

JESÚS P. ZAMORA BONILLA

The Rationality of Science and the Rationality of Scientists

ABSTRACT. The prevalent view in science studies and the philosophy of science is that the presence of individual, non-epistemic interests within the motivations of scientists constitutes an impediment for the attainment of the epistemic goals of science. This paper shows how methodological rules can be seen as a ‘social contract’ between self-interested scientists, in order to create a ‘game’ that is both stimulating to play for individual researchers, and efficient in the production of epistemic value.

KEY WORDS: economics of scientific knowledge, contractarian epistemology, scientific norms, scientific rationality, rational choice

1. Introduction

In this paper I want to present the guiding lines of a research programme into the economics of scientific knowledge, a programme whose ultimate goal is to develop what I would like to call a *contractarian epistemology*. The paper has, for this reason, a merely programmatic nature, in which some of the essential or fundamental aspects of the problems and strategies considered in this approach to (scientific) epistemology are exhibited, though only marginal reference will be given to specific arguments and solutions offered within the approach, for which I shall refer to other papers from mine. The main originality of this view of the epistemology of science is that it gives a fundamental role to the *strategic* (in game theoretical terms) aspects of the decisions that scientists have to make and that have some important effect on the epistemic quality of the outputs of scien-