

ARE UNCONCEIVED ALTERNATIVES A PROBLEM FOR SCIENTIFIC REALISM?

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Abstract

Kyle Stanford starts his a recent book, *Exceeding Our Grasp*, with the claim that “the most powerful challenge to scientific realism has yet to be formulated” (2006: 9). He goes on to formulate what he takes to be that challenge, offering a version of the pessimistic meta-induction that includes elements from the underdetermination argument. I have previously labeled the meta-induction “the most powerful argument against scientific realism”. I did so because “it rests on plausible claims about the history of science”. Stanford brings out just how plausible such claims can be. I think his version of the meta-induction is indeed the most powerful challenge. However, I think the challenge can be met.

I shall be drawing on earlier discussions in “Scientific Realism” (2005) and *Realism and Truth* (1997). I start by setting out what I take scientific realism to be, followed by a brief summary of my response to the underdetermination argument against it. The paper begins in earnest with my response to the pessimistic meta-induction. Against this background, I will turn to Stanford’s argument.

Conferences and Volumes: [\[2009\] Metaphysics of Science \(Melbourne, July 2-5, 2009\)](#)

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