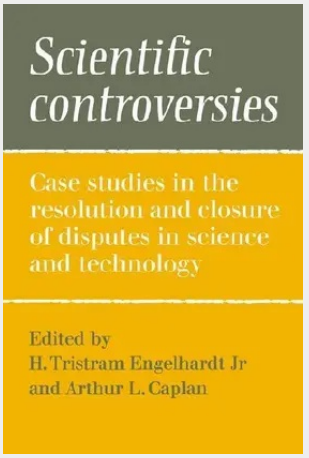
Engelhardt, Jr / Caplan

Scientific Controversies

Case Studies in the Resolution and Closure of Disputes in Science and Technology



This collection of essays examines the ways in which disputes and controversies about the application of scientific knowledge are resolved. Four concrete examples of public controversy are considered in detail: the efficacy of Laetrile, the classification of homosexuality as a disease, the setting of safety standards in the workplace, and the utility of nuclear energy as a source of power. The essays in this volume show that debates about these cases are not confined to matters of empirical fact. Rather, as is seen with most scientific and technical controversies, they focus on and are structured by complex ethical, economic, and political interests. Drs. Engelhardt and Caplan have brought together a distinguished group of scholars from the sciences and humanities, who sketch a theory of scientific controversy and attempt to provide recommendations about the ways in which both scientists and the public ought to seek more informed resolutions of highly contentious issues in science and technology. Scientific Controversies is offered as a contribution to the better understanding of the roles of both science and nonscientific interests in disputes and controversies pertaining to science and technology.

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