

# ■ CONTENTS

## *Preface*

*xi*

## PART I ■ Scientific Explanations by Constraint

1	What Makes a Scientific Explanation Distinctively Mathematical?	3
1.1.	Distinctively Mathematical Explanations in Science as Non-Causal Scientific Explanations	3
1.2.	Are Distinctively Mathematical Explanations Set Apart by Their Failure to Cite Causes?	12
1.3.	Mathematical Explanations Do Not Exploit Causal Powers	22
1.4.	How These Distinctively Mathematical Explanations Work	25
1.5.	Elaborating My Account of Distinctively Mathematical Explanations	32
1.6.	Conclusion	44
2	"There Sweep Great General Principles Which All the Laws Seem to Follow"	46
2.1.	The Task: To Unpack the Title of This Chapter	46
2.2.	Constraints versus Coincidences	49
2.3.	Hybrid Explanations	58
2.4.	Other Possible Kinds of Constraints besides Conservation Laws	64
2.5.	Constraints as Modally More Exalted Than the Force Laws They Constrain	68
2.6.	My Account of the Difference between Constraints and Coincidences	72
2.7.	Accounts That Rule Out Explanations by Constraint	86
3	The Lorentz Transformations and the Structure of Explanations by Constraint	96
3.1.	Transformation Laws as Constraints or Coincidences	96
3.2.	The Lorentz Transformations Given an Explanation by Constraint	100
3.3.	Principle versus Constructive Theories	112
3.4.	How This Non-Causal Explanation Comes in Handy	123
3.5.	How Explanations by Constraint Work	128

3.6. Supplying Information about the Source of a Constraint's Necessity	136
3.7. What Makes a Constraint "Explanatorily Fundamental"?	141
Appendix: A Purely Kinematical Derivation of the Lorentz Transformations	145
 4 The Parallelogram of Forces and the Autonomy of Statics	150
4.1. A Forgotten Controversy in the Foundations of Classical Physics	150
4.2. The Dynamical Explanation of the Parallelogram of Forces	154
4.3. Duchayla's Statical Explanation	159
4.4. Poisson's Statical Explanation	167
4.5. Statical Explanation under Some Familiar Accounts of Natural Law	173
4.6. My Account of What Is at Stake	178
 PART II ■ Two Other Varieties of Non-Causal Explanation in Science	
 5 Really Statistical Explanations and Genetic Drift	189
5.1. Introduction to Part II	189
5.2. Really Statistical (RS) Explanations	190
5.3. Drift	196
 6 Dimensional Explanations	204
6.1. A Simple Dimensional Explanation	204
6.2. A More Complicated Dimensional Explanation	209
6.3. Different Features of a Derivative Law May Receive Different Dimensional Explanations	215
6.4. Dimensional Homogeneity	219
6.5. Independence from Some Other Quantities as Part of a Dimensional Explanans	221
 PART III ■ Explanation in Mathematics	
 7 Aspects of Mathematical Explanation: Symmetry, Salience, and Simplicity	231
7.1. Introduction to Proofs That Explain Why Mathematical Theorems Hold	231
7.2. Zeitz's Biased Coin: A Suggestive Example of Mathematical Explanation	234
7.3. Explanation by Symmetry	238

7.4. A Theorem Explained by a Symmetry in the Unit Imaginary Number	239
7.5. Geometric Explanations That Exploit Symmetry	245
7.6. Generalizing the Proposal	254
7.7. Conclusion	268
8 Mathematical Coincidences and Mathematical Explanations That Unify	276
8.1. What Is a Mathematical Coincidence?	276
8.2. Can Mathematical Coincidence Be Understood without Appealing to Mathematical Explanation?	283
8.3. A Mathematical Coincidence's Components Have No Common Proof	287
8.4. A Shift of Context May Change a Proof's Explanatory Power	298
8.5. Comparison to Other Proposals	304
8.6. Conclusion	311
9 Desargues's Theorem as a Case Study of Mathematical Explanation, Existence, and Natural Properties	314
9.1. A Case Study	314
9.2. Three Proofs—but Only One Explanation—of Desargues's Theorem in Two-Dimensional Euclidean Geometry	315
9.3. Why Desargues's Theorem in Two-Dimensional Euclidean Geometry Is Explained by an Exit to the Third Dimension	323
9.4. Desargues's Theorem in Projective Geometry: Unification and Existence in Mathematics	327
9.5. Desargues's Theorem in Projective Geometry: Explanation and Natural Properties in Mathematics	335
9.6. Explanation by Subsumption under a Theorem	341
9.7. Conclusion	345
PART IV ■ Explanations in Mathematics and Non-Causal Scientific Explanations—Together	
10 Mathematical Coincidence and Scientific Explanation	349
10.1. Physical Coincidences That Are No Mathematical Coincidence	349
10.2. Explanations from Common Mathematical Form	350
10.3. Explanations from Common Dimensional Architecture	361
10.4. Targeting New Explananda	368

11	What Makes Some Reducible Physical Properties Explanatory?	371
11.1.	Some Reducible Properties Are Natural	371
11.2.	Centers of Mass and Reduced Mass	378
11.3.	Reducible Properties on Strevens's Account of Scientific Explanation	381
11.4.	Dimensionless Quantities as Explanatorily Powerful Reducible Properties	384
11.5.	My Proposal	386
11.6.	Conclusion: All Varieties of Explanation as Species of the Same Genus	394
	Notes	401
	References	461
	Index	483