

Taxonomy of the Notions of ‘Ways of Thinking’

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapters, I have explained how different thinkers in the wake of historical epistemology have given shape to the concept of Kant’s *a priori*. With the purpose of understanding how objectivity emerges and changes in the course of history, they have put forward different characterizations of the concept of ‘ways of thinking’, which can be regarded as distinct ‘historicized Kant’s a priori’. In the first part of this chapter, I shall draw some comparisons between these different species of the genus ‘ways of thinking’ in order to provide a conceptual taxonomy. Continuing with the biological metaphor, over time the evolution of historical epistemology has provided more and more sophisticated species of the concept of ‘ways of thinking’, such as Kuhn’s and Hacking’s. These species have inherited some ‘characters’ from their ‘ancestors’, e.g. from certain notions of the concept of ‘ways of thinking’ put forward by the classical historical epistemologists. I shall start by tracing these common characters.¹

¹In the biological metaphor, among the ancestors of the recent species of the concept of ‘ways of thinking’ one should mention Mannheim’s notion of ‘style of thought’ [*Denkstil*] (see Chap. 1). Since, as far as I know, neither Fleck nor other thinkers have referred to Mannheim’s prior usage of the concept, one could say that, just as flight emerged, disappeared and reappeared with different characteristics in new contexts several times in the course of the evolution of living beings, so the concept of ‘ways of thinking’ made sometimes its appearance in some fields of study only to be almost forgotten and then reconceived.