

From PPC to PSR
Realism to Conceptualism

Dominic Jones

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Aquinas (1225–1274): cause

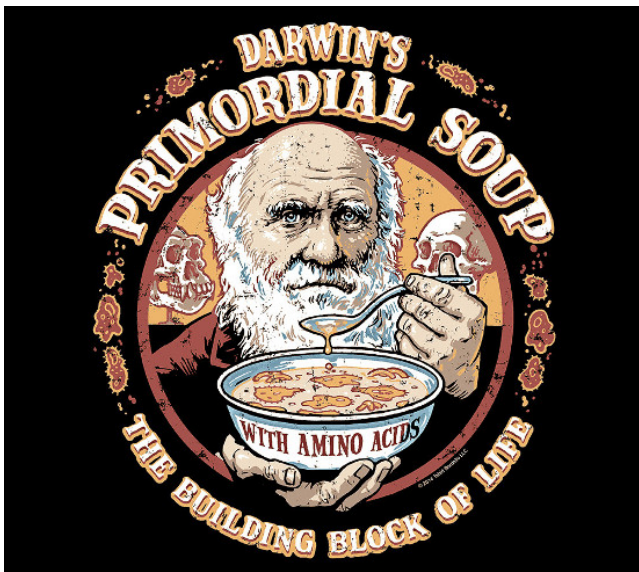


Principle of proportionate causality

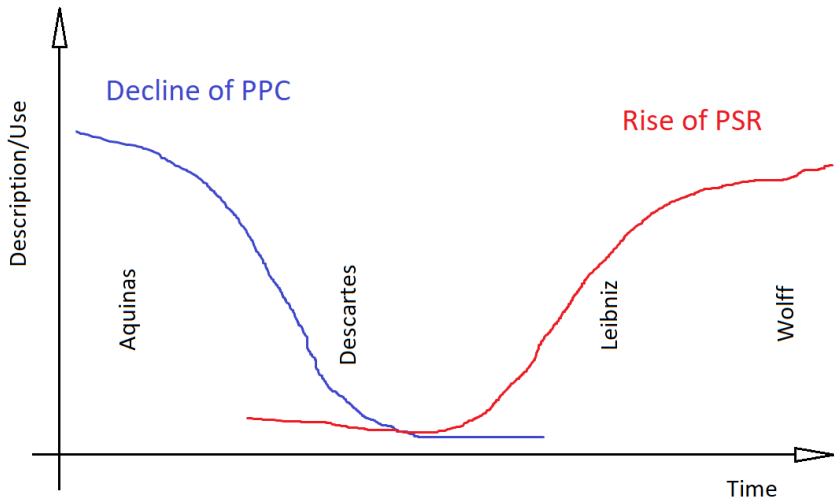
An effect is found in its cause ...

Formally	directly possessing it
Virtually	'possessing it through the totality of the causes'
Eminently	making (creating) it

Do amino acids cause concepts?



The great change



Descartes (1596–1650): cause and idea



Third meditation

It follows from this both that something cannot arise from nothing, and also that what is more perfect—that is, contains in itself more reality— cannot arise from what is less perfect.

And this is transparently true not only in the case of effects which possess actual or formal reality, but also in the case of ideas, where one is considering only objective reality.

Leibniz (1646–1716): PC and PSR



Die philosophischen Schriften

Our reasonings are founded on two great principles, that of contradiction, in virtue of which we judge that to be false which involves contradiction and that true, which is opposed or contradictory to the false.

And that of sufficient reason, in virtue of which we hold that no fact can be real or existent, no statement true, unless there be a sufficient reason why it is so and not otherwise, although most often these reasons cannot be known to us.

Wolff (1679–1754): PC and then PSR



Gurr's view on Wolff

Wolff unified that realm of the rational around the Principle of Contradiction. We can note the lack of existential reference in the fact that this realm remained distinct from that of the singular concrete sensible data of experience. Under the rise of empirical science, Wolff and his successors heightened the reality of the realm of the rational and deepened the realisation and the value of its experience.

But the systematic failure to incorporate it into an existential union with the realm of the rational will continue to haunt modern philosophy.

The heart of the problem

- If there is no metaphysical principle to govern the pruning of candidate causes that may be proposed to contribute to an effect then any number of 'candidate causes' may be entertained indefinitely, perpetuating an 'equality of theories'.
- PSR appears to exacerbate the problem as it offers no means of adjudication. Rather, it appears to offer a circular answer: the better theory is that with a greater sufficient reason. But what are sufficient reasons grounded upon?

The heart of the problem

- PPC, whilst a rather thin 'principle', at least points to substances which have certain powers.
- I claim that for a present effect the substances which contribute their causal powers are discernible, even if they are not apparent.
- I think this claim is hidden somewhere in PPC. However, I do not think it is anywhere in PSR. I think that to deny the claim would render any Realist philosophy dead.

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