

Is there any “logic of discovery in pictures”: Where do scientific ideas come from?

Kuhn believed there cannot be a “logic of discovery” but only a “psychology of research” (ibid., 266). A new theory “emerges all at once, sometimes in the middle of the night, in the mind of a man,” and “what the nature of that final stage is – how an individual invents (or finds he has invented) a new way of giving order to data now assembled – must here remain inscrutable and may be permanently so” (Kuhn 1996, 89–90).

This talk is an historical excursion into a case of using images in discovering and developing scientific ideas. The aims to identify possible systematic elements in using images in such cases. Where do scientific images come from? What happened to them next? How do they get transformed, transferred and adopted to various contexts? Are there any repeated uses of visualisations in discovery? What are their key components of such images? Do they stabilise in visual practices? How do they influence shaping the new concepts? These and related questions will be discussed.

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