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Why is the Dialogue so Difficult between the Historiography of the Social Sciences and the Historiography of Science?

Summary

In this paper, I observe that the historiographies of the social sciences differ sensibly from those of the sciences. I start by proposing a three-part typology of this specific development and then look for the origin of these separate historiographies. I test three groups of hypothesis: (a) the social sciences are so much different from the 'hard sciences' that it is impossible to understand them using concepts and methods which have mostly been developed within the historiography of the 'hard sciences'; (b) the second hypothesis assumes that the object changes less than the look at it: hence, sharing their object, it suggests that these historiographies differ because the identity and aims of the scholars who write them differ; (c) it is neither the object nor the historiographers which differ, but their relation.

Keywords: Historiography of social sciences; historiography of science; discipline; presentism; historicism; disciplinary function of history.

Im vorliegenden Aufsatz beobachte ich, dass sich die Geschichtsschreibung der Geistes- und Sozialwissenschaften unterscheidet von jener der Naturwissenschaften und schlage eine dreifach gegliederte Typologie dieser spezifischen Entwicklung vor. Im Anschluss frage ich nach den Ursprüngen der genannten Ansätze und untersuche drei Hypothesen: a) die Geistes- und Sozialwissenschaften unterscheiden sich so sehr von den ‚exakten‘ Wissenschaften, dass es unmöglich ist, sie mit Konzepten und Methoden verstehen zu wollen, die aus der Geschichtsschreibung der Naturwissenschaften hervorgegangen sind. b) die Untersuchungsobjekte ändern sich weniger als die Betrachtungsweisen. Nicht unterschiedliche Objekte sondern unterschiedliche Identitäten und Ziele der Historiker/innen bedingen also die abweichenden Geschichtsschreibungen. c) Weder die Untersuchungsobjekte noch die Historiker/innen in den beiden Bereichen differieren voneinander, sondern ihre je spezifische Beziehung zueinander ist ausschlaggebend für die profunden Unterschiede.

Keywords: Geschichtsschreibung der Geistes- und Sozialwissenschaften; Geschichtsschreibung der Naturwissenschaften; Disziplin; Präsentismus; Historismus; disziplinäre Funktion von Geschichte.

The first paragraphs of Henrika Kuklick's introduction to her edited volume *A New History of Anthropology*¹ summarized several important problems of the contemporary historiography of the social sciences² and interestingly pointed out the specific path which it is following:

This collection will appeal to a range of readers, anthropologists and historians prominent amongst them. For historians, the value of its essays will be their contextualization of anthropological ideas and practices in specific times and places. Anthropologists will find not only discussions of the discipline's major branches but also analyses of portions of its history that rarely feature in its oral tradition [...]. The classic typology of historians of the human sciences is Stocking's, a dichotomous scheme of ideal types: "presentists" and "historicists". Presentists [...] frame their accounts in contemporary terms, often seeking lessons from the past for the present: their tone may be celebratory, as they trace antecedents of ideas and methods now considered commendable, or mournful, regretting the loss of exemplary practices. Historicists [...] are not explicitly concerned with contemporary standards and debates: they show that when we read old texts as if they had just been written, we frequently misunderstand their authors' intended meanings.³

For obvious reasons, the curious tone of these few introductory sentences strikes every scholar aware of the innovations which have revolutionized the history of science in the last thirty years. First, Kuklick stretches the value of 'contextualization' as if it was a

1 Kuklick 2008.

2 Interestingly, the English language offers no unanimously accepted word to designate the various disciplines which are united in the French *sciences humaines* or the German *Geisteswissenschaften*. As a matter of fact, in English, these disciplines are distributed in four, partly overlapping, categories: the social sciences, which comprise anthropology, sociology, archaeology, history, geography, linguistics, economics and psychology; the behavioral sciences, which are composed of psychology, anthropology, and the cognitive sciences; the humanities which consist of art, literature, history, linguistics and anthropology; the human sciences, which gather the

cultural study of the human being (archaeology, anthropology, ...) and the biological (medicine, physical anthropology). Hence most of the disciplines appear simultaneously in different categories, a fact which underlines the imprecision of the division: it is a convention, as Roger Smith puts it (Smith 1997: 4, 17; see also Smith 1999, Reubi to be published). Put shortly, the word is missing, and so, probably, does the concept – which may be, in part, an explanation for its curious historiography. In this paper, following Porter and Ross 2003 and against Kuklick, I will use the category "social sciences".

3 Kuklick 2008, 1.

new concept, yet, when her volume was published, David Bloor's principle of causality⁴ had already been recognized, and questioned, for more than three decades. Second, she does not name Bloor's concept, even though it is most improbable that she is unaware of it, but rather uses the less specific word 'contextualization'. Last, she indicates that the question of contextualization constitutes a 'classic' problem for the historiography of the social sciences which has been identified by George Stocking who labelled the two possible postures of the historian of social sciences, presentism and historicism. Thus, in short, Kuklick's introduction does not only show that the historiography of the social sciences uses different concepts than the other historians of sciences; it also indicates that it does not fall within the scope of the chronology of what could be labelled the general historiography of science⁵ and, nevertheless, tackles the same questions. Hence, this example addresses the question whether all sciences are objects of equivalent interest for the history of science. I will argue that it is not the case, and in particular that the social sciences are given a specific place in the historiography and that their histories differ sensibly from the ones of the hard sciences. This is not a problem, of course; the problem is rather that the historians act as if the social sciences were studied like the hard sciences' disciplines, while, in practice, they are not.

Hence this paper will slightly broaden the scope of the "new historiographical approaches to archaeology"⁶ and apply the question to the case of the other social sciences. As Kuklick's example shows, the limits of the historiography of archaeology, which Gisela Eberhardt and Fabian Link have pointed out, can indeed be observed in the history of anthropology, but also in the history of history, linguistics, or sociology. In most of these fields, as Raymond Boudon has shown,⁷ it can be seen that the historiographies do not match the historiography of the hard sciences. The authors who have decisively contributed to the general field of the history of science, from David Bloor⁸ to Barry Barnes and Steve Shapin⁹, and from Pierre Bourdieu¹⁰ to Bruno Latour¹¹, are barely referred to; the questions which they raise, the methods which they use, and perspectives which they follow are mostly different, and, when similar, their origins are not mentioned.

The aim of this paper is to identify the reasons for this specific path. To do so, I propose to identify the types of historiography which historians of the social sciences write and observe that they differ strongly from hard science's historiography. Secondly,

4 Bloor 1976.

5 The general historiography of science consists of the study of natural, physical, and medical sciences. It is hence limited to what English names "science" and what French describe as *sciences dures*. In this paper, to mention this limited segment of historiography, I will use the formula: history of hard sciences.

6 The workshop during which the first version of this

paper presented in September 2010 in Berlin was named: "New Historiographical Approaches to Archaeological Research".

7 Boudon 1992, 304.

8 Bloor 1976.

9 Barnes and Shapin 1979.

10 Bourdieu 1984.

11 Latour 1984; Latour 1989.

I will submit for discussion three hypotheses which may explain the reasons for the mutual distrust by the historians of ‘general science’ and the historians of the social sciences in both the tools developed and the results obtained. Finally, I will suggest that, since it was a historical process which gave this orientation to the historiography of the social sciences, there are possibilities to end this mutual distrust.

I The historiography of the social sciences – an attempted typology

Over the past 40 years, the historiography of the social sciences has produced an incredible volume of work which presents so many national, institutional, or epistemological varieties that it is merely impossible to keep the overview. And even if it was possible, the few pages of this modest contribution would not suffice to describe these in any satisfying way. However a quick glance at a representative selection of publications on this topic may suggest dividing them into three broad and partly overlapping categories:¹² philosophical, disciplinary, and historicist historiography.

I.1 Philosophical history

The studies within the scope of the philosophical approach present three characteristics. In the first place, they are normative studies of a discipline, in the sense that Gaston Bachelard intended when he asserted that “*en opposition complète aux prescriptions qui recommandent à l'historien de ne pas juger, il faut au contraire demander à l'historien des sciences des jugements de valeur.*”¹³ These studies analyze a discipline’s past in order to help scholars to improve their practice of the discipline. Secondly, these studies ground almost solely on published texts and are therefore limited to a history of published ideas. They neither consider the history of scientific practice nor question the financing problems in science, which is considered a purely cognitive activity. Lastly, they focus on one specific discipline. To be sure, a few cross-disciplinary studies have been attempted, among them, Georges Gusdorf’s *De l’histoire des sciences à l’histoire de la pensée*¹⁴ and Michel Foucault’s *Les mots et les choses*.¹⁵ As the first general studies of the social sciences, they were crucial since they contributed to validate these activities as legitimate objects of the philosophy

12 It is important to underline that this typology is by no means a chronology. As Blondiaux and Richard have shown, the historicist turn in the history of the social sciences does not occur synchronically in the different disciplines (Blondiaux and Richard 1999,

120–121), nor does it have an absolute character (Blondiaux and Richard 1999, 116).

13 Bachelard 1972, 141.

14 Gusdorf 1966.

15 Foucault 1966.

of science and emancipated them from the domination of the practitioners' historiography. Moreover, they shaped later studies by attempting to understand the social sciences through the study of their past, thus redefining the past as a key to the essence of science. Finally, they attempted to identify the nature of the matter unifying the social sciences. Although they shared very different views (anti-humanist vs. humanist), followed different processes (unconscious vs. conscious), and had different perspectives (discontinuity vs. continuity), they tried in their more or less accurate studies of the history of the social sciences, to identify the processes, changes and continuities which have led to the birth of the social sciences and, with more ambition, to understand what has been their conception of the human being.

What is more interesting for this paper, however, is the development of this normative philosophy within each of the individual social sciences, all of which share this type of literature. In the history of archaeology, studies like Laurent Olivier's *Le sombre abîme du temps*¹⁶ correspond to this. Archaeology, he argues, shouldn't try to put together again the events of the past but must understand the modes of memory processes through materiality. In the history of history, Michel De Certeau's *L'écriture de l'histoire*¹⁷ or Paul Veyne's *Comment on écrit l'histoire*¹⁸ also fit into this first category, identifying the essential characteristics of historiography and the problems arising from the use of specific tools or concepts. James Clifford and George Markus's *Writing Culture*¹⁹ tackled the same questions for anthropology. The majority of these texts indeed make use of the history of these various disciplines to identify their current problems and to discover their *essence* by studying its past. Hence, although these studies may present significant methodological propositions, they differ sensibly from the historians' or the practitioners' positions: essentialist and anachronical, their analyses are more valuable to the practitioners because they are *bonnes à penser*. Interesting for their reflexive perspective, the philosophical essays may hence present a normative dimension.

1.2 Disciplinary history

This normative dimension is a characteristic which is again found in the second, disciplinary approach. In contrast to the philosophical approach's consideration of processes, however, this historiography focuses on analyzing what falls within the scope of a discipline and what is of interest for their practitioners *today*. As Bruno Latour puts it, they study the "stabilized state of affairs", rather than the "affair being stabilized"²⁰ – or in Bourdieu's words, they are concerned by the *opus operatum*, rather than the *modus operandi*.²¹ Identifying the discipline-in-the-past to the discipline-in-the-present, these

16 Olivier 2008.

17 Certeau 1975.

18 Veyne 1971.

19 Clifford and Marcus 1986.

20 Latour 2005, 1.

21 Bourdieu 1997, 86.

historians assume that there are things such as anthropology or archaeology, and do not try to understand the processes which have created them. Hence, they reify and naturalize the various fields of research.

Moreover, a disciplinary historiography is also a historiography *which* disciplines. Judith Schlanger²² and Claude Blanckaert²³ have shown that the writing of a history is generally a constitutive (and last) step in the formation of a discipline. The quest for “epistemic heroes”²⁴ and “forgotten precursors”²⁵ falls within its scope. While this is globally true, it is a particularly important process in the social sciences in the context of the reflexive turn. In the historiography of anthropology, for example, the reflexive move of the 1970s which resulted from a profound legitimacy crisis influenced many works. Hence, chronology has worked here as a *mise en ordre* of the disciplinary landscape. As exemplified in Raymond Aron’s *Étapes de la pensée sociologique*,²⁶ history is a pretext to clear discussions about the contemporary state and the future of a discipline and Jean Jamin could explicitly link both issues: “*l’ethnologie est entrée dans une phase de remaniement, qui passe peut-être par une réévaluation de son histoire*”.²⁷ Thus, written by leading scholars of the field, disciplinary history aims at the reproduction of the relations among the actors of the field and perpetuates the state of the discipline. Alternatively, it may be written by ambitious newcomers who use history to redefine the *doxa* and the limits of the field.²⁸ In both cases, history is used to discipline the discipline and this is why this historiography usually appears in the introduction of popular disciplinary handbooks. As a consequence, numerous publications written by practitioners follow this path²⁹ and dominate this historiography.³⁰

These disciplinary histories mostly follow what George Stocking (and Kucklick, after him) has named a presentist view of a discipline’s history. This view, Stocking has argued, is the position where the historian tends to demand of the past something more than simply why, where, and how something has happened. The past must be related to, and even useful for, furthering his professional activities in the ongoing present. It has a normative commitment, like Butterfield’s whig interpretation of history,³¹ and wrenches the individual historical phenomenon from the complex network of its contemporary context in order to see it in abstracted relationship to analogues in the present. While it is worth noting that this distinction echoes, but never explicitly refers to, the broader and famous controversy of the 1950’s between Gaston Bachelard and Alexandre Koyré, Stocking asserts that it is of particular importance to the historiography of the behavioral sciences. If this is so, the explanation should be found, in his view, in

22 J. Schlanger 1992.

23 Blanckaert 1995.

24 Bourdieu 1984, 34.

25 Kaeser 2001, 202.

26 Aron 1967.

27 Jamin 1988, 474; see also: Lepenies and Weingart

1983, XVII.

28 Bourdieu 2001, 72–77.

29 Kuper 1975; Daniel and Renfrew 1962; Daniel 1981.

30 Blondiaux and Richard 1999, 116.

31 Butterfield 1931.

the fact that social sciences are, in Kuhn's words, mostly pre-paradigmatic³²; hence, this historiography is more likely to be open to certain vices of presentism than the general historiography of science: "When there is no single framework which unites all the workers in the field, but rather competing schools, historiography simply extends the arena of their competition."³³ It means that the history of the social sciences is consubstantial to their practice.³⁴ Adapting Clausewitz's dictum, one might say that historiography is merely a controversy pursued by other means.

1.3 Historicist history

The historicist approach constitutes the origin of the last type of social-sciences historiography, which, like Kuklick's volume, aims at contextualizing the production of knowledge. Noël Coye's analysis of archaeological practice,³⁵ Nathan Schlanger's studies of the relations between nation-building and science³⁶ or Marc-Antoine Kaeser's biography of Edouard Desor³⁷ are some publications of the historiography of archaeology which fit this category; Bertrand Mueller's use of Lucien Febvre's book reviews to write the French founder of the *Annales*' biography³⁸ or Claude Blanckaert's study of the relations between anthropology and politics³⁹ are their counterparts for history or anthropology. Thus, these historians of the social sciences adopt various questions and methods from the general historiography of science. However, although one may find for obvious reasons numerous exceptions in the historiography of psychology and of governance,⁴⁰ rarely do they affiliate themselves to the different trends of the historiography of science which invented them, and seldom do they acknowledge their debts – they content themselves with the claim of being historicists. They adopt a contextualist view; analyze practices; study unpublished material which is not *a priori* a scientific archive; follow the relationships between and among the public, policymakers, and the sciences; examine controversies and relate context to science; or seek to understand the processes by which these disciplines were constituted. However, they barely mention the research in other fields, specifically in the history of hard sciences, and do not use their results. In other words, studying similar objects using a similar perspective is not a sign for sharing a disciplinary field. They do not refer to each other, and publish in different journals, as one may observe from the case of the historiography of anthropology or archaeology. Historians of the social sciences indeed have their own journals and some disciplines even have their own publication or series (*History of Anthropology*, *Bulletin of the History*

32 Kuhn 1962, 15.

33 Stocking 1968, 8.

34 Matalon 1992, 9.

35 Coye 1997.

36 N. Schlanger 2002.

37 Kaeser 2004.

38 Müller 2003.

39 Blanckaert 2001b.

40 See for example: Danziger 1990; Morawski 2005; Carson 2006; Rose 1996.

of *Archaeology*), or readers.⁴¹ Moreover, historians of the social sciences are organized in specific societies (ESHHS), and are present at separate conferences. To put it clearly: they belong to a distinct discipline.

Broadly, the situation already described by Friedrich Engels⁴² is thus the following: Research in the history of social sciences fits into a normative history of ideas, with a philosophical and a disciplinary pole, and neglects the recent developments in the historiography of science. Another group of historians of the social sciences shares topics, methods, and perspectives with the vast majority of historians of science, but clearly constitutes a different community of research. As Theodore Porter and Dorothy Ross have put it, “actors in this field [...] have not always been aware of one another, and some perhaps have discovered only recently that all along they have been writing this species of prose.”⁴³ At the end of the day, these three types of historiography of the social sciences share features that differ significantly from those in the general historiography of science; these common differences (might) explain why historians of the social and the natural sciences do not explicitly share their historiographical methods and perspectives; they most probably explain why one may talk about “new approaches” for innovations of more than thirty years.

2 The origins of separate communities

Nevertheless, it is interesting to understand why and how this situation occurred. Of course, no simple answer is available here and various paths of explanation should be explored. In my view, three hypotheses might be pursued, which I wish to offer for discussion. The first hypothesis suggests that the objects of these two disciplines are merely too different to be examined in the same way. The second tracks the identity and aims of the scholars who write these different historiographies and wonders if the difference originates here. The third supposes that the origin of these two different conceptions of the historiography of science lies in the relation between the objects and the observers or, in other words, between and among the knowledge-in-the-past, the knowledge-in-the-present and the observer.

2.1 Objects

The first proposition is that the objects observed in the social sciences and in the hard sciences are too different for their historiographers to share disciplinary elements. Therefore, so this proposition, they use different concepts and publish in different journals.

41 Murray and Evans 2008.

43 Porter and Ross 2003, 9.

42 Boudon 1992, 303.

Chemists, after all, study molecules, while theologians study sacred texts, and this is why they use different tools, follow different aims, and publish in different journals. The most important series on the topic such as the Cambridge and the Norton History of Science series follow this pattern too and have published special volumes dedicated to the social sciences. The hypothesis is hence that concepts and methods in the history of science were developed within the study of a specific object, the hard sciences, and they cannot be used in another domain. To be sure, this is far from being a new hypothesis. Wilhelm Dilthey already proposed a similar position⁴⁴ and Charles Perry Snow had argued that the humanities and the natural sciences were parts of two different, incommensurable cultures.⁴⁵ More recently, Wolf Lepenies's view was still very much alike when he suggested in *Die drei Kulturen* that the history of sociology should be analyzed with the tools of literary analysis, rather than of the history of science, because it was more of an aesthetic than a cognitive activity.⁴⁶ Thus he agreed with Raymond Boudon who argued that the social sciences followed four different goals – cognitive, aesthetic, critic, and cameralist – which explained their greater diversity. Quite in opposition to the hard sciences which, he suggested, were only cognitive, the cameralist social sciences could not favor the accumulation of knowledge since they necessarily constituted a situated knowledge. This, according to Boudon, explains the need for history in the social sciences.⁴⁷

This hypothesis is tempting⁴⁸ – although the idea following which the hard sciences would not be situated knowledge seems quite outdated – because it can help to understand why methods and concepts in the history of social science have developed in a specific way, and in a particular chronology. Since the object differs, the relevant questions and the legitimate controversies are not necessarily the same and, if they are, they do not have to follow the same chronology. This hypothesis is also appealing because it calls into question the hard sciences' imperialism,⁴⁹ which lifts these disciplines to a scientific benchmark; transposed to historiography, it would assert that the methods which allow historians to study the past of these sciences must work to understand the history of other sciences.⁵⁰ It is eventually an intriguing hypothesis, because it finds an echo in the very proposal of the STS which asserts that places play a role in the constitution of science.⁵¹ Thus, the essential differences between the social and other sciences would be rooted in the various *loci* in which they are practiced.

However, this hypothesis is problematic: The idea that the social sciences and hard sciences are so different is, as I have already pointed out, an old *serpent de mer*. From

44 Dilthey 1883.

45 Snow 1959.

46 Lepenies 1985. – Jerome Kagan recently pursued the same argument and suggested that there were three incommensurable cultures: the social sciences, the humanities and the natural sciences (Kagan 2009).

47 Boudon 1992, 306–311.

48 See also Smith 1997, 13–19.

49 Matalon 1992, 9.

50 Porter and Ross 2003, 6.

51 Livingstone 2003.

Dilthey's *Verstehen* and *Erklären* to Kuhn's pre-paradigmatic science, concepts have been proposed by many scholars to explain this putative difference without any of them ever standing out. This is not entirely surprising, for the distinction, in many respects, does not appear to be meaningful. The study of scientific practices, rather than ideas, or essences, has thus allowed one to construct communities of knowledge which are transversal to the social sciences – hard sciences border, as Robert E. Kohler has convincingly shown with the category of collecting sciences, uniting archaeology, zoology, ethnography or botanic⁵² or as Ian Hacking has done with interactive and non-interactive kinds.⁵³

Aside from these transversal categories, the social sciences and hard sciences present more similarities than it has previously been thought. As Claude Blanckaert has shown,⁵⁴ the relations between science and society as well as the processes of emergence are identical in both the social and hard sciences. While he admits that these are less visible in the social sciences, he suggests searching for the origin of this phenomenon not in some undefined, essential difference, but rather in the fact that the social sciences are less of an issue than the more strategic, expensive hard sciences. They are indeed quite identical and, if something is of interest here, it might be to identify the origin of this distinction and what is at stake in this historical, but naturalized difference.⁵⁵ Hence, the validity of the category has to be questioned and, although it is certain that what is understood today as social sciences does not overlap what was understood 100 years ago, it is still unknown, as Porter and Ross have underlined,⁵⁶ if what is branded and united under the label 'social sciences' shares enough features in synchrony.

2.2 Observers

The second hypothesis turns away from the object and focuses on the identity of the historians of science and social sciences. It is known that before the late 1970s, the vast majority of historians of science were either philosophers or practitioners of their own discipline. This is true for the hard sciences, as Thomas Kuhn, David Bloor or Alexandre Koyré testify, while the examples of Robert Lowie, Raymond Aron or Colin Renfrew and Glyn Daniel show that the same goes for the social sciences.

However, from the 1970s on, a community of scholars has emerged in the study of hard sciences who are neither philosophers nor practitioners. Inventing a tradition which goes back to Karl Mannheim, Max Scheler or Ludwig Fleck, they proposed an objectifying and distant look at the sciences of the past, which quickly dominated the field. Many of these studies of science have been identified as a reaction to the realm

52 Kohler 2007.

53 Hacking 1999.

54 Blanckaert 2001a, 15.

55 Smith 1997, 7.

56 Porter and Ross 2003, 1.

of big science in the 1950s and 1960s. The critical posture towards the Cold War and eurocentrism contributed to an ideological position opposed to science, rationality and progress and led to a general critique of power and knowledge. In this process, the hard sciences have been analyzed and criticized from the outside as being part of the condemned military-industrial, capitalistic complex and, as Dominique Pestre has argued,⁵⁷ the aim of these studies was to de-essentialize and to demystify science, among others by showing its diversity, its contingency and its practices.

For the social sciences, the movement was both similar and different. A critical view in anthropology or in history appeared in the 1970s (e. g., Paul Veyne, Michel de Certeau, or James Clifford), which was rooted in the same phenomenon found in the general field of science: Anthropology's relationship to the colonial power or to the military (Project Camelot), or history's reification of past traditions to invent national, or local, or religious identities, showed significant similarities to the other sciences. However, contrary to the hard sciences' case and although there are some rare exceptions,⁵⁸ the critical move came from within. While this is quite understandable for history at least, it nevertheless constituted a decisive difference with numerous and important consequences.

Three of them should be pinpointed. Firstly, the insider's view favors a presentist perspective. This is of importance, because the social-science historians' critical view is not solely rooted in the anti-science movement, but also in the reflexive turn. In this context, history is not simply a way to criticize science, but also a path to better, and renew the orientations of the single disciplines. Hence, the presentist perspective reifies the discipline, and promotes the actual state of the discipline to a benchmark. They look for operating ancestors, take the discipline for granted, and rarely question its coming into being. Secondly, the internal critique is not weaker, but may be less conflictual. It is not a war between sociologists and scientists; it is rather a discussion among practitioners of a same discipline about the state of an art whose axioms are shared. Because of that, the fronts stiffen less and a dialogue in which everyone has the same competences appears. Lastly, the histories which they write are locally competent, i. e. at the scale of a single discipline and nation. Thus, an historian of anthropology will rarely mention, nor be concerned with, the naturalist perspectives of his objects of study, because today's anthropologists do not master these issues; similarly, they also will not be able to produce transdisciplinary studies, because it is not of any interest for the discipline, despite what such studies can bring, as Peter Galison has demonstrated⁵⁹. This limited field of competence also hinders their joining the community of the historians of science and they remain identified as archaeologists, anthropologists, or linguists. In other words, they are amateur historians.⁶⁰

57 Pestre 2006, 6.

58 Porter and Ross 2003, 8.

59 Galison 1996.

60 Blanckaert 1988, 451–452.

Institutionally, this has important consequences: as amateurs, they develop their networks in their own professional and disciplinary fields, that of archaeology, anthropology, or geography, and this explains their publishing in specific journals; as amateurs, they are also financed by institutions of their own field, which, of course, favor research in their field. Thus, this volume is limited to the history of archaeology, as was the workshop and while the scope could have broadened to epigraphy or papyrology, it would most probably not have been to that of geography or psychology; the scholars' publishing strategies finally proceed from these links to one specific discipline and they do not indicate a social science's historians strong wish to talk to historians of science. Hence, in spite of the quantitative importance of the social and social sciences in the contemporary university and in spite of the social scientist's interest in their own history, this historiography finds little echo among the historians of science and remains of little interest.

However, this hypothesis isn't entirely satisfying either because it appears that is not so much the identity of these scholars – both the historians of science and the historians of social sciences are social scientists, what delegitimizes the difference between amateur and professionals⁶¹ – which is at stake, but rather the question of their relationship to their object. Some study themselves or their own tradition, others study external objects. The position is different. This leads to the last hypothesis.

2.3 Relationships

The last hypothesis supposes that the important difference lies neither in the object, nor in the historian, but in their relationship. We observed this earlier in what I called the disciplinary function of historiography, which arises from a new type of relationship between observer and object. Since Henri-Irénée Marrou,⁶² social scientists and historians have been aware of the ambiguous connections between historiography and the historian. His famous "*l'histoire est inséparable de l'historien*" stressed the impact of the scholar's present, social and cultural references and *Weltanschauung* on his scientific work. The issue for the historiography of the social sciences, if similar, is slightly more complex. As in Marrou's case, the construction of the past is mediated through the historian's present. But the present comprises a conception of the present discipline itself. Therefore, history, or the discipline-in-the-past, is shaped by the discipline-in-the-present. Simultaneously, the discipline-in-the-present is of course historically determined, which means that the discipline-in-the-past shapes also the discipline-in-the-present. This double relation is important for the historiography of the social sciences since it links the discipline-in-the-past and the discipline-in-the-present through the mediation of the historian. And

61 Blondiaux and Richard 1999, 115.

62 Marrou 1954, 47.

it is all the more so when the historian is a historian-cum-practitioner-of-the-discipline as it is so often the case for the historiography of the social sciences. Hence, it offers the possibility that the historian uses the past to build the discipline in the way he wishes it as a practitioner of the discipline whose history he is writing. Thus the relationships between object and scholar are multiplied, because the historian relates both to the object in the past and the object in the present.

The historiography of the social sciences is therefore much less autonomous than the general historiography of science. The past is at stake, for the discipline in the present and for its historiography which is in return a weapon to control the present and the past. This explains why it is considered a sphere with a high value coefficient, and this is why it has been generally dominated by the big names of the field. It comes with important symbolic capital within the disciplinary fields and constitutes a major issue. For this reason, and for the motives proposed by Boudon⁶³ as well as in stark contrast to the historiography of other sciences, disciplinary histories are central for the education of the students in the social sciences. Historiography is a means to reproduce or change, and in any case direct, the future of the discipline.

This is significant for the argument. The development of a new historiography and sociology of general science indeed brings new actors into the field of the historiography of sciences. Moreover, these actors are quite powerful ones. Their professionalism, their external view, and the growing place of science studies in the academic world give them major symbolic capital and thus menace the field of the historiography of sciences and for those dominating this historiography. As I have argued, the threat is even greater in the case of the historiography of the social sciences, since mastering the past helps to shape the discipline's present. If in the case of the hard sciences, the intrusion of these new methods has transformed the field of the history of science with some violence, in the history of social sciences both history and the discipline itself are at stake. The issue is hence much more critical for the dominants who may lose on both counts. Their position as historians dictates their position as archaeologists, anthropologists, or geographers. Therefore, the reluctance of the historians of the social sciences to the new developments of historiography is bigger.

At the same time, one might think that the historians and sociologists of science would invest the history of the social science and make it their territory. But they do not and do not show more interest in the object "social science" than the historians of social sciences for the new tools. This is true for several reasons: First, the social sciences are of little importance in the scientific field. They are thought to spend less money, do not develop in the big science, and seem of little ideological or political use. They don't develop in big institutions, which are studied in the frame of the sociology of scientific

63 Boudon 1992, 306–311.

organizations. They are also insignificant in the social field, since they do not raise fundamental questions as the genetically modified organism, or the global management of the swine flu. Moreover, the social sciences have strongly criticized their own practices and principles in the wake of the reflexive turn; thus the desacralization of science, which was an important aim of the Science Studies, is not an issue any more. In addition, the hard science's imperialism mentioned above lets one believe that the social sciences are like any other science, and hence that there is no interest in studying their specific case. Finally, most leading names in the history of science have studied the hard sciences, and both the institutions' force of inertia and the laws of imitation maintained them for long in the core of interest.

Thus, this relational issue between the past, the present, and the viewer may explain the state of the historiography of the social sciences. On one hand, the distrust towards new historiographic trends is a reassuring posture for disciplinary historians: Rejecting these methods, concepts, and results delays the arrival of new actors and the transformation of the discipline. On the other hand, the historicist historians have been entangled in an isolated field designed by the presentist historians and neglected by the historians of science and have developed their own concepts and methods. Sometimes similar to those of the other historians, sometimes different, they only rarely mention their affiliation, if any. They only raise the flag of historicism as if it was sufficient to identify them. As a matter of fact, historicist historians of the social sciences, satisfied and obsessed by the founding separation of presentism underlined by Kuklick,⁶⁴ but insufficiently examined and certainly less significant than it is generally assumed,⁶⁵ may have neglected another dividing wall which isolated their historical object and its historians from the general history of science. Hence they must act now, so that they do not become the new presentists of the historians of science, after winning the battle against presentism – which would thus consolidate a seducing but uncompletable comparison in the context of this paper with the nineteenth century historicists who won the battle against romantic historians before losing against the nomothetic historians influenced by sociology.

3 Conclusion

I have argued that the historiography of the social sciences follows a specific path. Considering the hypotheses suggested above, I would like to offer some modest solutions to change the situation. First, historians of general science and historians of the social sciences study the same object. Thus, there should be no objection to sharing methods

64 Kuklick 2008, 1.

65 Blondiaux and Richard 1999, 110–112.

and concepts. Second, the identity of the scholars is not an issue; what matters is their relationship to the objects. Hence, historians of social sciences need to rid themselves of their disciplinary perspective rather than excluding other historians. Not only should they abandon studies which focus on one single discipline, but they must eliminate the presentist perspective. To achieve this, a possible path would be to open up their field and invite historians of science to consider their topics in order to re-shape the field dominated by the presentist views. The issue here is to abandon the “ghetto mentality”⁶⁶ which dominates the field and become professional. In this respect, it is of central importance to reject the idea that the history of archaeology or the history of anthropology are merely dynamic subfields of archaeology or anthropology.⁶⁷ In addition, they should, fully use *and* recognize the heuristic capacities of new historiographical trends. Nevertheless, this should not be an unconditional surrender. Historians of the social sciences should make use of their specific case studies, no longer with the aim of developing parallel concepts and methods, but to participate in the elaboration and the modification of the history of science’s general concepts through their own results. Eventually, they must claim the value of their own concepts, such as the presentist-historicist distinction and all the critical thought born in the reflexive turn, to promote them as useful concepts in the general field of science.

In this respect, if I may express myself in military terms, these solutions address the question of the *strategic* relevance of a workshop on “New historiographical approaches to archaeological research”, which constituted the starting point of this publication. First, the adjective “new” has to be questioned. What is our posture, if we assert that these thirty years old methods and trends are new, since we all know they are not? It puts us in an outsider position. Furthermore, it is limited to archaeology, most probably because of some institutional motives which have been indicated earlier. Hence it perpetuates the, incorrect, idea following which history of archaeology would be apart from the history of sciences. The tactical relevance of this is perfectly clear, since we are still, obviously, cornered in an uncomfortable situation with disciplinary historians who are dominant in our discipline pushing us on one side, and advocates of the STS-field, which are dominant in the social sciences’ field, pulling us on the other. However, strategically and quite to the contrary to Blondiaux and Richard’s proposition, it is crucial to take root in the field of the history of science rather than turn back to the disciplines again.⁶⁸ To do so, it may be interesting, after harvesting the results of the mentioned workshop, to go two steps further: First, another workshop might be organized, which would overstep the disciplinary boundaries, and address these issues again at the general level of the social sciences; second, after having assessed our achievements, we should confront the general historiographies of science, to understand what our specialization in the science

66 Collini 1988, 398.

68 Blondiaux and Richard 1999, 123.

67 Handler 2000, 3.

studies' field can bring to the whole field. Here we shall question whether and how the tools developed in the STS work (or not) with our object and try to contribute to their improvement or the invention of new tools. And, in this process, archaeology, standing at the interface between the natural and social sciences, will again, but for other reasons, have to be in the middle of the interest.

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