

M20HSS316-ITP/Assignment-7/20171047/CLD

There are multiple issues to be considered here. Firstly, is the simpler explanation always the better one? Going by the principle of Occam's razor, that seems to be true. A model or theory which sufficiently explains a phenomena beyond reasonable doubt should be preferred over another which perhaps clarifies a few more cherry picked bits, but ends up increasing the overall complexity. However, a conspiracy theory rings a few other bells in addition to being overly complex. In a way it is more inductive than deductive. Suppose a murder has taken place, a conspiracy-theoretic detective would first frame a story in which P is the murderer, and then use whatever they can get their hands on as evidence to justify some of their story's aspects. A 'proper' detective believing in deductive reasoning would go the other way round - look at the evidence first and then try to reason out characteristics of the murderer.

Thus, there is more than just simplicity involved. The way you arrive at your solution (solution being the explaining hypothesis) is actually more important than what or how simple the solution is. Before we move on to what is an economical explanation, an understanding of attachment with the (so-called) real world is necessary. Looking at how previous phenomena and cases of similar styles were explained will help prevent a possible double standard. Thus, if we explain event A with a deductive explanation of some kind, an event B should be described based on a similar analysis. Note that we do not intend to hand out a one size fits all theory, however a large deviation in the approach needs to be avoided.

We can have a skeptical argument in favour of flat earth as: "All the evidence available proving that the earth is an oblate spheroid are actually well measured fabrications." This is indeed simple and economical. However, we need to look at reproducibility of an argument structure. Suppose, the skeptic flat-earther is mugged the following day and the mugger commits the crime out in the open without a mask and there are eye witnesses plus video evidence. In spite of all that, the judge uses the skeptical argument against the skeptic: 'you and the onlookers were in a hypnotised state and the video is actually a fabrication by a much bigger criminal mind who we are yet to identify and this person who you think is the mugger is therefore innocent.' The skeptic's reaction to this will be particularly interesting. The takeaway from this: it is important to consider the generalizability of an argument structure.

There is nothing new about trying to simulate the real world in a computer program. From role-play video games to fully funded projects at top research labs: computer graphics, image & sound processing, learning algorithms to generalize using living examples and sheer computational power have already yielded near-realistic renderings of the real world and it gets better day by day. In such a setting, there can be a proposition that we are actually characters in a computer program running on some supercomputer of a very advanced species somewhere. This argument is clearly inductive. It's not based on any evidence or on what we already know. Neither do we have any reason or some kind of lead to believe that we are indeed living in a simulation.

The seemingly economical nature of the argument lies in something else. No matter what clarification is asked for, the answer is always: 'since it was programmed like that'. For example, why is the Earth at a certain distance from the Sun? - since the programmers decided on that. Or

why was our skeptic mugged on the street? - since the programmers triggered that event and this list goes on.

Though economical at first glance, it is actually not so. Now if we were to ask, but why did the programmer do so? Then the submerged complexity comes to the surface. Laws of mathematics and physics on the other hand are much more economical. Only a few laws explain a large amount of real world phenomena. Free will of organisms, theory of evolution, spirit of survival, psychological studies, rational reasoning of human beings explain most earthly events.

Also, the simulation argument is recursive. Maybe the supercomputer controlling us is in itself a simulation and so on. And we have more rules for layering of supercomputers. Clearly, this increases the complexity in a cascading fashion. Also, at every level and on every small premise, we can ask the why is it so question which leads to more and more explaining. Though on the surface, the simulation idea seems nice, snappy and less complex, we are actually viewing an encapsulated and abstracted version of the full set of rules where everything reduces to 'since it's a program'. But in all fairness, we need the entirety which is more than the basic 'since tis so'.

Finally, there is no well defined way to judge complexity of this nature. It is highly subjective. The argument: 'the number of available simulation universes is a randomly generated number N , all events and properties of these universes are also randomly generated' - is indeed small and simple. However, there is no deductive way of reaching such a conclusion.

Now, would a skeptic or a flat-earther or a simulation-theorist succumb to skeptical inductive arguments if it came down to settling a matter in a court of law? The answer is no. Else, anyone would rob the skeptic at gunpoint and claim that it can also be possible that the skeptic was hallucinating or some supercomputer created a mimic who resembled their physical attributes and it was this mimic that actually robbed the skeptic.

Going by prevention of double standards, these types of arguments should be avoided and simple deductive arguments should be given preference. If we totally go by skeptical arguments, we could potentially end up with new reasons for every variation of an event. Scientific and mathematical laws are much more versatile in that regard and explain away a plethora of physical phenomena. Also, new rules and laws can be derived from existing ones. Overall, the non-skeptical scenario is more economical if we look at everything in depth as opposed to just viewing the shallow surface level argument.