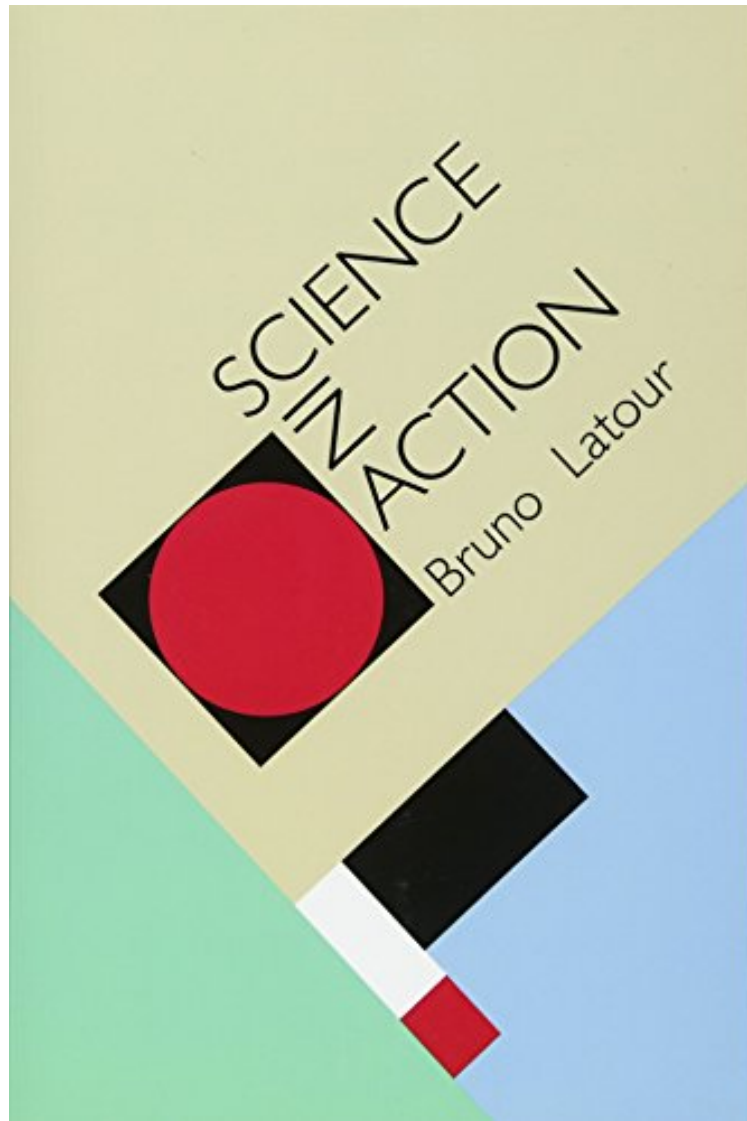


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Science in Action: How to Follow Scientists and Engineers Through Society

Bruno Latour

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Bruno Latour : Science in Action: How to Follow Scientists and Engineers Through Society before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Science in Action: How to Follow Scientists and Engineers Through Society:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. detailed and tedious manner. Very hard to readBy Vlad KrotovThe main point of the book is quite clear: the scientific processes is quite messy and social. The book is written in a very

dense, detailed and tedious manner. Very hard to read. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Interesting, but Nearly Unreadable Theory-Heavy By RDD In "Science in Action: How to Follow Scientists and Engineers Through Society", Bruno Latour works to offer a methodology for understanding the history of science, though he does not begin with the conclusion. Latour writes, Our entry into science and technology will be through the back door of science in the making, not through the more grandiose entrance of ready made science (pg. 4). To this end, he writes, I simply wish to summarize their method and to sketch the ground that, sometimes unwittingly, they all have in common. In doing so I wish to help overcome two of the limitations of science, technology and society studies that appear to me to thwart their impact, that is their organisation by discipline and by object (pg. 16). Therefore, he writes, We understand now why looking at earlier stages in the construction of facts and machines is more rewarding than remaining with the final stages. Depending on the type of modalities, people will be made to go along completely different paths (pg. 25). For his project, Latour forwards seven rules for studying science in action. Latour summarizes his first principle, writing, The construction of facts and machines is a collective process (pg. 29). His second rule asks followers to look for the intrinsic qualities of any given statement but to look instead for all the transformations it undergoes later in other hands. This rule is the consequence of what I called our first principle: the fate of facts and machines is in the hands of later users (pg. 59). Scientific instruments are necessary to Latour's third rule, so he defines them more broadly than most. Latour writes, An instrument, in this definition, is not every set-up which ends with a little window that allows someone to take a reading. A thermometer, a watch, a Geiger counter, all provide readings but are not considered as instruments as long as these readings are not used as the final layer of technical papers (pg. 68). This leads to his third rule: since the settlement of a controversy is the cause of Nature's representation not the consequence, we can never use the outcome Nature to explain how and why a controversy has been settled (pg. 99). Latour continues, Our fourth rule of method thus reads exactly like the third the word Society replacing the word Nature and then fuses the two together: since the settlement of a controversy is the cause of Society's stability, we cannot use Society to explain how and why a controversy has been settled. We should consider symmetrically the efforts to enrol and control human and non-human resources (pg. 144). Of his fifth rule of method, Latour writes, We should be as undecided as the various actors we follow as to what technoscience is made of: to do so, every time an inside/outside division is built, we should follow the two sides simultaneously, making up a list, no matter how long and heterogeneous, of all those who do the work (pg. 176). Of his sixth rule, he writes, When faced with an accusation of irrationality, or simply with beliefs in something, we will never believe that people believe in things or are irrational, we will never look for which rule of logic has been broken, we will simply consider the angle, direction, movement and scale of the observers displacement (pg. 213). Finally, Latour's seventh rule offers a more fixed approach to studies of science. He writes, What I propose, here, as a seventh rule of method, is in effect a moratorium on cognitive explanations of science and technology! I'd be tempted to propose a ten-year moratorium. If those who believe in miracles were so sure of their position, they would accept the challenge (pg. 247). 68 of 75 people found the following review helpful. Brilliant view on scientific truth as a network of strength By A Customer Latour today can be regarded as one of the leading philosophers of science and technology. After his first work with Steve Woolgar, "Laboratory life", this is his second major work in which he generalises on various topics that he only touched in a very preliminary way in the above work. Latour adopts a very original way of following scientists in their struggle to "produce" scientific truth. He studies them as if they were a tribe (Latour is originally an ethnographer). His conclusion is that scientific truth and the designing of successful technological artefacts is not so much a "unveiling of some hidden truth behind things" or a logical construction, but a very heterogeneous project in which money, resources, statements, objects, people and numerous other things are linked in such a way that a strong chain is formed. Something is true if the chain is strong enough to withstand "trials of strength". Latour does away with metaphysical ideas of "The Truth" but insists instead that truth is very much a stage in a process of negotiation between human and non-human actors. The idea that truth is the result of a logical process in which an abstract "reality" is discovered is, according to Latour, a story that is told afterwards to defend the theory itself and not something that is inherent in the forming of the theory itself. In a very easy-to-read way Latour guides his readers through the work of science and technology "in the making". A must for any student in science and technology as well as for any scholar in social sciences and philosophy.

Science and technology have immense authority and influence in our society, yet their working remains little understood. The conventional perception of science in Western societies has been modified in recent years by the work of philosophers, sociologists and historians of science. In this book Bruno Latour brings together these different approaches to provide a lively and challenging analysis of science, demonstrating how social context and technical content are both essential to a proper understanding of scientific activity. Emphasizing that science can only be understood through its practice, the author examines science and technology in action: the role of scientific literature, the activities of laboratories, the institutional context of science in the modern world, and the means by which inventions and discoveries become accepted. From the study of scientific practice he develops an analysis of science as the building of networks. Throughout, Bruno Latour shows how a lively and realistic picture of science in action

alters our conception of not only the natural sciences but also the social sciences and the sociology of knowledge in general. This stimulating book, drawing on a wealth of examples from a wide range of scientific activities, will interest all philosophers, sociologists and historians of science, scientists and engineers, and students of the philosophy of social science and the sociology of knowledge.

One cannot but be impressed by the scope of Latour's work... This is no mere bricolage, but a coherent and powerful framework for research. I predict that *Science in Action* will have an impact comparable to Thomas Kuhn's *Structure of Scientific Revolutions* both as a provocation to philosophers and as an inspiration to sociologists and historians of science. (Nicholas Jardine *Times Literary Supplement*) Latour's *Science in Action* is a "must read" for all sociologists, not just because the sociology of science is a dynamic and growing subdiscipline, but more importantly because Latour's thesis challenges the notions that underlie sociologists' efforts to distinguish our field as a "science"... Latour's thesis is that science, including sociology, is collective action and that facticity is a consequence, not a cause, of collective action... An excellent and enjoyable introduction to the sociology of science. (Joan H. Fujimura *Contemporary Sociology*) There is a wealth of material and some titillating insight into discoveries beginning with the framed race to find the structure of DNA--the double helix--and in Latour's hands, it becomes a true cliffhanger... This [book] will reward those who want to probe science and the modern world in depth. (Kirkus s) This account of science as composed of drifting, recombining networks is presented with considerable charm and humour. There are many brief case histories to enliven the text, and the book works very well as a guide through scientific reasoning. (Steven Yearly *Nature*) About the Author Bruno Latour is Professor at Sciences Po, Paris, and the 2013 winner of the Ludvig Holberg International Memorial Prize.