

## Is Evidence Historical?

### The “No coincidence” Argument

- Whewell’s position is that while explanations can count as some evidence for a theory, predictions are much stronger evidence
- He claims that the agreement of the prediction with what occurs is “nothing strange if the theory be true, but quite unaccountable, if be not”
- Inference to the best explanation: the “best” explanation, is the “correct” one
  - He admits that this agreement might be due to “mere chance” or “coincidence”
- If a theory is invented for the express purpose of explaining some phenomenon, the fact that it does explain it is certainly no coincidence -> **the possible reasons for the theory’s explanatory success are not “coincidence” or “truth” but rather the “ingenuity” of the theory’s inventor.**

### The Falsification Argument

- If a theory explains a known fact, this information cannot potentially falsify the theory because it is already known that the fact explained is true.
  - But if a theory predicts an unknown fact then it can function as a potential falsifier.
  - Example on page 463

They do a huge example using Baye’s thrm on page 464

## The Concept of Evidence

- **Objective Concept of Evidence:** whether e is evidence for h does not depend upon anyone’s beliefs or knowledge about e, h, or anything else. Hence if some e is evidence for h, it is so regardless of what any person knows or believes (469)
- **“Expert-relative” Concept:** e is evidence for h at time t only if there is some body of information b that is known by the “experts” at t and given b, e is a reason to believe h. (473)

TL;DR: In science, evidence is an impersonal concept. On impersonal concepts of evidence, such as the expert-relative view and the objective views, some e can be evidence for h whether or not any person knows/believes that e is true. Hence *time* at which e is known is **not** relevant to whether e is evidence for h, as the historical thesis holds (475)

# THEREFORE EVIDENCE IS NOT HISTORICAL