



About Method: Experimenters, Snake Venom, and the History of Writing Scientifically

Jutta Schickore

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About Method: Experimenters, Snake Venom, and the History of Writing Scientifically Jutta Schickore Scientists' views on what makes an experiment successful have developed dramatically throughout history. Different criteria for proper experimentation were privileged at different times, entirely new criteria for securing experimental results emerged, and the meaning of commitment to experimentation altered. In *About Method*, Schickore captures this complex trajectory of change from 1660 to the twentieth century through the history of snake venom research. As experiments with poisonous snakes and venom were both challenging and controversial, the experimenters produced very detailed accounts of their investigations, which go back three hundred years—making venom research uniquely suited for such a long-term study. By analyzing key episodes in the transformation of venom research, Schickore is able to draw out the factors that have shaped methods discourse in science.

About Method shows that methodological advancement throughout history has not been simply a steady progression toward better, more sophisticated and improved methodologies of experimentation. Rather, it was a progression in awareness of the obstacles and limitations that scientists face in developing strategies to probe the myriad unknown complexities of nature. The first long-term history of this development and of snake venom research, About Method offers a major contribution to integrated history and philosophy of science.



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