



 induction.md

Induction

Induction doesn't work. It's impossible and no one has ever learned anything by induction. Karl Popper [[explained this in detail]]. *But this is something of a distraction.* Let's step back and look at the bigger picture.

I'm judging induction using an epistemological framework, Critical Fallibilism (CF), which tells me how to evaluate ideas. It provides my methods for judging the arguments for and against induction.

When we're evaluating ideas we **need** an epistemological framework. One of the problems with induction is that it doesn't include one, so leaves it up to things like "common sense". This is a mistake and introduces errors that are hard to spot.

Induction is the idea you can predict the future by only using observations from the past. One of the big problems here is that it has no way to evaluate ***new ideas*** since there's no way to make observations about things that didn't previously exist.

Induction is not a general purpose epistemology. It focuses on observation, data and science. It doesn't give us a way to understand things like morality, politics, or even philosophical ideas like induction itself. Adding deduction still leaves things incomplete. So an inductivist must have some other epistemology which they are using to judge induction itself. This prior epistemology, which is used to evaluate induction itself, is a more direct rival to CF than induction is. If we agreed about the prior epistemology issues, then I bet agreeing about induction would be easy.

What makes this situation difficult is inductivists don't specify their prior epistemology. Is it general purpose, or a special case epistemology that is only used for philosophy arguments? What does it say? Inductivists commonly haven't thought about this at all, and inductivist texts standardly don't discuss the matter. What is the epistemology under which induction is correct? There is no clear answer.

CF is a general purpose epistemology which can be used to evaluate itself. The question of **which epistemological framework is correct** is in itself epistemological. That means an epistemological framework **needs** to be able to evaluate itself. Induction isn't general purpose, and therefore needs some other starting point.

What do inductivists have? They typically make philosophical arguments for induction but they don't know what epistemological framework they are using to create and evaluate those arguments. They usually don't even realize they need an epistemology in order to debate induction. So what inductivists have is *common sense epistemology*. They have whatever *cultural default* they picked up, here and there, without organized study.

CF is one of the only epistemological frameworks we have that can evaluate itself. It's also the most resistant to criticism. This means CF has no serious rivals. Induction isn't a rival epistemology – it relies on inadequately-specified-and-questioned cultural beliefs rather than specifying complete methods for dealing with arguments/ideas/etc (which is what an epistemology is).