

Diego Zucca
Neo-Aristotelian Biofunctionalism

Università di Sassari
Italia
e-mail: zucca.diego@gmail.com

Current biological sciences standardly ascribe proper functions to biological parts, traits and mechanisms. In addition, realism about proper functions has an important space within the ongoing debate in philosophy of biology. Functional ascriptions are often conceived of as tracking objective, observer-independent higher-level features of the inquired object, rather than merely depending on a methodological, descriptive or epistemic attitude. In this paper, I argue for a realist account of proper bio-functions based on standard causal explanations of an organism's behaviour: such explanations are most intelligible if the autonomy of special sciences rests on the (relative) ontological and causal autonomy of their respective objects. I take into consideration the Aristotelian theoretical framework on teleological causation and reconstruct his arguments against his reductionist rivals. Finally, I consider the recent revival of Emergentism and try to establish to what extent the Neo-emergentist framework fits with the Aristotelian model, which I show to be partially valid also within an evolutionist view.