USE OF THESES

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Explanation
A Causally Constrained Pragmatic Account

A Thesis Submitted In Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the Australian National University

David Braddon-Mitchell
Department of Philosophy, RSSS
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For Deborah Lavers
This thesis is my own work, written while I was a Research Scholar in the Department of Philosophy, Research School of Social Sciences, at the Australian National University. As far as I am aware, all assistance and sources are acknowledged.

(David Braddon-Mitchell)
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Abstract

This thesis argues that explanation consists in giving pragmatically selected and often counterfactual information about causes. It begins by examining pragmatic theories of explanation, and argues that they are right insofar as pragmatics are properly a part of explanation, not just an adjunct to explanation. In the following chapters it is argued that while pragmatics may be necessary for an account of explanation, they are not sufficient. Additional constraints are imposed regarding the need for explanatory information to be causal information, and usually counterfactual explanation if higher-level explanation is to be accounted for. The account thus developed is then applied to problems in metaphysics, philosophy of psychology and philosophy of language. It is argued that causal reductionism can seem more plausible in the light of a good account of explanation, that propositional attitudes can be seen to have explanatory virtues (on a certain account), that Fodor's Language of Thought Hypothesis suffers in the light of the right account of explanation, and that taking into account certain interest dependencies in explanation makes the development of an account of the reference of kind terms easier.

A Note On Format

Each chapter has its own Table of Contents; these are quite detailed and include all sub-headings. The Abbreviated Table of Contents that follows includes only the highest level headings in each chapter.
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