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EPISTEMOLOGY OF THE AIDS-CASE:
A CASE-STUDY FOR THE METHODOLOGY
OF SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH PROGRAMS

Abstract

The paper provides a case-study in the application of the principles of the methodology of scientific research programs to a contemporary scientific debate. The leading program in AIDS-research, based on the hypothesis of a causal link between HIV and AIDS, is compared to the “heretical” drug-AIDS program proposed at the beginning of the 90ies by Peter Duesberg. It is shown that, on the basis of the Lakatosian standards, both programs can be said not to have been progressive so far. After a first introduction in the AIDS-case (1.), I briefly reconsider the problem of dogmatism in science with reference to AIDS-research, and try to reconstruct the hard-core the largely prevailing HIV-AIDS program can be said to be based on (2.). Then some HIV-AIDS research strategies are considered and respectively classified as *ad hoc*₂ (3.) and *ad hoc*₁ (4.) and the “methodological” problem of the so-called “Koch’s postulates” is brought back to a properly theoretical controversy (indeed an ontological one) between the HIV-AIDS program’s supporters and its critics (5.). A catalogue of HIV-AIDS program’s anomalies (6.) and a sketch of Duesberg’s attempts to solve them (7.) is given. Finally I argue that, at the moment, neither the heretical drug-AIDS program nor the thriving HIV-AIDS program seems to have on its side any “crucial example which verify the additional content”, that is, the Lakatosian condition for an authentic (both theoretically and empirically) progressive shift (8.).