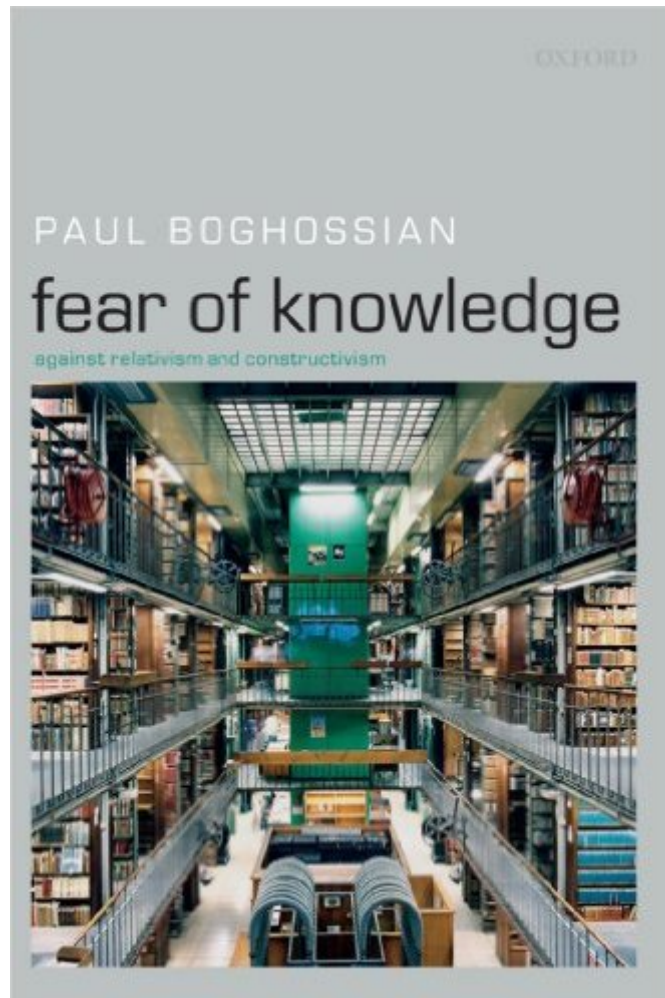




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Fear Of Knowledge: Against Relativism And Constructivism



Synopsis

The idea that science is just one more way of knowing the world and that there are other, radically different, yet equally valid ways, has taken deep root in academia. In *Fear of Knowledge*, Paul Boghossian tears these relativist theories of knowledge to shreds. He argues forcefully for the intuitive, common-sense view--that the world exists independent of human opinion and that there is a way to arrive at beliefs about the world that are objectively reasonable to anyone capable of appreciating the relevant evidence, regardless of their social or cultural perspective. This short, lucid, witty book shows that philosophy provides rock-solid support for common sense against the relativists; it is provocative reading throughout the discipline and beyond.

Book Information

Paperback: 160 pages

Publisher: Clarendon Press; 1 edition (December 7, 2007)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0199230412

ISBN-13: 978-0199230419

Product Dimensions: 8 x 0.3 x 5.4 inches

Shipping Weight: 8.2 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.8 out of 5 stars 32 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #216,970 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #75 in [Books > Textbooks >](#)

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Customer Reviews

"This is a book that can be read in an afternoon and thought about for a lifetime. His analysis is something of a tour de force: subtle and original enough to attract the attention of professional philosophers but accessible enough to be read by anyone with an interest in the subject. The result is one of the most readable works in philosophy in recent years."--Wall Street Journal

"The book does a fine job of assessing in brief compass the sort of relativism/constructivism advocated by Rorty and his fellow travelers, and Boghossian's sophisticated and careful arguments against that Rortian view are often ingenious and invariably telling. Aimed at non-specialists, *Fear of Knowledge* may well succeed in distancing those who are enamored of 'postmodern relativism'. . . from their postmodern enthusiasms."--Harvey Siegel, Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews

"Boghossian has written an excellent book.... it contains relentless exposures of confusion, falsehood, and

incoherence."--John R. Searle, New York Review of Books

Paul Boghossian is at New York University.

Great book

I really liked this book for its efficiency. The author defines his terms clearly, and explains the issues concisely. He uses examples to clarify his points without straying off on tangents. For these reasons the book is short, and mercifully so, as the subject can easily become mired in jargon, confusion, and excess verbiage, as illustrated by the majority of postmodernist writers. The book carefully describes various kinds of relativism, and the arguments put forward to support them. It then proceeds to expose the weaknesses and fallacies of each form of relativism, and leaves one quite refreshed by the common sense it imparts. I particularly recommend the book for undergrads. It will allow them to recognise snake-oil and flim-flam when they see it. For anyone in the sciences, or those interested in the question of whether there is a real world out there, this is an important addition to your library.

great book!

Professor Boghossian painstakingly establishes the arguments for relativism and constructivism and then systematically demolishes each of them. Chapter 2, "Constructing the Facts" begins, "Of the three constructivist theories before us, the most influential is the thesis of fact-constructivism--which is somewhat surprising given that it is also the most radical and counterintuitive. Indeed, properly understood, fact-constructivism is such a bizarre view that it is hard to believe that anyone endorses it. And yet, it seems that many do." He then goes on to make mincemeat of Goodman, Rorty, Foucault, and Putnam. Who could be more dogmatic, intolerant, and absolutist than relativists? They fear argument more than knowledge, so buy this book and have some fun at their expense.

In FoK Boghossian refutes the fantasies of Rorty, etc.

While this book doesn't necessarily accomplish the author's goal of being accessible to non-philosophers, it is elegantly written and well organized. It is a rather convincing argument that accuses relativists and constructivists of being too liberal with the scopes of their theses.

Boghossian is, however, partial to logic and the analytic tradition. I would imagine that some of the more Continental-leaning readers tend to think this text is biased. Notwithstanding, I have read few philosophical works that have been as clear and focused as this one.

Because there is a very extended tendency in premodern actual world (inclusive the global south) to minimize science and to recure to religion or revolutionary ideals to escape from the responsibility of creating an own world based in knowledge and in the intelligent appropriation of ower collective experience

The debate about truth has gone on for millenia, but Boghossian has done a superb job of summarizing the current debates about relativism. Considering that he is a former student of Richard Rorty, a book presenting a diametrically opposite point of view shows the kind of intellectual mastery that can only be generated from deep immersion in the point of view being criticized. For a 130 page book, there is tough sledding; but the advantage of a short book, is that you can read it a second time, and maybe even a third, without taking too much time away from your other pursuits of "the truth."

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