

John Earman, *Bayes or Bust? A Critical Examination of Bayesian Confirmation Theory*. The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1992. iv + 272 pp.

Reviewed by

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Bayes or Bust has more than its catchy title to recommend it. This is a thorough, well-written, and even entertaining account of Bayesianism as a comprehensive approach to the confirmation of scientific theories. From my perspective as a Bayesian statistician with limited knowledge of philosophy of science, I have learned a great deal about the foundational issues involved in the study of inductive inference from *Bayes or Bust*. Moreover, the book provides very interesting reading and an excellent source of references through which one could conduct a more extensive study of the field.

Earman's theme is captured in his belief that Bayesianism provides "the best good hope for a comprehensive and unified treatment of induction, confirmation, and scientific inference" (p. xi). While Earman confesses in the introduction that he is a Bayesian, he claims to be so only on certain days of the week (p. 1). This ambiguous attitude permeates the book, for while he extols the virtues of the Bayesian philosophy, Earman does not hesitate in present arguments to which he feels Bayesians have yet in respond satisfactorily. Earman admits that he intends to annoy those on both sides of the Bayesian fence. He charges that "critics of Bayesianism have generally failed to get the proper measure of the doctrine, while the Bayesians themselves have failed to appreciate the pitfalls and limitations of their approach" (p. xi).

The structure of *Bayes or Bust* reflects Earman's self-described "schizophrenia" (p. 2) on the issue of Bayesianism. After the first two chapters present the basic principles of Bayesianism from both historical and modern perspectives, chapters 3 and 4 champion the Bayesian philosophy. Chapters 5–9 then address some thorny problems which