

Post-Hoc Monsters and the Frankenstein Theory of Confirmation

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This talk concerns the highly vexing issue of how a confirmation theory ought to handle post-hoc monsters, that is, post-hocly constructed or modified hypotheses like Velikovsky's theory or Ptolemaic astronomy. One approach to this issue has been to demonise post-hocness itself, arguing that no hypothesis earns support from evidence that has been used in its construction or modification. Another approach has been to attempt to segregate the monstrous from the non-monstrous post-hoc hypotheses and to argue that only the latter earn support from accommodated evidence. In this talk, I'd like to put forth a more subtle approach which I call the 'Frankenstein' theory of confirmation. According to this approach, even post-hoc monsters earn confirmation from accommodated evidence but the confirmation earned does not spread evenly throughout the content of such hypotheses.