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SOME REMARKS ON THE EPISTEMOLOGICAL ASSUMPTIONS
OF CURRENT SOCIOLOGY OF SCIENCE

Abstract

Recent years have seen a flourishing of sociological studies of knowledge purportedly investigating the “contents”, and not merely the “circumstances”, of scientific research. This paper focuses on the basic epistemological assumptions of such studies by describing and discussing the main tenets of the so-called “strong programme” in the sociology of knowledge, as advocated in David Bloor’s recently republished *Knowledge and Social Imagery*. The need for a naturalistic study of knowledge is admitted, but serious objections are raised against Bloor’s treatment of such “formal” disciplines as logic and mathematics, and an argument is mounted against the “symmetry thesis” that the same types of cause must explain both true and false beliefs. It is argued that the symmetry thesis, far from being a presupposition of a truly naturalistic study of knowledge, stands in the way of some (plausible) naturalistic explanations of our true beliefs.