Philosophy Preliminary Exam Syllabus

Philosophy of Science with Simplicity

This is a study of four topics of central importance to the epistemology of science. You ask what makes something a scientific explanation, what is required for observations to support (confirm) scientific theories, whether predictive success is a better indication of the truth of a theory than post hoc accommodation, and whether simplicity is a guide to truth.

Background


Scientific Explanation


Confirmation and Disconfirmation


Kendall, ‘Designing a Research Project,’ online

Consilience, Prediction, Accommodation


Hitchcock and Sober, ‘Prediction vs. Accommodation,’ online

Barnes, ‘Predictivism for Pluralists,’ online

Simplicity

Forster, ‘Bayes and Bust: Simplicity as a Problem …,’ §§ 1, 2, 3, 6, online

Forster and Sober, ‘How to Tell When Simpler …,’ online


Locations of online readings:


Barnes, ‘Predictivism for Pluralists,’ The British Journal for the Philosophy of Science 56 (2005), 421–450.

Forster, ‘Bayes and Bust: Simplicity as a Problem …,’ §§ 1, 2, 3, 6, The British Journal for the Philosophy of Science 46 (Sep., 1995), 399-424.

Forster and Sober, ‘How to Tell When Simpler …,’ The British Journal for the Philosophy of Science 45 (Mar., 1994), 1-35.