

Science and Reality

Faye, Jan (2006) Science and Reality.

Full text available as:

[PDF](#) - Requires a viewer, such as [Adobe Acrobat Reader](#) or other PDF viewer.

Abstract

Scientific realism is the view that the aim of science is to produce true or approximately true theories about nature. It is a view which not only is shared by many philosophers but also by scientists themselves. Regarding Kuhn's rejection of scientific progress, Steven Weinberg once declared: "All this is wormwood to scientists like myself, who think the task of science is to bring us closer and closer to objective truth." But such a realist view on scientific theories is not without problems. The paper discusses some arguments for and against the ontological commitments that scientific theories may entail. The upshot is that scientific realism according to which the semantic content of theories should be understood literally is not sustainable. Instead, it is argued that only realism with respect to entities can be reasonably and practically maintained. Finally, the paper discusses structural realism which presents itself as a modern alternative to scientific realism which may meet both the optimistic no-miracle argument and the pessimistic meta-induction argument. My conclusion is that such a position is neither attractive nor defensible.

Keywords: Scientific realism, Structural realism, theories, truth.

Subjects: [General Issues: Realism/Anti-realism](#)

ID Code: 3748

Deposited By: [Faye, Jan](#)

Deposited On: 21 December 2007