

The New Riddle of Induction

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Goodman thinks that there is a new problem of induction, one that is more pressing than the old one that has been ‘solved, or dissolved’.

1 THE OLD PROBLEM

How can we be justified about our judgements about the future?

Hume’s answer is to appeal to a story about the psychology of how humans make predictions about the future. But it’s unclear if this really addresses the problem.

Goodman mentions a few different ways of interpreting the Old Problem. What is the right way of interpreting the problem?

Goodman accepts a response to the Old Problem that accepts a certain kind of circularity. (The response focuses on the *coherence* between particular instances and general rules.)

Because he thinks that the old problem of justifying inductive inferences is dissolved, his main focus is on getting clear about what the rules of inductive inference are. He calls this the *constructive task of confirmation theory*.

2 THE NEW RIDDLE

Confirmation appears to depend upon more than just the syntactic form of the hypothesis.

That one piece of copper conducts electricity confirms the hypothesis that all do. That one person has three children doesn’t confirm the hypothesis that all do.

The difference is that the copper hypothesis is *law-like*.

But there are some harder problems of this kind.

Suppose that all emeralds examined before 2022 are green. This confirms the hypothesis that all emeralds are green.

Let's define the term *grue*. Something is grue if it either (i) examined before 2022 and is green, or (ii) if it is not examined before 2022 and is blue.

So, all emeralds we have observed are grue. So, it seems like we have evidence that all emeralds are grue.

But if all emeralds are grue then when we observe emeralds after 2022 they will be blue.

But this is incompatible with all emeralds being green. It looks like if we define up strange properties like this then we can confirm almost anything we want. What has gone wrong?

The most common response is that there is something wrong with the property *grue*, which implies that 'all emeralds are grue' is not lawlike.

Grue seems to inappropriately refer to a particular time. And maybe laws cannot do this, not involve other spatial or temporal restrictions.

However, we can define blue and green in terms of grue and *bleen*. And the definitions of blue and green will also contain reference to particular times. So it seems we cannot distinguish between grue and green on these grounds.

The new riddle is different from the old one. The old problem was about how we could have evidence that the future resembles the past, or 'Why does a positive instance of a hypothesis give us grounds for predicting further instances?' The new riddle is, in effect about what it is for the future to resemble the past. Why do emeralds being green in the future resemble the past but emeralds being grue in the future not resemble the past?