

# Purposive Behaviour And Teleological Explanations

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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

leading scholars discuss the development and application of theories of causation and explanation offering a state of the art view of current work on these two topics

issues for 1896 1900 contain papers of the aristotelian society

monte johnson examines one of 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 has been

no comprehensive historical treatment of the issue aristotle is commonly considered the inventor of teleology although the precise term originated in the eighteenth century but 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

the boston colloquium for the philosophy of science began 25 years ago as an interdisciplinary interuniversity collaboration of friends and colleagues in philosophy logic the natural sciences and the social sciences psychology religious studies arts and literature and often the celebrated man in the street boston university came to be the home base within a few years proceedings were seen to be candidates for publication first suggested by gerald holton for the journal *synthese* within the *synthese* library both from the d reidel publishing company of dordrecht then and now in boston and lancaster too our colloquium was inheritor of the institute for the unity of science itself the american transplant of the vienna circle and we were repeatedly honored by encouragement and participation of the institute s central figure philipp frank the proceedings were selected edited revised in the light of the discussions at our colloquia and then other volumes were added which were derived from other symposia in boston or elsewhere a friendly autonomy independent of the *synthese* library proper existed for more than a decade and then the boston studies became fully separate we were grateful to jaakko hintikka for his continued encouragement within that library the series boston studies in the philosophy of science was conceived in the broadest framework of interdisciplinary and international concerns natural scientists mathematicians social scientists and philosophers have contributed to the series as have historians and sociologists of science linguists psychologists physicians and literary critics

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