

From Instrumentalism to Constructive Realism

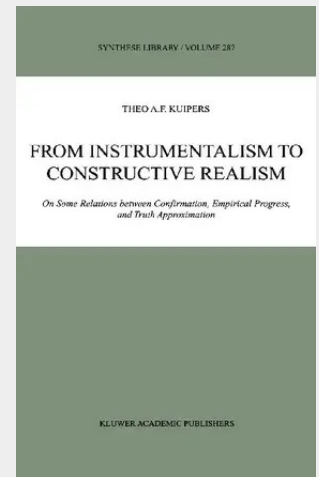
On Some Relations between Confirmation, Empirical Progress, and Truth Approximation

Surprisingly, modified versions of the confirmation theory (Carnap and Hempel) and truth approximation theory (Popper) turn out to be smoothly sythesizable. The glue between the two appears to be the instrumentalist methodology, rather than that of the falsificationist.

The instrumentalist methodology, used in the separate, comparative evaluation of theories in terms of their successes and problems (hence, even if already falsified), provides in theory and practice the straight road to short-term empirical progress in science (Laudan). It is also argued that such progress is also functional for all kinds of truth approximation: observational, referential, and theoretical. This sheds new light on the long-term dynamics of science and hence on the relation between the main epistemological positions, viz., instrumentalism (Toulmin, Laudan), constructive empiricism (Van Fraassen), referential realism (Hacking, Cartwright), and theory realism of a non-essentialist nature (constructive realism Popper).

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160,49 €

149,99 € (zzgl. MwSt.)

Lieferfrist: bis zu 10 Tage

Artikelnummer: 9780792360865

Medium: Buch

ISBN: 978-0-7923-6086-5

Verlag: Springer

Erscheinungstermin: 29.02.2000

Sprache(n): Englisch

Auflage: 2000

Serie: Synthese Library

Produktform: Gebunden

Gewicht: 1590 g

Seiten: 372

Format (B x H): 160 x 241 mm

