

Summary of Daston's Paper

Introduction

- Several meanings of objectivity (Daston 1992, 599)
 - [1] *ontological* aspect of objectivity
 - "ultimate structure of reality"
 - about the world
 - [2] *mechanical* aspect
 - to abstain from "judgement and interpretation in reporting and picturing scientific results"
 - about suppressing the "universal human propensity to judge and to aestheticise"
 - [3] *aperspectival* objectivity
 - a view that does not depend on the "specifics of the individual's makeup" or "position in the world"
 - about "eliminating individual idiosyncracies"
- Among the several meanings of "objectivity", one aspect is *aperspectival objectivity* (Daston 1992, 599)
 - This connotation/meaning is the currently dominant interpretation of the concept of objectivity (Daston 1992, 599)
- Aperspectival objectivity is "a method of understanding...A view or form of thought is more objective than another if it relies less on the specifics of the individual's makeup and position in the world, or on the character of the particular type of creature he is" (Daston 1992, 599)
- central aim of aperspectival objectivity: pick out and narrow down the knowledge (which is communicated) to that which *coincides* with public knowledge (Daston 1992, 600)
 - Because of the emphasis on communicability, this criterion of what is reported might (in some cases) "sacrifice deeper or more accurate knowledge" (Daston 1992, 600)

Objectivity in Medieval and Early Modern Period

- The concept of "objective", in scholastic philosophy, pertained to "objects of thought" and did not have any connection to objects of the world (Daston 1992, 600).
- The medieval and early modern usages of the concept of objectivity retained the same meaning (Daston 1992, 601).
- During this time, "objectivity" did not have any of the following connotations that are

presently associated with it: "emotional detachment", "restrain from judgement", "method and measurement" or "empirical reliability". Even the perspectival metaphor is not yet associated with the concept. (Daston 1992, 603)

- During this period, there were situations where concepts like "impartiality" and "disinterestedness" were invoked. However, these concepts were not yet associated with "objectivity" (Daston 1992, 601). These concepts were primarily dealt by **moral philosophy** and **aesthetics** since most of the discussions in these disciplines had to reconcile "individual viewpoints on the same issue" and thus had to deal with "detachment, impartiality, disinterestedness, even self-effacement" in order to make "shared public knowledge possible" (Daston 1992, 603).
- Some discussions that Daston (1992) discusses to illustrate the above usage:
 - Hume's argument for "universal standards of the beautiful" (Daston 1992, 603-604)
 - Adam Smith's discussion on "idealized impartiality that transcends all particular viewpoints" (Daston 1992, 604)
- Only during the beginning of the nineteenth century, the concept "objectivity" started to mean "impartiality" and become associated with external objects (Daston 1992, 601, 603).

Aperspectival objectivity

- Aperspectival objectivity, which developed during the nineteenth century was influenced by moral perspectives discussed above.
 - The nineteenth century philosophers felt that "the transcendence of individual viewpoints in deliberation and action" is an important precondition for "coherence scientific community" and reaching "scientific truth" (Daston 1992, 607)
- According to this notion, "objectively real" can be arrived by "eliminating individual idiosyncrasy through the prolonged 'averaging' of viewpoints by communication" (Daston 1992, 607).
- The need for this criterion of objectivity was motivated by how science grew to become a collaborative effort (Daston 1992, 608). The following social nature of this community demanded such criterion:
 - collaboration across countries and language boundaries
 - interactions among various "levels of skill, status and training"
 - the scientific communications (in the form of articles) being circulated