

Reflections on Structuralism and Scientific Explanation

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Abstract

This paper is about structuralism as a form of reconstructing theories, associated with the work Sneed, Balzar and Moulines among others, and not about "structuralism" in any of its other manifold senses. The paper is a reflection in that it looks back on some earlier work of my own on the subject of structuralism and explanation, in which I argued that structuralism and my 'instance view' of explanation go well together, with structuralism providing the means to develop the idea of a theoretical instance. Bartelborth has suggested a view that has some similarity with my early ideas, so I reflect on those as well. I suggest, in opposition to both positions, that a causal account of explanation might also sit well with structuralism. This paper will appear in a special edition of Synthese edited by Moulines and devoted to structuralism themes.

Keywords: Explanation, Structuralism, Models

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