

Humeanism, Best System Laws, and Emergence

Anonymous version

Abstract

To this day, debates on ontological emergence have been almost exclusively carried out within non-humean power-based or law-based metaphysics, the main underlying stake being indeed whether or not irreducible causal powers, or irreducible governing laws, can happen to come into being under specific circumstances. It is therefore unsurprising that humeanists themselves never felt *that* attracted by emergence, consistently with Lewis' own dismissal of "suchlike rubbish".

In the present paper, I argue, contrary to this received wisdom, that humeanism and ontological emergence can actually peacefully coexist. Such a coexistence can be established by reviving some elements of John Stuart Mill's philosophy of science, in which a very idiosyncratic account of diachronic, evolutionary emergence is associated with extensions of the humean mosaic and the correlative coming into being of new best system laws, which have the peculiarity of being temporally indexed. Incidentally, this reconciliation of humeanism and emergence allows for conceiving the autonomy of the special sciences in an interesting way, consistently with the reductionist ideal of a unified, all-encompassing science.

Keywords

Humeanism – Best System Account – Lawhood – Emergence – Diachronic emergence – Special sciences – Unity of science

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XXX