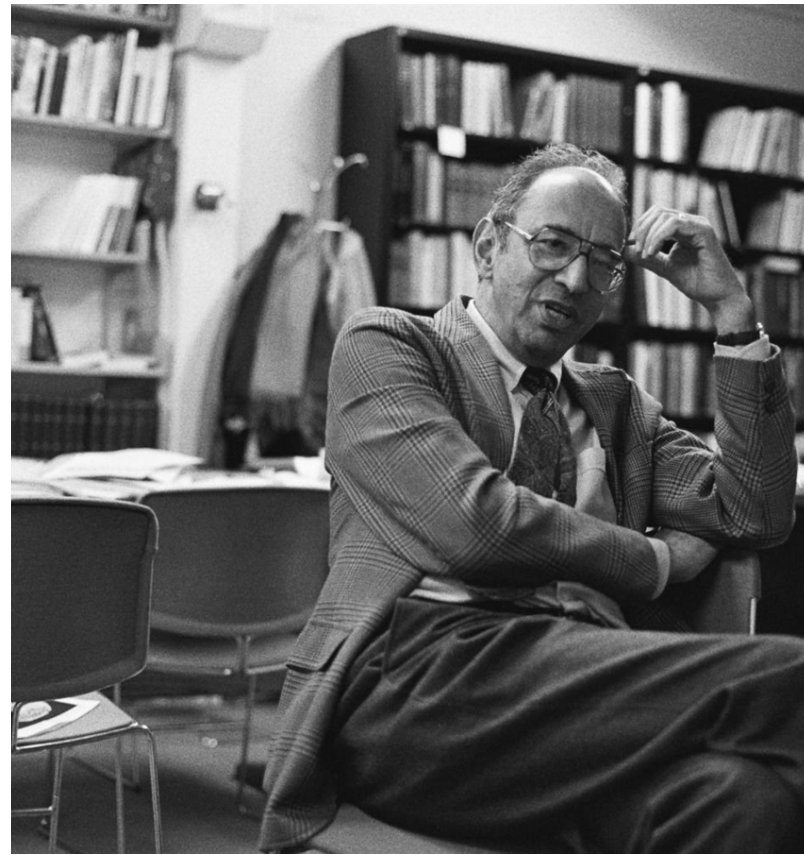
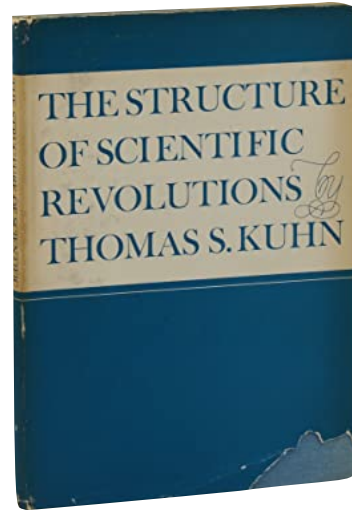


Thomas Kuhn and Interdisciplinary Conversation: Why Historians and Philosophers of Science Stopped Talking to One Another

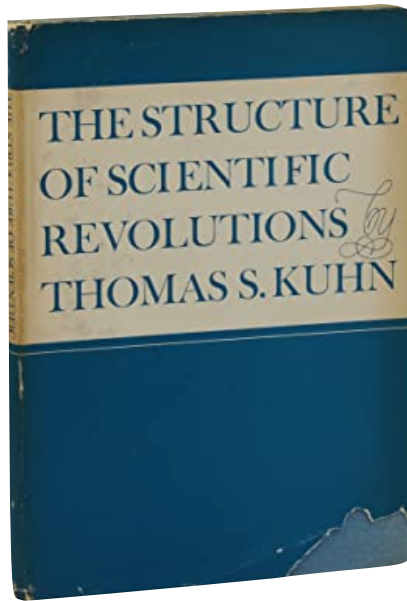
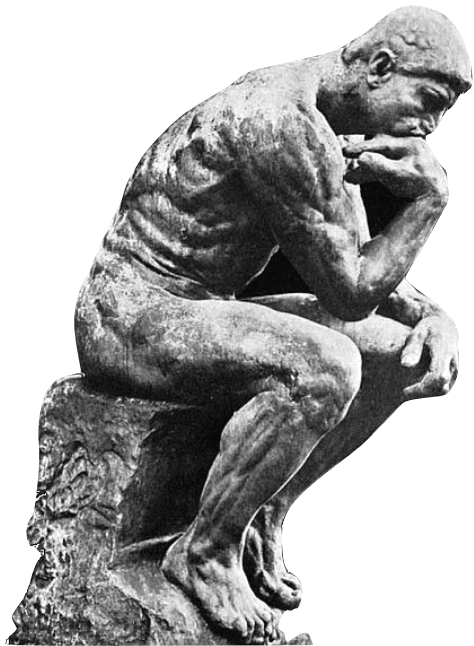
Jan Golinski | 2012



Kuhn's Structure
=
interdisciplinary
between history
and philosophy
of science



PHILOSOPHY



HISTORY



... but central to creating a divide between
the disciplines of history + philosophy of
science

Common Context

THE COLD WAR



Common Context

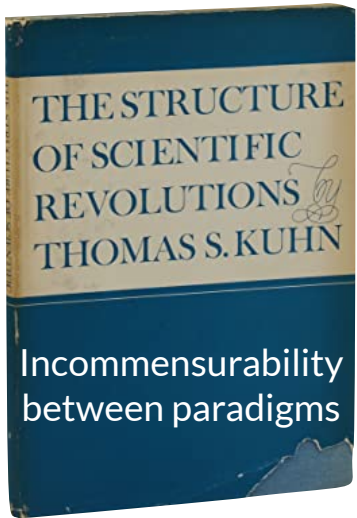


“If, following Emerson, we think of the potential power of destruction of the atomic bomb as the price we must pay for health and comfort and aids to learning in this scientific age, we can perhaps more coolly face the task of making the best of an inevitable bargain, however hard” (Conant 1947 *Understanding Science* xiii).

Kuhn's mentor: James Bryant Conant

Context for Philosophers

Relativism long associated with totalitarianism



Relativism

**Tool for
totalitarianism**

Philosophical criticism

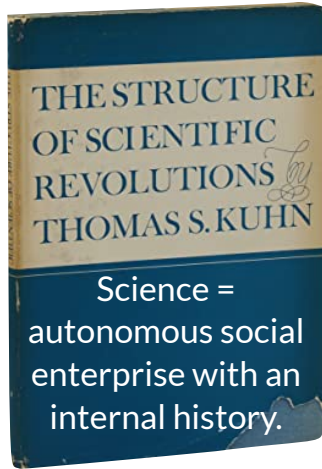
Popper: “psychologizing scientific theories” and surrendering the freedom of objective scientific reason by labeling scientific beliefs as the product of social or political interests (Popper 1970, 56).

Lakatos: irrational that paradigms can't be compared independently (Lakatos 1970, 178).

Suppe: Kuhn was interpreted as a philosopher of worldviews or *Weltanschauungen*; terms cannot translate across frameworks (Suppe 1977, 135).

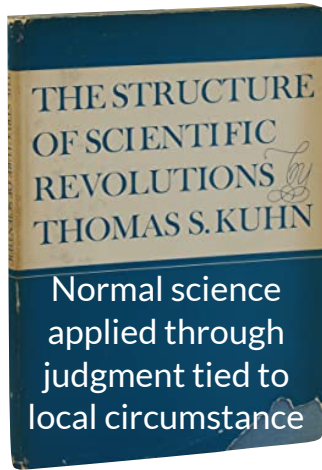
Context for Historians

Central question: historical causation in science – purely epistemic or socially influenced?



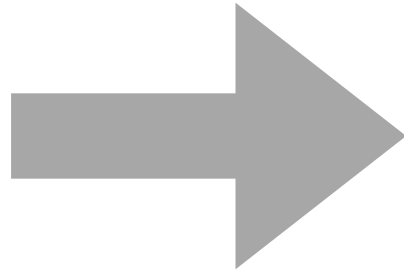
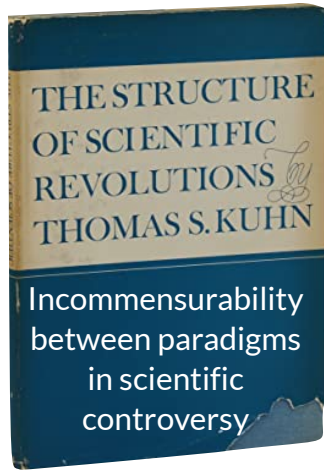
Context for Historians

Central question: historical causation in science – purely epistemic or socially influenced?

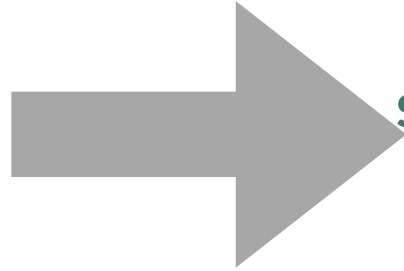


Context for Historians

Central question: historical causation in science – purely epistemic or socially influenced?



Relativism



**Tool for the
social study of
science**

Key difference

The response to incommensurability involves a response to relativism

Philosophers: relativism —> **tool of totalitarianism**

Historians and sociologists of science: relativism —> **tool for sociology of science**

Key difference

Conversation between philosophers and historians/sociologists of science slowed due to treatment of relativism

Philosophers: couldn't proceed while setting aside evaluative questions

Historians and sociologists of science: could now study without epistemological diversions

Takeaway

“A text does not establish a paradigm by its own self-conferred authority; rather it is ascribed authority insofar as it can be read (or misread) to accord with the interests of a community. Thus, factors that Kuhn himself would have been inclined to label ‘external’ impinge upon the interpretation of a text. Even an intellectual community that has acquired its own paradigm cannot be insulated from broader social forces” (Golinksi 26).

Gems



Importance of the historical context of *Structure*



Interesting point that Kuhn engaged more with philosophers after publishing *Structure* than with historians or sociologists.



Sociologists \neq historians?

A philosophical
reflection on the
integrated HPS in
Structure

Integrated HPS

Discussion

Are sociologists and historians the same? Why group them together, and what might change if we didn't? What groups have really diverged - historians and philosophers? Sociologists and philosophers?

This account applies Kuhn's concepts as understood by sociologists of science who embraced relativism: is this a good approach?