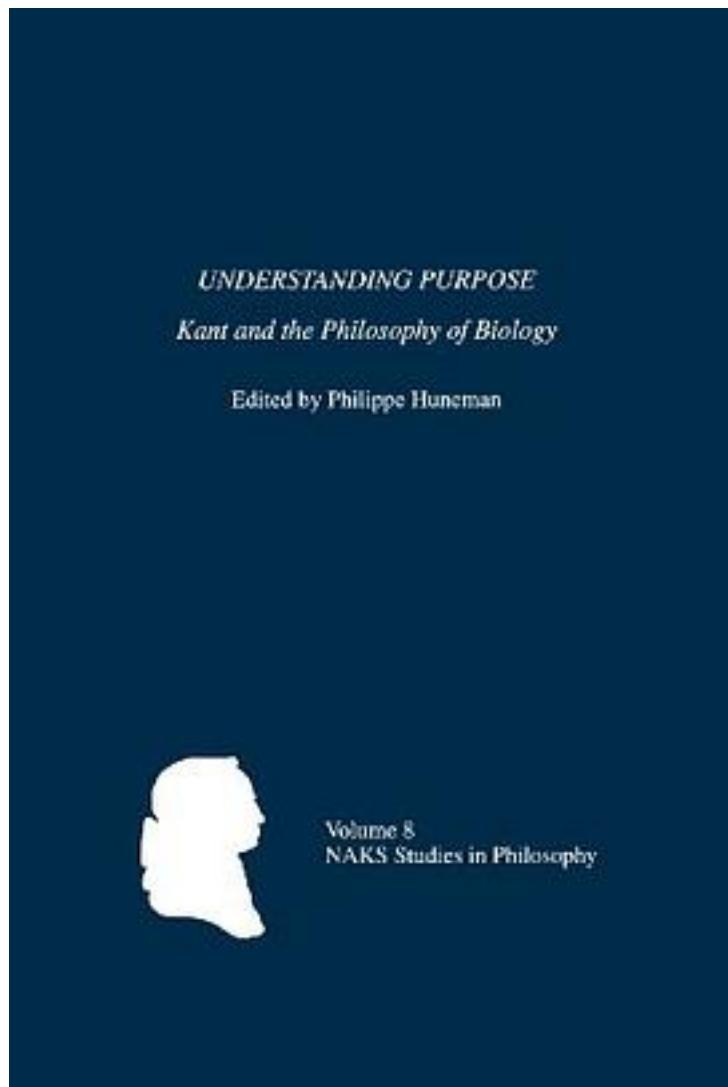


Understanding Purpose



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Understanding Purpose is an exploration of the central concept of natural purpose (Naturzweck) in Kant's philosophy of biology. Kant's work in this area is marked by a strong teleological concern: living organisms, in his view, are qualitatively different from mechanistic devices, and as a result they cannot be understood by means of the same principles. At the same time, Kant's own use of the concept of purpose does not presuppose any theological commitments, and is merely "regulative," that is, it is employed as a heuristic device. The contributors to this volume also investigate the following key historical questions relating to Kant's philosophy of biology: how does it relate to European work in the life sciences that was done before Kant arrived on the scene? How did Kant's unique approach to the philosophy of biology in turn influence later work in this area? The issues explored in this volume are as pertinent to the history of philosophy as they are to the history of science—it is precisely the blurred boundaries between these two disciplines that allows for new perspectives on Kantianism and early nineteenth-century German biology to emerge. Contributors: Jean-Claude Dupont, Mark Fisher, Philippe Huneman, Robert J. Richards, Phillip R. Sloan, Stéphane Schmitt, and John Zammito. Philippe Huneman is researcher at the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique Unit of the Université Paris.

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