

Crude Induction

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It is well to distinguish three different varieties of induction. The first and weakest kind of inductive reasoning is that which goes on the presumption that future experience as to the matter in hand will not be utterly at variance with all past experience. *Example*: “No instance of a genuine power of clairvoyance has ever been established: So I presume there is no such thing.” I promise to call such reasoning *crude induction*. [—]

Crude induction is the only kind of induction that is capable of inferring the truth of what, in logic, is termed a universal proposition. For what is called “complete induction” is not inductive reasoning, but is logistic deduction. We might further say, if we chose, that every crude induction concludes a universal proposition; but this would be merely the expression of a way of regarding matters. For any proposition concerning the general run of future experience may be regarded as universal, even if it be “A pair of dice will, every now and then, turn up doublets.” The undipped heel of crude induction is that if its conclusion be understood as indefinite, it will be of little use, while if it be taken definitely, it is liable at any moment to be utterly shattered by a single experience; for a series of experiences, if the whole constitutes but a single one of the instances to which an inductive conclusion refers, is to be regarded as a single experience.