The handle http://hdl.handle.net/1887/36396 holds various files of this Leiden University dissertation

**Author:** Karstens, Bart  
**Title:** Pluralism within parameters : towards a mature evaluative historiography of science  
**Issue Date:** 2015-11-18
Pluralism within Parameters. Towards a Mature Evaluative Historiography of Science

1. The tenet of symmetry poses undesirable restrictions to historiography of science, especially when it comes to diachrony. Therefore the principle of symmetry should be replaced by a principle of heterogeneity.

2. The principle of charity is a constitutive element of all historical understanding, provided it is used in the proper way, namely as a tool to generate and sustain a circle of interpretation.

3. Conceiving of science as an endeavour, primarily driven by the wish to decrease uncertainty, is essential in order to obtain a sound conceptualization of the phenomenon of error. It is only from this perspective that positive aspects of earlier approaches and a number of desirable notions, such as retrospective error, going amiss and fertile error, can be integrated.

4. Debates over the study of science have been stalemated by remarkably persistent positivist assumptions. Bringing these assumptions to the surface, and subsequently moving beyond them, uncorks new approaches to past science and fruitful debates about the merits of these approaches.

5. Because assessments of past science make sense only in comparison to alternatives, extended naturalism must be formulated as a platform, consisting of a set of typical elements, which provides the required comparative ground and in this way facilitates evaluative historiography.

6. The non-hierarchical, relationalist understanding of theory acceptance makes qualitative evaluation a complex activity. Science is a complex phenomenon and we must accept that to properly account for it has to reflect this.

7. The relation between philosophy and historiography of science is one of hormesis, in the sense that a restricted dose of philosophy is beneficial to the study of past science whereas a high dose is detrimental to it.

8. The currently fashionable ‘circulation of knowledge’ research projects are inspired by posthumanism. Among historians of science there is insufficient awareness of the drawbacks of this approach to the past and as a consequence the danger is that most of this research will in the end prove to be intellectually sterile.

9. One of the major challenges facing historiography of science in the near future is to include the history of the humanities and develop a common perspective on, what should be called, the history of knowledge.

10. To view historical scholarship as a disease of modernity, as Nietzsche did, is incorrect: it is, instead, an invigorating force of modern societies.