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Kempers, B.

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## II.4 Sociology and the Proliferation of Knowledge

### *La Condition Humaine*

BRAM KEMPERS

#### Cognitive ambiguities and the creation of fields

Sociology and its companion social sciences, such as cultural anthropology and psychology, enjoy ambivalent relations with one another, and with sections of the humanities, from cultural history to the study of languages. To complicate matters more, the relations with the natural sciences are ambiguous as well and subject to debate. Intellectuals never created a clear-cut and generally accepted classification of the arts and sciences concerned with human behavior. The cognitive quality of literature and the visual arts never disappeared. Literary authors still claim to enlighten *la comédie humaine*, as Balzac coined the subject of his novels.

Other professionals have entered the scene and contributed their claim to the truth about humanity. None ever achieved a monopoly on wisdom. Theologians lost their position as authorities, but they still present their views in the public domain and attract followers and believers. Their role was contested more and more in European societies since the eighteenth century, yet people adhered to the religious truths, expressed in various systems of faith. The position of theologians was only partially and temporarily taken over by philosophers, who tended to focus on specific fields of knowledge and language within separate university disciplines. Their authority was challenged by sociologists and anthropologists, who formulated new claims to the truth. However, none of the new disciplines acquired a cognitive monopoly, neither on specialized knowledge nor general wisdom. Each created its own cognitive world, outside of which their authority remained contested. The emancipation of the social sciences at the American and European universities since about 1900 was an ambiguous one, since they did not substitute rival interpretations of societies and individual behavior in various historical and geographical contexts.

To understand the dynamics of knowledge, several views, concepts and classifications have been introduced. German philosophers reflected upon the differ-

ences between *Naturwissenschaft* and *Geisteswissenschaft*, or *Kulturwissenschaft*, often phrased in the plural.<sup>1</sup> The English novelist and physicist C.P. Snow coined his concept of two cultures and the scientific revolution; he was worried about what he saw as a gap between science and literature.<sup>2</sup> Wolf Leppenius increased the number of cultures into three: science, literature and sociology. He linked his combination of Snow's dichotomy with German conceptualizations to the disciplinary system as it had developed at the universities.<sup>3</sup> Models of two and three cultures are not generally accepted, and rival views emphasize the natural sciences, like Thomas Kuhn who observed a succession of paradigms. However, his attractive neologism remained ill-defined and appeared not well suited for the social sciences and the arts.<sup>4</sup> The historical model of progress, whether seen as evolutionary or as revolutionary, has been applied to the humanities, though largely without taking sociology, literature and art into account.<sup>5</sup> Various classifications have been proposed, different histories have been constructed; separate discourses had their own way, some of them as a narrative, modern or postmodern. Sociologists constructed historical and biographical narratives of their own.<sup>6</sup> Sociological literature since the 1970s focuses on currents, perspectives and schools, taking into account its presociological predecessors.<sup>7</sup> Many books on sociology are at the same time faithful to sociology as an academic discipline and eclectic in their point of view and their references to predisciplinary discourses.

The French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu introduced the concept of different fields, such as education, television, literature and science, each with its own institutions, hierarchies and values.<sup>8</sup> He linked these fields to different forms of capital (economic, cultural and social) and to various attitudes, or types of habitus. In addition he connected distinctions people made between forms of art to differences in social status. The sociological concept of fields is better suited than that of paradigm, culture, discipline or profession to understand the unity and diversity in our cognitive culture. This configuration of fields in the humanities differs from knowledge on nature, which developed a shared new language: mathematics in combination with nonpoetic English. A high degree of clarity has been attained in the scientific study of natural phenomena and the division of labor between its main disciplines. Science has substituted art, theology and philosophy with increasing success. Distinct from the natural sciences in subject, method and theory is the study of humans, which took the natural sciences as they developed since the seventeenth century as its model. Yet knowledge of human societies became divided among various fields, without clear boundaries, with partial interactions and without a dominant conceptual framework.

### Continuity and innovation in artistic research and expression

A major difference with the progress in the natural sciences concerns the authority of literary authors. No one who searches for knowledge of atoms turns to Lucretius anymore; his poem on nature falls outside any curriculum in physics. Roman and Greek authors are still read by people who want to gain insights in humans. Since the 1820s a new genre emerged which communicated new contributions to understanding mankind. The novels from Stendhal to Salinger contributed to the knowledge of their contemporaries and to readers from later periods and other countries. Yet the relevant insights presented in literary works, old and modern, have hardly been incorporated into the publications of social scientists.

The same is true for the work of journalists, like Tom Wolfe, who devoted thorough research to his publications on modern art and capitalist society. Starting as a journalist, he crowned his career as an artist. The views of painters remained outside the scope of modern sociology, as did the work of pop singers. David Hockney and Jim Morrison evocatively portrayed different sections, male and female, gay and straight, of the same Californian society. Artists continued to reflect on life styles, ethics and other humanist aspects of the humanities. Successful authors experimented with different genres. Starting as a scholar, they turned to writing historical fiction, like Umberto Eco, who claimed that he could express his ideas better in fictional texts than in scientific discourse.

The variety of fields dealing with cognition of human affairs is partly dependent on a diversity of languages. After Latin lost its role in science, English became increasingly significant, yet other languages remain important in their own right, and problems of proper translation have never been absolutely solved. Anglo-Saxon classifications do not perfectly match French, German, Italian and Dutch concepts. There may be one human condition, but there is no unified system of knowledge, expressed in a common language. People have to cope with a wide variety of scholarly, scientific, literary, linguistic and artistic traditions that claim partial or total understanding of the human mind. Within a proliferation of fields, sociology came into being, within a wider intellectual context that includes the humanities, literature, art, journalism, theater and music.

The older fields were continuously renewed, maintaining claims to superior understanding of human emotions and interactions. They also claimed a superb way to convey insights in shorter or longer texts, ranging from epigrams to novels. From a disciplinary point of view, sociologists selectively paid attention to pre-disciplinary knowledge.<sup>9</sup> While human societies converged into a complicated global network, understanding of the human condition remained divided between all sorts of genres, languages, paradigms, disciplines and professions.<sup>10</sup> The first sociologists had a different outcome in mind.

## Comte, Durkheim and the ambiguous emancipation of sociology

In his lessons on philosophy, Auguste Comte introduced the concept of sociology as a major new branch of science. Starting in the 1820s he developed his ideas in a series of abstract philosophical reflections.<sup>11</sup> Sociology was to become the counterpart of the natural sciences. As such sociology would complete the scientific revolution, which saw the successful emancipation of astronomy, physics, chemistry and biology. In Comte's vision, sociology embodied for human beings, what the natural sciences meant for men's natural environment: a *science positive*, or 'positive science'. In this way, *sociologie*, and its adjective *sociologique* became fundamental concepts, referring to the third of Comte's three historical stages of human understanding. His law of progress in three stages encompassed the first, theological, phase, a second, metaphysical, phase, and the third and final one: positive and scientific. In his philosophical lectures and publications Comte every now and then related these stages to the development of societies but these connections received little empirical or analytical attention in his extensive texts.

Sociology was not the only neologism coined by Comte. He also invented the counterpart of egoism: altruism. In his broad evolutionism Comte enjoyed some success, witness the sociological and historical ideas of the British philosopher and sociologist Herbert Spencer.<sup>12</sup> Comte's original philosophical thought owed its importance to its positive and critical reception by Spencer and others. In his academic career, Comte was not successful. He remained a marginal figure in the university system. It was up to his fellow countryman, Émile Durkheim, to be elected to the first chair in sociology. Late in his career, Durkheim became professor of sociology at the Sorbonne in Paris, in 1912, the first sociological chair in Europe. Such a chair already existed at Chicago in the United States. In France the historians proved to be more successful institutionally, while sociologists also had to deal with other disciplines that entered the institutional arena, such as geography and anthropology.

Durkheim realized Comte's program, while abandoning his philosophical style and his broad evolutionary perspective. Durkheim abandoned abstract reasoning and historical generalizations. He advocated a sociological method on the basis of empirical research. For him this meant to collect data, guided by a repertoire of theoretical concepts. His plea for sociology was sustained by the application of statistical analysis. Durkheim raised the question what would, at first sight, look as the most individual decision a human being could take; his answer was: to end one's life. Embarking on an extensive analysis of data concerning suicide, Durkheim concluded that even that very individual deci-

sion was determined by social factors. As part of his classification of suicides, he coined another neologism: *anomy*. A class of people committed suicide, because they lived within a society that lacked a system of norms and values. So, Durkheim concluded, even the most individual actions require a sociological explanation.<sup>13</sup>

Apart from suicide, Durkheim published about sociological methods and about a theme that was dealt with by specialists in political economy: the division of labor in society.<sup>14</sup> Another important domain he explored was religion, not historically like Comte, but functionally. In doing so, he was consistently expansionist, because most topics he analyzed already belonged to other disciplines. Durkheim relied on published ethnographic reports, mainly considering 'primitive' Australian societies. He sought to define the essential characteristics and social functions of religion, its symbols and rituals. Durkheim considered the usage of sacred totems as collective representations that brought individuals together in social structures of family and clan. In this way, he conducted empirical research, on the basis of descriptive publications by others who had visited small-scale communities far from Europe. In a generalizing book on the elementary forms of religious life, Durkheim covered, both empirically and theoretically, what Comte had described in very broad terms as the first stage in the development of human understanding.<sup>15</sup> While Comte saw a one-dimensional progress in cognition from theology to metaphysics and from there to positive science, Durkheim studied religious practices and representations in a sociological way. He focused on signs, symbols, images, stories, systems, and rituals far from his familiar Christian and Jewish culture, to understand the social cohesion brought about by priests. Through collective representations (his concept), priests conveyed images of society through periodic rituals that cemented social bonds and made them visible. Durkheim practiced a comparative study of religion in a way that was fundamentally different from Comte's approach. As the one who gave a concrete adaptation of Comte's scientific model, he could hardly have been more different. So ambiguities in sociology emerged in the writings of two French authors who were later considered to be its founding fathers. They embodied different intellectual traditions, with divergent links to other disciplinary fields: theology, philosophy, geography, ethnography, anthropology and history.

Émile Durkheim became crucial in the institutionalization of sociology as a discipline within the expanding university system of disciplines and faculties. At the same time, he contributed to a falling apart of the emerging social science under the aegis of sociology. As a sociologist, he used theoretical and empirical publications that belonged to the realm of ethnography, ethnology, and anthropology. His articles and books were used by specialists in those fields, as well as

by historians writing about culture or civilization. Durkheim's most influential pupil and colleague, Marcel Mauss, became primarily known as an anthropologist. His 'Essay sur le don' became a canonical publication in the broad field where the expansionist sociologists lost control.

### **Interdisciplinary fusions between sociology, anthropology, history, and the arts**

The Dutch historian Johan Huizinga crossed disciplinary borders. In 1919 he published a wide-ranging book on late medieval culture in France and the Low Countries, *Herfsttij der Middeleeuwen*. Huizinga focused on complex Christian ideas and images. His highly successful book was translated into many languages, in English both as *The Waning of the Middle Ages* and *The Autumn of the Middle Ages*. Huizinga, trained in languages, became a famous cultural historian, who selectively used ideas from the social sciences. Huizinga, whose ambition was to be a literary author, even an artist, rather than a scientist, became a canonical historian around the word, despite the fact that his Dutch prose was difficult to translate. As such, Huizinga contributed to the ambiguities in the fields of the arts, sciences and humanities.

In the same period this merging of ideas and genres gained an impetus due to the Belgian Arnold van Gennep, who published a book on *rites de passage*, or rites of passage, with which he expanded Durkheim's theory of ritual. Van Gennep provided a model for the social dynamics of coming of age in various societies. He focused on the so-called primitive societies where the rituals concerning the transformation from child to adult appeared in a more dramatic way than in European societies of the twentieth century. Van Gennep's conceptual model became part of general knowledge and was adopted by social scientists like Margaret Mead, who studied the island Samoa, and by novelists. Coming of age is a main theme in the small oeuvre by J.D. Salinger. His heroes Holden Caulfield, and Franny and Zooey Glass came of age in modern cities along America's East Coast. His invented characters for his novels and stories, published in the 1950s, highlighting the problems adolescents face when they enter a society determined by new media, a lack of solidarity, and tensions between parents and children. He portrays modern society and its conflicts between the generations and between insiders and outsiders, a theme that was dealt with by sociologists. So ideas developed within the social sciences became important in renewed traditions of fiction, based on accurate observation and reflection. Novelists presented their insights not in an abstract and analytical framework but in fictional stories, performed by created persons and presented without footnotes, sources and bibliography.

The division of labor was further complicated by the rise of cultural anthropology in England and the United States. Edward Burnett Tylor published influential books on broad themes, such as culture, civilization, philosophy, religion, art and anthropology.<sup>16</sup> Franz Boas, a German Jew, born in Protestant Minden, studied physics in Heidelberg before turning to historical geography and deciding in 1882 to travel to the Canadian Arctic. He was the first to use the method of participant observation, which he continued in the American West, where the influence of white men remained limited. After several teaching jobs and projects at museums, in 1899, Boas became professor of anthropology at Columbia University in New York.<sup>17</sup>

The success of sociological and anthropological approaches soon became one of its main risks. Concepts, methods and theories spread quickly to other disciplines, genres and languages. In translation, words acquired new meanings and produced ambiguities. Culture and civilization enjoyed highly divergent meanings in the various languages and disciplines. The rise of sociology as a scientific method became a complicated affair, because it flourished outside the domain of empirical and statistical studies. New generations of sociologists turned away from this scientific model and reoriented themselves on the humanities and the older humanist tradition, which had contributed so much to the shared knowledge of texts, words, symbols and history. In Germany several authors, for whom the identity of sociologist was important, like Mannheim and Weber, looked for the older intellectual tradition of the humanities to clarify their methods and ideas. For some of the most original scholars in the early twentieth century, sociology became a *Geisteswissenschaft*. When they acquired a university chair, it was often not in sociology. At the same time nonsociologists adopted some of their ideas, so the emancipating discipline lost the grasp of its own inventions and lost its coherence. On the one hand, sociologists claimed to embody the new, positive science focusing on human behavior, and on the other they had to compete with many disciplines and arts. Cultural anthropology was only one of several rival disciplines that entered the university system, alongside sociology, without any consistent division of labor between them.

Sociological and anthropological ideas influenced cultural historians, who were eclectic and flexible in their approaches as a writer and researcher. Creative fusions between history, art history, anthropology and sociology attracted many readers. The monumental books and articles by Jacob Burckhardt, Aby Warburg, Johan Huizinga, Carlo Ginzburg and Peter Burke all testify to this intellectual trend of transcending disciplinary boundaries. With or without bibliographical references in his introductions, articles and footnotes, Huizinga used ideas from the social sciences.<sup>18</sup> He did so particularly in his influential book on the civilization, or *beschaving*, which flourished in the Low Countries

and the Duchy of Burgundy during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Huizinga focused on religion, literature, ritual and the visual arts, within urban societies bound together by the central, though itinerant ducal court. The dukes created a territorial state, rivaling for a while the King of France and the German Emperor.

Huizinga, who had studied Sanskrit, became a highly influential author, not only in the Dutch university world, where he occupied chairs in history at Groningen and Leiden. His books were translated and he became part of an international network of scholars within the humanities and occasionally in the social sciences. At the same time, Huizinga became an opinion leader in matters of contemporary art and culture, mostly in the Netherlands. Part of his publications belonged to the genre of the essay and journalism. His native country remained the framework for another identity: his outspoken and self-conscious literary ambition, a new blurring of prose and poetry. After his death his literary writing style came to be considered outdated and unscientific, yet Huizinga's works enjoyed several renaissances. The mixed reception of his publications and his choice for different modes confirms the complicated configuration of different fields.

### **Max Weber, Norbert Elias, and the re-establishment of sociology**

Unlike Huizinga, Max Weber aimed at sociological theory and method. He came to be recognized as one of its founding fathers, although sociology is absent in the title of his books.<sup>19</sup> Like Durkheim, Weber turned to religion as one of his fields of interest. He did so in a historical way and with an eye for highly complicated systems of belief, in particular Protestant Christendom within capitalism, which he linked to Protestant belief.<sup>20</sup> This was a way to criticize the approach, developed by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, who had presented religion (and art), as determined by the economic structures of society. Weber sought to re-evaluate religion as a force of its own, that facilitated the expansion of capitalism in Europe and the United States.

In his oeuvre, Weber added history, economics, and law to sociology as it was introduced by Comte and established by Durkheim. Using various intellectual traditions, Weber gave a decisive turn to the social sciences within the humanities in the German-speaking world. He occupied various chairs in different cities, only late in life to become professor of sociology. Methodologically, Weber turned away from the scientific approach and reorientated his language on philosophy and history.

In the 1930s, Norbert Elias synthesized the available traditions. His magnum opus, published in 1939, on the civilizing process was republished in 1969.<sup>21</sup> He added a dedication to his parents, Hermann Elias, who died in Breslau in 1940 and 'Sophie Elias, gest. Auschwitz 1941 (?)'. The second addition has an introductory chapter, written in 1968 while Elias was teaching at Leicester. In this introduction, Elias seeks to explain the fundamental, paradigmatic meaning of this, by then, thirty-year-old book. He criticizes the dominant American sociology. Talcott Parsons's theory is a-historical and opposes individual and society as two distinct entities. Elias distances himself from the dominant functionalist model of Parsons and Robert Merton. He argues for a reorientation on nineteenth-century theories, such as those of Comte, Spencer and Marx. Unlike Comte and Spencer, Marx did not present himself as a sociologist; he was a journalist and a politician rather than a scientist, yet he was posthumously included in the canon of founding fathers. This was also the case with Alexis de Tocqueville, who came to be considered as sociologist only from the late 1950s, due to the efforts of C. Wright Mills, Raymond Aron, and Robert Nisbet. With his 1969 introduction, Elias reshaped sociology and history, a transformation of ideas that he rendered even more explicit in his introduction under the title: *What Is Sociology?*

The *in memoriam* to his parents – victims of one of the most uncivilized regimes from human history as regards its attitude to Jewish, homosexual and other minorities – gives a short and dramatic clue to the social identity of the author. In the preface, written in 1936, Elias had been reluctant to present anything of his persona, apart from some of his intellectual roots, an attitude to which he remained faithful for the rest of his long life. The word sociology, so important in the 1969 introduction, only occurs once in 1939. In his preface, Elias mentions psychology, philology, ethnology or anthropology as no less relevant for his theoretical questions than sociology or the various specialized branches of *Geschichtsforschung*. He expressed his loyalty to sociology by references to Weber's analysis of the state and, as part of his acknowledgements, to Karl Mannheim, then established in London. There Elias had conducted most of his empirical research of books on rules for civilized behavior from the thirteenth to the late eighteenth centuries.

In his annotations, Elias illustrates his heterogeneous intellectual background. He starts with a quote from Oswald Spengler, like Huizinga a cultural critic with an outspoken ethical opinion. Apart from philosophical works, Elias pays his tribute to Mannheim, Herder and Voltaire, belonging to distinct intellectual and artistic traditions. The German translation of Huizinga's *Herfsttij* serves as one of Elias's sources, empirically more than theoretically. In the notes belonging to Part 2, he discusses Max Weber's 'Idealtypen'. In this way Elias addresses again the friction between social sciences and humanities. Another discussion concerns the

role of the Italian city states in the civilizing process. Elias connects this issue not so much to the work of Jacob Burckhardt, which was discussed in depth by Huizinga. Instead, Elias links the issue of Italy to a source publication of letters by Venetian diplomats. He used both texts and images. Where Huizinga analyzed Netherlandish panel paintings, Elias analyzed German drawings in manuscripts. Entering the domain of art history meant still another blurring of boundaries.

Ambiguities in the disciplinary order abound, as Huizinga's and Elias's analyses of images are hardly taken seriously by specialists in art history. In scholarly books about the images dealt with by Huizinga and Elias, art historians do not take account of their insights or criticize them. Within modern sociology, literature and the visual arts were hardly studied, and in this respect Elias remained an isolated scholar. Because of his broad, unconventional view of history, culture, art and society, Elias late in life became an example for a specific school in sociology and for some historians. He was marginal in postwar scientific sociology. So one of the most important books in sociology hardly contained references to sociology, and enjoyed its strongest reception in a particular sociological school and in various sections of the humanities. In its cross-references, Elias's iconic book on the civilizing process shows an open mind to a wide variety of disciplines and art forms, setting it apart from the a-historical and nonliterary main stream sociology, so strongly criticized in the new introduction of 1969.

### **Social scientists in search for identity, style, and audiences**

Time and again, creative social scientists moved away from the models that had proven to be successful in astronomy, physics, chemistry, and biology. They returned to history, the languages and literature to collect data and to express their ideas. They often enjoyed their most prolific reception outside one of the internally divided disciplines. The experimental method existed only in a niche, such as the famous experiment in social psychology conducted by Stanley Milgram. In the early 1970s, Milgram aimed to test hypotheses on obedience to authority in an experimental setting. He owed his success both to a scholarly publication and a film, publicized on television. Mathematical models were developed and applied to data, yet they served primarily restricted issues and themes. Statistics were widely applied, in specialized fields rather than in sociology as a whole. Large scale surveys set the tone during the 1960s and 1970s, but the results were criticized from various angles. Scientific sociology, based on quantitative data and statistical analysis, became more sophisticated and less relevant to the basic social questions. The mathematization of knowledge affected sociology much less than psychology and economy.

Critique on the primarily American paradigm went hand in hand with a reevaluation of Elias's work, especially when he moved to Amsterdam. After a difficult career, that brought him to positions in Ghana and Bielefeld, he was acknowledged as an important sociologist, first at the University of Amsterdam and hence at various German, Italian, English and American universities. Sociology and cultural anthropology became reintegrated in a renewed type of theoretically informed cultural history, with extensions into processual archeology, art history and literary studies. Sociological and anthropological concepts and methods were once again part of the humanities and the humanist traditions. Modern historical sociology interacted again with art, literature and journalism, because some of the most important social scientists embarked on writing and publishing in those domains, creatively experimenting with a wide variety of genres. This is the case in the oeuvre of Johan Goudsblom and Abram de Swaan, which is confirmed by its reception.<sup>22</sup> Apart from a highly regarded academic reputation in sociology, they are known as literary authors and received literary prizes.

This happened to be the case as well with some Dutch specialists in the history of Dutch literature who occasionally used ideas from the social sciences, like Herman Pleij and Frits van Oostrom.<sup>23</sup> However, the artistic appraisal of their writings mainly concerned their publications in the Dutch language. Although English became the dominant vehicle for scholarship, national languages remained important. One of the reasons for this borderline is the scarcity of good translators, another that most authors express themselves best in their native language and attract the widest audience in their own country, in spite of the worldwide dominance of English.

Unlike the natural sciences, the social sciences and the humanities show complicated, eclectic and flexible patterns which extended beyond the boundaries of science. Merging with the fields of literature, art and journalism occurs in a creative and confused way; cross over is not a marginal phenomenon; many of the most widely read authors do not identify themselves with a single discipline and maintain bonds with the arts. Novels, plays, paintings and pop songs continue to flourish, converging into one culture consisting of various fields.

### **Enduring and renewed inspiration from the arts**

Reflection on human behavior enjoyed a long history before the scientific revolution. Anachronistically, scholarly writers tend to consider these texts as prescientific. From a sociological point of view, it is possible to consider the Bible, Homer and Shakespeare to be proto-sociology, and the nonwritten ideas as presociology. Before Comte and Durkheim, a geographically and historically broad spectrum

of texts circulated which addressed common themes. Since the making of the Hebrew Bible, the codification of the heroic battle of Troy, and the dialogues of Plato, a continuous literary tradition arose. This consisted of library inventories, commentaries, constitution of texts, translations and analyses of words. The Greek version of the Hebrew Bible was supplemented by an extensive section on the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. His actions and ideas, served to portray Hebrew society under Roman imperial rule within a Hellenistic cultural tradition. From Augustine onward, the Latin literary tradition arose reflecting on Jerusalem-centered texts in continuously expanding social and linguistic contexts.

The emancipation of what became a worldwide network of faculties of the social sciences since the 1950s was complicated by the continuous interest in pre-disciplinary texts, not only for reasons of style but also because their content remained relevant. Texts were continuously read and interpreted, far beyond the limits of the societies they described and the audiences they originally addressed. Their wisdom concerning human behavior remained functional beyond their geographical and historical contexts. Yet they were hardly included by sociologists in their repertoire.

While the social sciences came into being, a nonscientific approach to human societies was continued and renewed. Stendhal used personal experiences and journalistic reports for modern novels, such as *Le rouge et le noir*. He located his plot in a village near Besançon and in Paris. The social context of his invented characters was recognizable to his readers, then and now, in France and beyond. He wrote modern literature that portrayed modern individuals. Novels were experimental in style and in ideas; they created an experiment on paper, using observations and experiences from outside the literary world. Since the 1820s, the tradition of literature was renewed in vocabulary, themes, aspects of human behavior and social setting. *Madame Bovary*, by Gustave Flaubert, portrayed a social drama between Ry and Rouen, while other aspects of the provincial world of France were evoked by Guy de Maupassant and Alain-Fournier.

Marcel Proust described the elite society of his youth in Paris. He addressed the dynamics of coming of age and tensions between social groups: conservative aristocrats, intellectual Jews, and gays with divergent profiles. His title refers to historical research. He added new insights to the role memory played in forming a personal identity and to shifting identities in different social settings. And Proust portrayed the social usage of concepts, such as culture and mentality. French novelists addressed social phenomena that scientists failed to understand. Large sections of the human mind and heroic response to social pressures were treated in the domain of literature.

Novels, journalistic articles and plays continued to be produced outside the era of the social sciences. They continued to be read, seen and commented upon

after the rise of disciplines and faculties. Many sections of society were enlightened by literary authors, journalists and comedians who criticized and mocked professional scientists, failing to incorporate insights from other fields. Bourdieu, who published on Flaubert, remained an exception, as he analyzed the fields of literature, art, higher education, mass media and science.

Interesting aspects of Dutch society were portrayed in novels rather than scientific publications. Willem Elsschot, Louis Couperus, Nescio and Multatuli interpreted aspects of society that were neglected by sociologists. They highlighted the role of new media in private companies at Antwerp, relations between men and women, young and old in bourgeois society of The Hague, young marginal artists in Holland and Zeeland, as well as colonial society in Asia. In the Netherlands this tradition of realistic fiction was renewed and continued, covering more recent trends in social life by authors ranging from W.F. Hermans to A.F.Th. van der Heijden. Their style of writing and method of research was less abstract and less analytic than the work of contemporary social scientists, who left large sections of human emotions, sexual relations, trade, memory, dilemmas and conflicts uncovered.

Italian society was graphically described by Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa and Giorgio Bassani. The aristocrat Tomasi addressed the circulation of elites, a theme introduced by the sociologist and aristocrat Vilfredo Pareto. He did so in a less analytical way, but his portrait of the disappearing Sicilian aristocracy in the period of the formation of the Italian state perfectly fits Pareto's and Weber's models. Tomasi combined the decline of one elite and the rise of another with state formation and with Veblen's leisure class, a concept he coined in 1899. His historic novel, a classic in Italian literature, and appreciated all over the world, was published posthumously in 1958, due to Bassani, the highly esteemed chronicler of social life in Ferrara in the 1930s and 1940s.

The cognitive force of fiction went far beyond Europe. This tradition of inventing personages and plots was renewed and expanded into ever increasing sections of society: Russian authors, Chinua Achebe or J.M. Coetzee, and the genre of the great American novel. Who wants to understand Californian society finds more clues in the paintings by David Hockney and in the lyrics by Jim Morrison than in publications by scientists who left these corners of society untouched. In the 1960s, Hockney depicted the new Californian elite, cosmopolitan and gay, with its villas, hotels, lawns, swimming pools and connections with the New York art world. He did so consciously, later commenting that upon his arrival from London he thought: this place needs its own Piranesi. The poet and performer Jim Morrison immortalized the same region with world famous songs like 'L.A. Woman', 'L.A. Woman' and 'The End'. After riding the highway West, Jim Morrison introduced the black American blues and sang: 'He took a face from

the ancient gallery/And he walked on down the hall'. He continued with the Freudian drama, modeled on the ancient tragedy of Oedipus, to conclude with: 'This is the end'.

### One culture, many fields

Increase in knowledge about the human mind followed a path that differed profoundly from the better known and more widely appreciated increase in knowledge about nature. There is no such a thing like a single, one-dimensional progress. Debates linger on, concerning methods, concepts, languages, narratives, falsifications and genres of presentation, many of which function next to one another with limited communication among the fields.

The natural sciences constituted a model for a new type of inquiry of humans but this scientific approach turned out to be far less successful than in chemistry and physics. Only particular niches saw a flourishing of experiments, statistical analyses and mathematical processing of data. These niches remained isolated and limited in scope. The scientific model failed to substitute literary approaches. Boundaries between disciplines changed continuously, creating unstable citation communities, separate catalogues and bibliographies, as well as unclear divisions of labor among libraries.

Next to the scientific approach of human societies, the older paradigm of the humanities continued to exist and along these lines new insights came into being, sometimes interacting with the scientific model. This resulted in eclectic and varied mixtures of disciplines that tended to transcend the boundaries of science. The most-quoted authors moved between literary studies, philology, art history, archeology, history, sociology and anthropology, as well as theater studies, cultural studies and media studies.

These creative shifts from one genre to another extended into the realm of the arts. Works of art were studied and successful scholars choose to write fiction themselves. They considered themselves to be literary authors and sometimes even became famous authors of best sellers in the domain of literary fiction or in a mixture of art, the humanities and journalism.

Innovations in art and literature allowed for new genres to emerge in which themes were addressed that were also of interest to social scientists and those who adhered to the humanist tradition. This happened in modern painting, pop music, journalism, film and television. Sometimes artists expressed their views on human societies in a more impressive and evocative way than social scientist had done, or they observed aspects of human behavior that had escaped their attention.

All these fields of thinking about the human race, changing, eclectic and heterogeneous as they are, at first sight suggest less order and more chaos than the setting of the natural sciences and their search for a unified theory of forces. However, the humanities embody a different order. The various fields converge into one cognitive culture concerned with human societies, global and full of niches. This multifield setting and the partial connectivity between the fields proved to be an intellectually productive way to address the complicated topic of human relations and their rich histories.

## Notes

- 1 Various authors reflected on this dichotomy. Wilhelm Dilthey rejected Comte's positivism, which was also criticized by Heinrich Rickert. Johan Gustav Droyson developed the method of 'forsehend zu verstehen'. See Pim den Boer, *Beschaving. Een geschiedenis van de begrippen hoofsheid, heusheid, beschaving en cultuur* (Amsterdam, 2001), 60-63. Around 1900 authors tried to reestablish a link with the German intellectual tradition of idealist philosophy. For sociology, Johan Heilbron, *Het ontstaan van de sociologie* (Amsterdam, 1990), 12-12 and 274-281.
- 2 Charles Percy Snow, *The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution* (Cambridge, 1959); *The Two Cultures: A Second Look* (Cambridge, 1963).
- 3 Wolf Leppeny, *Die drei Kulturen. Soziologie zwischen Literatur und Wissenschaft* (Munich, 1985). He corrected Snow's dichotomy and amplified his portrait of disciplinary sociology, *Geschichte der Soziologie. Studien zur kognitiven, sozialen und historischen Identität einer Disziplin*, 4 vols. (Frankfurt am Main, 1981); *Between Literature and Science* (Cambridge, 1988).
- 4 Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago, 1962/1970). For an overview, see H. Floris Cohen, *How Modern Science Came into the World: Four Civilizations, One 17th-Century Breakthrough* (Amsterdam, 2010).
- 5 See Rens Bod, *De vergeten wetenschappen. Een geschiedenis van de humaniora* (Amsterdam: Prometheus, 2010; 2nd rev. ed., 2012). Bod's overview of progress in the study of texts, music, architecture, theater, media, and the visual arts has appeared in English as *A New History of the Humanities* (Oxford University Press, 2013). See also Rens Bod, Jaap Maat, and Thijs Weststeijn (eds.), *The Making of the Humanities*, 2 vols. (Amsterdam University Press, 2010, 2012).
- 6 Robert Nisbet, *The Sociological Tradition* (New York, 1966); Lewis Coser, *Masters of Sociological Thought: Ideas in Historical and Social Context* (New York, 1971); Dirk Kaser (ed.), *Klassieker des soziologischen Denkens*, 2 vols. (Munich, 1976); Heilbron, *Het ontstaan van de sociologie*; Michiel Leezenberg and Gerard de Vries, *Wetenschapsfilosofie voor geesteswetenschappen* (Amsterdam University Press, 2001, rev. ed., 2012). Overviews on the history of literature form a separate field, divided along lines of languages and according to views on literature. For a critical discussion, see Johan Goudsblom, *Balans van de sociologie* (Utrecht and Amsterdam, 1974); *Sociology in the Balance* (Oxford, 1977). I used sociological and related theories in *Painting, Power and Patronage: The Rise of the Professional Artist in Renaissance Italy* (London, 1992).

- 7 This approach was introduced by Raymond Aron, *Main Currents in Sociological Thought* (New York, 1965/1968/1998). Familiar with the French tradition, Aron gave Montesquieu and Alexis de Tocqueville their due, as well as Karl Marx. On sociology and its history: E.C. Cuff, W.W. Sharock, and D.W. Francis (eds.), *Perspectives in Sociology* (London and New York, 1979; 3rd ed., 1990); Richard Kilminster, *The Sociological Revolution: From the Enlightenment to the Global Age* (London, 1998); Nico Wilterdink and Bart van Heerikhuizen, *Samenlevingen. Inleiding in de sociologie* (Groningen, 2007), and the oeuvre of Randall Collins.
- 8 Pierre Bourdieu, *La distinction* (Paris, 1979), with subsequent editions and translations. His analytical framework is discussed in Michael Grenfell, *Pierre Bourdieu: Key Concepts* (Stocksfield, 2008).
- 9 Johan Heilbron, *The Rise of Social Theory* (Cambridge, 1995); Johan Heilbron, Lars Magnusson, and and Bjorn Wittrock (eds.), *The Rise of the Social Sciences and the Formation of Modernity* (Dordrecht, Boston, and London, 1998).
- 10 Pim den Boer, *Geschiedenis als beroep. De professionalisering van de geschiedbeoefening in Frankrijk (1818-1914)* (Amsterdam, 1986), with a focus on history as a university discipline; for geography and sociology, 257-258, 344, 404-407, 413, 426, 455-456. In 1902 Durkheim held the chair of the science of education, created in 1887. *L'Année sociologique* existed since 1898.
- 11 See Heilbron, *The Rise of Social Theory*. The fourth volume of *Discours de philosophie positive* saw the introduction of sociology, further developed in *Système de politique positive*; Comte's third group of publications on contemporary society rather than the history of ideas. Publications appeared in 1822, 1830, 1838, 1839, 1841, 1842, 1852, 1853, 1854, the later ones on social order, society, *statistique sociale*, social dynamics, and sociological prediction of the future of humanity. First editions of Comte and others are hard to find in libraries of departments of sociology.
- 12 Herbert Spencer, *The Study of Sociology* (New York, 1891); *The Principles of Sociology* (New York, 1896). His publications also deal with philosophy, biology, and his own life.
- 13 See Émile Durkheim, *Le suicide, étude de sociologie* (Paris, 1897); *Suicide, a Study of Sociology* (London, 1970); Steven Lukes, *Durkheim: His Life and His Work, a Historical and Critical Study* (London, 1973).
- 14 Émile Durkheim, *Les règles de la méthode sociologique* (Paris, 1895); *De la division du travail social* (Paris, 1893); *The Division of Labour in Society* (London, 1984).
- 15 Émile Durkheim, *Les formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse* (Paris, 1912); *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (London, 1968).
- 16 Edward Burnett Tylor, *Researches into the Early History of Mankind and the Development of Civilisation* (London, 1865); *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Art and Custom* (New York, 1971); *Anthropology: An Introduction to the Study of Man and Civilisation* (London, 1881).
- 17 For Boas, see Siep Stuurman, *De uitvinding van de mensheid. Korte wereldgeschiedenis van het denken over gelijkheid en cultuurverschil* (Amsterdam, 2009), 390-406.
- 18 See Johan Huizinga, *Verzamelde werken*, 8 vols. (Haarlem, 1948-1951).
- 19 Max Weber, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* (Tübingen, 1922), published posthumously on the basis of the notes he had made for teaching; he addressed sociology as a discipline in its often-quoted first sentence.
- 20 Max Weber, *Die Protestantische Ethik und der Geist des Kapitalismus* (Hamburg, 1920).
- 21 Norbert Elias, *Über den Prozess der Zivilisation. Soziogenetische und psychogenetische Untersuchungen*, 2 vols. (Bern/Munich, 1969); Norbert Elias, *Was ist Soziologie?* (Munich, 1970).

- 22 Nico Wilterdink, Johan Heilbron, and Abram de Swaan (eds.), *Alles verandert. Opstellen voor en over J. Goudsblom* (Amsterdam, 1997); Bram Kempers, 'Een geleerde op zoek naar een genre. Cultuur in het werk van Goudsblom', in Nico Wilterdink, Johan Heilbron, and Abram de Swaan (eds.), *Alles verandert. Opstellen voor en over J. Goudsblom* (Amsterdam, 1997); and B. Kempers, 'Secretaris van Stendhal. Kunst, geschiedenis en sociale wetenschap', in Annet Mooij, David Bos, and Sonja van't Hof (eds.), *Grenzeloos nieuwsgierig. Opstellen voor en over Abram de Swaan* (Amsterdam, 2007), 121-132.
- 23 Bram Kempers, 'Een held staat nooit alleen. Herman Pleij en de cultuur van Nederland', in Herman Brinkman, Jeroen Jansen, and Marita Mathijssen, *Helden bestaan! Opstellen voor Herman Pleij bij zijn afscheid als hoogleraar Nederlandse letterkunde aan de Universiteit van Amsterdam* (Amsterdam, 2008), 275-283.

