

NATURALISM IN EPISTEMOLOGY *

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Abstract

Recent work in epistemology reveals deep divisions over the very nature of the field. Advocates of naturalized epistemology hold that epistemology is crucially dependent upon empirical results from the cognitive sciences. I argue that some epistemology projects, such as the effort to help people to reason better, undoubtedly do require empirical input. In spite of the naturalists' arguments to the contrary, there's no good reason to think that empirical results will play any significant role in the central epistemological project, constructing a general abstract analysis of knowledge and justification. The formulation of specific principles about perception, testimony, memory and other potential sources of knowledge and justification either amounts to specifying mere special cases of the abstract general analyses or else is a purely empirical matter. Finally, whether responses to skepticism require input from science depends entirely upon the nature of the response. Thus, a large part of traditional epistemology remains independent of science.

Key Words: epistemology, naturalized epistemology, naturalism, justification

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