

Falsification of Theories without Verification of Basic Statements – An Argument for the Possibility of Knowledge Growth

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Abstract

Karl Popper rightly contests the possibility of a verification of basic statements. At the same time he strictly believes in the possibility of growth of empirical knowledge. Knowledge growth, however, is only possible if empirical theories can be falsified. This raises the question, how theories can be falsified, if a verification of those statements that falsify theories – i.e. basic statements – is not possible. This problem is often referred to as the “basic problem” or “problem of the empirical basis”. In this paper I show that – from a logical point of view – a falsification of theories is possible without a verification of basic statements. Furthermore I show that knowledge growth in the empirical sciences will be possible if two assumptions are valid. These assumptions can neither be proven nor falsified. However, they have to be postulated by everybody in everyday life.

Keywords: epistemology, basic problem, falsification, verification, falsification of theories, verification of basic statements, basic statements, growth of empirical knowledge, growth of knowledge, theory of knowledge growth, verisimilitude

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