



Susan Haack's Philosophical Thought

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Introduction

In Susan Haack's holistic philosophical thought, the keywords of continuity, middle ground, fallibilism, and the normativity of truth are prevalent throughout. She opposes various forms of extremism and is committed to finding a middle path in seemingly irreconcilable binary oppositions.

Susan Haack's Academic Contributions

Traditional epistemology offers two answers to the problem of epistemic justification. Foundationalism posits that justification must be grounded in the objective world, where basic beliefs are justified directly by experience, and other beliefs are supported consequently. Coherentism, on the other hand, argues that justification is merely the coherent relationship among beliefs, independent of sensory experience. Susan Haack's foundherentism acknowledges the contribution of experience to empirical justification while retaining the mutual support among beliefs. This theory has a dual aspect: the causal chain by which experience influences beliefs and the logical factors such as induction and abduction that are embedded among beliefs work synergistically. Justification varies in degree, is continuous, and relies on the evidence possessed by the subject at a specific time. Evidence is divided into three dimensions: supportive, independently secure of reasons, and inclusive, which together determine the degree of justification, avoiding the one-dimensional bias. She uses the crossword puzzle as a basic model for epistemology, proposing that reasonable beliefs must acquire both empirical support and systemic coherence through bidirectional verification. The

structure of evidential support has logical characteristics, and in empirical justification, mutually supportive beliefs form a network that is coupled with the empirical evidence, thus avoiding vicious circular arguments. The standard of justification is truth-directed, and justified beliefs have sufficient reason to be considered true. Haack introduces foundherentism into the legal field, arguing that evidence and belief systems in the courtroom should also mutually support each other (like a crossword puzzle), and that legal procedures should serve the truth and practice rather than be merely mechanistic tools.

Haack notes that since Frege, the development of logic has manifested in four parallel fields, where "non-standard" logics (modal logic, many-valued logic, intuitionist logic, etc.) develop alongside classical logic, explaining the limitations of classical logic in certain fields and for specific purposes. Thus, different logics are suitable for different aims or domains. Solely recognizing classical logic would easily exclude other systems as "not true logics," thereby evading the genuine philosophical issues. She criticizes Quine's logical monism that acknowledges only the legitimacy of classical logic. Haack advocates for a restricted pluralism, where "restricted" means not all formal systems constitute logic; choices among formal systems should be guided by formalization purposes. Conflicts may exist between different logical systems, but these can be mitigated through shifts in meaning, purpose, selection, etc., facilitating reasonable plural coexistence. Moreover, formal systems are not absolutely self-evident and can be modified based on intuitive judgments regarding non-formal arguments, thus

making logic amendable.

Haack proposes Critical Common-sensism, striving to transcend the extremes of Old Deferentialism and New Cynicism. Critical Common-sensism acknowledges the existence of objective standards of evidence quality and inquiry implementation but offers a more flexible and less formalized understanding. It asserts that the core evaluative criteria are not inherent to science but shared across all empirical inquiries, meaning that science does not enjoy epistemic privilege. Critical Common-sensism opposes pure logicity and focuses on the “secularity” of evidence-how the quality of evidence relies on the interaction between the knower and the real world (empirical foundations) as well as the relationship between types of entities and scientific language (confirmation of real kinds). It also opposes subjectivism; although the judgment of evidence quality is prospective (dependent on background beliefs), the quality itself remains objective and does not shift due to subjective or communal will.

Haack further introduces Innocent Realism, clarifying the metaphysical assumptions of scientific research, thus avoiding the drift of Critical Common-sensism into a baseless pragmatism. Innocent Realism asserts the existence of only one real world, which contains real kinds and laws that are independent of our beliefs, and there exists objective truth. Human beings and their cognitive activities are, in themselves, part of the real world. Haack rejects pluralism that posits the existence of “multiple real worlds.”

Representative Works

Susan Haack’s representative works include *Deviant Logics* (1974), *Philosophy of Logics* (1978), *Evidence and Inquiry: Towards Reconstruction in Epistemology* (1993), *Manifesto of a Passionate Moderate: Unfashionable Essays* (1998), *Defending Science Within Reason: Between Scientism and Cynicism* (2003), *Pragmatism, Old and New: Selected Writings* (2006), *Putting Philosophy to Work: Inquiry and its Place in Culture* (2008), and *The Importance of Evidence: Science, Proof, and Truth in Law* (2014).

Resume



Susan Haack (1945-2026) was a British philosopher and scholar, graduating from the University of Oxford and the University of Cambridge, where she received a Bachelor of Philosophy from Oxford and a PhD in Philosophy from Cambridge in 1972. She was elected as an honorary member of Phi Beta Kappa, served as the president of the Charles S. Peirce Society, and was a member of the US/UK Educational Commission. Before joining the University of Miami, she held positions as a fellow at Murray Edwards College in Cambridge and as a professor of philosophy at the University of Warwick. She subsequently served as a Distinguished Professor of Humanities, Cooper Senior Scholar in Arts and Sciences, and professor of philosophy and law at the University of Miami. In 2004, she was included by British scholar Peter King in the work *One Hundred Philosophers* as one of the notable living philosophers. In 2005, London’s *The Sunday Independent* listed her as one of the greatest female philosophers of all time. In 2016, University College Dublin awarded her the Ulysses Gold Medal.

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Conflict of Interest

No conflict of interest