Biohumanities: Rethinking the relationship between biosciences, philosophy and history of science, and society

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Abstract

We argue that philosophical and historical research can constitute a ' Biohumanities' which deepens our understanding of biology itself; engages in constructive 'science criticism'; helps formulate new 'visions of biology'; and facilitates 'critical science communication'. We illustrate these ideas with two recent 'experimental philosophy' studies of the concept of the gene and of the concept of innateness conducted by ourselves and collaborators. We conclude that the complex and often troubled relations between science and society are critical to both parties, and argue that the philosophy and history of science can help to make this relationship work.

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