

REFLECTING ON THE FRAGMENTATION
OF THE FIELD OF THE HISTORY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY.

PERSPECTIVES FROM EUROPE

ESHS—Paris Meeting

5 et 6 novembre 2015

Université Paris Diderot

Organisé par
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Avec le soutien du laboratoire SPHERE
(UMR 7219, CNRS /Université Paris Diderot et Université Paris 1 Panthéon Sorbonne)
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Rationale

Vüe de Paris, prise du Palais de Bourbon, où l'on fait voir les différentes expériences de l'impulsion de l'air inflammable sur l'air naturel, par le moyen d'un ballon aërostatique place au centre du bassin des parterres du Palais des Tuilleries, au dessous duquel, étoient dans un char MM. Char. [1783].

Giet / 18.-18..?

Source: Gallica.bnf.fr /Bibliothèque nationale de France

Karine Chemla

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In recent decades, history of science and technology has been a successful field. Since the 1970s new approaches have gained momentum, which led to the significant development in cultural and social histories of science, as well as the sociology of science. This diversification was soon followed by an expansion of the subject areas covered by the history of science and technology. One consequences of this extension was the widening of history of science and technology into, and even in some cases its replacement by, a “history of knowledge” («histoire des savoirs», “Wissensgeschichte”).

Such transformations in the issues addressed and the topics dealt with resulted in important reconfigurations for the field. Traditionally, history of science and technology had been close to the sciences. Practitioners of the various sciences fostered and contributed to research in the field, in the process of which they created positions and institutional support for it. One major consequence of this relationship was the creation of the International Union for the History and Philosophy of Science (IUHPS) as one among the other Scientific Unions in the International Council of Scientific Unions (ICSU). Likewise, history of science and technology also had, by tradition, a privileged relationship with philosophy, and, to a lesser extent, with the so-called “area studies.” In line with these transformations, new types of relationships with other disciplinary fields have become significant, including history, sociology or anthropology.

These changes have their positive side. History of science and technology has gained

in depth and scope. It has diversified and benefited from insights from a wide array of disciplines. However, some related trends in the recent evolution of the field can be noticed, which call for reflection and perhaps action.

The relationship between history of science and technology and the various sciences has often become looser, although specific situations depend on the disciplinary and institutional backgrounds. In some contexts, one could almost speak of a divorce. The same observation holds true for the relationship between history of science and technology, on the one hand, and philosophy, or even philosophy of science and technology, on the other. Instead of cooperating with each other, and mutually strengthening each other, as was often the case some decades ago, the relationship between the two fields has become less tight, that is when they are not mutually antagonistic. Philosophers of science and technology, or historians of the philosophical reflections of past practitioners, now seldom participate in history of science and technology meeting, opting rather for conferences of philosophy of science, or history of philosophy of science, such as those organized by the Society HOPOS (History of the Philosophy of Science). These are major changes for the history of science and technology and they require reflection. There seem to be losses involved from these reconfigurations, and this conference aims to discuss these issues.

In addition to the positive impetus that history of science and technology received from establishing relationships with other disciplines, both from a scholarly and institutional viewpoint, this transformation has also contributed to what appears as a fragmentation for the history of science and technology. Historians apparently tend to discuss and work with those sharing similar approaches and topics of research. Fragmentation can also be observed in other respects. For instance, historians of ancient science and technology now rarely work or discuss with specialists of modern history, as if they were now part of different disciplines. One might consider fragmentation is in general an unavoidable consequence of increasing specialization. We want to consider the question whether in this regard the case of our field is not specific and whether such fragmentation is not detrimental to the history of science and technology.

The conference will discuss the present state of the history of science and technology in this respect, in general and in the various contexts in which it developed. In particular, the meeting will examine the position of the history of science and technology in various European countries and institutions. Its goal is to inquire into the consequences for the history of science and technology of its various reconfigurations and fragmentations.

We are interested in their consequences from a scholarly viewpoint. Has the field become at the international level an assembly of sub communities hardly communicating with each other? Or, do its practitioners still share a sense of taking part in a joint endeavour? What are the consequences for the type of research done in the history of science and technology? Could we put forward new general goals that would elicit a greater integration of the field? Given the current state of the field, how can teaching programmes in the history of science and technology contribute to a greater integration?

The conference also intends to better understand the consequences of the subject's transformations from an institutional viewpoint. What consequences can be perceived in different countries, and can we predict how they might affect the future of the history of science and technology? Are these changes in the field creating conditions favourable for the development of the field and the creation of new positions in universities, museums and institutes? Or are they detrimental, and if so, what actions might be taken to counter these effects?

The European Society for the History of Science believes that reflecting on these issues is essential to better undertake its role in the field. A clarification of the scientific and institutional consequences of the reconfigurations and fragmentations in the history of science and technology will be an asset to better understanding the future of the field, and as guide to developing ESHS initiatives.



Programme

Le Palais de l'Institut (Collège des Quatre Nations) et la Galerie du Louvre
Jean Baptiste Lallemand (1716?-1803)
Source: gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 5, 2015

9:30 – 9:45 Welcome, with coffee and viennoiseries

9:45 – 10:00

Karine Chemla (President of the European Society for the History of Science): *Introduction*

Chair: Karine Chemla

10:00 – 12:30

COHESION OF THE FIELD AND TEACHING THE HISTORY OF SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Toni Malet (Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Barcelona): *Some reflections on fragmentation and integration in history of science through a review of recent literature about science in Francoist Spain*

Ida Stamhuis (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam): *The Stevin Centre: one of the Dutch university centers in the history of science and humanities: an international trend?*

11:30 – 11:45 Break

11:45 – 12:30

Fabio Bevilacqua (Department of Physics, University of Pavia): *New challenges and old responsibilities in the field of History of Science*



Lunch Break

Chair: Fabio Bevilacqua

14:00 – 16:15

HISTORICAL APPROACHES TO THE HISTORY OF SCIENCE

Frank A.J.L. James (Royal Institution/University College London): *The second International Congress for the History of Science, London, 1931*

Erwin Neuenschwander (University of Zurich, Switzerland): *History of Science and Technology: Past, Present, Future*

16:30 – 18:00

SPECIFIC TRAJECTORIES IN THE HISTORY OF SCIENCE

Luciano, Erika (Department of Mathematics, University of Turin): *History of Science and Technology and History of Mathematics in Italy: Cooperation and Fragmentation of Scholarly Communities in Changing Institutional Settings*

16:15 – 16:30 Break

16:30 – 18:00

Efthymios Nicolaidis (National Hellenic Research Foundation): *History of Science in Southeastern Europe: trying to integrate the dominant trends.*

Olga Elina (S.I. Vavilov Institute for the History of Science and Technology, Russian Academy of Sciences): *On the Situation in the History of Science and Technology in Russia*

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 6, 2015

9:30 – 9:45 Welcome, with coffee and viennoiseries

9:45 – 10:00

Claude Debru (Ecole Normale Supérieure, Paris): *A testimony*

Chair: Ida Stamhuis

10:00 – 12:30

SPECIFIC TRAJECTORIES IN THE HISTORY OF SCIENCE (end)

Milada Sekyrková (Charles University, Prague, République tchèque): *Challenge for the Czech History of Science after 1989: Leaving East? Going West?*

SPECIFIC TRAJECTORIES IN THE HISTORY OF A DISCIPLINE

Felicitas Seebacher (Austrian Academy of Sciences, Commission for the History and Philosophy of Science, Working Group for the History of Medicine): *Analysing “Viennese Medicine”. Reflections on the History of Medicine at the University of Vienna and Perspectives for the Future*

11:30 – 11:45 Break

11:45 – 12:30

Petr Svobodny (Université Karlova, Prague, République tchèque): *History of Medicine in the Czech Republic: Institutions, Networks, Challenges*

Lunch Break

Chair: Toni Malet

14:00 – 15:30

HOW TO CREATE COHESION IN THE HISTORY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY?

Emilia Calvo (University of Barcelona): *The evolution of the history of science as an institutional discipline in Spain over the last decades and prospects of future*

Baichun ZHANG (Institute for the History of Natural Sciences, Chinese Academy of Sciences): *Trend in Chinese Scholars’ Research on History of Science and Technology: From Unitary Model to Methodological Diversity*

15:30 – 15:45 Break

15:45 – 16:30

Liliane Hilaire-Pérez (University Paris Diderot-Paris 7 and EHESS): *Considering technology as a human science : from social history to the history of technology*

16:30 – 17:30

GENERAL DISCUSSION, with participation of **Karine Chemla** and **Matthieu Husson** (CNRS, SYRTE)

CONFERENCE DINNER