

Class 26 - Schneider

Contemporary Philosophy

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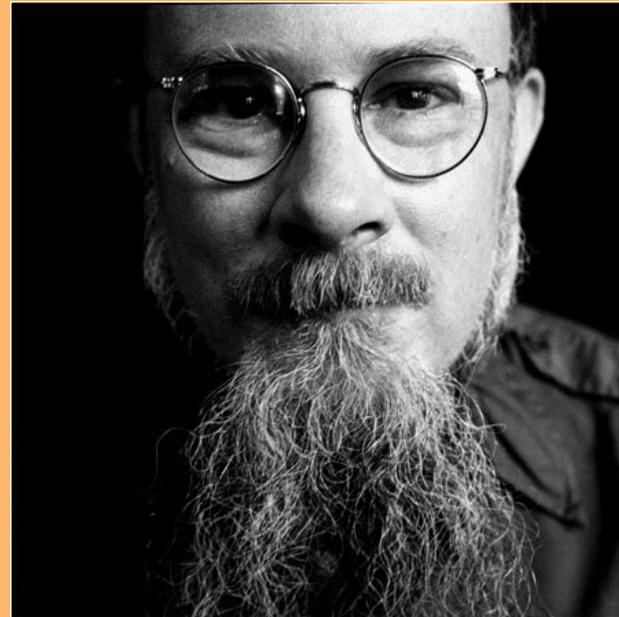
Review of Part II

Background

- ▶ Intuitions and possible worlds
- ▶ Stich, and cognitive diversity
- ▶ Hempel and the D-N model

HS/MRL

- ▶ Parsimony
- ▶ Access



Review of Part II, Part II

Thought Experiments

- ▶ Kripke/Armstrong
- ▶ Earman's single-particle
- ▶ Tooley's 10 particles
- ▶ Tooley/Carroll's 8/9 X-particles in Y-fields
- ▶ Carroll's W-particles
- ▶ Carroll's Mirror



The thought experiments are intended to support the anti-Humean view that there is more to the world than local matters of particular fact.

The Humean universe is too barren.

Against the Thought Experiments



Beebe

- ▶ The thought experiments are based on intuitions about the governance of laws of nature.
- ▶ The Humean doesn't think that laws govern.
- ▶ Beebe claims to have intuitions that the laws merely summarize.



Loewer

- ▶ We do have anti-Humean intuitions.
- ▶ But we should dismiss them.
- ▶ Stich and cognitive diversity

Schneider



She mentions three Humean replies to the counter-examples, though there are really two approaches.

First, the Negotiability Reply: Intuitions are plastic.

Second, the On-balance Reply:

- ▶ Accept the anti-Humean intuitions, but deny that the counter-examples suffice to reject HS.
- ▶ The question is whether, on balance, the Humean better captures our ordinary notion of the laws of nature than the anti-Humean.

Schneider opposes Beebee, and her claim that intuitions are negotiable.

She accepts Loewer's methodology, but rejects his conclusion.

Beebee

Beebee argued that the debate over the status of laws resolved to a debate about our intuitions.

- ▶ The anti-Humean relies on intuitions about governance.
- ▶ The Humean relies on intuitions about local matters of fact.
- ▶ The counter-examples just re-state these intuitions in veiled ways.

Schneider responds that this way of viewing the debate is misleading, 311.

Even Beebee acknowledges that she is biting a bullet in response to Carroll's argument; see Beebee 593.

Philosophy is not Burden-of-Proof Volleyball



Offending against pre-theoretic intuitions levies a burden on the Humean.

The Humean must provide some reason for abandoning those intuitions.

(C) Ceteris paribus, choose the philosophical theory of F that best accommodates our (relevant) pre-theoretic intuitions about F.

The Negotiability Reply not only offends pre-theoretic intuitions, it offends the considered judgments of scientists, and the practice of science.

Intuitions vs Scientific Practice

Maudlin argued that practicing scientists presuppose a more substantial notion of the laws, and physical possibility.

“Contemporary practice in physics not only makes heavy use of talk of laws of nature, but, quite significantly, it *precludes* a Humean account of laws” (314).

Philosophical debates over the laws of nature don't affect practicing science.

Schneider's point goes in the other direction.

Which Intuitions?

Consider the three principles Schneider discusses on p 315.

- ▶ i. What the laws at a world are is stable under minor counterfactual differences in boundary conditions.
- ▶ ii. The laws govern or guide the evolution of events at a world.
- ▶ iii. The laws do not supervene on non-nomic events.

Beebe's claim is that the anti-Humean relies on a conception of laws as governing, ii.

The anti-Humean does not commit to a contentious view of the laws as revealed or created by a divine lawgiver.

Against Governance Intuitions

“It is important to notice that the mere fact that a metaphysical theory speaks of God ‘setting up a world’ to illustrate its position does not show that the appeal of the ontological primitive in question ultimately derives from the notion of divine law. Appeals to a divine force, setting up ontological shop, occur throughout the metaphysics literature, being employed in motivating views that clearly do not depend, for their plausibility, upon the notion of a divine lawgiver” (317-8).

Further, it is not the metaphors with civil law, or moral law, that support the anti-Humean thought experiments.

Those thought experiments rely merely on the intuition that laws of nature are ontologically basic, autonomous of local matters of particular facts rather than dependent exclusively on them.

What do the thought experiments show?

- ▶ i. What the laws at a world are is stable under minor counterfactual differences in boundary conditions.
- ▶ ii. The laws govern or guide the evolution of events at a world.
- ▶ iii. The laws do not supervene on non-nomic events.

The anti-Humean relies only on the weaker claim i to conclude iii.

One possible response for the anti-Humean is to deny that ii is a necessary part of the argument.

Then, one might wonder how the anti-Humean gets from i to iii.

Furthermore, if the Humean can account for i, then the thought experiments which are supposed to support i won't serve as support for iii.

Conclusions on Negotiability

On the one hand, I want to say that it seems unlikely that the Humean can support *i*, despite the claims of the anonymous reviewer, 315-6.

On the other hand, if the Humean can't even justify *i*, then HS, and the whole MRL project, is fundamentally misguided.



The On-Balance Reply

When we choose a theory, we try to find the one that best fits the evidence.

No theory will accommodate all our intuitions.

We have to look for the best fit.

Loewer: the intuitions, even if we accept them, should not be decisive against MRL.

But, worries about some intuitions (about, say, force) may not infect other intuitions.

Primitivism

What can we say about the laws of nature, if HS does not suffice?

HS promoted a reductive view of the laws.

- ▶ The local matters of particular fact were ontologically basic
- ▶ The laws are derived from them.

Armstrong: the laws of nature are necessary relations among universals.

- ▶ Universals are ontologically basic.
- ▶ This position remains open, if obscure

Alternatively, one could take the laws themselves as ontologically basic, as fundamental furniture of the universe.

Scientific Practice

Maudlin argued that physicists don't try to reduce the laws

Problems with separability.

But, scientists are generally insensitive to metaphysical questions.

