

Causes and Consequences

Nobody asked but ...

Again, I will remind myself and the reader that Ockham's Razor, while championing simplicity, is actually a call for the optimum. My understanding of Friar William's admonition is that the simplest explanation which fits all the facts is the most likely to be true. There is implied in this that the explanation also must be complex enough to fit all the facts.

We humans as a species seek simplicity, often at the expense of sufficiency. We seek quickness, often at the expense of knowing all the facts. We tend to resolve our perceptions of reality by a shearing away of facts. We do this through linear thinking about causes and consequences. We forget that for every consequence, there are many causes, and for every cause, there are many consequences. Reality is not represented by 1-to-1 relationships. Those facts that you can cram into a working database, can be resolved into 1-to-many relationships. But the world is full of many-to-many relationships. Even though we have techniques for simplifying some of these, we often forget that oversimplification can destroy most of these, as well as those people who would oversimplify, as well as those who are innocent victims of that oversimplification.

Grasping reality can be killing labor, if one cannot perceive facts, causes, and consequences in their concrete forms. We might restate Ockham's Razor — the simplest explanation in which sufficient attention has been paid to all the facts is the most likely to be true, in the context of the universe of truths.

— Kilgore Forelle