

Epilog

The Large-Scale Structure of Inductive Inference

This volume has sought to describe the large-scale structure of the inductive inferences and the inductive relations of support in science. While I am satisfied that the many chapters devoted to this task have made considerable progress in delineating that structure, I am sure that there is much more to be done. The research that led to this volume has been research in history and philosophy of science. As I noted in the prolog, that research involves a continuing exchange between the philosophy of science and the history of science. One component of the exchange needs to be emphasized. I have found that a major source of theses in philosophy of science lies in the study of history of science. For that history recounts the many examples of scientists who grappled with inductive problems of great difficulty and overcame them with inductive maneuvers of still greater ingenuity. Time spent studying the history is philosophically fertile in a way that armchair reflection is not. For armchair reflection can only return what we can each think up ourselves. A study of the history of science can draw on the ingenuity of generations of the cleverest minds at their moments of greatest achievement. It provides an endlessly fertile repository of inductive ideas in philosophy of science for those willing to explore it. This volume explores only a tiny portion of this repository. Much remains to be found. My hope is that this volume will encourage others to enter this repository and see what marvels they can find.