

Assessment 5 Explanation

Note: For this assessment, you will refer to the previous reading, A. Alexander and D. Zare's "Do Bubbles in Guinness Go Down?"

Alexander and Zare's "Do Bubbles in Guinness Go Down?" offers an explanation of why bubbles in a certain freshly poured liquid appear to flow downward. This explanation is relevant as a case study for illustrating and comparing different philosophical accounts of explanation, each of which offers a different reason for why scientific explanations are explanatory. Alexander and Zare, of course, are not concerned with *why* the explanation explains; it is enough for them that it *does* explain. One task for philosophers of science, however, is to understand how or why an explanation happens to explain. Completing this task typically involves *agreeing* with scientists about *whether* an explanation explains, in order to focus on what it is about the explanation that makes it an explanation.

Summarize Alexander and Zare's explanation of why bubbles in Guinness go down. Then select two accounts of scientific explanation (deductive-nomological, causal, unification, pragmatic, mechanistic). Describe each account, and then apply each account to Alexander and Zare's explanation. Finally, assess which of the two accounts best explains why Alexander and Zare's explanation is explanatory.

