# Nelson goodmanss new riddle of induction

NELSON GOODMANS'S NEW RIDDLE OF INDUCTION The traditional problem of induction was popularized by David Hume and it reamined quite traditional untilNelson Goodman proposed a new problem which he called " the new riddle of induction" as expressed in the third chapter of Fact, Fiction and Forecast. The New Problem By the new riddle of induction Goodman put forward a claim that not all generalizations are confirmed by their instances. In other words " confirmation of a hypothesis by an instance depends rather heavily upon the features of the hypothesis other than its syntatical form" (72). He distinguished the lawlike (that a given piece of copper conducts electricity increases the credibility of the statement asserting that other pieces of copper conducts electricity, and thus confirms the hypothesis that all copper conducts electricity) and accidental (that a given man now in this room is a third son does not increase the credibility of the statement asserting that other men now in this room are third sons and so does not confirm the hypothesis that all men now in this room are third sons) statements. Yet, both are cases in which the hypothesis is a generalization of the evident statement. Thus, Goodman argued: " only a statement that is lawlike – regardless of its truth or falsity or its scientific importance – is capable of recieviing confirmation from an instance of it; accidental statements are not" (73). As such, there is need for a way of plainly distinguishing the lawlike from the accidental statements. However, the problem of induction goes beyond merely trying to exclude a few cases that are admitted by our definition of confirmation. Hence, Goodman proposed a new predicate, " grue." The predicate " grue" applies to things examined before time t just in case they are green but to other things just in case they are blue. Supposing that all emeralds examined before a certain time t are

green, at t, our observation supports the hypothesis that all emeralds are green since our evidence statements assert that emeralds a, b, c and so on are green. But with the new predicate " grue" at t we have for each evidence asserting that a given emerald is green, an equally coressponding evidence asserting that it is grue. Thus, the two predications are confirmed by evidence statements describing the same observations. This example put forward by Goodman futher stresses his claim that the difficulty in determining what constitutes lawlike hypotheses is far more complex than previously thought so that once again the initial dilema remains: " anything can confirm anything." Goodman and Hume Although the initial problem of induction as expoused by Hume, by which anything can follow upon anything else, was thought by Goodman as dissolved (59). The more pertinent problem is that any statement could confirm any other. Even upon futher modification of the definition of confirmation, the problem remains unresolved. Thus, Goodman held that Hume's real problem was not in his descriptive approach but in the lack of precision in his description; for though some regularities establish habits, others do not. Conclusion On a conclusive note, the aftermath of Goodman's new riddle were attempts to resolve the new problem which he proposed. In my opinion, Goodman's problem may well be a psuedo-problem: is Goodman's grue actually projectible? Surely in concrete epistemic situation, the predicate " grue" is not actually projectible, but in certain counterfactual epistemic situations, it may be. If Goodman's riddle is indeed projecting a new property for emeralds, for instance, which has not been experinced in the past, then it is not really a problem of induction since induction is a kind of hypothesizing about a whole based on past observations of the part of a class. Thus, although the conclusion is

supported by the premises, it does not follow necessarily from them. Also, Goodman's new predicate could not legitimately fit into a scientific discourse because it is less simple than its corresponding predicate " green" since it is defined in terms of two other predicates. BIBLIOGRAPHY Goodman, Nelson. Fact, Fiction and Forecast. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1955.