

Before Montucla: Historiography of Science in the Early Modern Era

Workshop at the *Interdisciplinary Centre for Science and Technology Studies, Bergische Universität Wuppertal, Germany, March 3/4, 2016*

During the last decades many new topics, approaches and research agendas emerged in historiography of science. The field extricated itself from descriptive positivism and celebratory Whiggism and began to take account of the various contexts of historical writings, creatively combining methods of the humanities and the social sciences with knowledge of the sciences. Historiography of science, however, still lacks evaluation and interpretation of its own history. In other words, the history of historiography of science has not been written yet. General overviews of the origins of history of science as a discipline usually go back to the end of the 19th century but historiography of science is much older. Some scholars say that it began in classical antiquity, among pupils of Aristotle. Other authors argue that the discipline originated in the efforts of early modern scientists to convey legitimacy and nobility to their field. Other authors argue that historiography of science arose in the Enlightenment in close relation to the study of the history of the human spirit. Every attempt to seriously study the history of historiography of science must therefore start with finding out when the moment came in which historiography of science emerged as a discipline with its own themes, specific methods and supporting institutions. We assume that historiography of science originated in the early modern period because at that time “science” in the modern meaning of the word emerged – and in order to be recognized as a producer of knowledge worth of knowing it had to offer its impressive pedigree. But still there are a lot of questions concerning the origins, aims, functions and methods used in the first outlines of the history of science.

The workshop wants to address these gaps in our knowledge. We welcome all contributions that relate to the history of historiography of science especially in the period from the Renaissance to the beginning of the 19th century. We want to examine how the perception of the history of science was influenced by philosophical assumptions, mainly by philosophy of history: e. g. did scientists and historians view the history of science as a linear accumulation of knowledge or as a cyclical process in which periods of blossom and barbarism alternated? We are interested in how the themes of contemporary general historiography, including chronology or biblical history, affected the outlines of the history of

science. Did scientists and historians synchronize the history of science with the political and socio-economic events (as in the Marxist historiography)? What factors were recognized as decisive in the development of science? Further, we are interested in the role of mythological and religious strategies in promoting particular points of view on the history of science. We are interested in nationalist, racist and religious prejudices that influenced different forms of interpretation of the history of science. We welcome papers that relate to the iconography of the historiography of science and various ways of graphical representations of and in the history of science. The literary strategies of early historians of science are an interesting problem as well. We want to discuss key concepts of the historical forms of historiography of science: the changing ideas of scientific progress, of history, of science; emancipation from prejudices, tradition, cumulativism etc. We are also interested in what scientists and historians expected of their historical overviews of the development of science, i.e.: what were the functions of historiography of science? What kind of transformations can be seen, especially in the period from 16th to the early 19th century? Who were the supposed (and real) addressees of such historical accounts. What was the public for which the outlines of the history of science had been prepared? And what effect and impact was expected?

The workshop is being organized at the Interdisciplinary Centre for Science and Technology Studies (IZWT) at the Bergische Universität Wuppertal. For further information on the topic, please get in touch with Volker Remmert, remmert@uni-wuppertal.de; or Daniel Špelda spelda@kfi.zcu.cz. The workshop's ambit invites interdisciplinary collaboration. Proposals for papers from all who can contribute to the topic are therefore welcome. Special consideration will be given to proposals from young scholars. The language of the workshop will be English. Submissions must include a title, an abstract (1–2 pages) of a 20 minute presentation, and a short CV (maximum one page). Submissions should be sent to Volker Remmert at remmert@uni-wuppertal.de no later than July 18, 2015. Contributors' overnight accommodation costs will be covered. But because funds are limited, please let us know well in advance if you will need support to cover travelling expenses.

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