

OLGA STOLIAROVA

*Institute of Scientific Information in Social Sciences of Russian Academy
of Sciences, Moscow*

I. Stengers: Ontological Criteria of Science and Perspectives for Sociology of Science

Abstract

I am starting from the famous enough words B. Latour says about Isabelle Stengers's work namely that she is looking for criteria of science not in epistemology but in ontology.

I became interested to try to answer on the question about what are the ontological criteria of science she is looking for if we take into account the fact that her work is of vital importance for some trends of current sociology of science? To put it other way how is it possible for sociology of science to be interested in ontological proving of science if it by definition treats knowledge as related to subject (society) deals with the ways of construction of knowledge, and in this respect proceeds from Kantian paradigm? What kind of ontology can it use?

Analyzing Stengers' book 'The Invention of Modern Science' I conclude that she builds her model of science on Deleuzean's concept of event. Being which is understood as an event refers to the philosophical notion of becoming. Contrary to being becoming describes the world as dynamic and unstable 'not waiting outside and not remaining equal to itself'.

Science which deals with becoming (but not with eternal and stable substances) and which is itself the part of becoming goes beyond modern oppositions that it is either 'objective' and describes 'the world as it is' or 'subjective' and can be reduced to a 'merely opinion'.

Instead of it, as Stengers shows by the example of Galileo's experiments, modern science comes as the peculiar kind of practice creating the regimes of 'mutual engagement' of natural objects, technologies, and scientists which result in new collectives and new knowledges.

So, if Kant, the father of constructivist paradigm, treats experimental-mathematical science starting from Galileo as evidence that we can know about reality only what we put in it ourselves (i.e. as the argument for purely constructivist mode of knowledge) then Stengers considers construction (or invention) as the way of 'making nature speak'. What is the product of the co-operation of the invention and materiality is a new collective of actors which are both constructed and

real. The novelty and singularity of such collectives indicate that science is the way of our participation in the construction of the world.

The concept of being as event and the model of science built on it throw sociology of science into engagement with 'natural reality' and allows it to keep its identity and at the same time not to fall into relativism.