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Project Title: The Production of Public Understanding
Primary Investigators: Matthew Slater, Associate Professor of Philosophy and Jason Leddington, Assistant Professor of Philosophy
Funding Agency: The Varieties of Understanding Project at Fordham University and the John Templeton Foundation
Award Amount: $100,000
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In a democratic, industrialized society, a scientifically literate public is critical to the possibility of good policy-making. However, recent science communication has failed to generate a level of public consensus sufficient to inform rational action on important public initiatives. Primary investigators Slater and Leddington propose that re-orientating our epistemic goals in education, advocacy, and communication from *Public knowledge* to *Public Understanding* might dramatically improve this situation. As it stands, however, "public understanding" is poorly understood. Social-scientific models for its promotion typically leave 'understanding' unexplained and fail to adequately distinguish it from knowledge. Moreover, relevant philosophical literature generally focuses on *individual*, rather than *public* understanding.

Funding from the Varieties of Understanding Project at Fordham University and the Templeton Foundation enables Slater and Leddington to combine philosophical study of the nature of public understanding with case studies of critical science outreach efforts to: (a) develop a viable philosophical theory of public understanding alongside (b) strategic recommendations for social scientists, journalists, and policy-makers to devise better means for producing public understanding of science.

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