

Can Error-Statistical Inference Function Securely?

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Abstract

This paper analyzes Deborah Mayo's error-statistical (ES) account of scientific evidence in order to clarify the kinds of "material postulates" it requires and to explain how those assumptions function. A secondary aim is to explain and illustrate the importance of the security of an inference. After finding that, on the most straightforward reading of the ES account, it does not succeed in its stated aims, two remedies are considered: either relativize evidence claims or introduce stronger assumptions. The choice between these approaches turns on the value attached to two aims of inquiry that are in tension: drawing strong, informative conclusions and reasoning securely.

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