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THE TWIN ROOTS AND BRANCHES OF SOCIAL EPISTEMOLOGY
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Social epistemology is a field of research within Anglo-American philosophy that has emerged over the last decades in the borderland between epistemology and philosophy of science. Breaking with an ancient philosophical tradition, social epistemology adopts a social perspective upon knowledge, construing it as a phenomenon of the public sphere rather than as an individual, or even private or “mental”, possession. Knowledge is generated by, and attributed to, not only individuals but also collective entities such as groups, businesses, public institutions and entire societies. Like traditional epistemology, social epistemology is a normative enterprise, but whereas traditional epistemology typically contents itself with laying down abstract principles for the justification of knowledge while taking little interest in their practical implementation, social epistemology is concerned to provide directions for the improvement of our collective epistemic practices and institutions. In pursuing this agenda, social epistemology adopts a naturalistic stance, in the recognition that conceptual analysis will not get us very far in identifying the conditions for effective knowledge generation on a societal scale. We must adopt an empirical approach, drawing on disciplines such as psychology, sociology, anthropology and economics.

The above tenets are agreed upon by most current philosophers who label themselves as social epistemologists. However, behind this consensus lurks considerable divergence. Social epistemology (SE) comprises two roughly demarcated lines of development, one being an extension of classical analytic epistemology while the other is inspired mainly by philosophy of science. This difference in pedigree brings a couple of significant divergences with it. On both sides there is some amount of organization and joint efforts, in the form of journal publication and similar academic manifestations, often involving some critical attention to the activities of the other branch; still there are many independents and borderline figures in the field. In the following, we shall look at both branches.

Analytic Social Epistemology: The Naturalist and ReliabilistTurns
We start with the branch emerging out of classical epistemology, often labeled Analytic Social Epistemology (ASE). ASE is a descendant of classical epistemology, which defined itself by the task of defeating the radical sceptic. If we accept the rules of play proposed by the radical (Cartesian) sceptic, all we have to work with epistemically are our own subjective experiences (“ideas”). The result is epistemic solipsism: the very existence of the external world becomes moot and, a fortiori, so does the existence of other human beings with whom one might have shared the task of gaining knowledge
about that world. This radically individualist and subjectivist perspective would be retained even after
20th-century epistemology made its celebrated “linguistic turn”, replacing Cartesian talk of mental
operations upon “ideas” with the analysis of evidential relations between propositions (or sentences). The
individualist-subjectivist stance would survive in the principle that all the human knower has to work
with are first-person observation sentences and their ilk.

Analytic epistemology would eventually break with this individualist tradition and produce
a social offshoot, but the move was made by small and cautious steps, and along an indirect route.
First came a break with the a priori approach and a turn towards an alternative, naturalistic conception
of human knowledge, i.e. the empirical examination of how human cognition actually functions. This
idea had been proposed by Willard Quine in a celebrated article entitled “Epistemology Naturalized” (Quine 1969),
but its implementation had to await the pioneering work of Alvin Goldman,
the founding father and central figure of analytic social epistemology. Goldman developed the naturalistic

The empirical turn would seem to abandon traditional epistemology’s normative agenda, which
aims to lay down the – formal and idealized – conditions for a belief to be justified by the evidence,
and takes little interest in the actual, invariably error-prone, workings of the human mind.
Goldman found a way, however, to salvage normativity by devising an alternative to the traditional
“internalist” models of justification, where a belief is warranted by the evidence the believer can
cite on its behalf. On the novel, externalist view proposed by Goldman, we can grant to a belief the
status of knowledge even if unsupported by premises known to the believer, as long as the cognitive
process through which it was generated is generally a reliable deliverer of truth. It does not
matter if this process consists in purely neuro-physiological goings-on, the nature of which is
unknown to the believer, as is, for example, the case in vision. Goldman arrived at this theory
through a series of steps. Early on, he adopted a causal theory of (empirical) knowledge, in order
to circumvent certain familiar counter-examples to the standard analysis of knowledge as justified
true belief (Goldman 1967). According to Goldman, this analysis could be amended by adding the
condition that the fact known be causally connected to the belief about it. In subsequent articles,
Goldman would address the problem that not just any causal connection would do; it had to be of
an epistemically “appropriate” kind. This requirement was resolved by a general condition to the
effect that the causal mechanism in question be a reliable producer of truth under the given circumstances, i.e. that it would generate true beliefs in a high proportion of cases (Goldman 1972).

There was some vacillation in Goldman’s early presentations with respect to the nature of his
enterprise: Was this a case of conceptual analysis of notions such as “justification” and “knowledge”,
or was it an attempt to naturalistically explain the philosophical intuitions that we draw on
in such an analysis, hence a case of second-order naturalism (Goldman 1972)? Be that as it may,
Goldman’s commitment to first-order naturalism (naturalism with respect to empirical beliefs) was
firm, and he would explore this approach in a monograph that offered a comprehensive review of
contemporary empirical research into individual human cognition in psychology and cognitive
science (Goldman 1986). An important task of normative epistemology would henceforth be to deter-
mine which cognitive processes are reliable producers of truth.

Analytic Social Epistemology: The Social Turn

Next, Goldman expanded externalism and reliabilism to encompass even the social components
of the cognizer’s environment, thereby finally extending analytic epistemology into the social
realm (Goldman 1987, 1999). His first steps were cautious. The point of socializing epistemology
is to legitimate the immense increase in each individual’s knowledge that ensues if we accept the
testimony of others. But, given epistemology’s classical sceptical roots, this immediately raises
a number of problems: Under which conditions can we trust other people’s testimony? And is

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such trust an autonomous mode of validation, or must it be backed up by other, independently recognized types of evidence? Moreover, our informants sometimes contradict each other. How can we rationally handle such disagreement? These questions already arise in everyday contexts, but recur in pointed versions in the sciences: How can lay people identify trustworthy scientific experts, and how should they react when experts disagree?

Such questions were among the first to be treated by analytic social epistemologists, using the familiar tool of thought experiment. They constituted key topics of discussion in the journal founded by Goldman in 2004, *Episteme: A Journal of Social and Individual Epistemology*. In large part, the aim was to overcome resistance from traditional individualist epistemologists who argued that social epistemology is not real epistemology. Later, when the conceptual groundworks were secured and interest turned from person-to-person testimony to larger societal institutions of knowledge production and dissemination, ASE adopted a more naturalistic stance (Goldman 1999). Topics of investigation were institutions such as law, science and the media. This effort had an empirical and a theoretical side, of which the former consisted in examining actual epistemic practices for their “veritistic” merits, i.e. their reliability as truth-producers. This aspect has to this day remained somewhat programmatic, and has largely relied on data collected by other disciplines for other, more local or specific purposes.

ASE has put more effort into the development of theory. ASE’s preferred theoretical models are typically formal and abstract, with micro-economics being a particularly popular source of inspiration. Such models adopt the stance of methodological individualism by anchoring all societal phenomena in individuals, their deeds and their cognitive proclivities, and ASE’s penchant for this approach is no doubt a remnant of the individualism of classical epistemology. ASEers have also devised models of their own making, less closely tied to micro-economic paradigms. Thus, Goldman and collaborators have developed models based upon Bayesian probability theory (Goldman and Shaked 1991).

Proponents of ASE are aware that the institutions of knowledge production have vast and sometimes invidious social implications, and also grant that knowledge maximisation is not the sole goal of social epistemology; other concerns are at play as well, such as social equality. But ASE holds that the exploration of such broader normative issues belongs to political philosophy rather than social epistemology (Goldman 2004). ASE has gradually moved in the direction of a broader ethico-political perspective, however, although again, these developments have been piecemeal and cautious. Miranda Fricker’s work is a pioneering effort in this direction, demonstrating the existence of a specific, epistemic type of injustice that constitutes a legitimate topic for epistemology (Fricker 2007). It is perpetrated, e.g. when somebody’s testimony is neglected because of prejudices concerning that person’s gender, race or lowly social status. Such neglect impugns a person’s status as a knower, thereby negating a crucial aspect of our humanity. Fricker is not unaware of the more mundane, material fruits of possessing knowledge; nevertheless, she is unwilling to make issues concerning the societal distribution of knowledge part of the ambit of social epistemology. Instead, it is a subject for political philosophy or ethics.

The reluctance of ASE to address broader issues of distributive fairness may be a carry-over from the strong focus in traditional epistemology on the “production” side of knowledge, to the neglect of its “consumption”: The aim was to lay down the conditions for generating knowledge — “generating” to be understood in the highly etiolated sense of “furnishing beliefs with adequate evidence”. ASE has long since embraced the idea, however, that knowledge can be encapsulated in more tangible vessels than minds, such as books, computers, measuring instruments, university disciplines, educational programs, etc.; this is implicit in the externalist turn. It is a natural next step to start addressing issues of the ethics and politics of the distribution of such embodiments. And indeed, that process is underway. An example is Sanford Goldberg, whose most recent work contains a program for the development of ASE in the direction of addressing general normative issues (Goldberg 2016).
Science-Oriented Social Epistemology

We now turn to the other branch of SE, which has philosophy of science, rather than epistemology, as its most important progenitor. This discipline deals with an especially eminent example of social cognition, science; thus a social perspective on knowledge was inherent in it from the very start. Thus, while much ASE work still revolves around the legitimacy of the very step from individualism to collectivism, the other branch rests confidently in its collectivist stance. Moreover, philosophy of science typically is not much concerned with securing indubitable evidence for beliefs already held, but has a more dynamic goal, i.e. promoting the progress or “growth” of science, and this stance is inherited by its academic descendant.

The notion of scientific progress had come under pressure through Kuhn’s work, however. Kuhn granted that science progresses in the direction of ever higher “puzzle-solving” power, but denied that this implies an ever closer correspondence to the fundamental structure of reality (Kuhn 1962/1970). Kuhn’s revolutionary and sociologized conception of science inspired a spate of empirical investigations of science. This effort, known as Science and Technology Studies (STS), was instigated by the work of David Bloor and his collaborators in the so-called Edinburgh School (Bloor 1976/1991), while a more recent and highly influential contribution was made by Bruno Latour (Latour 1987, 1999). In its turn, STS influenced developments within science-oriented social epistemology, in particular Steve Fuller’s program.

The science-oriented social epistemologists form a highly diverse and loosely connected group, not a collective organized around a common project; although, as we shall see, there are pockets of more organized efforts within this branch. Hence, any brief survey will involve huge simplifications. In the following, the representatives of science-oriented social epistemology are treated in an order of increasing divergence from ASE.

First, Philip Kitcher will receive brief mention. Kitcher is primarily a philosopher of science trying to work out a more sociologically realistic analysis of science, following the debunking that idealized positivistic models had suffered at the hands of Kuhn, while still saving science’s rational status. In particular, Kitcher wanted to secure a robust sense for the notion of scientific progress, rebutting Kuhn’s dismissal of that idea (Kitcher 1993).

What earns Kitcher the epithet of a “social epistemologist” is, first, his treatment of science as not a world unto itself, to be grasped only in its own sui generis categories, but as a mode of the general category of societal knowledge production. He emphasizes that the optimal strategies for achieving truth and other epistemic goals, even individual goals, will involve coordination of effort with others (Kitcher 1992). In this spirit, he analyzes science in theoretical terms with general application to social systems, such as “consensus practices” and “organization of cognitive labor". Moreover, in his more recent work, he explicitly addresses political and ethical aspects of scientific organization and the role of science in society (Kitcher 2011).

Methodologically, Kitcher’s work shows considerable affinity with that of Alvin Goldman and ASE, using formal models similar to those of microeconomics. This combination of features defines Kitcher’s views as something like a midway position between the two wings of social epistemology.

Social Epistemology and the “New Social Movements”

Among another group of philosophers of the post-Kuhnian era, the issue of science’s social and political role was in focus from the start. During the 1970s and 1980s, many philosophers of science were disappointed with science’s stance on various key social and ideological issues of that era. It was felt that science tended to support conservative agendas and neglected such current challenges as the erosion of the environment, militarism, racism, gay rights and gender inequality, issues raised by the so-called “new social movements”. The issue of gender discrimination played a special role, and it is...
hardly an accident that many of the philosophers involved were female. Several of them had a background in analytic philosophy, and their agenda did not call for the outright rejection of science, as was the aim of certain radical feminists, but rather to work out a compromise position. Representatives of this effort are Helen Longino (Longino 1990, 2002), Sandra Harding (Harding 1991) and Lorraine Code (Code 1991), each of them with a different balance between the twin, somewhat contrary aims of reconstructing science and defending it against more radical criticisms. Obviously, the agenda of a political critique of science would also be shared by some male philosophers, such as Joseph Rouse (Rouse 1987). All these authors regarded science as a model of human knowledge in general and saw its flaws as those of human thinking as such, only writ large; hence they deserve the epithet of social epistemologists.

There is no room for discussion of all these authors, so I choose Helen Longino as a good representative. Longino wanted to salvage scientific objectivity while making science more sensitive to social concerns, among which feminism had her special interest. She buttressed her critique of traditional science with detailed studies of biological theorizing in particular, demonstrating gender bias of various sorts. Still, Longino wanted to show that science as such is not inherently biased against women or other particular groups. The task was to devise a conception of science that would have room for a plurality of social concerns. She articulated this as the need to eliminate the division between the rational and the social in our understanding of science.

Longino’s analysis starts from the insight that science does not proceed by generalizing induction on observations that are cleansed of all theoretical bias, as logical positivists would have it, but uses more complex patterns of reasoning (later to be known as “inference to the best explanation”). Such complex patterns typically involve deep background assumptions of a metaphysical nature needed to bridge the gap between evidence and theoretical conclusion. This is known as the “underdetermination of theory by data” and is normally seen as a weakness of scientific method, especially since those background assumptions often encode societal and ideological values that make science subject to normative bias.

Longino argues rather to the contrary, however, viz. that underdetermination makes room for the input of ideological and valuational concerns into the scientific process in a way that does not invalidate that process, thus safeguarding the societal relevance of science. It is crucial, however, that such interests not be allowed to determine the course of research in a covert manner. To secure transparency, the theories at play must be subjected to an open process of discussion and criticism. (Here, her theory shows a clear and acknowledged affinity with Popper’s criticist methodology of science.) Longino stresses, however, that the scientific process cannot be guaranteed to produce a single winner: The result may instead be a multiplicity of different theories representing different perspectives upon reality. This pluralism is generated by differences in topics addressed, methodology, instrumentation, research interests, etc., which contribute to the contextual nature of the scientific process.

Longino’s position, which she calls “critical contextual empiricism”, shares important traits with instrumentalism, from which it is however distinguished by Longino’s acceptance of truth as one of the goals of science. Still, the notion of “truth” is not the best to capture science’s essential tie to reality, according to Longino. She prefers what she calls “conformity”, which also comprises the relationship of resemblance between a scientific model and reality. Moreover, while Longino grants the legitimacy of the traditional striving for unification in science, the viability of this goal cannot be demonstrated by metaphysical argument, nor is its accomplishment guaranteed by methodology. Longino emphasizes that this does not represent a simple relativism, but rather pluralism. Pluralism is an epistemic value and is pernicious only from the point of view of a dogmatic metaphysical monism, and reductivism.

To Longino, individual knowledge has the same structure as scientific knowledge, i.e. it is a matter of advancing a claim and defending it against relevant objections (sometimes referred to
as the "default and challenge"-structure of knowledge). This means that knowledge, scientific or everyday, is inherently social as it is defined not only by its conformity to reality, but also by its normative legitimacy in the context of discourse, which in the case of science may encompass all of society.

Such social legitimacy must be earned: In the societal process of validating a piece of scientific knowledge, equality must be preserved, in the sense that all qualified voices must be heard, regardless of gender, race or social status. To Longino, this principle safeguards both the validity of scientific results, and the ideal of social equality.

**Critical Social Epistemology**

Next, we turn to a segment of the science-oriented branch of social epistemology that presents itself as an organized effort, communicating through a journal founded by Steve Fuller in 1987 named *Social Epistemology* and subtitled *A Journal of Knowledge, Culture and Policy*. This branch is sometimes referred to as Critical Social Epistemology (CSE), a term signaling its keen interest in the ethics and politics of societal knowledge production. The name also marks a distinction to Goldman’s ASE with which CSE has enjoyed a somewhat troubled relationship. CSE is a collective effort, and among its other key figures is James Collier, long-time editor of *Social Epistemology*. Still, the development of CSE is still largely shaped by the twists and turns of the thought of its founder, Steve Fuller. In the following, for lack of space, I shall deal with Fuller’s work only.

Unlike Longino and others, Fuller does not try to work out a compromise between analytic philosophy of science and its various critics of the 1970s and 1980s. He takes for granted that the traditional philosophical project of developing a logic of theory choice is defunct; instead, we must turn to social science for an understanding of science. Moreover, he takes it as a mere truism that knowledge seeking is a social enterprise, that science is the most important manifestation of this collective effort, and that science is therefore a model of human cognition as such.

Finally, a concern with the social role of science, the politics of knowledge production and the fairness of its societal distribution was in focus for CSE from the start. Thus, Fuller sets out from largely the position that ASE has eventually come to occupy by small and cautious steps. Moreover, he has absorbed many of the lessons of Science and Technology Studies and puts them to use in his work – albeit not uncritically. These foundational points of CSE were laid down by Fuller in an early work simply entitled *Social Epistemology* (Fuller 1988/2002).

In ASE writings, Fuller is often depicted as a radical (CSE is called “radical social epistemology” by Goldman), and his project is thought to be continuous with the supposed science-debunking agenda of Science and Technology Studies. This interpretation of Fuller’s work should be disputed; as a matter of fact, there is no single element in Fuller’s position on key epistemological issues that is not embraced by one or another prominent epistemologist or philosopher of science in the analytic tradition. The radical air springs rather from the fact that Fuller combines a handsome number of such minority views. Add to this a somewhat polemical style and a desire to provoke, including by a controversial intervention in the debates about creationism (Fuller 2008), and Fuller’s reputation as a radical readily follows.

Among Fuller’s minority views is an epistemic constructivism (which is shared, for example, with Bas van Fraassen and his “constructive empiricism”), and instrumentalism (shared with Larry Laudan). Fuller’s position is somewhat eclectic, however, in combining constructivism in natural science with realism in social science. Moreover, contrary to the conception of some ASE critics, Fuller is not averse to characterizing science as the pursuit of truth (Fuller 2012b), although not necessarily in the sense of one comprehensive theoretical system. This stance puts him in the company of such notables of analytic philosophy of science as Ronald Giere.
Twin Roots and Branches of Social Epistemology

Fuller’s work resists simple summary because of his somewhat unsystematic style of writing. Moreover, he likes to embed his discussion of general philosophical topics within historical narratives that add an extra dimension of complexity to his writings. Here I shall try to connect the most important dots that define Fuller’s version of social epistemology.

Elements of Fuller’s Social Epistemology

The sociological framework in terms of which Fuller understands science is, at the highest level, a macro-sociological one of great abstractness. To Fuller, “science” is a socio-functionalist term, referring to whatever mode of thought is socially dominant and authoritative in a given society (Fuller 1997). The institution that we refer to as “science” in our culture is only one particular realization of this function, while magical or religious modes of thought have fulfilled a similar role in non-Western societies and among our own historical ancestors.

While Fuller’s view of science is thus nominally relativist, this characterization would be misleading in conflating Fuller’s broader, functionalist concept of science and our accustomed one. With respect to science in its standard sense, he is a non-relativist and universalist, albeit in a somewhat unorthodox sense: he insists that such knowledge should be useful to everyone. He distances himself from the “standpoint epistemology” advocated by some feminist epistemologists because it tends to promote knowledge that is of value only to a limited societal segment. Instead, science, to which every member of society contributes resources in one way or another, should aim at producing knowledge accepted by and useful to everyone (he refers to this as the “proletarianization” of science production, cf. Fuller 1993). This aim can be achieved only by looking for scientific knowledge of universal scope, generated through procedures acceptable to everyone. Fuller’s universalism is thus ideologically based, rather than metaphysical or methodological.

Like ASE, Fuller is a naturalist with respect to uncovering the principles for organizing societal knowledge production: We have to go about this empirically. Fuller is a dedicated interdisciplinarian, drawing broadly upon sociology, psychology, rhetoric, economics, law and history. Methodologically, he insists on a top-down holistic approach that takes society as the starting point, in contrast to a bottom-up, individualist methodology that starts with individuals and constructs the social as the aggregation of their actions. Fuller is critical of ASE’s penchant for models of the latter kind, especially if they duplicate the tendency of micro-economic models towards a priorism and over-abstraction. Fuller’s insistence that a holistic approach is needed for a genuinely social epistemology does not mean, however, that he eschews empirical research into the cognitive powers of individuals. On the contrary, Fuller advocates the development of an experimental “psychology of science”. He constantly stresses the point, however, that human beings are essentially flawed as cognizers, even when they appear in the garb of scientists (Fuller 1989/1993); flaws that can only be neutralized by embedding individuals in larger cognitive communities. Thus, a psychology of science, and indeed cognitive psychology in general, must be a social psychology.

Fuller’s catholicity with respect to input from the social sciences raises a problem of methodology: Currently an enormous body of experimental data is being generated in social psychology, cognitive psychology and related areas, much of it with links to the booming field of brain research and neuroscience. It is difficult to get an overview, and even harder to merge these results with overarching sociological theories. Fuller’s methodological preference would clearly be to integrate such particular findings “upwards” into a holistic conception of man and society, but he does not appear to have a clear strategy for how this should be achieved – or at least nothing matching in clarity ASE’s opposite strategy of methodological individualism, using formalized models based upon the notion of a rational agent.

Fuller’s apparent insouciance on this point may reflect his subscription to what he calls a “realizationist” conception of science itself, according to which we can largely shape it as we
like without relying too heavily upon theoretical guidance (Fuller 2012b). This is tied up with his adoption of a “shallow” conception of science (Fuller 1993), which denies that science possesses a unique deep structure: It is not a “social kind” with a distinctive socio-cognitive essence to be unearthed empirically. Instead, it is a fairly superficial organizational phenomenon, its virtues being largely the same as those that make industrial production superior to the crafts; that is, rather elementary features of the mass organization of (cognitive) labor. To Fuller, science is basically a matter of communication and information sharing, hence he looks to rhetoric as a key tool for the improvement of science (Fuller 1993). Rhetorical interventions can serve to counteract the tendency of scientists to form disciplinary fiefdoms, rationalized by reference to “paradigms” and “incommensurability”. Fuller sees these and attendant Kuhnian notions as largely fictions designed to protect academic turf.

Fuller does not view the current shift towards industrial-style knowledge production in universities and research institutions as a great threat since he basically shares the instrumentalist premise of current science policy: Science is a tool for the production of societal goods, in the broadest sense. We should not try to roll back this development but to control it, which involves inter alia ensuring that the epistemic goods are evenly distributed. Fuller’s overall normative stance with respect to science may thus justly be called utilitarian, but with an egalitarian constraint: It is a matter of creating the maximum good for a maximum of people, and with a fair distribution. Moreover, people should not only enjoy the fruits of science on equal terms but also have a say about which ones to produce. Thus, Fuller’s normative model is borrowed from political philosophy – that is, the ideals of egalitarian democracy – just as much as from welfare economics. He advocates that knowledge be made available as a public good, so that no-one can use epistemic advantage to exploit or dominate others.

Fuller is not oblivious of the tension between the material and the politico-ideological functions of science, and that the current managerial mode of organization poses potential threats to the vital freedom of research. In this spirit, he has written extensively about the formal safeguards of academic freedom in research institutions, and has proposed detailed prescriptions for how this freedom can be legally protected (Fuller 2000). He adopts the term “republicanism” for his preferred mode of organization in which the scientist has a right to investigate whatever he pleases and to communicate his findings without fear of losing his livelihood. Here, we see another manifestation of Fuller’s “realizationism” with respect to science: Science is something we can freely create, and sustain, by the establishment of appropriate institutional structures and legal instruments.

In the most recent work, Fuller has radicalized his agenda of employing scientific results to make science more productive: We should take the daring step of genetically modifying man himself, to make him (among other things) a more reliable cognizer and eventually a new and superior human species, Homo 2.0. Fuller is aware of the perils of this high-risk strategy; still he endorses it in view of the “proactionary principle” (the opposite of the precautionary principle) and what he terms superutilitarianism, which is basically utilitarianism with a very long time perspective, allowing that ills inflicted upon current generations are outbalanced by increased welfare for future ones (Fuller 2012a). Here, finally, emerges a truly radical element in Fuller’s thought, shifting it out of epistemology and into politics and ideology; his critics would no doubt say, science fiction.

**In Conclusion**

The relationship between ASE and CSE has been needlessly antagonistic, with both sides tending to overstate their mutual differences. Here, I have pointed to similarities, captured in the picture of the two schools as moving in roughly the same direction, only with CSE having started out from a point farther along the common route. Recent work on the ASE side that narrows the gap between the two branches, such as that by Sanford Goldberg, supports this view. Still, as we
have seen, there are genuine and substantial differences between the methodological preferences of the two branches; moreover, each side takes detours and byways from the common direction that the other would shun. Furthermore, the conservative and cautious intellectual temper of ASE contrasts strongly with the reformist tendency of CSE. This is related to a difference in organizational structure: Whereas ASE is a purely academic effort operating through traditional academic channels such as book and journal publication, CSE has a somewhat broader agenda and a more diversified modus operandi. Its communication platform includes an internet-based discussion forum that invites contributions from a more extensive group of interested parties. The ambition is that this broader basis will secure CSE an audience even outside of narrow academic circles. Finally, add to this Fuller’s recent venture into transhumanism where ASE is unlikely to tread, and the conclusion must be that the two main organized efforts within social epistemology will remain distinct also in the future.

There is likely to be a more accurate recognition in both branches of the other side’s agenda, however, and a more constructive interchange between the two. Finally, a substantial number of social epistemologists will remain noncommittal with respect to the two organized efforts within the discipline, offering an independent breeding ground for new ideas and developments.

References


**Further Reading**