

Grounded Empiricism

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In this talk, I defend a novel form of empiricism, which I label 'grounded empiricism'. I motivate grounded empiricism by taking lessons from the most highly articulated and influential version of empiricism of the last half a century, namely Bas van Fraassen's constructive empiricism. I begin by outlining the key strengths and weaknesses of the constructive empiricist notion of observability. I then proceed to focus on an important omission in van Fraassen's work, namely a rationale for why we should trust the senses to begin with. I argue that the real source of epistemic credibility in the senses is the satisfaction of two principles (that are later combined into a composite principle). I then proceed to make a case for the view that the same epistemic credibility can be found in instruments, and even in purely artificial agents that integrate such instruments into their epistemic life. I conclude the talk with a discussion of the broader scientific realism debate, asking where grounded empiricism fits into this debate.