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1) Biografie

Laszlo Kosolovsky (1987) is wetenschappelijk onderzoeker aan de Universiteit Gent (België). Hij werkt aan een doctoraat getiteld 'Wetenschap, expertise en democratie: een sociaal-epistemologische studie van wetenschappelijke praktijk' (onderzoeksproject G.0122.10) (promotor: prof. dr. Erik Weber). Hiernaast volgt hij de postgraduaatsopleiding 'Logic, History and Philosophy of Science' aan de Universiteit Gent. Aan diezelfde universiteit behaalde hij in 2009 zijn masterdiploma wijsbegeerte met de grootste onderscheiding. 'Een sociaal epistemologische studie over de rol en impact van expertise: overzicht en reflectie via klimaatproblematiek' is de titel van zijn proefschrift. Zijn interesses en werkgebied omvatten (wetenschaps)filosofie (voornamelijk 'Science and Technology Studies', sociale epistemologie en wetenschapsbeleid), antropologie, sociologie en politicologie.

2) Abstract

When science meets society

Worldwide matters of concern, such as global warming and the economic crisis, have shown that science is not an isle in society, where scientists should (solely) pursue science for its own sake. The underlying value-free ideal of science is a hot topic of debate in contemporary philosophy of science (Lacey, 1999; Longino, 2002; Douglas, 2009; Elliott, 2012). The arguments in the debate are often influenced by insights from science's connection to society. For example, when a particular scientific discipline gets confronted with ongoing specialization in the field, it could result in scientists themselves losing grip of the larger scientific picture at play. However, scientists are more often being called upon as experts to give advice to policymakers and (governmental) organizations. Boldly stated, science and society are now more related than ever. Or so it seems at first sight. Nevertheless, this specialization has a downside now that science is no longer to be regarded as our ultimate savior in times of distress. If the global economic crisis has taught us anything, it is that even experts can disagree and (correspondingly) make mistakes. Of course, this puts a burden on both science, as it seems to be hit in its core, and society, which (often blindly) relied upon the advice of scientists for policy making. Society finds itself confronted with different experts claiming different things. On the one hand, government representatives request from scientists undisputable evidence that can be used to ground decisions upon. Often neglecting the question whether science is up to the task or not. On the other hand, scientists grant themselves a different kind of responsibility: It is

not up to them to interfere with the needs and/or demands of society. Their job merely consists of providing the evidence. What their audience does with the knowledge presented is not their matter of concern.

In general, scientific research does not produce logically firm evidence about the natural world. And thus, the corresponding idea of science being able to deliver undisputable evidence upon which policy decisions could be made, is flawed. In a scientific community, different individuals can weigh evidence in different manners through the use of different standards. In the best case, science puts forward a robust consensus based on a research process that allows continued scrutiny, re-examination, and revision (Oreskes, 2004). On the one hand, when push comes to shove, establishing a scientific consensus is imperative to solve controversies, such as global warming. Establishing a consensus on the causes and extent of global warming could facilitate policymaking and, moreover, send a convincing signal that doing nothing will have dire consequences. On the other hand, studies carrying attention for plurality and heterodoxy have raised questions concerning the ideal of the scientific consensus and, connected to it, the neglect of dissent (Solomon, 2006).

Investigating this intriguing relation between science and society further will be the aim of this presentation, relating its philosophical quarrels to everyday life, which will increase their understanding. Guided by insights from 'Science and Technology Studies' and social epistemology, the author presents his own findings (Kosolovsky, 2010 & 2011) as a manner of paving the way for further understanding of this complex relation between science and society.

References

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3) Presentatievorm

De lezing zal de vorm dragen van een klassieke presentatie, weliswaar aangepast aan het verwachte doelpubliek. Om een breder publiek aan te spreken zullen technisch filosofische discussies op een begrijpbare manier overgebracht worden d.m.v. referenties naar alledaagse situaties, komische parodieën en vernieuwende presentatievormen, zoals Prezi. Via deze weg wens ik mijn publiek op de hoogte te brengen van de hedendaagse academische discussies binnen deze subdiscipline van de filosofie en hen vervolgens uit te nodigen tot eigen reflectie over deze thema's.