

BOOK REVIEWS

Socializing Epistemology: The Social Dimensions of Knowledge

Edited by Frederick F. Schmitt

Lanham: Rowan & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1994. 315 pp.

Reviewed by Patrick J.J. Phillips

Sceptics of philosophy as a discipline argue that the practice of philosophy often revolves around staking out an area of expertise, such as philosophy of economics or philosophy of science, and then proceeding to argue about what falls inside or outside of the subject area. Sceptics of this ilk will find much ammunition for their arguments in Frederick F. Schmitt's volume *Socializing Epistemology: The Social Dimensions of Knowledge*.

In his twenty-seven page introduction, Schmitt goes to great lengths to differentiate "social epistemology" from the "sociology of knowledge." The latter is defined by Schmitt as "the empirical study of the contingent social conditions or causes of knowledge or what passes for knowledge in a society . . ." (p. 1). "Social epistemology," according to Schmitt, ". . . is the conceptual and normative study of the relevance of social relations, roles, interests and institutions to knowledge" (p. 1). The distinction implied here is by no means obvious. However, the definitions (and the distinction) satisfies Schmitt and the next twenty-six pages of the introduction are dedicated to identifying thinkers who posed questions that are to be viewed as forming a groundwork for the discipline that is "social epistemology." As Schmitt put it, "The history of social epistemology is largely unexplored . . ." (p. 2). Schmitt employs a veritable cornucopia of thinkers, from Aristotle (p. 2) to Pierce (p. 20) to Bruno Latour and Barry Barnes (p. 24), all of whom are visited by Schmitt in his attempt to locate them as working within the area of "social epistemology."

The collection itself comprises eleven articles as well as a comprehensive bibliography by Schmitt and Spellman (not surprisingly entitled: "Socializing Epistemology"). The collection itself is far from heterogeneous, with topics ranging from "Belief Forming Practices and the Social" by William P. Alston (p. 29) and "Speaking of Ghosts" by C.A.J. Coady (p.75), to "The Fate of Knowledge in Social Theories of Science" by Helen E. Longino (p. 135) and "Accuracy in Journalism: An Economic Approach" by James C. Cox and Alvin I. Goldman (p. 189).

In "Belief Forming Practices and the Social," Alston investigates the "social influences on individual cognition." Alston states, "I am a philosopher, concerned with epistemology . . . hence . . . I shall be concentrating on the conditions under which beliefs enjoy one or another epistemic status, realize one or another "epistemic desideratum"—being rational or justified, or qualifying as knowledge, to take the examples that have figured most prominently in epistemology" (p. 29). Alston develops three reasons for the reliability or unreliability of doxastic practices which he labels "grades of social involvement" (p. 48), arguing that social considerations are relevant to the epistemic status and assessment of individual beliefs (p. 49).

James C. Cox and Alvin I. Goldman, in their essay "Accuracy in Journalism: An Economic Approach," continue the work of Schmitt's introduction as part of their project to "define and develop a certain nontraditional sector of epistemology—a sector dubbed 'social epistemology'" (p. 189). This is carried through an analysis of the popular (American) news media.

In "Speaking of Ghosts," C.A.J. Coady examines Bradley's essay "The Evidences of Spiritualism" (1935) in a manner which is consistent with his book, *Testimony: A Philosophical Study* (1992). Coady argues against a certain picture of our reliance on the word of others, which is explicitly acknowledged as being derived from Hume (p. 77). Coady's account of spiritualist beliefs as well as those concerning the possibility of communication with alien species, both terrestrial and extra-terrestrial (p. 85), is intrinsically interesting. In concluding, Coady adopts a mitigated position on the question of reports of spirit land (*i.e.*, bodily survival, *etc.*), claiming that those who do give credence to such beliefs cannot be accused of irrationality (p. 91).

Like Coady's essay, Longino's "The Fate of Knowledge in Social Theories of Science" is a modification and a defense of certain arguments outlined in an earlier book, her *Science as Social Knowledge: Values and Objectivity in Scientific Inquiry* (1992). She continues the project of this book in her attempt to "develop an analysis of scientific inquiry that both acknowledges the social dimensions of inquiry and keeps room for the normative and prescriptive concerns that have been the traditional preoccupation of philosophers" (p. 135). Longino devotes the majority of the essay to a rebuttal of Philip Kitcher's charge that she is guilty of relativism and that as a result her account of science is incapable of distinguishing between evolutionary theory and creationism. Longino's counter-arguments attempt to establish a set of "discursive conditions for effective discursive interaction" and as a result to show that the normative content of "knowledge can be expressed within the terms of a social theory of scientific knowledge" (p. 156).

Other contributions to the Schmitt volume include "Egoism in Epistemology" by Richard Foley, "Contrasting Conceptions of Social Epistemology" by Philip Kitcher, "Remarks on Collective Belief" by Margaret Gilbert and "A Conservative Approach to Social Epistemology" by Hilary Kornblith. As a

result, the collection of eleven essays contained within *Socializing Epistemology* has much to offer the epistemologist as well as those interested in sociology of knowledge. However, whether Schmitt has succeeded in his intention, namely the birthing of a new subject for philosophical analysis (social epistemology) is, ironically, dependent upon social factors which are themselves the subject of study of the authors of this volume.

Patrick J.J. Phillips, Department of Philosophy, York University
2700 Keele Street, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M3J 1P3 pat@nexus.yorku.ca

The Semantic Foundations of Logic
vol. I, Propositional Logics vol. II, Predicate Logic
by Richard L. Epstein

Vol. I, New York: Oxford University Press, 1995, 480 pp.

Vol. II, New York, Oxford University Press, 1994, 412 pp.

Reviewed by Douglas Walton

This pair of books are two volumes of an ongoing research project developing a new kind of formal logic. The volume on propositional logics is the second edition of the book of the same title originally published by Kluwer (1990). The book begins with an introduction to classical propositional logic, and then goes on to develop the new kind of logic. Both new volumes are presented very clearly from the ground up, in a text-book format, complete with exercises. And so both books, but especially the volume on propositional logics, could be used in a middle or upper level logic course, or a course on philosophy of logics.

The new logics are built around the idea that certain kinds of relations can be added into the requirements needed for the conditional (and for the other logical connective, where required). One kind of relation of this sort is generally called "relatedness". But what does 'relatedness' mean? Is it the same thing as 'relevance'? Epstein defines relatedness in various specific ways, many of which do seem to model kinds of relevance that would be of interest to the readers of *Informal Logic*.

For example, one way of defining relatedness is subject-matter overlap (vol. 1, p. 93). You can assign each given statement in your argument a set of subject matters, meaning a subset of a set of topics that the argument is supposedly about. So one proposition can be said to imply another in the new relatedness system if, and only if, the truth-values are the same as classical logic, and the two propositions do have subject matter overlap. For example,