THE METHOD OF REFLECTIVE EQUILIBRIUM:
A Solution to the Problem of Induction?
THE PROBLEM OF INDUCTION

- How do we know that our inductive inferences are valid?
  - Ex: The rising of the sun tomorrow

- How do we justify our beliefs?
  - Intuitions vs. Observations
REFLECTIVE EQUILIBRIUM

Idea introduced by Nelson Goodman, but given name by John Rawls

The state at which one’s intuitions about some particular case are in complete agreement with one’s general theory about that case.

Narrow vs. Wide

Ex: Kripke’s Ben Franklin example
THE METHOD OF REFLECTIVE EQUILIBRIUM

- The process by which one seeks Reflective Equilibrium, i.e., the process of balancing intuitions and theories
  - Justification for our beliefs provided by coherence

- “A rule is amended if it yields an inference we are unwilling to accept; an inference is rejected if it violates a rule we are unwilling to amend” (Goodman 67).

- Method of RE a replacement for Method of Induction?
THE RELIABILITY OF OBSERVATIONS AND THE NEW RIDDLE OF INDUCTION

PROBLEM OF INDUCTION COMICS

We observe that "all emeralds are green," and conclude that this is a fact of nature...

But all emeralds are also "grue"!

Grue?

Grue means "green if first observed before some future time (say, Jan. 1, 2006) and blue if first observed afterwards."

So "all emeralds are grue" is an equally good inference?

Exactly! But as a scientific fact, it makes a totally different prediction for future results!

If that's right, it's a big problem for the scientific method!

ON JANUARY 1, 2006, T-REX'S FEARS ARE REALIZED:

Science is FUCKED!

I know! PRETTY SCARY.

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PROBLEMS FOR THE METHOD OF RE

- Coherence does not imply truth
  - The Gambler’s Fallacy

- Pluralism
  - Problem in science
  - Ex: Geocentric vs. Heliocentric

- Stich …
REFERENCES

- Goodman photo:  
  http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~phildept/images/goodman.jpg


- Grue comic: http://www.qwantz.com/fanart/grue.png

- Professor Marcus’ notes