

An anti-causal theory of action as basis for historical explanations

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Causalists of human action explanation assume that in order for historiography and the humanities in general to be scientific at all, those disciplines have to take over the explanation methods of the sciences, i.e. their causal mode of explanation. But disciplines like history, sociology, political sciences, economics a.s.o. deal with human actions, that are to be explained teleologically. The true form of explanation of human actions takes the agent's intentions and beliefs as premises of a practical syllogism, from which the explanandum follows logically. I want to show that the causalist's picture is fuelled from several misconceptions: I) that actions are physical events, II) that actions are physical events accompanied by volitional mental occurrences, III) that these volitional mental occurrences are causing actions just like natural phenomena cause each other. Also, the explanation of human actions does not depend on so-called "normic law hypothesis". Instead, historical explanations work like everyday explanations of contemporary's actions. To explain an action by a reason is not to refer to another event which is a Humean cause of it, but to embed the action in a context such that it can be understood, what the agent went after and thereby it will be understood, what the action was.