

CONTENTS

List of Illustrations	xv
Preface	xvii
Acknowledgments	xxi

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION: DISCOVERING MECHANISMS 1

Learning How Curare Kills	1
Learning to Look for Mechanisms	2
Discovery: The Product Shapes the Process of Discovery	7
Strategies from History	10
The Mechanistic Integration of Biology	12
The Pragmatic Power of Mechanism	12
Bibliographic Discussion	13

CHAPTER 2 BIOLOGICAL MECHANISMS 15

What Is a Mechanism?	15
Machines vs. Mechanisms	15
Components and Features of Mechanisms	16
Entities and Activities	16
Set Up, Start, and Finish Conditions	18
Productive Continuity	19
Regularity	19
Organization	20
Levels of Mechanisms	21
Functions	23
Mechanisms in a Wider Context	24
Multilevel, Multifield Perspective on Mechanisms	25
Conclusion	26
Bibliographic Discussion	26

CHAPTER 3 REPRESENTING BIOLOGICAL MECHANISMS	30
Introduction: Representing Mechanisms	30
Dimensions of Mechanism Schemas	30
Completeness: Black Box to Gray Box Sketch to Glass Box Schema	31
Detail: Abstract to Specific	32
Support: How-possibly, How-plausibly, How-actually	34
Scope: Narrow to Wide	35
Visual Representations of Mechanisms	38
Mathematical and Graphical Representations of Mechanisms	41
Conclusion	50
Bibliographic Discussion	51
CHAPTER 4 CHARACTERIZING THE PHENOMENON	52
Characterizations of Phenomena Shape the Discovery of Mechanisms	52
Phenomena Are Not Just Proper Functions	53
Phenomena, Data, and Experimental Techniques	54
What Is Involved in Characterizing a Phenomenon?	56
Precipitating Conditions and Manifestations	56
Inhibiting Conditions	57
Modulating Conditions	58
Nonstandard Conditions	58
By-Products	59
Summary: Characterizing the Phenomenon	60
Recharacterizing the Phenomenon	60
Fictional Phenomena	60
Lumping and Splitting	61
Conclusion	62
Bibliographic Discussion	62

CHAPTER 5 STRATEGIES FOR MECHANISM SCHEMA

CONSTRUCTION 64

Discovery: From Aha to Strategy 64

The Product Shapes the Process of Discovery 65

Guidance from the Phenomenon and the Store 67

Localization 69

Employ a Schema Type 71

Modular Subassembly 74

Forward/Backward Chaining 77

Conclusion 80

Bibliographic Discussion 81

CHAPTER 6 VIRTUES AND VICES OF MECHANISM SCHEMAS 83

Introduction 83

Virtues of Good Theories 83

Evaluating Mechanism Schemas: Superficiality, Incompleteness,

Incorrectness 86

Superficiality 87

Incompleteness 89

The “And How Does That Work?” Test and the Vice of Boxology 90

The “What If That Worked Differently?” Test and the Vice of

Chainology 91

The Build It Test 92

Incorrectness 94

Conclusion 95

Bibliographic Discussion 95

CHAPTER 7 CONSTRAINTS ON MECHANISM SCHEMAS 97

- Introduction: Constraints and Correctness 97
- Theoretical Background of Harvey's Discovery 98
- Locations 102
- Structures/Entities 104
- Abilities 106
- Activities 109
- Timing 111
- Productivity 113
- Roles 114
- Global Organization 115
- Conclusion 117
- Bibliographic Discussion 117

CHAPTER 8 EXPERIMENTS AND THE SEARCH FOR MECHANISMS 119

- Introduction 119
- Experiments for Testing Causal Relevance 120
 - Experimental System, Intervene, Detect 120
- Interlevel Experiments for Testing Componential Relevance 125
 - Interference Experiments 126
 - Stimulation Experiments 127
 - Activation Experiments 128
- Complex Experiments for Asking Specific Mechanistic Questions 129
 - By-What-Activity Experiments 129
 - By-What-Entity Experiments 131
 - Series of Experiments and Multiple Interventions 133
 - Preparing the Experimental System 137
- Conclusion 141
- Bibliographic Discussion 142

CHAPTER 9 STRATEGIES FOR REVISING MECHANISM SCHEMAS 144

Introduction 144

General Types of Anomalies 145

Experimental and Data Analysis Errors and Falsifying Anomalies 145

Monster, Special Case, and Model Anomalies 146

Clues from the Anomaly 147

A Monster Anomaly 148

Localizing and Fixing Special Case and Model Anomalies 151

Indicative Anomalies in the Search for Mechanisms 152

Localizing a Model Anomaly: The Discovery of Messenger RNA 154

Modular Redesign 157

Conclusion 159

Bibliographic Discussion 159

CHAPTER 10 INTERFIELD AND INTERLEVEL INTEGRATION 161

Different Fields, Different Questions 161

Simple Mechanistic Integration: Discovering the Mechanism of Protein

Synthesis 164

Interlevel Integration: Discovering the Mechanisms of Learning 167

Sequential Intertemporal Integration: Sequential Relations among

Mendelian Genetic and Molecular Biological Mechanisms 172

Continuous Intertemporal Interlevel Integration: The Evolutionary

Synthesis 177

Conclusion 182

Bibliographic Discussion 183

CHAPTER 11 THE PRAGMATIC VALUE OF KNOWING HOW SOMETHING WORKS	186
Introduction: Control	186
Estuary Mechanisms: Eliminating Dead Zones	187
Cystic Fibrosis Mechanisms and Design of Therapies	189
Optogenetics: Controlling the Brain with Light	193
Conclusion	195
Bibliographic Discussion	195
CHAPTER 12 CONCLUSION	196
Discovering Mechanisms	196
Summaries	199
References	203
Index	219