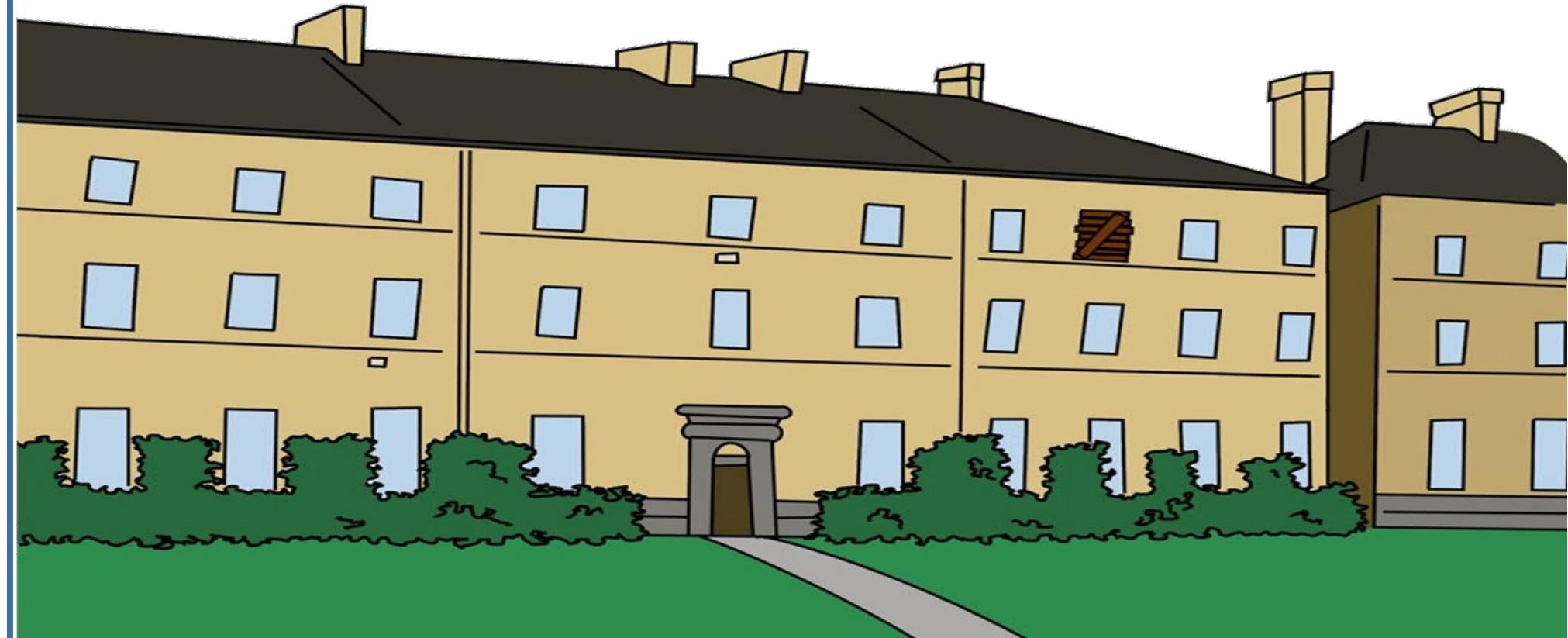


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*Presents*

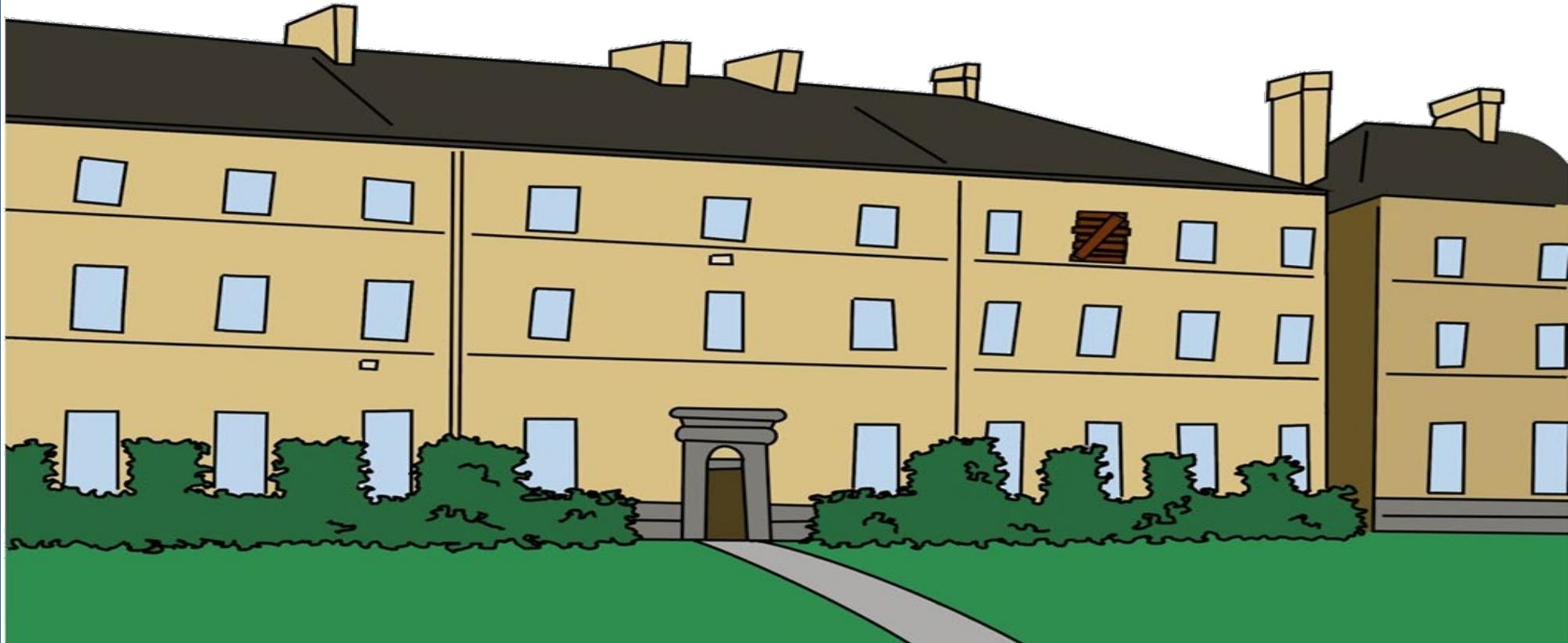
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*The Life and Times in Victorian London*

*# 015 - The Abductive Reasoning of Sherlock Holmes - 02/06/2017*





*Welcome to topic # 015... today we will be looking at 'abductive reasoning', a form of logical inference.*



*Holmes, In "The Adventure of the Red-Headed League," you correctly identified Mr. Jabez Wilson's current and past trade, his having time spent in China, and his membership in Freemasonry.*

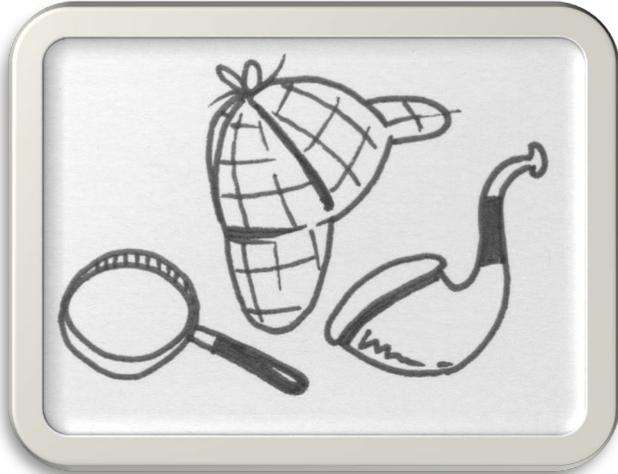


***This demonstration of your powers of observation resulted from your overall pursuit of detective skills I first described in A Study in Scarlet.***



*Basic to such efforts, you noted in "The Five Pips," is the observer's stockpile of knowledge and facts that can be applied to one's observations in order to form a conclusion.*





*While I will refer to this as deduction, the process is actually abductive reasoning. In deductive reasoning, if the premises are true, the conclusion must be true.*





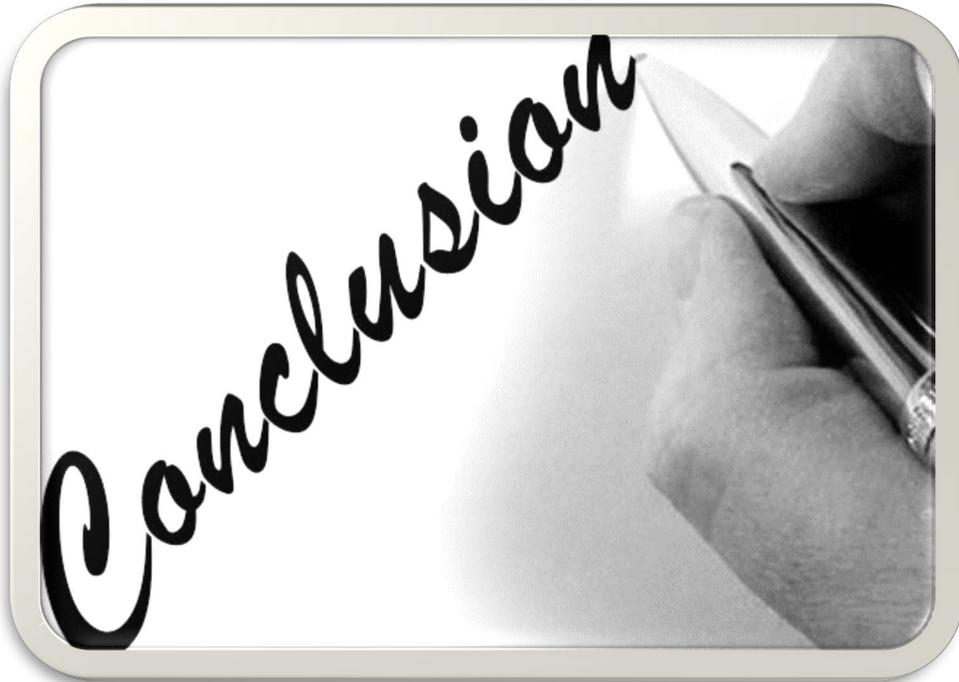
*According to Luke Muehlhauser, the deductive approach to Mr. Wilson's membership in Freemasonry would follow this pattern:*



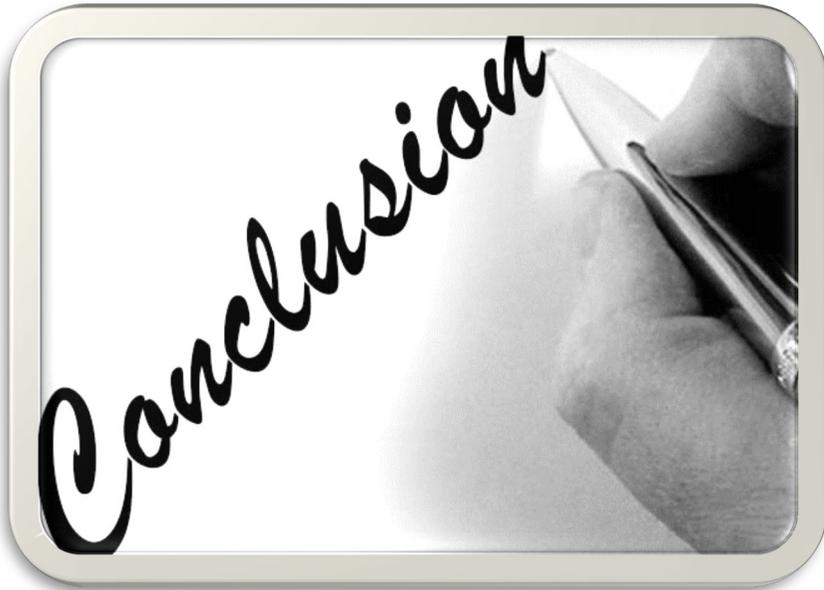
- 1) *Everyone wearing an arc-and-compass breastpin is a Freemason.*
- 2) *Mr. Wilson is wearing an arc-and-compass breastpin.*
- 3) *Therefore, Mr. Wilson is a Freemason.*



*The problem with such an approach, however, is that someone might wear the breastpin without being a Freemason. As a result, the conclusion is not necessarily true, because the basis for the argument is flawed.*



*In the abductive approach, the conclusion is based on the best explanation known.  
Muehlhauser illustrates Holmes' actual train of thought in the above case as:*



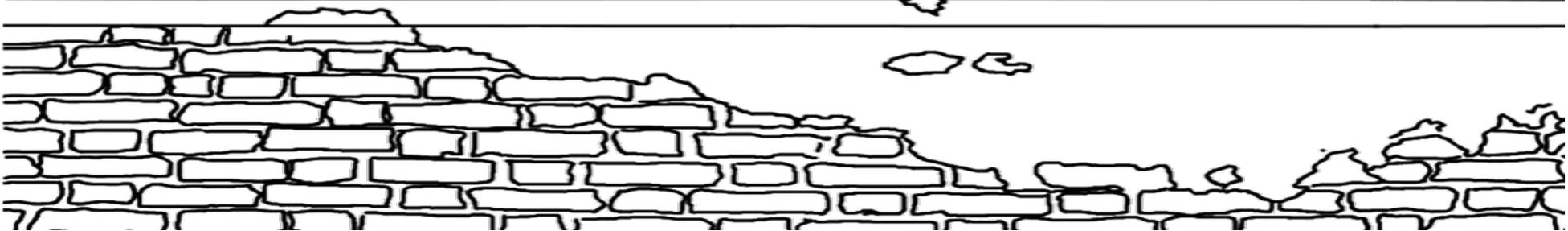
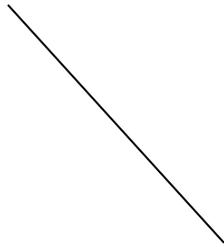
- 1) *The surprising fact, an arc-and-compass breastpin on Mr. Wilson, is observed.*
- 2) *But if Mr. Wilson is a Freemason, an arc-and-compass breastpin on the man would be a matter of course.*
- 3) *Hence, there is reason to suspect that Mr. Wilson is a Freemason.*



*The basis for such logic is the hypothesis, or the first part of the second statement, Mr. Wilson is a Freemason. This declaration is the one that best accounts for what is observed in the first statement.*



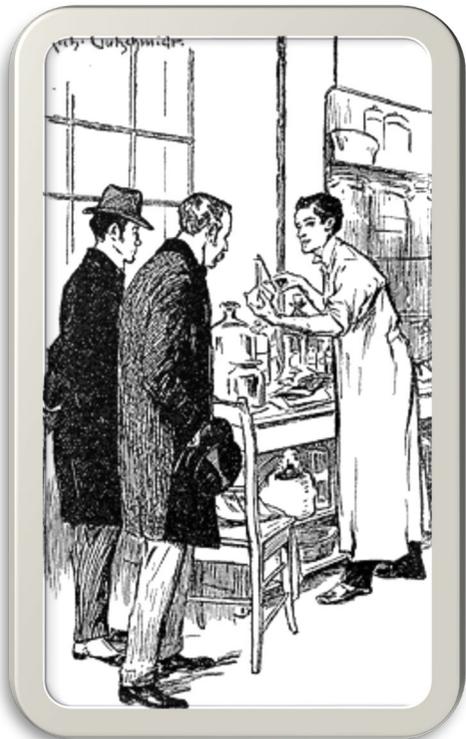
*Determining what truly provides the best explanation involves collecting knowledge to be used in forming the hypothesis.*



*Such data gathering is most closely associated with the physical sciences and its adherence to the scientific method to increase the accuracy and reliability of both the observations and the conclusions drawn from them.*

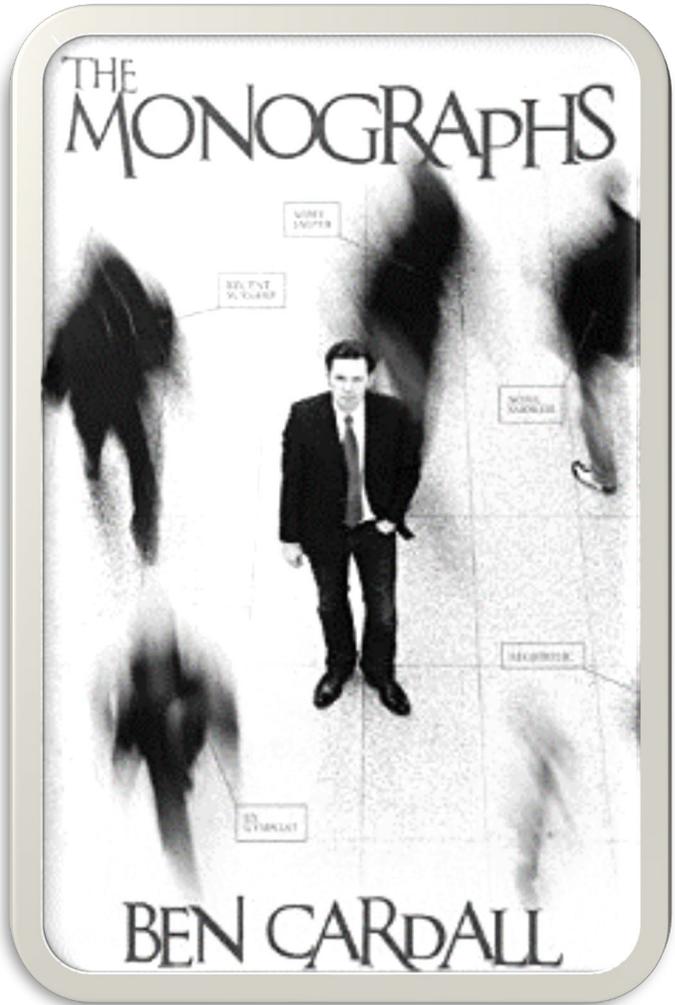


*Thus, I was driven to gather and store as much knowledge as possible to make the best explanation possible to seek a test to determine if blood caused a stain;*



*...to catalog the ashes of one hundred-forty different tobaccos; to classify tattoo marks; to inventory differences in footprints, ears, and hands; and other tidbits.*

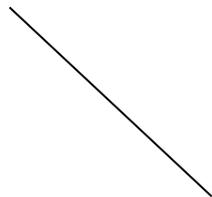




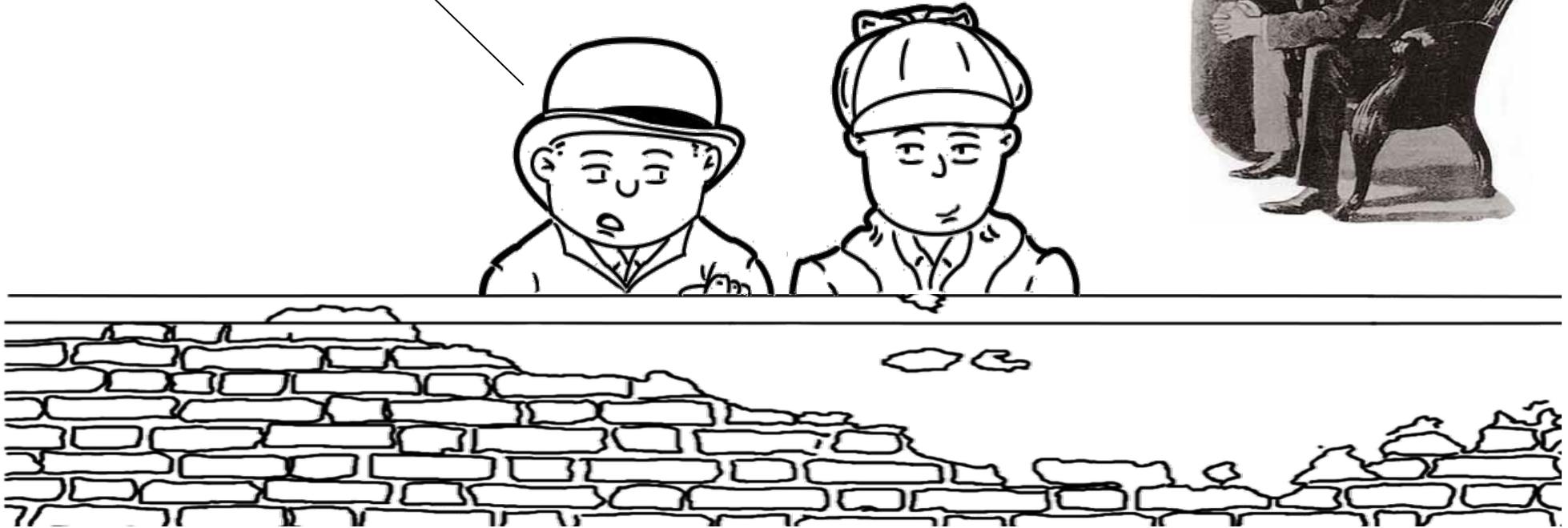
*In an effort to further develop my chosen field, what I will glean, I will share with others through monographs and treatises.*



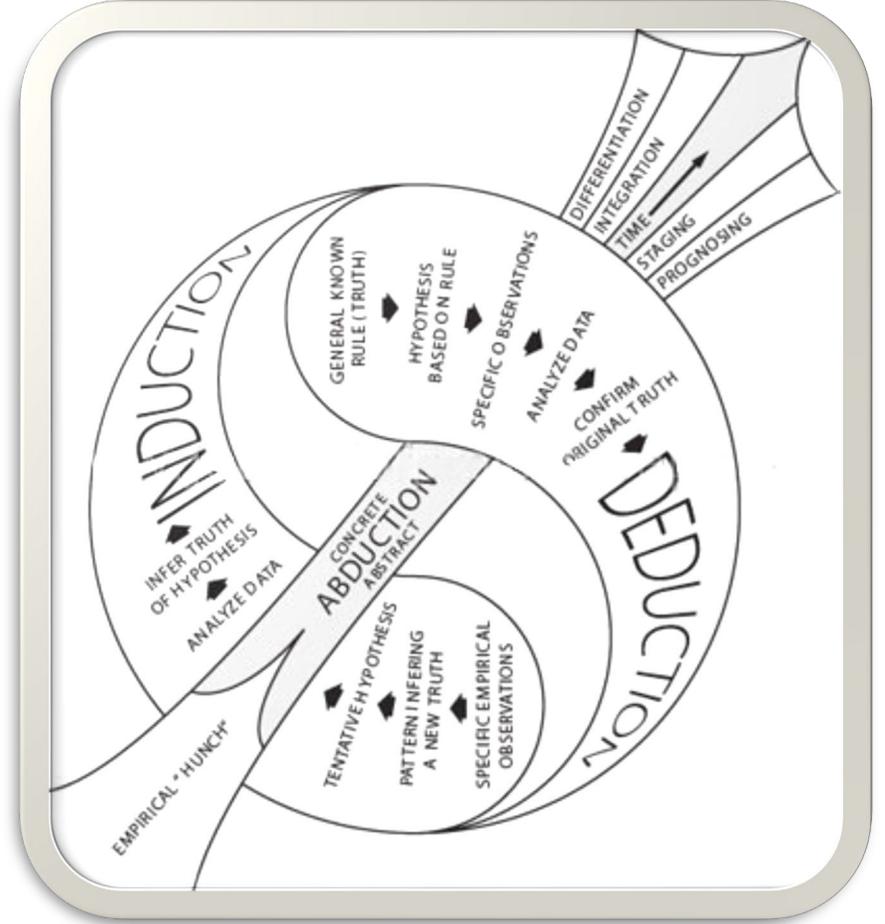
*As you will tell me in "The Five Orange Pips,"  
"To carry the art, however, to its highest pitch, it is  
necessary that the reasoner should be able to utilise  
all the facts which have come to his knowledge;*



*...it is not so impossible, however, that a man should possess all knowledge which is likely to be useful to him in his work, and this I have endeavoured in my case to do.*



*So it appears you failed to recognize your thinking as abductive reasoning rather than deductive...*



*Even 21<sup>st</sup> Century detective training rarely, if ever, will correctly identify this basic investigative practice.*



Abductive Reasoning

DEDUCTIVE

INDUCTIVE



ABDUCTIVE

(LOGIC OF THE MAYBE)



*All the same, I will apply my knowledge, using a systematic approach, as will my modern equivalents...*



Abductive Reasoning

DEDUCTIVE

INDUCTIVE



ABDUCTIVE

(LOGIC OF THE MAYBE)



*...but with an even greater arsenal,  
e.g. DNA, face-recognition, and  
ion spectrometry, than at my  
fingertips, if not in my brain  
attic.*



*So we have completed  
topic # 015 in our  
series...*

*Yes, but we'll be back  
with another topic  
soon...*



## References for this topic:

- 1) Doyle, Arthur Conan; Ryan, Robert (2012-12-13). The Complete Sherlock Holmes
- 2) <http://commonsenseatheism.com/?p=3703>
- 3) David Carson, "The Abduction of Sherlock Holmes," International Journal of Police Science and Management June 2009.



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