

Abstract

The title of the present thesis is *Biology in the agora: Studies on problems and themes in popular science* (Den torgförda biologin: Studier i populärvetenskapens problem och tematik). ISBN 91-628-5828-9

The chief aim in this work is to demonstrate the fruitfulness of Ludwik Fleck's philosophy of science for stimulating a number of new viewpoints in the study of popular science and popularisation from the vantage point of history of ideas and science. Taking its point of departure in the question, "What is popular science?", the present work articulates a comprehensive theoretical framework for addressing problems regarding the place of popular science and its multiple functions, as well as necessary preconditions needed for popularisation. In addition to this historical examples are taken from popular biology texts, both ones that were produced by Swedish authors and foreign works in Swedish translation. These are meant to illustrate and in part problematise a common understanding of the form and function of popular science as a literary genre. In my study I also argue that popular science should be regarded as a topic highly relevant for a historiography of science that seeks to paint a picture of the development of the sciences and their significance with a broad brush.

Keywords: popular science, popular knowledge, popular biology, popularisation, Ludwik Fleck, history of science, thought collective, thought style.