

# Logica en Sherlock Holmes



Jean Paul Van Bendegem

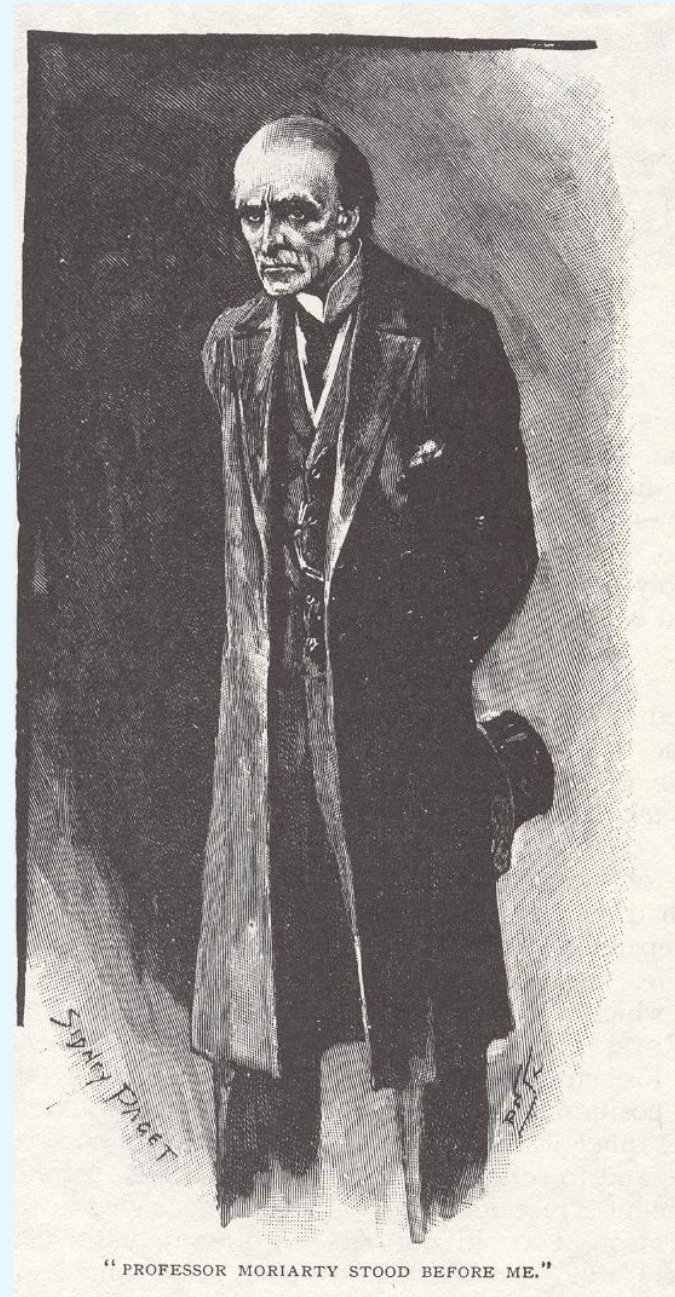
# Waarom de interesse?

- Hij is in staat enkel door denkwerk te achterhalen wat er gebeurd is
- Hij is superieur in menig opzicht
- Hij is kind van een heldere en transparante maatschappij
- De vrouw speelt geen enkele rol in zijn leven
- Zijn aartsvijand, Professor James Moriarty, is een wiskundige



Irene Adler  
“The woman”

Professor James Moriarty  
“The Napoleon of Crime”



# De Canon

vier grote verhalen of novellen:

- *The Sign of Four*
- *A Study in Scarlet*
- *The Valley of Fear*
- *The Hound of the Baskervilles*

vijf verhalenbundels:

- *Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*
- *Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes*
- *The Return of Sherlock Holmes*
- *His Last Bow*
- *The Case Book of Sherlock Holmes*



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## Sherlock Holmes Returns!

IN next week's issue of COLLIER'S, the Household Number for October, will begin the most notable series of short stories of the year,—“The Return of Sherlock Holmes,” by Sir A. Conan Doyle. Those familiar with the previous adventures of the famous detective—and are there any who are not?—will remember that the last heard of Mr. Holmes was the report that he had been hurled headlong over a precipitous cliff. It was not believed that any man—either in fact or in fiction—could survive such a shock as this, and even the detective's best friends (even those who most realized the very good reasons Holmes might have for wishing himself to be considered dead) began to give up hope of ever again hearing of his wonderful genius or of witnessing his almost infallible operation. But Holmes did not die. He survived the peril through which he passed, and of this and of the ensuing adventures Conan Doyle tells us in the remarkable series which he has called “The Return of Sherlock Holmes.” The first story is entitled “The Adventure of the Empty House,” and will be published in the October issue. The second story will appear in the November issue. The illustrations for the series are by the artist Dorr Steele and form a perfect complement to the text.



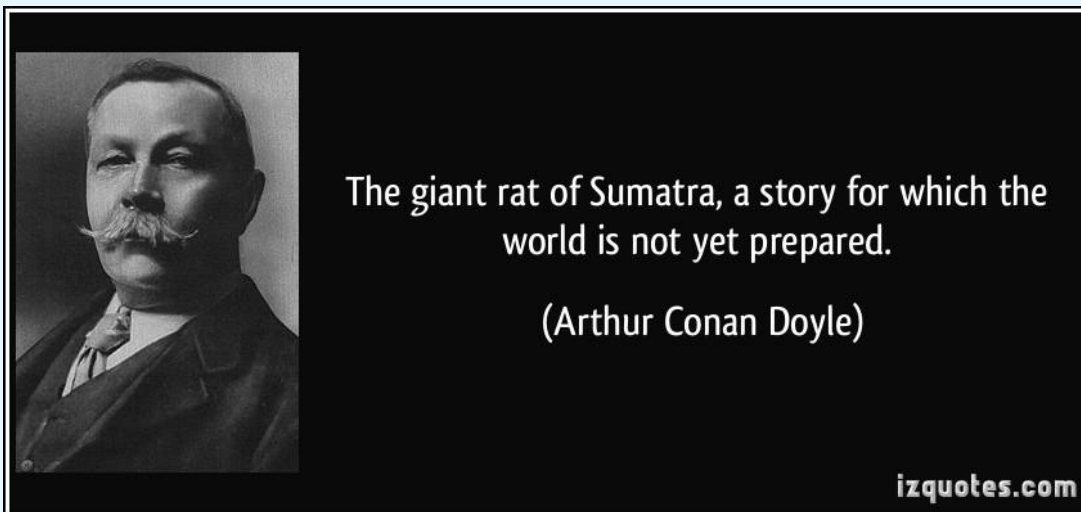
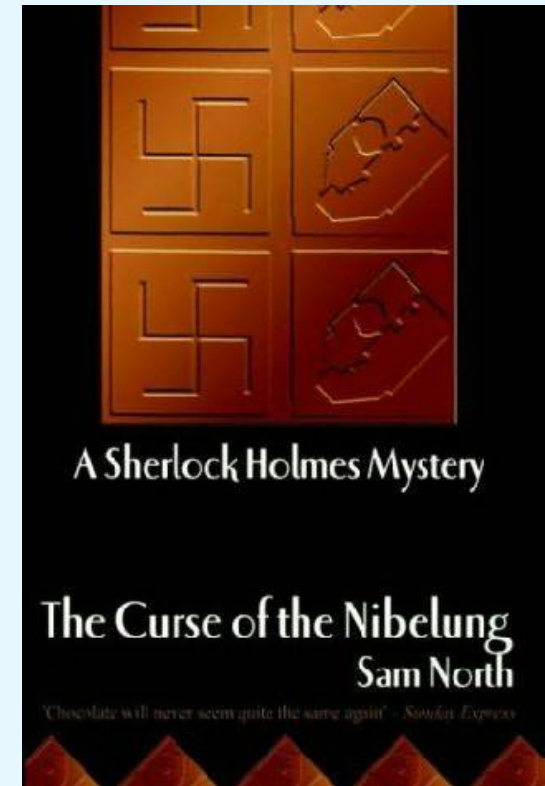
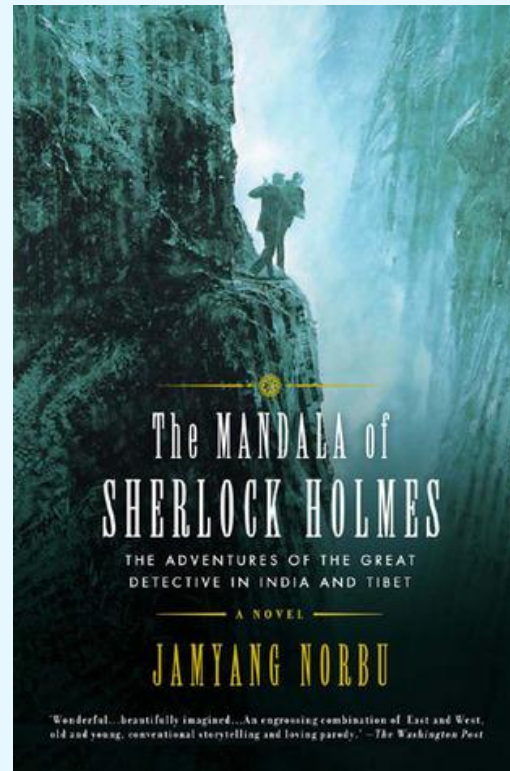
Sir Conan Doyle

The double-page illustration of the October Household Number is a fine

## De nooit opdrogende bron van **pastiches**

- *The Giant Rat of Sumatra*
- *The Seven-Percent Solution* (Sigmund Freud)
- *Dracula* (Bram Stoker)
- *Sherlock Holmes and the Mysterious Friend of Oscar Wilde* (Oscar Wilde)
- *The Philosopher's Ring* (Bertrand Russell, Ludwig Wittgenstein & Alistair Crowley)
- *Marx et Sherlock Holmes* (Karl Marx)







## Inspiratiebronnen

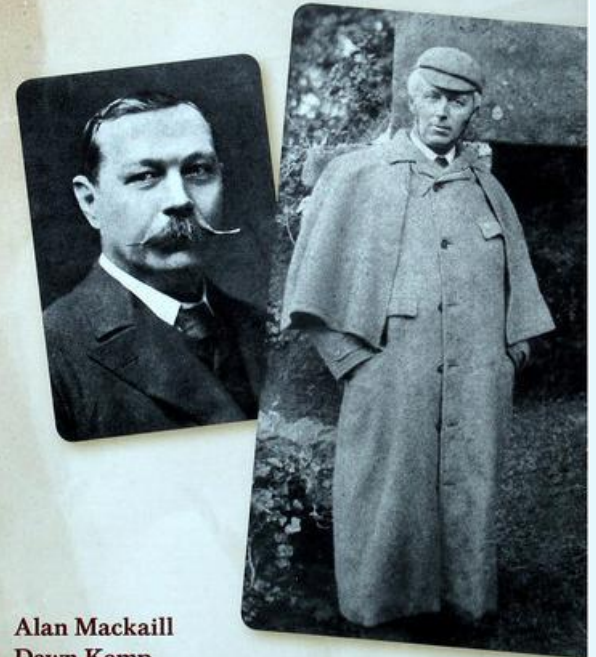


Edgar Allan POE  
(1809-1849)





*Conan Doyle & Joseph Bell*  
**The Real Sherlock Holmes**



# The Sherlock Holmes Society of London

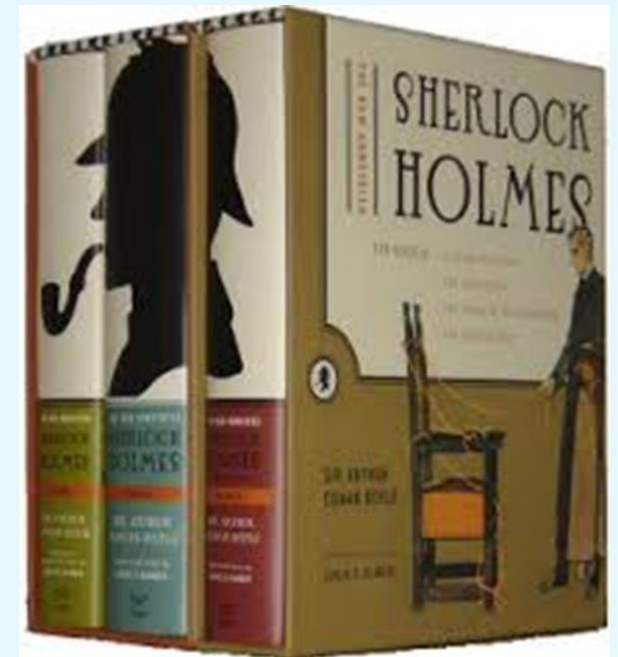
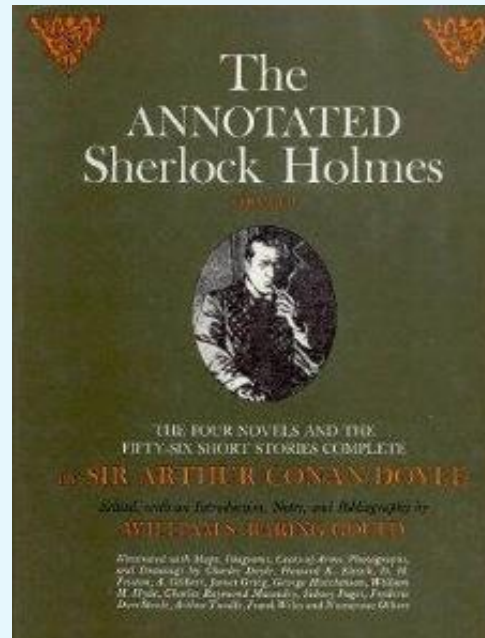
(SHSL: <http://www.sherlock-holmes.org.uk/>)

basispremises:

- Sherlock Holmes en John H. Watson hebben reëel bestaan
- Sir Arthur Conan Doyle: enkel literair agent

‘tongue-in-cheek’

William S. Baring-Gould: *Annotated Sherlock Holmes*,  
twee volumes (New York: Clarkson N. Potter, 1967)



**Voorbeeld**

Watson loopt rond met een schotwonde in zijn schouder,  
later is de wonde afgedaald tot zijn been. ????



# The Sherlock Holmes Journal

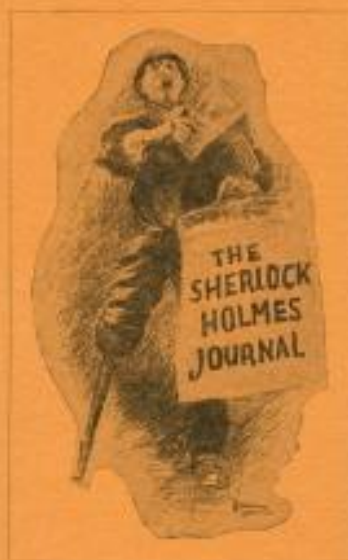
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## “Knowledge of Philosophy—Nil” or Sherlock Holmes as Inspiration for Philosophers

by JEAN PAUL VAN BENDEGEM

MY TITLE, of course, is a reference to Watson's description of Holmes's general knowledge and abilities in *A Study in Scarlet*. It seems to imply that philosophy had little to offer Sherlock Holmes, notwithstanding the occasional reflections Holmes makes on human nature that truly deserve to be called philosophical (as in *His Last Bow*, the famous “There's an east wind coming, Watson” passage). Perhaps exception should be made for the non-canonical case of the philosophers' ring (Collins [1978]). Apparently, there Holmes seems to have changed his mind, for he says:

“The twentieth century is a new era, . . . There are new currents flowing in the best minds these days, and our scientists and philosophers of Cambridge are in the thick of it.” (p. 3)

To illustrate this statement, he mentions the physicist Ernest Rutherford, Bertrand Russell and Alfred North Whitehead, two logicians, authors of the famous *Principia Mathematica*, “in which . . . they have split our system of numbers into the fine particles of pure logic.” (p. 3). But then there is Canonical evidence as well that Watson himself did not consider this early description of Holmes to be terribly precise and accurate later on (*The Five Orange Pips*). In addition, when Holmes retired, Watson writes in the preface of *His Last Bow* that “he has, for many years, lived in a small farm upon the down five miles from Eastbourne, where his time is divided between philosophy and agriculture”.

However, it is not my intention to discuss the complex and intricate relationship between Holmes and philosophy from the Holmesian point of view. Rather, in these few pages I wish to explore the other direction: what had and has Sherlock Holmes to offer philosophy? First, I will briefly mention the well-known cases: game theory, deductive logic and inductive logic. Secondly, I will present and briefly discuss a quite recent and rather intriguing occurrence of Sherlock Holmes in philosophical literature.

“We shall get out at Canterbury”

Why did, as reported in *The Final Problem*, Holmes decide to leave the train in Canturbury? Was

it a rational decision or just whimsical behaviour? Assuming the former for obvious reasons, the question arises as to what method Holmes used. Pure logic seems insufficient for a number of reasons, the most obvious one being that pure logic does not care much about *Bradshaw's Railway Guide*. Therefore there is a clear need for a justified decision method. The theory of games as developed by mathematician John von Neumann and economist Oscar Morgenstern provided the answer. I will not present the mathematical details (see Austin, 1986), but try to give the reader a rough idea.

Suppose you are invited to play the following game. At each round, both players toss a coin resulting in either “heads” (H) or “tails” (T). If you both obtain the same result, the other player must give you 10p. If not, you pay the other player 5p. Would you join this game? Obviously yes. The argument is this: there are four possibilities. Either the outcome is HH, TT, HT or TH. Thus there is a 50% chance that both coins are the same, 50% otherwise. Therefore, I have an average profit of 10p half of the time, thus (on average) 5p. But my opponent has an average profit of 2.5p. Conclusion: I make a net profit (on average) of 2.5p. This is an interesting game for me (though not for the other player). This sort of reasoning is typical for so-called zero-sum two-person games. “Zero-sum” refers to the fact that one player's profit is the other player's loss. Do note that it is of course assumed throughout that you prefer winning to losing.

Holmes's reasoning is similar to the argument above. However, there is one important distinction. In the above game, there is one clear strategy for me: join the game (and an equally clear one for the other player: do not join!). In most zero-sum two-person games, very often one is forced to adopt a so-called mixed strategy. That is, instead of saying “do this”, one arrives at a result that says that the best one player can do is “do this in x percent of the cases; do that in the remaining cases”. Consider the penny game once more. Suppose that now, instead of tossing a coin, both players simply say H or T at each round. There are two basic strategies: (i) say H all the time and (ii) say T all the time. A mixed strategy would be something like: say H in 25% of cases and

# Wat is de denkmethode van Sherlock Holmes?

- Doorgaans denkt men aan deductie
- Niet de unieke manier van redeneren
- Wat zijn alternatieven?
- Inductie
- Abductie

Vrij eenvoudig te illustreren

(a) Alle mensen zijn sterfelijk

(b) Socrates is een mens

DUS

(c) Socrates is sterfelijk

**DEDUCTIE**

(b) Socrates is een mens

(c) Socrates is sterfelijk

DUS

(a) Alle mensen zijn sterfelijk

**INDUCTIE**

(c) Socrates is sterfelijk

(a) Alle mensen zijn sterfelijk

DUS

(b) Socrates is een mens

**ABDUCTIE**

## *Silver Blaze*

- Voorbeeld 1:

“Is there any point to which you would wish to draw my attention?”

‘To the curious incident of the dog in the night-time.’

‘The dog did nothing in the night-time.’

‘That was the curious incident,’ remarked Sherlock Holmes.”

## *The Sign of Four*

- Voorbeeld 2:

“When you have eliminated the impossible, what remains, however improbable, must be the truth”

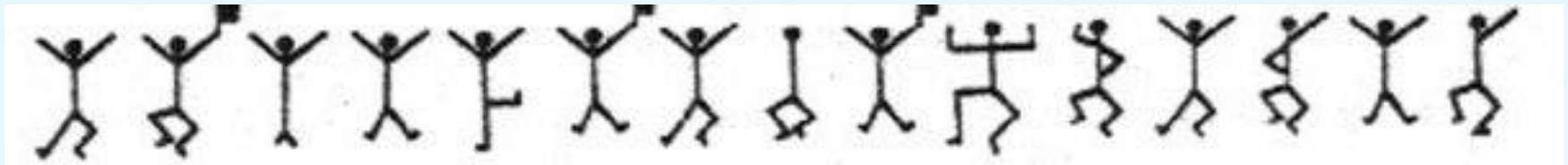
Verwijst naar **disjunctief syllogisme**:

A of B of C, niet-A, niet B, dus onvermijdelijk C



# *The Adventure of the Dancing Men*

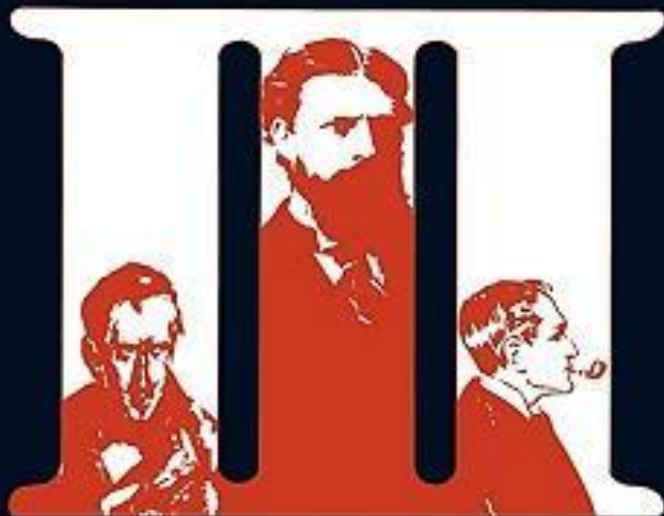
- Voorbeeld 3:



Het ontcijferen van een code door te steunen op de frequentieverdeling van de letters en de waarschijnlijkheid van opeenvolgingen

*Dupin, Holmes, Peirce*

THE SIGN OF  
T H R E E



EDITED BY UMBERTO ECO  
AND THOMAS A. SEBEOK

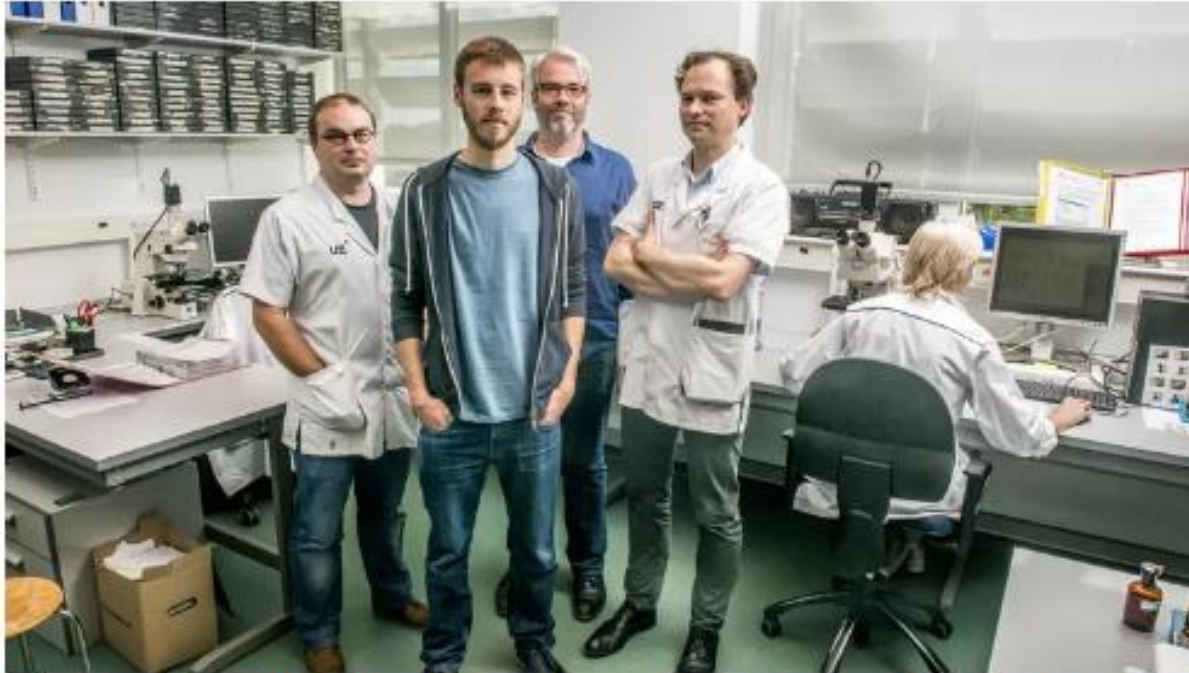


# Abductie

- Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914)
- Verwant met Bayesiaanse benadering
- “Inference to the best explanation”
  
- Belangrijke toepassing: medische context
- Diagnose stellen op basis van symptomen



# Dr. House spelen in UZ Gent



Internist Steven Callens, patiënt Ruben Impens, geneticus Bruce Poppe en neuroloog Dimitri Hemelsoet. Beeld © STEFAAN TEMMERMAN

Vier specialisten van het UZ Gent gaan zich vanaf volgende maand buigen over de onverklaarbare en vreemde symptomen waarmee patiënten soms al jaren rondlopen. Het Programma voor Ongediagnosticeerde Zeldzame Aandoeningen (ProZA) moet leiden tot snellere en efficiëntere diagnoses. 'Een beetje zoals Dr. House. Puzzelen en wroeten tot je weet wat er echt scheelt.'



# Waarschuwing!

