



Thursday, June 26th, 10:30-11:00, room 201

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Performativity in the studies of science primary assumptions (and further doubts)

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The terms performance and performativity have recently gained much attention in the fields of humanities and social sciences. 'The performative turn' has marked an epistemological shift away from representational modes of knowledge production, to ones understood in terms of embodied, materially and temporally situated practices. As Peter Wehling puts it in his article titled 'The Situated Materiality of Scientific Practice': If one tries to pick out one feature that (almost) all of the different references to performativity have in common, then the best candidate might be its non- or antiessentialist impetus: performativity is not concerned with substantial things but rather with the (temporal) effects of "doings" and "performances".

Nevertheless, both concepts – performance and performativity – remain extremely ambiguous and require further elaboration.

The aim of my presentation is to trace the terms performance and performativity in several areas of inquiry, especially in the field of science and technology studies (with specific reference to the works of Andrew Pickering, Joseph Rouse and Katrin Barad), performance studies (mainly Richard Schechner's and Marvin Carlson's ideas), and Jon McKenzie's work titled 'Perform or Else: From Discipline to Performance'. I will then systemize the different aspects of performances and performativity, specifically touching upon the concept of science as culture and practice, the role of the representational aspects of science, the materiality and temporality of scientific practices and the questions regarding human and non-human agency.

Finally, I will outline some preliminary assumptions concerning the understanding of 'knowledge-as-performance' (drawing upon Richard Schechner's division between notions of 'is-performance' and 'as-performance'). So far the notion of performativity has been applied to describe the processes of knowledge production. However, I believe that a step towards examining their very result – knowledge, as a performance, can serve to clarify some areas of controversy within the performative turn as well as properly distinguish this view of knowledge from other philosophical stances (e.g. knowledge in propositional terms or knowledge understood as solely social practice).