

Introduction:

The Dawn of the Modern Humanities

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This volume investigates the changes in subject, method and institutionalization of the humanities before and after 1800. Was there a revolution in the humanities around 1800 – a sudden shift in the study of the products of the human mind, or were these changes part of a much longer process? The authors address these questions from an overarching perspective for a variety of humanities disciplines: from philology, musicology, art history, linguistics, historiography to literary theory.

This is the second volume in the series *The Making of the Humanities* which originates from the conference series of the same name.¹ While the first volume dealt with the emergence of the humanities disciplines in the early modern world,² the current book centres around the transition from early modern humanities disciplines (i.e. before 1800) to modern disciplines (i.e. after 1800). This transition is generally taken as one of the most important transformations in intellectual history,³ and has even been regarded as a conceptual and institutional revolution.⁴ It is therefore surprising that existing studies rarely if at all take an overarching view on the humanities during this period. Instead they focus on the development of an individual discipline during the decades around 1800, or make a comparison between a couple of disciplines only, such as philology and historiography.⁵ By way of a *pars pro toto* reasoning, the transformations found in one or two disciplines are then generalized to all humanities disciplines. An in-depth cross-comparison of all humanistic activities during the period around 1800 is badly needed, and this volume aims to make a start with it.

The articles in this book were originally presented at the conference *The Making of the Humanities II* at the University of Amsterdam in 2010. The first conference of this kind, in 2008, was initiated by a group of scholars affiliated to the Universities of Amsterdam, Oxford and St Andrews who wished to explore the history of the humanities in comparison: philology, history, linguistics, musicology, rhetoric, art history, poetics, literary studies, theatre studies, as well as more recent disciplines such as film studies. Such an endeavour had never been taken

up before. This conspicuous gap in historiography is still difficult to explain. It is sometimes understood as a consequence of the fragmentation of the humanities disciplines during the last two centuries when linguists, philologists, historians, musicologists, archaeologists, art historians, theatre historians and literary theorists increasingly formed their own academic communities with specialized methodologies, journals and conferences. At the same time it has also been observed that despite the increasing divergence between the humanities disciplines, their underlying concepts, methods and practices display a striking commonality.⁶ This remarkable combination of fragmentation and unity formed a further motivation for our conference series. At the first conference in 2008, we focused on the humanities in the early modern period from 1400 to 1800. This was the time when the *studia humanitatis* produced immensely influential insights into philology, linguistics, art theory, poetics, musicology and historiography that changed European society in all respects and that profoundly shaped the New Sciences.

The 2008 conference did not cover the humanities in other periods or regions, however. For this reason, we believed that a second conference was in order, and indeed that several more were needed. The initial aim of the 2010 conference, from which the current volume originates, was to start where the previous conference stopped, i.e. around 1800, when the early modern disciplines supposedly transformed into modern ones. Yet, it soon became clear that the germs of the transition from early modern to modern humanities were already present in the eighteenth and often even in the seventeenth century. We therefore decided that the period of the second conference should not range from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century, but should include (at least part of) the seventeenth century as well.

In virtually any historiography, periods are categorized in terms of 'before' and 'after' 1800. But not all things split nicely and neatly. Political history may be categorized in terms of this time frame with turning points like 1789 or 1815.⁷ But is intellectual history, in our case the history of the humanities, also subject to this split? This is a question that recurs in several of the papers of this volume. Even if it is generally assumed that the humanities underwent a 'humanization' of their methods and subject matter after 1800 – when the human world was separated from the natural – the papers in this volume show that the constitutive distinction between a science of human products and a science of nature was already in full shape around 1700, in particular in Giambattista Vico's work. Vico predates the well-known distinction by Wilhelm Dilthey between *Geisteswissenschaften* and *Naturwissenschaften* by almost two centuries. This insight triggers a whole set of follow-up questions, such as: how did nineteenth-century disciplines, methods and communities differ from their eighteenth- and seventeenth-century counterparts? Is there only continuity to be found in the development of the hu-

manities during this period or can something like a break be discerned? And to what extent were the conceptual and methodological ‘innovations’ in Lachmann’s philology, Ranke’s historiography and Grimm’s linguistics, among others, already present and practised in the eighteenth century and before?

The papers in this book

In the first contribution of Part I of this book, *Linguistics and Philology*, Joep Leerssen immediately sets the stage for these questions when he compares the notion of philology as applied by linguists and literary historians of the early nineteenth century with the programme set forth in Giambattista Vico’s *Scienza Nova*. He shows that while the name of Vico was by and large obscure, a paper trail can be traced from Vico to Grimm so as to account for the rise of modern philologies (a term coined by Vico). In a programmatic sense, Leerssen argues, the historicist turn and the comparative method were entirely Vicoesque. The philological approach of reconstructing the *Urtext* was used in the comparative linguistic investigation of deriving language relationships as well as legal studies, and it became an all-embracing cultural anthropology of the various European nations.

The influence of the early modern humanities on the nineteenth-century humanities is also explored by Toon Van Hal who addresses the ‘proto-discipline’ of linguistics in a time when there was not yet such a discipline. The study of language constituted an auxiliary branch of learning rather than a separate field. How was linguistic knowledge transmitted and received in these times and how? Van Hal discusses the various views of kinship of languages before the nineteenth century. Many of the famous nineteenth-century discoveries on the relation and kinship between Indo-European languages made by Franz Bopp and others were already made before 1800, and Van Hal shows that these discoveries were well consolidated among Renaissance and post-Renaissance scholars.

The last contribution of Part I discusses the state of linguistics as an academic discipline at the end of the nineteenth century. Els Elffers deals with the development of General Linguistics by its (co-)founder Georg von der Gabelentz and his textbook from 1891, one of the first general linguistic textbooks ever written. The task to create the actual discipline of general linguistics was enormous: it arose as an umbrella discipline where many fragmented parts of earlier language studies had to be integrated, from the exclusively historical approach to the more ‘synchronic’ approaches. Elffers shows that on the one hand Von der Gabelentz builds on early historical linguistics, while on the other hand he is a visionary predecessor of De Saussure in the twentieth century.

Part II of the book deals with the intricate relation between The Humanities and the Sciences. The article by Fokko Jan Dijksterhuis concentrates on the early modern entanglement of mathematics and philology. The humanist bent of early modern mathematics is usually seen as a remnant of the Renaissance, but Dijksterhuis shows that the making of the humanities was the making of the sciences at the same time. It is a story of reciprocal demarcation that gave the sciences and humanities a distinct profile in the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth century. Focusing on two actors that were both philologists and mathematicians, Dijksterhuis shows that the fate of 'humanist mathematics' was sealed with the nineteenth-century reform of the universities and the formation of modern scientific disciplines that resulted in a break with the classics.

The relation between music and science is investigated by Maria Semi who sheds new light on a work on the 'science of music' by Sir John Hawkins in 1776. While the birth of musicology is usually attributed to Guido Adler in 1885, Semi shows that the beginnings of musicology must be antedated by more than a century. Hawkins had a clear idea of a discipline that recognized music as its object and history as its method of investigation. Already in the eighteenth century the time was ripe for the birth of musicology that, in employing a historical method, characterized itself as a humanistic discipline and led to the explosion of the ancient *artes liberales*. The physical study of music, named 'acoustics', became part of the sciences and was fostered by an enormous quantity of experiments performed and published by the royal academies.

The nineteenth-century revival of the ancient debate over the question whether language is a natural phenomenon or something that is constructed by humans, is dealt with in the contribution by Bart Karstens. Among the first and second generation of comparative linguists there was considerable difference of opinion whether linguistics should be (or become) a natural science or remain part of the humanities. Karstens shows that the assemblage Bopp created by drawing together ideas from philology, history, anatomy, physiology, anthropology, physics and philosophy gave rise to these controversies which sheds light not only on the development of linguistics but on the discipline formation process in humanities and science in general. As Karstens contends, discipline formation is to be understood as a form of hybridization rather than specialization.

Part III of the book is entitled Writing History and Intellectual History. Nineteenth-century historicism and its predecessors is the topic of the first contribution by Jacques Bos. In his analysis of the transition of historiography from humanism to historicism, Bos focuses on two humanist historians (Machiavelli and Guicciardini) and two nineteenth-century historians (Ranke and Droysen). His starting point is Machiavelli's and Guicciardini's painful experience that the old world of Italian city-states was lost. A similar dissociation of the past occurred

around 1800 when historians realized that the French Revolution had brought about a tragic rupture. As a result the past became an object of study similar to what happened in the sixteenth century. Bos also discusses some key elements in nineteenth-century historicism that are not found in humanist historiography, such as the problem of interpretation and especially the transformation of historiography into an academic discipline.

Foteini Lika deals with the intricate relation between fact and fiction, in particular between the competing 'disciplines' of historiography and novel writing. She shows that the defining space between the two has always been fluid since the novel, as a fictional form, defined itself either in relation to or as an actual species of history writing. Lika then compares the works of two nineteenth-century writers, Thomas Macaulay and Emmanuel Roidis, showing that both writers blurred the boundaries between history and fiction: the first working towards a 'novelization' of history, the second towards a 'historization' of the novel.

The contribution by Hilary Gatti provides a long-term view of the history of intellectual history by comparing John Milton's *Areopagitica* (1644) with John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty* (1859). Gatti shows that these authors share some fundamental ideas, such as their common emphasis on the individual as proper subject of liberty, as well as the limits any society should impose on the individual's rights and freedom. Gatti then argues how these notions of liberty have had a decisive impact on more recent discussions, in particular the question of women's liberties and rights, and the problem of colonial liberty. It thus turns out that the history of the concept of liberty connects seventeenth-century humanists with nineteenth-century philosophers.

The Impact of the East is the theme of Part IV. From 1600 onwards the history of the humanities becomes increasingly global. In the first contribution, Gerhard F. Strasser points out that the first substantive results of an interchange between Europe and the Far East occurred with the beginning of Catholic missions to these 'new' regions, in particular China. The materials that reached the European scholarly community gave an enormous impulse to the study of the Chinese language and its tonal system, Chinese art and musicology. The first Sanskrit grammar was published and numerous accounts on Nepal, Tibet and India appeared. Strasser notes that all fields of the European humanities underwent profound changes due to the Eastern influx.

Thijs Weststeijn continues along this line when he discusses the immense impact of the Chinese humanities in the Low Countries (as well as in other parts of Europe) and the emergence of what he calls proto-sinology. The Chinese language, with its tonal system and semantically transparent characters, was investigated to such an extent that it served as the basis for the design of artificial languages, for example by Leibniz. Chinese themes popped up in literature and

theatre (for instance in Vondel's work), and Chinese styles appeared everywhere in the applied arts (the words 'Dutch' and 'Chinese' even became interchangeable in ceramic art). Isaac Vossius's insight that Chinese history could not be accommodated with biblical history, as Chinese texts and monuments were apparently untouched by the Flood, had a major impact. Vossius's stance connected China to radical thought. Weststeijn shows that proto-sinology was by definition interdisciplinary – it combined the humanities with geographical, anthropological and politicological insights. Similar to what Karstens contends for linguistics, the emergence of the proto-discipline of sinology is a form of hybridization rather than specialization.

Michiel Leezenberg's paper focuses on the impact of the 'nearer' East, that is, the East formed by the frontier region of the Ottoman, Austrian and Russian empires where Christian and Islamic ideas came together. The key figure here is Dimitrie Cantemir (1673-1723) who played a leading role in the development of German and Russian orientalism. Translations of Cantemir's Ottoman history shaped Edward Gibbon's view of the Ottoman Empire and possibly Montesquieu's ideas on the causes of the greatness and decline of Rome. A highly underestimated scholar for the last two and a half centuries, Cantemir emerges as a crucial figure in the rise of Western orientalism as well as of the rise of the modern nation state. As such he may stand as a symbol for much broader developments, such as the decline of the great early modern empires and the rise of the nation state and modern imperialism, and the radical rearticulation of the humanities against this background.

In Part V, entitled *Artworks and Texts*, Mats Malm sets off with a paper on the role of emotions in the development of artistic theory and the system of literary genres. He clarifies the emergence of lyric as third of the major genres (next to drama and epic) by tracing treatments of the emotions on the border between poetry and the other arts. Malm views the Renaissance attempt to define painting through rhetoric's categories as a precursor to the definition of poetry when the fine arts were launched in the eighteenth century, enabling lyric to be established among the literary genres. He traces a very long shadow of Alberti's art theoretical work *De pictura* (1435): painting is defined through rhetoric, and then poetry through painting.

The contribution by Adi Efal examines the interrelation between philology and the discipline of art history. She draws a view of the place of the plastic arts within the philological endeavours, from Winckelmann onwards. Her discourse centres around the notion of *figura*, and she surmises that it is the figures that make up the framework of philological inquire. According to Efal the figure (*figura*) is located on the borderline between word and image, finding its origin in rhetoric. She discusses the affinity between art history and philology in the con-

text of the movements of historicism, hermeneutics and neo-kantianism, arguing that art history can be and has been exercised as a 'figural philology'.

Part VI deals with the relation between Literature and Rhetoric. The first contribution by Alicia C. Montoya investigates the emergence of medievalism in the Paris-based Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres in the early eighteenth century. Montoya points out that modern commentators have tended to dismiss the historiographic efforts of these early Académiciens, arguing that their *belle-lettriste* conception of scholarship prevented them from giving due attention to non-literary sources such as archaeological, iconographic and architectural sources. Montoya argues that this judgement does not do justice to the Académiciens' own understanding of scholarship. She examines how these authors defined the work of scholarship and proposed models for eighteenth-century practice. The relation between rhetoric, philology and historical scholarship appears to be a close one in this period.

Neus Rotger explores the Gothic revival that is first found in eighteenth-century historiography. The interest in the Gothic reflected a growing taste for the non-classical centuries of European culture. Rotger argues that a comparative examination of the most influential French and English advocates shows to what extent historical consciousness allowed new ways of interpreting the cultural past. The revival of a Gothic antiquity (opposed to the Classic) was fundamentally 'interdisciplinary' and promoted the rehabilitation of a series of marginal authors and works to canonical positions. The reconstruction of the Gothic literary past entailed a debate a meaning, function and uses of the past for the modern contemporaries, long before the proclaimed nineteenth-century historical turn.

David Marshall discusses the long decline of the discipline of rhetoric in the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. He argues that rhetoric's contribution to the development of the humanities between 1600 and 1900 was profound precisely because it was being marginalized. Marshall discusses the work by Thomas Hobbes, Giambattista Vico and Friedrich Nietzsche who all taught rhetoric and produced written records of these experiences. While none of them thought that rhetoric could be an end in itself, they adopted rhetorical presuppositions in their work to the point that they became unconscious to all but invisible. Hobbesian politics, Vichian anthropology and Nietzschean philosophy were all transformations of rhetoric, each in its own way.

The last part of this book, Part VII, deals with the Academic Communities in the development of the modern humanities. The 'archival turn' was a decisive moment in the transformation of history from an early modern to a modern discipline. Pieter Huistra discusses how archival research became crucial to the historical method, but also, how the content of the archives influenced the historian's work. Huistra provides an in-depth study of the role of the archive during three

generations of the Feith family who were heading the Groningen archive in the nineteenth century. He shows how the changing standards in history influenced the archival depot and its inventories, and how in turn historians were guided by its content and structure. The Feith family illustrates how the structure of their 'designed' archive changed historical practice.

Claus Møller Jørgensen analyzes the dynamics behind the specialization that took place in the nineteenth-century humanities at the University of Copenhagen. The humanities liberated themselves from an inferior position to the higher faculties by upgrading the status of classical studies and the education of secondary school teachers at the end of the eighteenth century. While the classics held a superior position until 1849 embodying the ideal of educational holism and integration of disciplines, after the reform of the faculty of humanities in 1849 the attempt at integration lost its attractiveness. The disciplines evolved as specialized scholarly disciplines with research agendas, methodologies and journals of their own. Classical philology became gradually marginalized by the national disciplines of history and national philology.

In the last contribution of the book, Herman Paul explores the ideals of intellectual virtue, where he focuses on nineteenth-century Leiden. While this century is known as an age of academic discipline formation and specialization, in which fields as history, philology, Oriental studies and theology all sought to establish distinct identities, the similarities and parallels between the emerging disciplines are often striking. Paul argues that one overlooked parallel is the extent to which scholars in various fields could have remarkably similar ideas about the qualities essential for the 'modern, critical' scholar. Since such ideals of intellectual virtue or scholarly selfhood deeply influenced the goals and methods of research, the study of these scholarly selves nourished by scholars in different fields contributes to a truly interdisciplinary history of the humanities.

Break or continuity in the humanities?

Various papers in this volume suggest that the notion of a revolution in the humanities around 1800 is more problematic than has been previously assumed. While the nineteenth century brought discipline formation and specialized methodologies, several concepts and ideas were in existence already well before 1800 and were consolidated among scholars, for instance in philology, linguistics, musicology and historiography (Leerssen, Semi, Van Hal). New in the nineteenth century was especially the academic institutionalization of disciplines (Elffers, Paul, Jørgensen), not so much the nature of humanistic knowledge as a whole. Universities guaranteed stability and continuity, but these also existed among

Renaissance and post-Renaissance scholars before academic institutionalization (Van Hal, Weststeijn, Leezenberg).

Several papers illustrate the immense influence of early modern humanism on the modern humanities, for example in philosophy (Gatti) and historiography (Bos) but also in philology (Leerssen) and rhetoric (Marshall). Also the cross-relations between different fields are closer than often assumed: for example between art theory and literary theory (Malm), and philology and art theory (Efal) as well as between history writing and fiction writing (Lika). Thus the widely proclaimed specialization and fragmentation of the humanities is less evident than is often assumed: the transition from classical to national humanities is fundamentally 'interdisciplinary' (Rotger) and the notion of discipline formation can be seen as a form of hybridization rather than specialization (Karstens, Weststeijn).

This volume also shows that the humanities developed a common historical and philological method which was built on a *rhetorical* tradition that already lasted for several centuries. This continuing importance of rhetoric further undermines the idea of a revolution in the humanities around 1800. Rhetoric rather than history or philosophy appears to be constitutive for the development of many of the humanistic disciplines: it is foundational in eighteenth-century philology and historical scholarship (Montoya). And even though rhetoric becomes marginal in the course of the nineteenth century, most scholars adopt strong rhetorical presuppositions in their work (Marshall).

The study of academic communities in the nineteenth century indicates that the different fields of the humanities have more in common than their increasing specialization suggests, especially with respect to ideals of intellectual virtue (Paul) but also with respect to the dramatic changes due to nationalist agendas (Jørgensen). The 'archival turn' was a decisive moment in the transformation of the historical humanities from early modern to modern disciplines (Huistra). The humanities indeed changed from a classical to a national character, but this process already started in the eighteenth and even in the late seventeenth century.

Another important development in the period 1600-1900 is that the humanities and the sciences drifted apart obtaining different profiles. Humanist mathematics disappeared and was detached from its history (Dijksterhuis). The science of music was split into a physical and a historical study of music, even though this happened as early as in the eighteenth century (Semi). In some disciplines, in particular linguistics, there was a debate whether the object of study (language) was a natural phenomenon or something created by humans (Karstens). This opposition became the constitutive distinction between science and humanities in the work by Wilhelm Dilthey, which could however already be found in Giambattista Vico two centuries earlier.

The impact of the 'East' on the 'West' has been immense in the development of the humanities. Not only did the study of music, art, language and literature from China and India change the European humanities (Strasser), new disciplines appeared as well, such as proto-sinology which combined insights from a variety of fields (Weststeijn). Also the humanities from Eastern Europe (Russian and Ottoman Empire) have been highly influential: developments in Eastern Europe not only preceded the humanities in Western Europe, but shaped them to a very large extent, especially with respect to nationalism and imperialism (Leezenberg). Thus the very idea of a transformation in the humanities must also be viewed and further investigated from an Eastern perspective.

In sum, this volume seems to indicate that if there was a revolution in the humanities as a whole around 1800, it was mostly on an institutional rather than on a conceptual level. A profound transformation of concepts – e.g. from the classical to the national – did occur, but this transformation was part of a longer and more complex process that already started in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, where input from the 'East' (both from outside and from within Europe) was crucial. Of course, our investigatory journey into this process has just begun, and more research and conferences will be needed to shed further light on this issue.

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Notes

- 1 The first conference in this series was 'The Making of the Humanities: First International Conference on the History of the Humanities', which took place from 23-25 October 2008 at the University of Amsterdam. The second conference was 'The Making of the Humanities II: Second International Conference on the History of the Humanities', which took place from 21-23 October 2010 also at the University of Amsterdam.

- 2 Rens Bod, Jaap Maat and Thijs Weststeijn (eds.), *The Making of the Humanities: Early Modern Europe* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010).
- 3 See Reinhart Koselleck, 'Einleitung', in: O. Brunner, W. Conze and R. Koselleck (eds.), *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe. Historisches Lexikon zur Politisch-Sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, Vol. I (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1972). See also Johan Heilbron, Lars Magnusson and Björn Wittrock (eds.), *The Rise of the Social Sciences and the Formation of Modernity: Conceptual Change in Context, 1750-1850* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1998).
- 4 See Michel Foucault, *Les Mots et les choses: une archéologie des sciences humaines* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966). See also Michiel Leezenberg and Gerard de Vries, *Wetenschapsfilosofie voor geesteswetenschappen* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2000). And see also Ian Hacking, *Historical Ontology* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002).
- 5 While Michel Foucault, *Les Mots et les choses* discusses various 'human sciences', his coverage of the humanities is focused on philology and history. The same holds for Georges Gusdorf, *Les Sciences humaines et la pensée occidentale*, 13 vols (Paris: Payot, 1968-1988). An exception is Rens Bod, *De vergeten wetenschappen: een geschiedenis van de humaniora* ('The Forgotten Sciences: A History of the Humanities') (Amsterdam: Prometheus, 2010 – the English translation will appear with Oxford University Press), which discusses eight humanities disciplines until 1900 and fourteen disciplines from the twentieth century onwards. However, Bod's book is meant as a general overview rather than as a case study of the transition around 1800.
- 6 The search for a general humanistic method of analysis and interpretation with a specific set of concepts is as old as the concept of *Geisteswissenschaften* introduced by Wilhelm Dilthey in the nineteenth century. See Bod, *Vergeten wetenschappen* for an overview of the various methodologies in the humanities. See also Gunter Scholz, *Zwischen Wissenschaftsanspruch und Orientierungsbedürfnis: zu Grundlage und Wandel der Geisteswissenschaften* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1991). And also Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode: Grundzüge einer philosophischen Hermeneutik* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1960).
- 7 Also from a global perspective, this Eurocentric division may hold, due to nineteenth-century colonialism and Western imperialism.