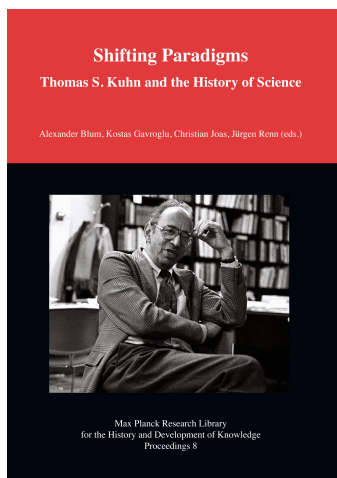


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Alexander Blum, Kostas Gavroglu, Christian Joas and Jürgen Renn:

Introduction



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Introduction

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Christian Joas and Jürgen Renn

Thomas S. Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* ("Structure" in the following) was first published in 1962 and became the most widely read book on the history of science. Since then, philosophers, historians, sociologists, educationalists, anthropologists, psychologists, economists, cultural commentators, journalists and readers belonging to many more academic and non-academic areas have been discussing this book. In scholarly journals, seminars, popular writings, monographs, public lectures and conferences, the book has been analyzed, commented upon, (often) criticized, (sometimes) praised, its impact assessed, and, in various instances, dismissed as trivial.

The appearance of *Structure* was perhaps the second major milestone, after the first publication of the journal *Isis* in 1912, to mark the rise of the history of science to a field enjoying broad recognition beyond the narrow community of its practitioners. On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the publication of *Structure*, the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science organized an international conference, inviting scholars from various disciplines not only to reflect on Kuhn's impact and legacy but also on the history and the current state of the history of science. The present volume is an outcome of the conference *50 Years Since Structure: Towards a History of the History of Science*, held in Berlin in October 2012.

The primary intention of the organizers of this event was not to celebrate Kuhn's book, but rather to offer an occasion to discuss the remarkable developments that have led the community of historians, philosophers and sociologists of science to its present state. To this end, scholars were invited who themselves have shaped these developments in the past decades. For some, *Structure* was a decisive factor in these developments, for others it did not play much of a role; yet most would acknowledge that it is a book that was always "there," accompanying most of us in our collective or personal undertakings to further establish history of science. Indeed, the book has had a dominating presence for roughly half of the lifetime of the history of science as an institutionalized endeavor.

The present book sets Kuhn's *Structure* in context and makes it the subject of historical reflection and analysis. The first part of the volume is dedicated to per-

sonal recollections, including an interview with Kuhn himself conducted in 1990. The second part aims at historicizing Kuhn and his work. One important context that is discussed is that of the Cold War and its impact on the role and understanding of science. Another context relevant to situating Kuhn's work is that of the philosophical discussions of science in the twentieth century. The contributions to this part not only deal with the overarching theoretical argument of *Structure*, but also with the context of Kuhn's choice and interpretation of his major case studies: the birth of Copernican astronomy and the quantum revolution.

The contributions to the third part trace Kuhn's legacy in traditions of research and teaching in the history of science, which is remarkably substantial given that he never created a Kuhnian school in the history and philosophy of science in the traditional sense of the term. The essays in this part show in particular that the impact of *Structure* and other works not only consisted in discussions of Kuhn's challenging claims, but also in the models they set for productive investigations in the history of various scientific fields, some of them far from Kuhn's original concerns.

The openness of Kuhn's work is also reflected in the reinterpretations that it made possible. The fourth part is dedicated to such reinterpretations, in particular in the sociology of science, where his concepts and terminology have fallen on fertile ground. The fifth part deals with issues in the history and philosophy of science that were either neglected by Kuhn or where his position was challenged by alternative approaches.

The broad spectrum of papers and perspectives assembled in this volume will hopefully convince readers interested in the history of science that this field itself has a dramatic and contested history that is paradigmatically embedded in the fate of Kuhn's *Structure* and merits further exploration.

In closing, we would like to honor the memory of the British historian of science, John Pickstone, who sadly passed away in February 2014 before this book was published. His "big picture" approach to the history of modern science, technology and medicine greatly influenced the field. He will be missed by all those who had the pleasure of knowing him or working with him.