

Summary

The central theme of this work is the changes in the methodology of the historiography of science. The book describes the history of the historiography of science as an autonomous discipline since its beginnings in the seventeenth century to the present, focusing above all on changes in its approach to the history of science. The exposition of these changes is grounded in the assumption that there are four main methodological stances in the historiography of science: anachronic, diachronic, internalistic and externalistic. The main thesis of the study states that, from the methodological point of view, it is possible to understand the history of the historiography of science as a transition from anachronic internalism to diachronic externalism. In its beginnings, the historiography of science was perceived as an instrumental discipline: as a tool designed to popularize science, its progress and its values. Gradually, however, the discipline began to assume characteristics of the humanities – from historiography at first, but later from the social sciences as well. These new methods provided historians of science with new insights that radically changed established opinions on the progress of science which had developed within the older positivistic tradition.

The first part of the study examines the development of the historiography of science up to the first decades of the 20th century. The exposition concentrates mainly on the positivistic historiography of science and its tacit assumptions, which has its origin in the philosophy of history. The second part is devoted to the process which is usually called „the professionalization of the historiography of science“, referring to when the discipline began to consciously reexamine its own assumptions while denying its instrumental function. At the same time, the historians of science were rejecting a the position commonly known as whiggism and its consequences, e. g. anachronisms, to be replaced by those methods used in

historiography. The third part of the study seeks to explain the process of incorporating the sociological approaches in the methodological canon of the discipline. In the beginning there was felt a strong distaste among historians of science to include social factors in the explanations of scientific progress because such a practice was viewed as a Marxist prejudice. During the second half of the 20th century, however, this aversion weakened and today the sociologically oriented historiography of science constitutes a significant part of the contemporary historical investigation of science. Although some scholars warn against disproportionate use of sociological practices, it is quite possible to interpret such use positively – as an opportunity for the contributive cooperation of science and the humanities.