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Underdetermination in Geophysics

Miyake, Teru (2010) *Underdetermination in Geophysics*. In: [2010] Philosophy of Science Assoc. 22nd Biennial Mtg (Montréal, QC) > PSA 2010 Contributed Papers.



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Abstract

This paper examines the epistemological implications of a particular underdetermination problem from geophysics, with an emphasis on understanding how the scientists themselves tried to deal with the problem. The problem is from the highly influential work of the geophysicists Backus and Gilbert in the late 60° s, who were trying to determine the internal structure of the Earth using seismic waves. I find that actual underdetermination problems can be vastly complex, with different sources of underdetermination having different epistemological implications. A better understanding of actual cases of underdetermination is needed before we can make epistemological conclusions based on underdetermination.

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