

From the Strong Programme to the Third Wave in the Sociology of Science

The aim of the lecture is to introduce the students to the field of Sociology of Science and Technology, or what now is called the Science, Technology and Society field (STS). The lecture will cover the developments from the emergence of the Edinburgh School and the Sociology of Scientific Knowledge (SSK), to the Actor Network Theory (ANT). Finally it provides the key problems, issues and debates that have emerged with the introduction of the so-called Third Wave in STS. The first part of the lecture discusses the way that the SSK emerged in the late 1960s and early 1970s under the influence of the work of Thomas Kuhn and in an attempt to overcome drawbacks of the Mertonian sociology of science. The main methodological, theoretical and philosophical principles will be presented while in the same time the key problems in the philosophy of science due to the approaches introduced by the sociologists of scientific knowledge will be analyzed. The second part will focus on the Actor Network Theory, as promoted by Bruno Latour and Michel Callon, and the constructivist approaches to science and technology. The aim is to show the common characteristics and the differences to the social constructivist's approaches promoted by SSK. The final part will introduce the so-called Third Wave in STS as supported by sociologists Harry Collins. The main philosophical directions and the criticism that this approach has triggered will be presented and critically discussed. The key questions that will be raised and discussed having constructivist approaches to science and technology: Is science a social construction? In what way science can be considered as a construct? What are the repercussions of the understanding of science and technology as endemically constructions? What is the relation between science and nature in the context of constructivist approaches?