

# OBJECTIVITY

## From Social Epistemology to Political Philosophy of Scientific Knowledge

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# Outline

- ◆ Objectivity: What is the problem?
- ◆ The Proper Roles Question
- ◆ The Proper Values Question
- ◆ Deliberative Democracy and Science
- ◆ Scientific/Intellectual Movements
- ◆ Conclusions



# Objectivity

Knowledge claims can be trusted by ourselves and others

Trust in scientists who present  
claims

Reliance on  
claims

Social  
Responsibility

Competence &  
Honesty

CCE

# What is the problem?

- ◆ **Social Responsibility:** What does it mean for scientists to follow appropriate moral and social values in different stages of scientific inquiry?
  - ◆ **The Proper Roles Question:** What roles can moral and social values legitimately play in scientific inquiry?
  - ◆ **The Proper Values Question:** How can scientists identify appropriate moral and social values, that is, the values that should play the proper roles in scientific inquiry?

# Theses

- ◆ No single procedure can guarantee that scientists receive adequate information about appropriate moral and social values.
- ◆ Ideal procedures miss an important aspect of well-functioning liberal democratic societies: the on-going struggle to make visible the social experiences of subordinate or marginal social groups.
- ◆ Scientific/intellectual movements play an important role in political philosophy of scientific knowledge.

# The Proper Roles Question

- ◆ How can moral and social value judgments enter into the core of scientific inquiry and why should they be integrated with democratic principles?
  - ◆ an argument from inductive risk
  - ◆ an argument from pluralism
  - ◆ an argument from normative background assumptions

# The Proper Values Question

- ◆ How can scientists receive information about appropriate moral and social values?
  - ◆ an expert-driven approach
  - ◆ a market-driven approach
  - ◆ a government-driven approach

# Deliberative Democracy and Science

- ◆ Dilemma between public participation and informed decision-making
- ◆ Scientists' value judgments should conform to counterfactual informed democratic decisions:
  - ◆ Well-ordered science
  - ◆ Deliberative polling
- ◆ As tools of information processing, deliberative mini-publics are only as inclusive as the pool of alternative value perspectives they engage.

## Scientific/Intellectual Movements

- ◆ “SIMs are collective efforts to pursue research programs or projects for thought in the face of resistance from others in the scientific or intellectual community” (Frickel and Gross 2005, 206).
- ◆ Due to their collective nature, SIMs can make social experiences and value perspectives visible under conditions where relations of power tend to suppress or distort testimonies.
- ◆ SIMs have the capacity to extend the pool of alternative value perspectives.

# Conclusions

- ◆ Models of deliberative democracy have advantages over expert, market, and government-driven approaches.
- ◆ Yet, even the most sophisticated models of deliberative democracy are limited because they can process information merely from the existing pool of value perspectives.
- ◆ SIMs can extend the pool of value perspectives by making marginal or subordinate social experiences visible.



THANK YOU!