

Observational Judgment Convergence and Veridicality

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Observation reports are used throughout science to test theories. But for tests to carry real weight, the observation reports must be veridical. There are those who deny that observation reports are veridical. One major motivation for this approach is the theory-ladenness thesis. Put simply, theories distort the content of observation reports and hence such content cannot truthfully represent things about the world. In this talk, I examine the relationship between observational judgment convergence and veridicality. Although veridicality implies observational judgment convergence — i.e. two individuals who both correctly adjudge the same observational situation could not be in genuine disagreement — the same is not true the other way around. In a nutshell, convergence in observational judgments is necessary but not sufficient for their veridicality. Even so, I put forth some general arguments for the view that the most likely explanation for observational judgment convergence is the veridicality of the corresponding observation reports. Alternative explanations in the form of constructivist views are considered and dismissed as inadequate.