

The direct and indirect role of values in scientific expertise: Inquiring Heather Douglas' account.

According to Heather Douglas (2008), experts must be responsible to the public “in how they handle the uncertainties and weighty judgments that are part of their exercise of expertise” (p.3). In making their judgments experts “can and should embrace values as guidance in what counts as sufficient warrant” (p.10), an indirect role of values, but values should not act “as reasons (the direct role) for accepting or rejecting an empirical claim” (p.10). By making the distinction between the direct and indirect role of values in expert judgments, Douglas hopes to protect the expert from politicisation concerns.

In this paper, I start with a critique of Douglas' distinction between direct and indirect values. What if two experts have different values or a divergent (theoretical) view of what counts as enough evidence – or, as too uncertain – to make their judgment? Does this variation among individual experts not imply that Douglas' indirect values are direct after all? (This will be illustrated with examples from economic expertise during the recent financial turmoil.) Secondly, I revisit the debate on epistemic values – introduced as additional guidance – for theory choice beyond logic and evidence (cf. Churchman 1956; Kuhn 1977; McMullin 1983; Laudan 1984; Lacey 1999), in particular the problems in considering epistemic values as *internal* to science and the convergence of epistemic and non-epistemic values (cf. Rooney 1992). These problems obviously challenge scientific objectivity, and in response alternative understandings of objectivity have been formulated (e.g. Longino 2002). On the basis of these reformulations, I will reconsider Douglas' account of the responsibility of the scientific expert (cf. Douglas 2000, 2003 and 2008).

In conclusion, the responsibility of the expert does then not merely depend on indirect values to limit and legitimate the expert's judgments, but on the expert's readiness to uptake the public's criticism (understood within Helen Longino's procedural social epistemology, labelled *Critical Contextual Empiricism*, cf. Rolin, forthcoming). Such an approach solves the problems with Douglas' account in dealing with the (in)direct role of non-epistemic values and the problems of the politicisation of expertise, or so I will argue.

References

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