

Einladung zum GASTVORTRAG

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The Historical Challenge to Realism and Essential Deployment

Mi., 19. 6. 2019, 18.00 Uhr s.t., Seminarraum VI (Karl-Rahner-Platz 3)

According to the so-called “No Miracles Argument” (NMA), it would be a miracle if false theories were so empirically successful as they are. Laudan objected pointing to many successful theories that turned out to be false, and Lyons listed even individual theory-components deployed in novel predictions but false. Deployment Realists (DR) replied that the false components in question had not been deployed essentially. Lyons, in turn, criticized Psillos’ criterion of essentiality. In this talk, I propose a better characterization of essentiality, which escapes Lyons’ criticisms. I then show how the essentiality requirement rules out the cases of Dalton, Mendeleev, and caloric as possible historical counterexamples to the NMA and DR. The cases of Bohr’s orbits, ether and caloric show that essentiality cannot be detected prospectively (otherwise, we could anticipate the future of science), and even prospective detection of non-essentiality may be too difficult. But since Laudan’s and Lyons’ objections are always retrospective, retrospective recognition of inessentiality is enough for DR.



Mario Alai is associate professor of Theoretical Philosophy at the University of Urbino. He holds degrees from the universities of Bologna, Urbino and Helsinki, and doctorates from the universities of Maryland and Florence. His research focuses mainly on scientific and metaphysical realism (vs. antirealism) but he has published on a variety of issues in analytic epistemology, philosophy of language and philosophy of science.

Alle Interessentinnen und Interessenten sind herzlich eingeladen!