

Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| <i>Opening remarks</i> | 1 |
| 1. <i>The notion of probability</i> | |
| 1.1 A historical sketch | 7 |
| The birth of probability | 7 |
| The dual character of probability | 12 |
| Jakob Bernoulli and direct probability | 13 |
| Nikolaus and Daniel Bernoulli | 15 |
| Thomas Bayes and inverse probability | 17 |
| Probability and social mathematics: Condorcet and Quetelet | 18 |
| The rise of contemporary statistics: Galton, Pearson, Fisher | 21 |
| The advent of probability in physics | 25 |
| 1.2 Probability and induction | 27 |
| Francis Bacon | 28 |
| Induction as ampliative inference | 29 |
| Hume's problem of induction | 31 |
| Mill, Herschel, Whewell | 34 |
| 2. <i>The laws of probability</i> | |
| 2.1 The fundamental properties of probability | 39 |
| 2.2 Bayes' rule | 47 |
| 2.3 Kolmogorov's axiomatization | 52 |

3. The classical interpretation

3.1 Laplace and the Principle of insufficient reason 57

| | |
|--|----|
| Determinism | 57 |
| The ‘Principle of insufficient reason’ | 60 |
| The ‘Rule of succession’ | 62 |
| Expectation and certainty | 64 |

3.2 Problems of the classical definition 66

4. The frequency interpretation

4.1 Robert Leslie Ellis 71

4.2 John Venn 74

| | |
|-------------------------------------|----|
| Probability as limiting frequency | 74 |
| Criticism of the rule of succession | 77 |
| Probability and belief | 78 |

4.3 Richard von Mises and the theory of ‘collectives’ 81

| | |
|------------------------------|----|
| Von Mises’ approach | 81 |
| Collectives | 83 |
| Randomness | 85 |
| Collective-based probability | 87 |
| Applications to science | 89 |

4.4 Hans Reichenbach’s probabilistic epistemology 91

| | |
|--------------------------------|----|
| Reichenbach’s frequentism | 91 |
| The theory of posits | 95 |
| The justification of induction | 98 |
| Causality | 99 |

4.5 Ernest Nagel’s ‘truth-frequency’ theory 101

5. The propensity interpretation

5.1 Peirce, the forerunner 105

5.2 Popper’s propensity interpretation 106

| | |
|--|-----|
| Falsificationism | 106 |
| The propensity interpretation of probability | 109 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| A world of propensities | 112 |
| 5.3 After Popper | 114 |
| Single-case and long-run propensity theories | 114 |
| Humphrey's paradox | 118 |
| Propensity as an ingredient of the description of chance phenomena | 121 |
| 5.4 Digression on chance and randomness | 125 |
| Historical remarks | 125 |
| Poincaré's views on chance | 126 |
| The riddle of randomness | 128 |
| Is chance objective? | 132 |
| 6. <i>The logical interpretation</i> | |
| 6.1 Beginnings | 135 |
| 6.2 The nineteenth century English Logicians: | |
| De Morgan, Boole, Jevons | 136 |
| Augustus De Morgan | 136 |
| George Boole | 138 |
| William Stanley Jevons | 141 |
| 6.3 John Maynard Keynes | 144 |
| Probability as a logical relation | 144 |
| Rationality and the role of intuition | 147 |
| Analogy, relevance and weight | 149 |
| Ramsey's criticism | 152 |
| 6.4 William Ernest Johnson | 153 |
| 6.5 Viennese logicism: Wittgenstein and Waismann | 158 |
| Ludwig Wittgenstein | 158 |
| Friedrich Waismann | 161 |
| 6.6 Rudolf Carnap's inductive logic | 164 |
| Two concepts of probability | 164 |
| The logic of confirmation | 169 |
| The turn of the Sixties | 174 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| 6.7 Harold Jeffreys between logicism and subjectivism | 178 |
| Bayesianism | 178 |
| The interpretation of probability | 181 |
| Probabilistic epistemology | 184 |
| 7. <i>The subjective interpretation</i> | |
| 7.1 The beginnings | 189 |
| William Donkin | 189 |
| Émile Borel | 191 |
| 7.2 Frank Plumpton Ramsey and the notion of coherence | 194 |
| Degrees of belief and consistency | 194 |
| Ramsey, Keynes and Wittgenstein | 200 |
| Belief, frequency and ‘probability in physics’ | 202 |
| 7.3 Bruno de Finetti and exchangeability | 208 |
| De Finetti’s radical probabilism | 208 |
| Subjective Bayesianism | 215 |
| Criticism of other interpretations of probability | 220 |
| Indeterminism | 223 |
| 7.4 Some recent trends | 225 |
| Richard Jeffrey’s radical probabilism | 225 |
| Patrick Suppes’ probabilistic empiricism | 230 |
| <i>Closing remarks</i> | 235 |
| <i>References</i> | 239 |
| <i>Index</i> | 261 |