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Generalizations

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When someone creates a new axiom, what he did was notice a pattern- one that was derived from past data, describes present activity and can thus be used to predict the future with reasonable accuracy. In the 19th Century, they called Science's ability to forecast events "prevision". For a Science to be legitimate, they said, an axiom had to be have some capacity to obtain prevision. This holds not just for Science, but for culture in general. The proverbs of a society are the collected wisdom of a people: the cultural axioms that have the same predictive ability. Why? Because as Heraclitus said, "Character is destiny". If someone knows another person's character, he can (with a reasonable accuracy) forecast future behavior. Today, generalizations such as "The Laws of Nature" or "proverbs" are denounced as "stereotyping," and we're discouraged from noticing such patterns. Could there be a darker reason behind the arbiters of our society stigmatizing pattern-recognition?

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