

Table of Contents

1	Introduction	1
1.1	The problem of functional explanation.....	2
1.2	The main issues discussed in connection with the notion of ‘function’.....	11
1.3	An outline of my argument.....	12
2	Function and function attributions	17
2.1	Introduction	17
2.2	Different kinds of function	18
2.2.1	Function as activity.....	18
2.2.2	Function as causal role.....	19
	Example 2.1: the causal role of the heart.....	19
	Example 2.2: the causal role of the thymus.....	20
	Example 2.3: the snake’s forked tongue.....	22
	Characteristics of attributions of causal roles.....	23
2.2.3	Function as survival value.....	25
	Example 3.1: the survival value of egg shell removal in birds	25
	Example 3.2: social foraging by black-headed gulls.....	27
	Example 3.3: behavioural differences between two species of gazelles.....	27
	The snake’s forked tongue, revisited.....	29
	The thymus, continued.....	29
	Characteristics of claims about survival value.....	30
2.2.4	Function as selected effect.....	33
	Example 4.1: the function of inquilinism	33
	Characteristics of attributions of selected effects.....	34
2.3	The role of function attributions in biological enquiry	35
2.3.1	Introduction	35
2.3.2	Seven types of questions and their answers.....	36
	Introduction.....	36
	Functional morphology	41
	Ethology	48
	Conclusion.....	51
2.3.3	The role of the different kinds of function statements.....	52

Descriptions of (potential) activity (function1).....	52
Attributions of causal roles (function2)	52
Function as survival value –design explanation (function3).....	53
Function as selected effect–selection explanation (function4).....	53
2.4 Summary and conclusion.....	54
3 Biologists about function	57
3.1 Introduction	57
3.2 Bock and Von Wahlert (1965).....	57
3.3 Dullemeijer (1974).....	61
3.4 Zweers (1979)	64
3.5 Tinbergen (1963).....	66
4 The classical attempts	69
4.1 Introduction	69
4.2 Hempel (1959).....	70
4.2.1 Hempel’s account of ‘function’ and ‘functional analysis’	70
4.2.2 Why ‘having a function’ is not the same as ‘satisfying a need’	71
4.2.3 Examples of functional analyses: the need to circulate oxygen.....	73
4.2.4 Hempel’s account of the scientific value of functional analyses	76
4.2.5 Why Hempel’s account fails	78
4.3 Nagel.....	79
4.3.1 Nagel’s account of the meaning of function attributions.....	79
4.3.2 Nagel’s account of functional explanation.....	85
4.3.3 Physical possibilities.....	88
4.4 Conclusions	94
5 The causal role theory	95
5.0 Introduction to chapter 5 to 8.....	95
5.1 Introduction to chapter 5.....	96
5.2 Cummins’s account of function and functional explanation.....	97
5.2.1 Cummins’s criticism of previous accounts of functional explanation.....	97
5.2.2 Cummins’s account of functional explanation	98
5.2.3 Cummins’s account of function attributions.....	100
5.2.4 Summary of Cummins’s account.....	100
5.3 Evaluation of Cummins’s account.....	100
5.3.1 Functional explanation.....	101
5.3.2 Attributions of causal roles.....	102
The causal role of the heart	103

The causal role of the thymus	104
The snake's forked tongue.....	105
Conclusion.....	105
5.4 Design explanations and causality.....	106
5.5 Attributions of causal roles in selection explanations.....	107
5.5.1 A causal account of appeal to causal roles in evolutionary explanations..	107
5.5.2 Cummins's view of causal roles and natural selection.....	109
Cummins's examples and his main thesis	109
Cummins's first claim.....	111
Cummins's second claim	112
Cummins's third claim.....	113
Cummins's fourth claim	114
Cummins's conclusion.....	115
5.5.3 Conclusion	116
5.6 Discussion of some criticisms of Cummins's account.....	117
5.6.1 Amundson & Lauder (1994).....	117
5.6.2 Is Cummins's analysis in need of suppletion?.....	119
5.7 Conclusion	122
6 The survival value approach	125
6.1 Introduction	125
6.2 Attributions of causal roles and claims about survival value	126
6.2.1 The definition of 'function' according to the survival value approach	126
6.2.2 A survey of the differences.....	128
6.2.3 Example: respiration.....	130
6.2.4 Example: the heart.....	133
6.2.5 Example: territory behaviour.....	134
6.2.6 Example: egg shell removal in birds.....	135
6.2.7 Conclusion	137
6.3 Functional counterfactuals.....	138
6.3.1 Introduction	138
6.3.2 Canfield's account of function attributions.....	139
6.3.3 Functional counterfactuals in biology.....	142
6.3.4 Functional counterfactuals and laws of nature	143
6.3.5 How to determine the counterfactual situation	146
6.3.6 Are counterfactual judgements too complex to be evaluated?	149
6.3.7 Conclusion	150
6.4 Adaptation.....	151

6.4.1	Introduction	151
6.4.2	Adaptation as the fit between an organism and its way of life (adaptation2)	152
6.4.3	Adaptation as a genotypic process (adaptation3).....	156
6.4.4	Adaptation as a fitness enhancing trait (adaptation4).....	156
6.4.5	Adaptation as a trait built by selection (adaptation5).....	159
6.4.6	Conclusion	162
6.5	Canfield’s account of the explanatory role of appeals to survival value.....	163
6.5.1	Canfield’s account of functional explanation.....	163
6.5.2	Function attributions and design explanations	165
	Introduction.....	165
	Krogh’s (1941) explanation of the circulatory system.	166
	Schwenk’s (1994) explanation of why snakes have forked tongues...167	
	Habibi c.s. (1993) on gazelles.	167
	Tinbergen c.s. (1962) on egg shell removal.....	169
	Conclusion.....	169
6.5.3	Conclusion	171
6.6	Horan’s account of the explanatory role of appeals to survival value.....	171
6.6.1	Horan’s account of functional explanation	171
6.6.2	Evaluation of Horan’s account.....	173
	Functional explanation vs. evolutionary explanation.....	173
	Consequence laws?.....	174
	The explanatory role of statements of proximate function	177
6.6.3	Conclusion	177
6.7	Conclusion	179
7	The etiological theory	181
7.1	Introduction	181
7.2	Proper functions and selection.....	184
	7.2.1 The etiological account of function.....	184
	7.2.2 Selection explanations.....	189
7.3	The proper place of proper functions.....	192
	7.3.1 The evidence against proper functions.....	193
	7.3.2 Functional explanations.....	198
	Millikan	199
	Neander.....	205
	Kuipers & Wisniewski.....	208
	Conclusion.....	210

7.3.3	The normative role of function attributions.....	210
7.3.4	Conclusion	218
8	A non-causal account of design explanation	221
8.1	Introduction	221
8.2	The structure of design explanation	222
8.2.1	The core of a design explanation.....	222
8.2.2	Appeal to causal roles.....	225
8.2.3	Optimality claims and requirement claims	230
8.2.4	Requirements, problems, (dis)advantages.....	232
	Requirement explanations.....	232
	Optimality explanations	235
8.2.5	Appeal to physical laws.....	236
8.3	Fundamental relations.....	237
8.3.1	Introduction	237
8.3.2	Mayr's distinction between proximate and ultimate causes.....	239
8.3.3	My proposal.....	242
	Individual / population	243
	Causes / interdependencies	244
	Classification of explanations	246
8.3.4	Functional interdependencies.....	247
	The concept of need	247
	The relation 'demands for'	250
8.4	Design explanation and functional interdependencies.....	253
8.4.1	What is learned from a design explanation	253
	Why mammals gallop	255
	Photoreceptor twist.....	256
	Egg shell removal.....	261
8.4.2	Relation between design explanations and capacity explanations.....	262
8.4.3	Conclusion	263
	Summary	265
	Samenvatting	277
	Dankwoord	285
	References	287

