

Background to Post-Normal Science

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26 June 2009

When did a radical critique of science emerge in the post-war period?

Nuclear weapons:
first from an ethical perspective,
then (Sir Solly Zuckerman) – methodology.
H-Bombs are not weapons of 'war' – so all
planning is demented.

Nuclear strategy – a triumph of quantitative
applied social science.

Into the '60's:

Silent Spring

Science and Survival – Barry Commoner

The Anti-Concorde Project.

Kuhn: 'The Scientific Community' or a
bunch of selfish, scared puzzle-solvers?

Dirty Science in Vietnam – and a
researchers' strike.

BSSRS – science for (the) people?

Scientific Knowledge and its Social Problems

Pathologies of Industrialised Science:
Entrepreneurial, Shoddy, Reckless and
Dirty – Plus Runaway Technology.

The dialectical triad for science: academic,
industrialised, critical (like the Enlightenment,
with a touch of the '60's)

Into the '70's.

Radical Science gives way to Environmental Activism

'The Council for Science and Society' – subversion at the top – just a generation too early.

My focus: the management of uncertainty

In policy-relevant quantitative science.

Insignificant digits and GIGO-science

'Economics as an elite folk-science'.

WASH-1400 and Three Mile Island: experts in a bugged motel room: Mickey Mouse technology.

Then in 1981 Silvio Funtowicz came to Yorkshire, in search of contacts in the philosophy of mathematics.

Shortly afterwards, he attended my lecture on the regulation of Recombinant DNA research, and we discovered a common interest in risk, regulation and uncertainty.

I applied for a grant to do research on this, and got it! Out of this came the NUSAP notational system, and much more...