

# Realist Ennui and the Base Rate Fallacy

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## Abstract

The no-miracles argument and the pessimistic induction are arguably the main considerations for and against scientific realism. Recently these arguments have been accused of embodying a familiar, seductive fallacy. In each case, we are tricked by a base rate fallacy, one much discussed in the psychological literature. In this paper we consider this accusation and use it as an explanation for why the two most prominent 'wholesale' arguments in the literature seem irresolvable. Framed probabilistically, we can see very clearly why realists and anti-realists have been talking past one another. We then formulate a dilemma for advocates of either argument, answer potential objections to our criticisms, discuss what remains (if anything) of these two major arguments, and then speculate about a future philosophy of science freed from these two arguments. In so doing, we connect the point about base rates to the wholesale/retail distinction; we believe it hints at an answer of how to distinguish profitable from unprofitable realism debates. In short, we offer a probabilistic analysis of the feeling of ennui afflicting contemporary philosophy of science.

**Keywords:** scientific realism; base rates; no-miracles argument; pessimistic induction

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