

2 **Book notice**

3 **Friedrich Stadler (ed.): The present situation in the philosophy**  
4 **of science. Dordrecht: Springer, 2010, 422pp, €139,95 HB**

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9 This edited collection brings together the various papers that were presented in the  
10 first conference of the European Science Foundation-sponsored research network  
11 “The philosophy of Science in European Perspective” in Vienna at the end of 2008.  
12 There are 28 contributions and an introduction by Fritz Stadler, which aims to draw  
13 links between the several papers and to find some unifying themes in the project of  
14 developing philosophy of science in a *European* perspective. The papers (some of  
15 which could have been better edited not to look too much like the oral presentations  
16 they initially were) are arranged around the five sections of the research network:  
17 formal methods; philosophy of the natural and life sciences; philosophy of the  
18 cultural and social sciences; philosophy of the physical sciences; history of  
19 philosophy of science. Some of the papers are focused on searching what it is to do  
20 philosophy of science in a European perspective, thereby investigating the issue of  
21 what exactly a European perspective *is*. Other papers are more self-standing  
22 research papers that could be in any collection—whether focused on the European  
23 perspective or not (mostly the papers of part II—on formal methods; the papers of  
24 part III—on the philosophy of the life sciences; the papers on part V—on the  
25 philosophy of physics). This is not accidental, of course. It reflects the fact that there  
26 is no—at least not yet—uniform understanding of what it is to do philosophy of  
27 science in a European perspective. To many, this simply means doing philosophy of  
28 science *in Europe*; that is, doing the standard philosophy of science stuff (realism,  
29 causation, models, confirmation, philosophy of physics and the like) based in  
30 *Europe*—as opposed to the Rest of the World. To others, the search of a European  
31 perspective is the search of a distinctive approach or approaches to philosophy of  
32 science. This search, as well the search for a methodology for this search, is mostly  
33 encountered in parts I (history of philosophy of science) and IV (philosophy of the

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34 social and cultural sciences) of the book. There are some very interesting papers in  
35 these sections (e.g., by Thomas Uebel and Wenceslao Gonzalez), which explore  
36 ways to delineate the *European* element of the perspective. The fact is that unless  
37 this oscillation between doing philosophy of science *in* Europe and doing  
38 philosophy *from* a European point of view is resolved, it will not be clear what  
39 exactly is the “quintessentially European self-reflection on the aims and values of  
40 philosophy of science in itself”, as Stadler puts it in the informative introduction (8).  
41 There is no doubt, as this volume makes clear too, that there is a lot of first-rate  
42 philosophy of science being done in Europe in all major areas of the discipline. But,  
43 I venture to say, the key to a European perspective is precisely the transgressing of  
44 the sub-disciplinary boundaries and the fostering of genuinely integrative  
45 approaches and agendas. This is something that a lot of the contributors to this  
46 volume are alive to and this suggests that the future for the *European* philosophy of  
47 science is bright.  
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