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Nature and history : towards a hermeneutic philosophy of historiography of science

Bouterse, Jeroen

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Author: Bouterse, Jeroen

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Stellingen behorende bij het proefschrift van Jeroen Bouterse

Nature and History: Towards a Hermeneutic Philosophy of Historiography of Science

1. Determinism and historical inevitabilism do not entail each other.
2. Any assertion of a clear 'gap' between the sciences and humanities should be treated with suspicion, as should the idea that history of science is the natural bridge over that gap.
3. The idea that Whig history should have been long gone by now is rather Whiggish.
4. Causal anachronisms – i.e., saying that something was the case that in fact couldn't have been the case – ought to be avoided. But since it is *a priori* unclear which conceptual anachronisms lead to causal anachronisms, conceptual anachronisms are not a mark of bad history-writing.
5. Inevitabilism about science is usually (though not necessarily) associated with the idea that the final state of science can be explained by nothing else than the world it is about. But historical contingentists should not conclude that their position requires the world to be causally impotent.
6. Rather than bickering about the question whether science is objective, we ought to ask whether it is about something. It is, but its objects do not render its content inevitable.
7. Historical explanation involves a hermeneutic dimension: that is, it involves a mode of understanding to which the historical position of the historian herself is relevant.
8. There is no reason to suppress any of our causal convictions, including those about science and the world it studies, when we study and write the history of science.
9. Naturalistic and hermeneutic perspectives on history and historiography of science share a possibility to affirm both the historical contingency of scientific development and the fact that it matters that science studies something.
10. History matters to historiography no less than it does to science.