals from several institutions this publication caters primarily to researchers and students working at the intersection of philosophy and biology

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