



Seminar
Sandra Mitchell on Integrative Pluralism
Nicholas Smith on Naturalized Epistemology

20 June 2011
10am – 1pm
CPNSS Room T206, LSE

Integrative Pluralism: the Case of Protein Folding

Sandra Mitchell

Integrative pluralism defends the view that there is scientific value in fostering different levels of description and explanation, and integration, rather than reduction, will produce the most informative accounts of the behaviour of complex structures. I will explore this hypothesis by considering the case of protein folding behaviour in biological systems. I will consider this behaviour from three perspectives; first, the physics of the material constituents and their behaviour, second, the chemistry of the molecular structure of proteins, how they acquire the structures they have and third, the biological function of proteins, especially the dependence of function on particular structures.

Knowledge is Sexy

Nicholas Smith

In this paper, I review the arguments for and against a defence of naturalized epistemology in terms of survival, and then offer a rather different account of why human evolution supports the reliability of our cognitive equipment. The view for which we will argue is that philosophers' appeals to the processes of natural selection that are adaptive in terms of survival have provided an incomplete picture of what naturalists have available to them to make the sort of defence sceptics have claimed cannot be made. To supplement this picture, we provide evidence from what Darwin called "sexual selection" and also what others now call "social selection" to provide a more complete picture of why it is reasonable to suppose that evolution has supplied human beings and many other animals highly reliable and also veridical cognitive processes.

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