

Hume's Psychological Definition of Causation

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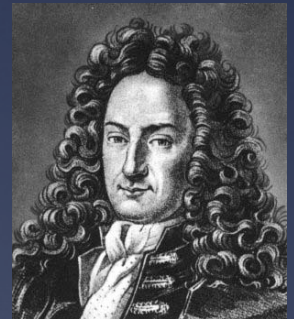
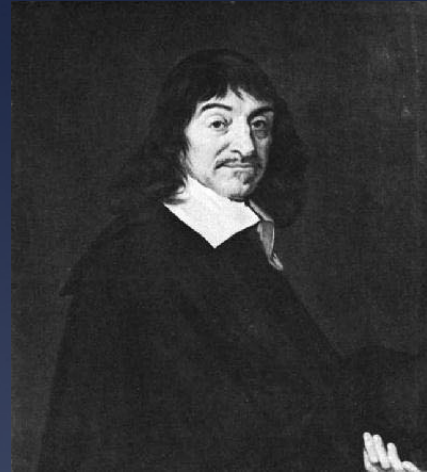


Recap: Hume's Thought Process

- * Empiricist: Philosophically Skeptical
- * We experience events and notice regularities in nature
- * Through induction we attempt to explain patterns of events
- * We formulate laws of nature in which particular causes result in particular events
- * They all make sense in the world we conceive, because we see patterns so often

Development of These Ideas

- * Descartes
 - * Innate Ideas
 - * Induction leads to truth
- * Leibniz
 - * Infinite analysis and Finite analysis
 - * Everything can be reduced to contradictions
- * Hume
 - * The universe functions through regularity
 - * Contrary to Berkeley, Hume believes there are no miracles.
 - * The human mind simply cannot understand the laws of the universe



Problems of Induction

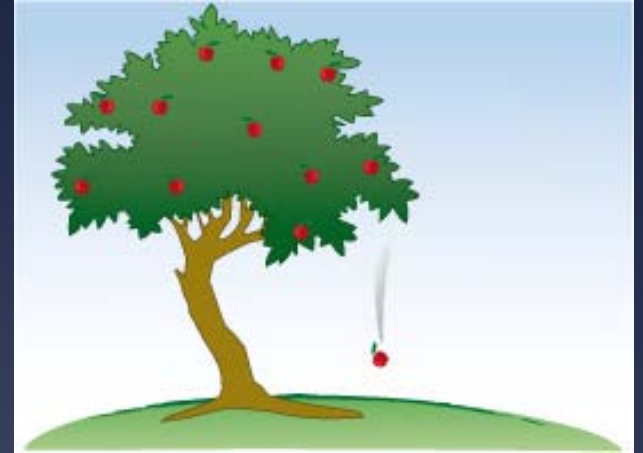
- * Weak Problem
 - * We have limited intelligences
- * Strong Problem
 - * Even given all possible evidence from the past, we cannot know that the laws of nature will not shift radically and unexpectedly.
- * New Riddle
 - * Even given that the laws of nature remain stable, we do not know which predicates are confirmed

We Experience our Senses, Not the World

- * We don't know the world, we just know how we experience the world.
 - * Agrees with Berkeley in this regard
- * We don't experience the desk, we experience the subjective sensation of touching the desk.
- * Example of paradox of the basins by Locke - Subjective experience, neither hand's experience can we deem to be true.

How we Build Natural Laws

- * 1. All apples fall to the ground.
- * 2. All fruit falls to the ground.
- * 3. All objects fall to the ground.
- * Scientific claims are general principles that describe specific occurrences.
- * "The leap from specific to universal involves claims about causal connections."
- * "When we say, therefore, that one object is connected with another, we mean only that they have acquired a connection in our thought" (*Enquiry*, §VII.2, AW 563a).

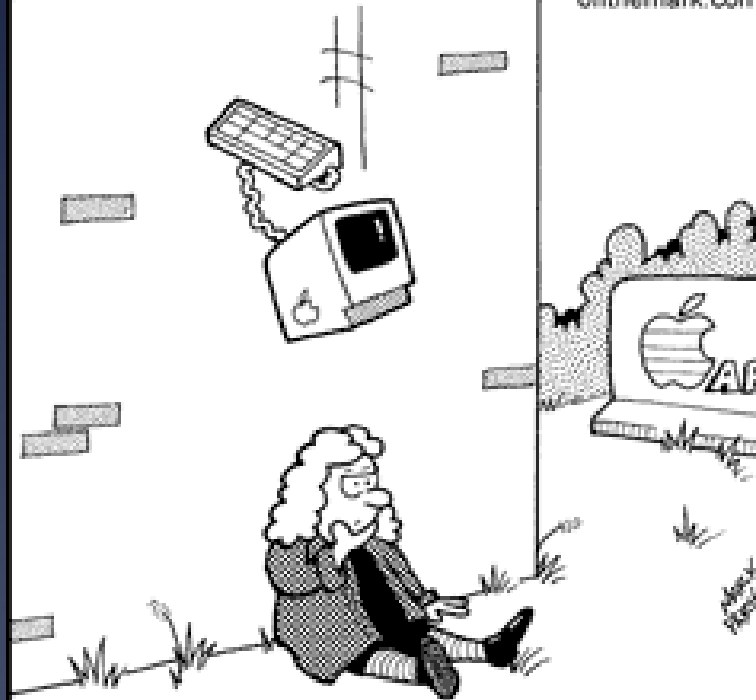


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SIR ISAAC NEWTON'S GREAT, GREAT,
GREAT, GREAT, GREAT, GREAT GRANDSON.

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Hume's Claim



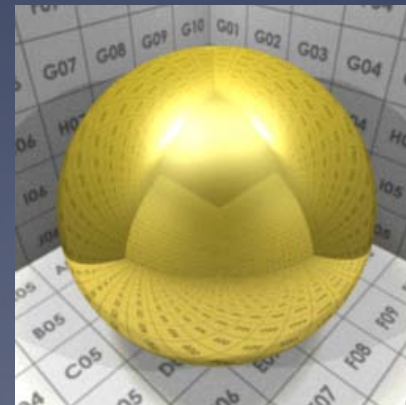
- * We observe past regularity and assume that it will continue into the future, but we have no evidence to support this claim.
- * We have insufficient evidence to obtain insight into the true laws of the universe. As such we use induction to make unsupported assumptions about connections, and explain them as natural laws.

Psychological Definition of Causation

- * Accept conjunction; do not assume connection
- * Form a definition of cause and effect in objective terms.
- * Hume's Definition of Causation:
 - * *"...an object followed by another, and whose appearance always conveys the thought to that other"* (Enquiry, §VII.2, AW 563b).
- * Cause and effect relationships are mental constructs, not universal.

So What?

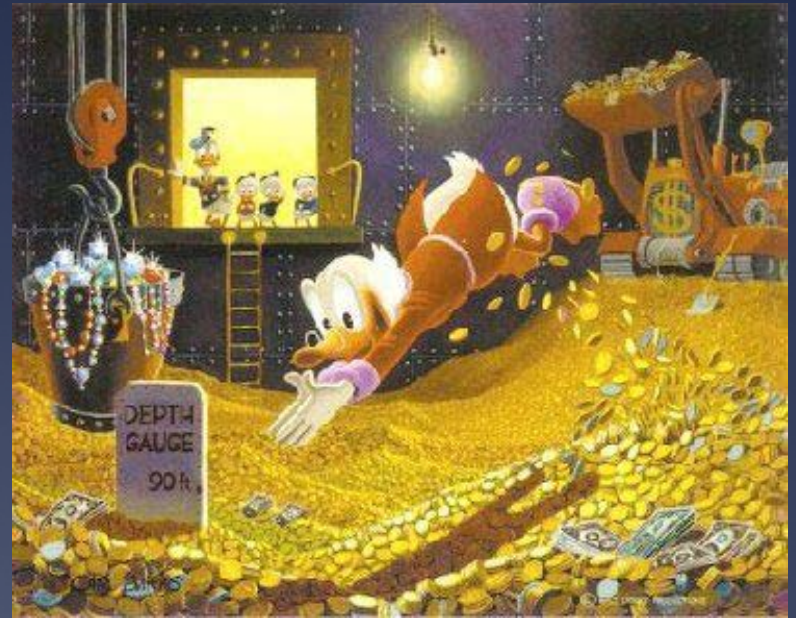
- * *Philosophically*, we should not explain the world using laws based on connections.
- * *Practically*, Hume acknowledges that it is useful to depend on natural, constructed laws.
- * Hume believes in a material world
- * Sphere of Uranium vs. Sphere of Gold
 - * We know that you cannot have a sphere of Uranium that large because it will explode





Sphere of Uranium vs. Sphere of Gold

- * Hume believes neither are laws
- * We know that with enough gold, a sphere that size could be possible
- * But a sphere of uranium that size would be too unstable to exist
- * For practicality, what should we believe?



Questions

- * What can we gain by being philosophically skeptical?
- * Do you agree with Hume?
- * Should we discredit the scientific method?
- * Could there be a compromise between what Hume is arguing and scientific law?

Sources

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