

THE GULBENKIAN COMMISSION

*on the Restructuring
of the Social Sciences*

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Open the Social Sciences

*Report of the
Gulbenkian Commission
on the Restructuring of the
Social Sciences*

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III. What Kind of Social Science Shall We Now Build?

In any social circumstance, there are only a limited number of ways in which a clash of values can be dealt with. One is through geographical segregation. . . . Another, more active way, is through exit. . . . A third way of coping with individual or cultural difference is through dialogue. Here a clash of values can in principle operate under a positive sign—it can be a means of increased communication and self-understanding. . . . Finally, a clash of values can be resolved through the use of force or violence. . . . In the globalizing society in which we now live the first two of these four options become drastically reduced.

—Anthony Giddens¹⁰

What are the implications of the multiple debates within the social sciences since 1945 for the kind of social science we now should build? And for what, exactly, are they implications? The intellectual implications of these debates are not entirely consonant with the organizational structure of the social sciences that we have inherited. Thus, as we begin to resolve the intellectual debates, we must decide what to do organizationally. It may turn out to be easier to do the former than the latter.

The most immediate question is the organizational structure of the social sciences themselves. They have, of course, been disciplines, which meant that they were intended to shape the training of future scholars, and this they have done effectively.

10. Anthony Giddens, *Beyond Left and Right* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), p. 19.

But in the final analysis, training of students has not been the most powerful mechanism of control. A stronger one was the fact that the disciplines have controlled the career patterns of scholars once they completed their training. Both teaching and research positions in universities and research structures have by and large required a doctorate (or its equivalent), and for most positions the doctorate has had to be in a specified discipline. Publication in the official and quasi-official journals of the discipline to which one is organizationally attached was, and for the most part still is, considered a necessary step for career advancement. Graduate students are still advised (and well advised) to secure their degrees in a discipline that is considered a standard one. Scholars have tended to attend primarily the national (and international) meetings of their own discipline. Disciplinary structures have covered their members with a protective screen, and have been wary of encouraging crossing the lines.

Yet disciplinary prerequisites have been breaking down in some scholarly arenas that have become important since 1945. The worldwide series of colloquia and conferences, so central in recent decades to scientific communication, have tended to recruit participants according to specific subject matter, for the most part without too much regard for disciplinary affiliations. There are today a growing number of major scientific reviews that consciously ignore the disciplinary boundaries. And of course the multiple new quasi-disciplines and/or “programs” which have been emerging in the last half century are often, even usually, composed of persons who have degrees from multiple disciplines.

Most importantly, there is the eternal battle for resource allo-

cation, which in recent years has gotten more ferocious because of budgetary constraints, after a long period of continuous budgetary expansion. As newly emerging quasi-disciplinary structures lay greater claims on university resources and seek to control more directly future appointments, they tend to eat into the power of the existing main disciplines. In this battle, groups which are presently less well financed seek to define abstract intellectual justifications for proposed shifts in resource allocation. It is here that the main organizational pressure for restructuring of the social sciences will come. The problem is that this pressure to realign organizational structures on the basis of new intellectual categories is pursued country by country, university by university. And the initiative is often not that of working scholars but that of administrators, whose concerns are sometimes more budgetary than intellectual. The perspective before us is that of organizational dispersal, with a multiplicity of names, akin to the situation that existed in the first half of the nineteenth century. That is to say, the process of establishing the disciplines between, say, 1850 and 1945 was one of reducing the number of categories into which social science might be divided into a limited list with which we have become familiar and which was largely adopted worldwide. We have recounted how and why the process since then has begun to move in the other direction. We may wish to reflect on the rationality of the emerging pattern.

These organizational problems are, of course, more than compounded by the blurring of the trimodal pattern of superdomains: the natural sciences, the social sciences, and the humanities. It thus becomes a question not merely of the pos-

sible reconfiguration of organizational boundaries within the social science disciplines, but of the possible reconfiguration of the larger structures of the so-called faculties. Of course, this struggle over boundaries has been a ceaseless one. But there come moments in which what may be called for are major as opposed to minor realignments. The early nineteenth century ushered in such a pattern of major realignments, which we have been describing here. The question before us is whether the early twenty-first century may be another such moment.

There is a third level of possible restructuring. It is not only a question of the boundaries of departments within the faculties and the boundaries of faculties within the universities. Part of the nineteenth-century restructuring involved the revival of the university itself as the central locus of knowledge creation and reproduction. The enormous expansion of the university system across the world in the period since 1945, in terms of numbers of institutions, of teaching personnel, and of students, has led to a flight of research activities to ever "higher" levels of the educational system. Before 1945, some researchers still taught in secondary schools. By 1990, not only was this no longer true, but many scholars even avoided, to the degree they could, teaching in the first or lower levels of the university system. Today, some are even fleeing the teaching of doctoral students. As a result, there has been a growth of "institutes of advanced studies" and other nonteaching structures.

Similarly, the central locus of intellectual communication in the nineteenth century was national scholarly meetings and national scientific journals. As these structures became overcrowded, they were to some extent replaced by colloquia, which

have flourished worldwide since 1945. Now this field too is overcrowded, and we are seeing the emergence of small, continuing structures of physically separated scholars, abetted, of course, by the great advances in communications possibilities offered by electronic networks. All these developments at least open the question of whether, in the next fifty years, universities as such will continue to be the main organizational base of scholarly research. Or are other structures—-independent research institutes, centers for advanced study, networks, epistemic communities via electronic facilities—going to substitute for them in a significant way? These developments may represent very positive adjustments to the problems inherent in the enormous expansion of university structures. But if it is thought desirable or inevitable that research become separated to any significant extent from teaching and from the university system, there will need to be a greater effort to obtain public legitimation for this development, or else there may not be the material bases to sustain scholarly research.

These organizational problems, which are of course not limited to the social sciences, frame the context within which intellectual clarification will take place. There are probably three central theoretical/methodological issues around which it is necessary to construct new, heuristic consensuses in order to permit fruitful advances in knowledge. The first concerns the relationship of the researcher to the research. At the beginning of the century, Max Weber summarized the trajectory of modern thought as the “disenchantment of the world.” To be sure, his phrase merely described a process that had evolved over several hundred years. In *La nouvelle alliance*, Ilya Prigogine and

Isabelle Stengers have called for a “reenchantment of the world.” The concept of the “disenchantment of the world” represented the search for an objective knowledge unconstrained by revealed and/or accepted wisdom or ideology. In the social sciences, it was a demand that we not rewrite history in the name of existing power structures. This demand was an essential step in freeing intellectual activity from disabling external pressures and from mythology, and remains valid. We have no wish to return the pendulum and find ourselves once again in the predicament out of which the disenchantment of the world sought to rescue us.

The call for a “reenchantment of the world” is a different one. It is not a call for mystification. It is a call to break down the artificial boundaries between humans and nature, to recognize that they both form part of a single universe framed by the arrow of time. The reenchantment of the world is meant to liberate human thought still further. The problem has been that, in the attempt to liberate the human spirit, the concept of the neutral scientist (put forward not by Weber but by positivist social science) offered an impossible solution to the laudable objective of freeing scholarship from arbitrary orthodoxy. No scientist can ever be extracted from his/her physical and social context. Every measurement changes reality in the attempt to record it. Every conceptualization is based on philosophical commitments. In time, the widespread belief in a fictive neutrality has become itself a major obstacle to increasing the truth value of our findings. If this poses a great problem for the natural scientists, it is an even greater problem for the social scientists. Translating the reenchantment of the world into a reasonable

working practice will not be easy. But for social scientists it seems an urgent task.

The second issue is how to reinsert time and space as internal variables constitutive of our analyses and not merely unchanging physical realities within which the social universe exists. If we consider that concepts of time and space are socially constructed variables which the world (and the scholar) use to affect and interpret social reality, we are faced with the necessity of developing a methodology wherein we shall place these social constructions at the center of our analyses, but in ways that they will not be seen or used as arbitrary phenomena. To the extent that we succeed in this, the outdated distinction between idiographic and nomothetic epistemologies will lose whatever cognitive meaning it still has. However, this is easier said than done.

The third issue before us is how to overcome the artificial separations erected in the nineteenth century between supposedly autonomous realms of the political, the economic, and the social (or the cultural or the sociocultural). In the current practice of social scientists, the lines are de facto often ignored. But the current practice does not accord with the official viewpoints of the major disciplines. The question of the existence of these separate realms needs to be tackled directly, or rather, to be reopened quite fully. Once that happens, and new formulations begin to take root, the intellectual bases for the restructuring of the disciplines may become clearer.

One last caution. If the researcher cannot be "neutral" and if time and space are internal variables in the analysis, then it follows that the task of restructuring the social sciences must be

one that results from the interaction of scholars coming from every clime and perspective (and taking into account gender, race, class, and linguistic culture), and that this worldwide interaction be a real one and not a mere formal courtesy masking the imposition of the views of one segment of world scientists. It will not be at all easy to organize such worldwide interaction in a meaningful way. It is thus a further obstacle in our path. However, overcoming this obstacle may be the key to overcoming all the others.

What, therefore, can we conclude about the possible steps that could be taken in order to "open social science"? There exists no easily available blueprint on the basis of which we can decree any reorganization of the structures of knowledge. We are concerned rather with encouraging collective discussion and making some suggestions about paths along which solutions might be found. Before we consider proposals for restructuring, there seem to us several major dimensions worthy of fuller debate and analysis. They are: (1) the implications of refusing the ontological distinction between humans and nature, a distinction embedded in modern thought since at least Descartes; (2) the implications of refusing to consider the state as providing the only possible and/or primary boundaries within which social action occurs and is to be analyzed; (3) the implications of accepting the unending tension between the one and the many, the universal and the particular, as a permanent feature of human society and not as an anachronism; (4) the kind of objectivity which is plausible in the light of the evolving premises of science.

1. Humans and Nature

The social sciences have been moving in the direction of an increasing respect for nature at the same time that the natural sciences have been moving in the direction of seeing the universe as unstable and unpredictable, thereby conceiving of the universe as an active reality and not an automaton subject to domination by humans, who are somehow located outside nature. The convergences between the natural and social sciences become greater to the degree one views both as dealing with complex systems, in which future developments are the outcome of temporally irreversible processes.

Some social scientists have responded to recent findings in behavioral genetics by urging a more biological orientation for the social sciences. Some have even been reviving the ideas of genetic determinism on the basis of inferences from the human genome project. We think that taking this path would be a serious mistake and a setback for the social sciences. We feel that the principal lesson of recent developments in the natural sciences is rather that the complexity of social dynamics needs to be taken more seriously than ever.

Utopias are part of the concern of the social sciences, which is not true of the natural sciences, and utopias must of course be based on existing trends. Although we now are clear that there is no future certainty, and cannot be one, nonetheless images of the future influence how humans act in the present. The university cannot remain aloof in a world in which, since certainty is excluded, the role of the intellectual is necessarily changing and the idea of the neutral scientist is under severe challenge,

as we have documented. Concepts of utopias are related to ideas of possible progress, but their realization does not depend merely on the advance of the natural sciences, as many previously thought, but rather on the increase in human creativity, the expression of the self in this complex world.

We come from a social past of conflicting certitudes, be they related to science, ethics, or social systems, to a present of considerable questioning, including questioning about the intrinsic possibility of certainties. Perhaps we are witnessing the end of a type of rationality that is no longer appropriate to our time. The accent we call for is one placed on the complex, the temporal, and the unstable, which corresponds today to a transdisciplinary movement gaining in vigor. This is by no means a call to abandon the concept of substantive rationality. As Whitehead said so well, the project which remains central both to the students of human social life and to the natural scientists is the intelligibility of the world: "to frame a coherent, logical, necessary system of general ideas in terms of which every element of our experience can be interpreted."¹¹

In the choice of possible futures, resources are very much a political question, and the demand for expanded participation in decision making is worldwide. We call upon the social sciences to open themselves to these questions. This is by no means a call, however, as was made in the nineteenth century, for a social physics. Rather, it is a recognition that, though the explanations we may make of the historical structuring of the natural universe and of human experience are by no means identical,

11. A. N. Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, corrected ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1978), p. 3.

they are noncontradictory and are both related to evolution. During the past two centuries, the real world has imposed current political issues on intellectual activity, pressuring scholars to define particular phenomena as universals because of their implications in the immediate political situation. The issue is how to escape the passing constraints of the contemporary to arrive at more long-term, durable, and useful interpretations of social reality. In the necessary differentiation and specialization of the social sciences, we may have paid too little attention to one general social problem resulting from the creation of knowledge: how not to create a gap between those who know and those who do not.

The responsibility of going beyond these immediate pressures is not that of the working social scientists alone; it also is that of intellectual bureaucracies—university administrators, scholarly associations, foundations, government agencies responsible for education and research. It requires the recognition that the major issues facing a complex society cannot be solved by decomposing them into small parts that seem easy to manage analytically, but rather by attempting to treat these problems, treat humans and nature, in their complexity and interrelations.

2. The State as an Analytic Building Block

The social sciences have been very state-centric in the sense that states formed the supposedly self-evident frameworks within which the processes analyzed by the social sciences took place. This was especially true for those that studied (at least up to 1945) essentially the Western world—history and the trio of nomothetic social sciences (economics, political science, and

sociology). To be sure, neither anthropology nor Oriental studies was state-centric, but this was because the zones these scholars studied were not considered to be loci of modern social structures. Modern social structures were implicitly located within modern states. After 1945, with the rise of area studies and the consequent expansion of the empirical domain of history and the three nomothetic social sciences into the non-Western world, these non-Western areas too became subject to state-centric analyses. The key post-1945 concept of “development” referred first and foremost to the development of each state, taken as an individual entity.

No doubt there were always some social scientists who did not consider the state—the current state, the historical state (pushed backward into prestate times), the putative state—to be a unit so natural that its analytic primacy was presumed, not justified. But these dissenters were few and not all that vocal in the period from 1850 to 1950. The self-evident character of the state as constituting the natural boundary of social life began to be questioned much more seriously beginning in the 1970's. This was the result of the conjuncture, a not accidental conjuncture, of two transformations. The first was a transformation in the real world. The states seemed to lose their promise as agents of modernization and economic well-being in popular and scholarly esteem. And second, there were the changes in the world of knowledge we have been describing, which led scholars to look again at previously unquestioned presuppositions.

The certain knowledge that had been promised us by social scientists seemed an evident consequence of their faith in progress. It found expression in the belief in steady improve-

ments that would be implemented by "experts," in which the "enabling" state would play a key role in the effort to reform society. The social sciences were expected to abet this process of rational, gradual improvement. It seemed to follow that the state's boundaries would be taken as forming the natural cadre within which to pursue such improvement. There have been, of course, continual challenges within the world of knowledge, including within the social sciences (for example, in the late nineteenth century), to an overly simple idea of progress. But each previous challenge seemed to melt away in the face of continuing technological achievements. Furthermore, the basic thrust of democratization led everywhere to steadily increasing demands on the state, urgent calls for it to utilize its fiscal and budgetary powers to ameliorate and redistribute. The state as purveyor of progress thus seemed theoretically secure.

But in recent decades, as redistributions increased less fast than escalating demands for redistribution, states began to be viewed as offering less satisfaction rather than more. A certain amount of disillusionment began to set in, beginning in the 1960's. Insofar as the transformations of the world since then have served to nourish a deep skepticism in most parts of the world about how really inevitable the promised improvement might be, and in particular whether the state's reforms in fact bring about real improvements, the naturalness of the state as the unit of analysis has been seriously undermined. "Think globally; act locally" is a slogan that very deliberately leaves out the state, and represents a withdrawal of faith in the state as a mechanism of reform. It would have been impossible in the

1950's, when both ordinary people and scholars thought at the state level and acted at the state level.

Given this shift from action at the state level, which was thought to guarantee a certain future, to action at global and local levels, which appears much more uncertain and difficult to manipulate, the new modes of analysis of both the natural scientists and of the proponents of cultural studies seemed to many to offer more plausible models. Both modes of analysis took uncertainties (and localisms) to be central analytic variables, not to be buried in a deterministic universalism. It followed that the self-evident nature of states as conceptual containers—the analytic derivative in the social sciences of both idiographic history and the more universalistic social sciences—became open to serious challenge and to debate.

State-centric thinking had not, of course, precluded the study of relations between states, international relations as it is commonly (if erroneously) called, and subfields existed within each of the social sciences devoted to the so-called international arena. We might have expected that it would be practitioners from within these subfields who would first respond to the challenge that the rising awareness of trans-state phenomena has presented to the analytic frameworks of the social sciences, but this was not in fact the case. The problem was that international studies had been premised on a state-centric framework just as much as other parts of the social sciences. They took the form primarily of comparative studies, with states as the unit to be compared, or of "foreign policy" studies, in which the object was to study the policies of states towards each other, rather than

that of studying the emergent characteristics of trans-state structures. In the institutionalized social sciences, the study of the complex structures that exist at the more global level were for a long time largely neglected, just as were the complex structures that exist at more local levels.

Since the late 1960's, there have been numerous attempts—within each of the disciplines and across the disciplines—to be less state-centric. In most cases this has gone in tandem with historicization and, in particular, with the use of longer time periods for empirical analysis. This shift in the unit of analysis has gone under many labels, such as international political economy, the study of world cities, a global institutional economics, world history, world-systems analysis, and civilizational studies. There has simultaneously been a renewed concern with “regions”—both regions that are large and trans-state (e.g., the recent concern with East Asia as a region within the whole world) and regions that are small and located inside states (e.g., the proto-industrialization concept in economic history). This is not the place to review each of these in their commonalities and their differences, but to note that each in its way challenged the state-centric theoretical presuppositions of the social sciences as they had been traditionally institutionalized. It remains to be seen how far the logic of their positions will push their proponents. There are some who favor a clean break with the traditional disciplines rather than remaining on their fringe, wishing to join a new heterodoxy based upon global spatial referents.

The state-centrism of traditional social science analyses was a theoretical simplification that involved the presumption of homogeneous and equivalent spaces, each of which formed an au-

tonomous system operating largely through parallel processes. The limits of this kind of simplification ought to be even more evident in the study of complex historical social systems than they were in the study of atomic and molecular phenomena, in which such methods are now considered a thing of the past.

Of course, rejection of the state as the indicated socio-geographical container for social analysis in no way means that the state is no longer to be viewed as a key institution in the modern world, one that has profound influences on economic, cultural, and social processes. The study of all these processes clearly require an understanding of the mechanisms of the state. What they do not require is the assumption that the state is the natural, or even the most important, boundary of social action. By challenging the efficacy of organizing social knowledge among units defined by state boundaries, recent developments in the social sciences imply some significant transitions in the objects of social scientific research. Once we drop the state-centric assumption, which has been fundamental to history and the nomothetic social sciences in the past, and accept that this perspective can often be a hindrance to making the world intelligible, we inevitably raise questions about the very structure of the disciplinary partitions which have grown up around, indeed have been based on, this assumption.

3. The Universal and the Particular

The tension between the universal and the particular in the social sciences has always been a subject of passionate debate, since it has always been seen as having immediate political implications, and this has impinged on serene discussion. The

Romantic reaction to, and reformulation of, Enlightenment conceptions was centered around this issue, and that debate was not unconnected with the political controversies of the Napoleonic era as the culmination of processes launched by the French Revolution. The issue has returned to the fore in contemporary discussions of the social sciences, in large part resulting from the political reassertion of the non-Western world, combined with the parallel political assertion of groups within the Western world that consider themselves to have been culturally oppressed. We have already traced the various forms in which this debate has taken form within the social sciences. One significant organizational consequence of this revived debate has been the call for a social science that is more "multicultural" or intercultural.

The effort to insert new premises into the theoretical frameworks of the social sciences, ones that respond to this demand for a more multicultural social science, has been met with a revival under various guises of social Darwinism. Social Darwinism is a particular variant, and a rather influential one, of the doctrine of inevitable progress. Its key argument has been essentially that progress is the result of a social struggle, in which competency wins out, and that interfering with this social struggle is interfering with social progress. These arguments have sometimes been reinforced by the genetic determinism we have mentioned. The discourse of social Darwinism labels any concept associated with the losers in the "survival of the fittest" evolutionary process as irrational and/or unrealistic. This categorical condemnation has often covered all values held by groups who do not have powerful social positions, as well as

alternative projects critical of the belief that industrialization, modernization, and Westernization are inevitably linked.

Technocratic rationality, presenting itself as the most advanced version of modern rationalism, has been in many ways an avatar of social Darwinism. It also delegitimizes any concept which does not fit a means-end model of rationality, and any institution which has no immediate functional utility. The framework that situates individuals primarily within states has tended to treat actors who do not fit in this framework as remnants of premodern times, who will be eliminated eventually by the advance of progress. Treating seriously the innumerable concepts, values, beliefs, norms, and institutions placed in this unwanted category has been deemed unscientific. In many cases, the very existence of these alternative worldviews and their proponents has been forgotten, suppressed from the collective memory of modern societies.

What has changed today is that many people, including many scholars, now strongly refuse to accept this dismissal of alternative sets of values, and this has been reinforced by the (re)discovery of major substantive irrationalities that are embedded in modern rational thought. The question that is consequently before us is how to take seriously in our social science a plurality of worldviews without losing the sense that there exists the possibility of knowing and realizing sets of values that may in fact be common, or become common, to all humanity. The key task is to explode the hermetic language used to describe persons and groups that are "others," who are merely objects of social science analysis, as opposed to those who are subjects having full rights and legitimacy, among whom the analysts have placed

themselves. There is an inevitable confusion or overlap here between the ideological and the epistemological. For a large number of non-Western social scientists, the distinction between the political, the religious, and the scientific does not seem entirely reasonable or valid.

Many of the critics of parochialism have hitherto emphasized the negative agenda, that of denying false universalisms. They have questioned the appropriateness of claimed universalist principles to a number of singular cases, and/or the possibility or desirability of universalism, and have offered in its place quasi-disciplinary categories defined by social constituencies. The principal result up to now has been largely the multiplication of particularisms. Beyond the obvious argument that the voices of dominated (and therefore hitherto largely ignored) groups need to be acknowledged, there is the more arduous task of demonstrating how incorporating the experiences of these groups is fundamental to achieving objective knowledge of social processes.

We would emphasize that universalism is always historically contingent. Thus, rather than show once again what the social sciences have missed by excluding a large part of human experience, we should move on to demonstrate what our understanding of social processes gains once we include increasingly larger segments of the world's historical experiences. Nonetheless, however parochial the previous versions of universalism have been, it does not seem sensible simply to abandon the terrain of the traditional disciplines to those who persist in these parochialisms. Restoring the balance will involve arguing the case within the existing disciplines, while simultaneously establish-

ing new avenues for dialogue and exchange beyond (and not merely between) the existing disciplines.

We further strongly urge the fuller realization of a multilingual scholarship. The choice of language often predetermines the outcome. To take a very obvious example, the concepts of the middle class, the *bourgeoisie*, and *Bürgertum* (presumably approximately similar) in fact define significantly different categories and imply different empirical measurements. The minimum that we can expect of social scientists is an awareness of the range of realms of conceptual meaning. A world in which all social scientists had working control of several major scholarly languages would be a world in which better social science was done. Knowledge of languages opens the mind of the scholar to other ways of organizing knowledge. It might go a considerable distance towards creating a working and fruitful understanding of the unending tensions of the antinomy of universalism and particularism. But multilingualism will only thrive if it becomes organizationally as well as intellectually legitimated: through the real use of multiple languages in pedagogy; through the real use of multiple languages in scientific meetings.

Dialogue and exchange can only exist where there is basic respect among colleagues. The angry rhetoric that now intrudes on these discussions is, however, a reflection of underlying social tensions. Merely calling for civil debate will not achieve it. Responding simultaneously to the demands of universal relevance (applicability, validity) and of the continuing reality of a multiplicity of cultures will depend on the imaginativeness of our organizational responses and a certain tolerance for intellectual experimentation in the social sciences. The social sci-

ences should embrace a very wide opening to research and teaching on all cultures (societies, peoples) in the search for a renewed, expanded, and meaningful pluralistic universalism.

4. Objectivity

The question of objectivity has been central to the methodological debates of the social sciences from the beginning. We said at the outset of this report that social science was the attempt in the modern world "to develop systematic, secular knowledge about reality that is somehow validated empirically." The term "objectivity" has been used to represent appropriate attempts to achieve this objective. The meaning of objectivity has been very much tied to the sense that knowledge is not *a priori*, that research can teach us things that we did not know, can offer surprises vis-à-vis our prior expectations.

The opposite of "objective" was taken to be "subjective," defined most often as the intrusion of the biases of the researcher into the collection and interpretation of the data. This was seen as distorting the data, and therefore of reducing its validity. How then could one be objective? In practice, different social sciences took different paths in the search for this objective. Two models were dominant. The more nomothetic social sciences emphasized removing the danger of subjectivity by maximizing the "hardness" of the data, that is, their measurability and comparability. This pushed them in the direction of collecting data about the present moment, where the researcher was most likely to be able to control the quality of the data. The more idiographic historians analyzed the issue differently. They argued in favor of primary sources, untouched (undistorted) by

intermediate persons (previous scholars) and in favor of data about which the researcher would be expected to feel more uninvolved personally. This pushed them in the direction of data created in the past, and therefore about the past, and in the direction of qualitative data, where the richness of the context could lead the researcher to understand the fullness of the motivations involved, as opposed to a situation where the researcher simply extrapolated his own model, seen as his own prejudices, onto the data.

There have always been doubts expressed about the degree to which either of these approaches allows us to obtain objective data. In recent decades, these doubts have been expressed quite loudly, the result of the changing situation in the social sciences that we have been describing. One kind of question that has been posed is "*whose* objectivity?" Posing the question in this way implies skepticism, even total doubt, about the possibility of achieving objective knowledge. Some have suggested that what is said to be objective knowledge is merely the knowledge of those who are socially and politically stronger.

We agree that all scholars are rooted in a specific social setting, and therefore inevitably utilize presuppositions and prejudices that interfere with their perceptions and interpretations of social reality. In this sense, there can be no "neutral" scholar. We also agree that a quasi-photographic representation of social reality is impossible. All data are selections from reality, based on the worldviews or theoretical models of the era, as filtered through the standpoints of particular groups in each era. In this sense, the bases of selection are historically constructed, and will always inevitably change as the world changes. If perfectly

uninvolved scholars reproducing a social world outside themselves is what we mean by objectivity, then we do not think such a phenomenon exists.

But there is another meaning to objectivity. Objectivity can be seen as the outcome of human learning, which represents the intent of scholarship and the evidence that it is possible. Scholars seek to convince each other of the validity of their findings and their interpretations. They appeal to the fact that they have used methods that are replicable by others, methods whose details they present openly to others. They appeal to the coherence and utility of their interpretations in explaining the largest amount of available data, larger amounts than alternative explanations. In short, they present themselves to the intersubjective judgment of all those who do research or think systematically about the particular subject.

We accept that this objective has not been realized fully, or even frequently, up to now. We accept that there have been systematic errors in the ways in which social scientists have proceeded in the past, and that many have used the mask of objectivity to pursue their subjective views. We have indeed tried to outline the nature of such continuing distortions. And we accept that these errors are not to be repaired by simple appeals to an ideal of intersubjectivity, but require strengthening the organizational underpinnings of the collective effort. What we do not accept is that social science is therefore to be reduced to a miscellany of private views, each equally valid.

We feel that pushing the social sciences in the direction of combatting the fragmentation of knowledge is also pushing it in the direction of a meaningful degree of objectivity. We feel that

to insist the social sciences move in the direction of inclusiveness (in terms of the recruitment of personnel, an openness to multiple cultural experiences, the scope of legitimate matters of study) is to further the possibility of more objective knowledge. We feel that to emphasize the historicity of all social phenomena is to diminish the tendency to make premature, and ultimately naive, abstractions from reality. We feel that persistently to question the subjective elements in our theoretical models is to increase the likelihood that these models will be relevant and useful. We feel that attention to the three issues we have previously discussed—a better appreciation of the validity of the ontological distinction between humans and nature, a broader definition of the boundaries within which social action occurs, and a proper balance of the antinomy of universalism and particularism—will all assist considerably our attempts to develop the kind of more valid knowledge that we seek to have.

In short, the fact that knowledge is socially constructed also means that more valid knowledge is socially possible. The recognition of the social bases of knowledge is not at all in contradiction to the concept of objectivity. On the contrary, we argue that the restructuring of the social sciences of which we have been speaking can amplify this possibility by taking into account the criticisms of past practice that have been made and by building structures that are more truly pluralist and universal.

IV. Conclusion: Restructuring the Social Sciences

We have tried in this report to address three things. The first is to show how social science was historically constructed as a form of knowledge and why it was divided into a specific set of relatively standard disciplines in a process that went on between the late eighteenth century and 1945. The second is to reveal the ways in which world developments in the period since 1945 raised questions about this intellectual division of labor and therefore reopened the issues of organizational structuring that had been put into place in the previous period. The third is to elucidate a series of basic intellectual questions about which there has been much recent debate and to suggest a stance that we think optimal in order to move forward. We now turn to discussing in what ways the social sciences might be intelligently restructured in the light of this history and the recent debates.

We should say at the outset we have no simple, clearcut for-

mulas, but primarily present a set of tentative proposals that seem to us to move in the right direction. There is unclarity today in the classification of the social sciences, the result of various blurrings whose historical roots we have tried to explain. To be sure, adjustments can always be made, and indeed are constantly being made, that can ameliorate some of the irrationalities. We certainly do not advocate abolishing the idea of divisions of labor within social science, and this may continue to take the form of disciplines. Disciplines serve a function, the function of disciplining minds and channeling scholarly energy. But there has to be some level of consensus about the validity of the dividing lines, if they are to work. We have tried to indicate the ways that the historical trajectory of the institutionalization of the social sciences led to some major exclusions of reality. Discussion about these exclusions has meant that the level of consensus concerning the traditional disciplines has diminished.

The classification of the social sciences was constructed around two antinomies which no longer command the wide support they once enjoyed: the antinomy between past and present, and the antinomy between idiographic and nomothetic disciplines. A third antinomy, that between the civilized and the barbaric world, has few public defenders anymore, but in practice still inhabits the mentalities of many scholars.

In addition to the intellectual debates surrounding the logic of the present disciplinary divisions, there is the problem of resources. The principal administrative mode of dealing with protests about the present divisions has been the multiplication of interdisciplinary programs of training and research, a process that is continuing unabated, as additional claims are still con-

stantly being made. But such multiplication requires personnel and money. However, the reality of the world of knowledge of the 1990's, especially as compared to that of earlier decades, is the constraint on resources imposed by fiscal crises in almost every state. While social scientists, because of the internal pressures generated by their intellectual dilemmas, are seeking to expand the number and variety of pedagogical and research structures, administrators are looking for ways to economize and therefore to consolidate. We are not suggesting that there has been too much multidisciplinary. Far from it. Rather, we are pointing out that organizationally this has gone less in the direction of unifying activities than in that of multiplying the number of university names and programs.

It is only a matter of time for the two contrary pressures to collide, and collide severely. We may hope that working social scientists will take a hard look at their present structures and try to bring their revised intellectual perceptions of a useful division of labor into line with the organizational framework they necessarily construct. If working social scientists do not do this, it will no doubt be done for them by administrators of the institutions of knowledge. To be sure, no one is, or is likely to be, in a position to decree wholesale reorganization, nor would it necessarily be a good thing if someone were. Nonetheless, the alternative to wholesale, sudden, and dramatic reorganization is not muddling through, expecting that somehow things will improve and work themselves out. This is because confusion, overlap, and resource shortage are all increasing simultaneously, and together they can add up to a major blockage in the furtherance of knowledge.

Let us remember a further reality of the present situation. While we have been describing a general pattern in the social sciences today, the detailed classifications vary country by country, often institution by institution. Furthermore, the degree of internal cohesiveness and flexibility of the disciplines varies today, both between disciplines and among the forms a discipline assumes around the world. The pressure for change therefore is not uniform. In addition, the pressure for change varies according to the theoretical perspectives of various social scientists, and according to the degree to which particular groups of social scientists are more or less directly involved in public service activities and concerns. Finally, different communities of social scientists find themselves in different political situations—national political situations, university political situations—and these differences affect their interests and therefore the degree to which they will favor or strongly oppose administrative reorganization.

No doubt, we could simply plead for more flexibility. This is the course that we have in fact been following for three or four decades now. There has been a certain amount of success in this regard, but the alleviation of the problem has not kept pace with its intensification. The reason is simple. The sense of safety in the disciplines tends more often than not to win out in the small group arenas that university departments constitute, and in which much of the real power of day-to-day decision making is located. Foundations may give grants to imaginative groups of scholars, but departments decide on promotions or course curricula. Good motivations pronounced by individuals are not always very efficacious in constraining organizational pressures.

What seems to be called for is less an attempt to transform organizational frontiers than to amplify the organization of intellectual activity without attention to current disciplinary boundaries. To be historical is after all not the exclusive purview of persons called historians. It is an obligation of all social scientists. To be sociological is not the exclusive purview of persons called sociologists. It is an obligation of all social scientists. Economic issues are not the exclusive purview of economists. Economic questions are central to any and all social scientific analyses. Nor is it absolutely sure that professional historians necessarily know more about historical explanations, sociologists more about social issues, economists more about economic fluctuations than other working social scientists. In short, we do not believe that there are monopolies of wisdom, nor zones of knowledge reserved to persons with particular university degrees.

There are emerging, to be sure, particular groupings of social scientists (and indeed non-social scientists) around specified interests or thematic areas, from population to health to language, and so forth. There are emerging groupings around the level of analysis (concentration on individual social action; concentration on large-scale, long-term social processes). Whether or not the thematic distinctions or the "micro/macro" distinction are ideal ways to organize the division of labor in social science knowledge today, they may be at least as plausible as distinguishing between the economic and the political, for example.

Where do opportunities for creative experimentation lie? There must be many which the reader can identify. We can point to some that are found at quite different loci on the academic

spectrum. At one extreme lies the United States, with the largest density of university structures in the world, and also a very strong internal political pressure both for and against restructuring the social sciences. At the other extreme lies Africa, where universities are of relatively recent construction and the traditional disciplines are not very strongly institutionalized. There the extreme paucity of public resources has created a situation in which the social science community has been forced to innovate. No doubt, there are particularities elsewhere in the world, which will permit equally interesting experimentation. One such arena is perhaps the post-Communist countries, where much academic reorganization is occurring. And no doubt, as Western Europe builds its community structures, there will be openings for creative experimentation in the university system.

In the United States, university structures are multiple, diverse, and decentralized. The issues raised by the call for multiculturalism, as well as the work in science studies, have already become the subject of public political debate. Issues raised by some of the new developments in science may possibly be caught in the political whirl by contagion. This provides an additional motive for working social scientists to take the issues in hand and to try thereby to keep passing (and passionate) political considerations from intruding too deeply in a process that is far too consequential to be decided on electoral motivations. The United States has had a long history of structural experimentation in the university systems—the invention of graduate schools in the late nineteenth century, a modification of the German seminar system; the invention of the system of free electives by

students, also in the late nineteenth century; the invention of social science research councils after the First World War; the invention of "core course" requirements after the First World War; the invention of area studies after the Second World War; the invention of women's studies and "ethnic" programs of multiple kinds in the 1970's. We are not taking a position for or against any of these inventions, but use them to illustrate the fact that there has been room in the U.S. university system to experiment. Perhaps the U.S. social science community can once again come up with imaginative solutions to the very real organizational problems we have been describing.

In the post-Communist countries, we are faced with a situation in which many erstwhile structures have been disbanded and certain university categories discarded. The financial pressures have been such that many scholars have moved outside the university structures to continue their work. As a consequence, here too there seems much room for experimentation. There is, of course, the risk that scholars will seek to adopt wholesale the existing structures of Western universities on the grounds that these represent a future that is different from their own immediate past, without recognizing the real difficulties in which the Western university systems are finding themselves. Nonetheless, there are some signs of experimentation. For example, in erstwhile East Germany, at Humboldt University in Berlin, the history department has become the first one in Germany, perhaps in Europe, to create a subdepartment of European ethnology, attempting thereby to give so-called historical anthropology a *droit de cité* inside of history. Historical anthropology has also become a formal category within the Ecole des Hautes

Etudes en Sciences Sociales in Paris, there not within history, but side by side as coequal with both history and social anthropology. At the same time, in a number of universities in various parts of the world, physical anthropology has come to be incorporated into human biology.

The European Community has placed considerable importance on strengthening links among its various universities, through exchange programs and the encouragement of new pan-European research projects. The universities are seeking to face creatively the question of the multiplicity of languages in scholarly use, and we may hope that the solutions they find may restore the linguistic richness of social scientific activity and offer some answers to one of the issues raised under the relationship of universalism and particularism. Insofar as there may be new universities created with a specifically European vocation (one example may be the Europa-Universität Viadrina in Frankfurt an Oder), there exists the opportunity to restructure the social sciences without having the problem of transforming existing organizational structures.

In Africa, a process of experimentation has already begun. The current situation in Africa, which in many ways looks dismal, has provided a foundation for alternative forms of scholarship which do not necessarily reflect the disciplinary approaches adopted in other regions of the world. Much of the research about socioeconomic evolution has required that research methods not be fixed but rather open to accommodate new knowledge and has encouraged cutting across the divide between the social and natural sciences. Experimentation has also occurred in other parts of the non-Western world. The same dilemma of

limited resources and lack of deep institutionalization of the social science disciplines led to the creation in the past thirty years of the very successful FLACSO (Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales) research and training structures throughout Latin America, which have operated as para-university institutions not beholden to traditional categories of knowledge.

The emergence of independent research institutions in Africa and Latin America, although they are still limited in number, has created an alternative avenue for undertaking research. One of the interesting features of some of these institutions is that they seek to join together expertise from the social and the natural sciences, showing little regard for disciplinary boundaries. They have also become major sources of policy ideas for government officials. This is now also occurring in the post-Communist countries. It has, of course, also occurred in Western countries. The Science Policy Research Unit at Sussex University has a curriculum that is divided half and half between the social and natural sciences.

While it is not yet possible to be sure that the emerging social science research in these new frameworks will result in coherent alternative groupings of knowledge, it is safe to say that in some parts of the world the old paradigms and the institutions that were set up to safeguard, nurture, and protect them never really worked or have broken down. Such regions did not fully enter the old intellectual cul-de-sacs and therefore they are now relatively more open spaces in which intellectual and institutional innovations are emerging. This self-organizing trend, emerging from relatively chaotic situations, may serve to encourage us to support other such self-organizing trends outside the accepted paths of the world university system.

We are not at a moment when the existing disciplinary structure has broken down. We are at a point when it has been questioned and when competing structures are trying to come into existence. We think the most urgent task is that there be comprehensive discussion of the underlying issues. This is the primary function of this report, to encourage such discussion and to elaborate the interconnected issues that have arisen. In addition, we think there are at least four kinds of structural developments which administrators of structures of social science knowledge (university administrators, social science research councils, ministries of education and/or research, educational foundations, UNESCO, international social science organizations, etc.) could and should encourage as useful paths towards intellectual clarification and eventual fuller restructuring of the social sciences:

1. *The expansion of institutions, within or allied to the universities, which would bring together scholars for a year's work in common around specific urgent themes.* They already exist, of course, but in far too limited a number. One possible model is the ZiF (Zentrum für interdisziplinäre Forschung) at Bielefeld University in Germany, which has done this since the 1970's. Recent topics for the year have included body and soul, sociological and biological models of change, utopias. The crucial thing is that such year-long research groups should be carefully prepared in advance and should recruit their membership widely (in terms of disciplines, geography, cultural and linguistic zones, and gender), while still emphasizing enough coherence with previous views so that the interchange can be fruitful.
2. *The establishment of integrated research programs within university structures that cut across traditional lines, have*

specific intellectual objectives, and have funds for a limited period of time (say about five years). This is different from traditional research centers, which have unlimited lives and are expected to be fund-raising structures. The ad hoc quality of such programs, which would, however, last five years, would be a mechanism of constant experimentation, which, once initially funded, would free the participants from this concern. In the multitude of requests for new programs, instead of immediately starting new teaching programs, perhaps what is needed is that the proponents be allowed to demonstrate the utility and validity of their approaches by this kind of research program.

3. *The compulsory joint appointment of professors.* Today the norm is that professors are affiliated with one department, usually one in which they themselves have an advanced degree. Occasionally, and more or less as a special concession, some professors have a "joint appointment" with a second department. Quite often this is a mere courtesy, and the professor is not encouraged to participate too actively in the life of the "second" or "secondary" department. We would like to turn this around entirely. We would envisage a university structure in which everyone was appointed to two departments, the one in which he/she had his degree and a second one in which he/she had shown interest or done relevant work. This would, of course, result in an incredible array of different combinations. Furthermore, in order to make sure that no department erected barriers, we would require that each department have at least 25 percent of its members who did *not* have a degree in that discipline. If the professors then had *full* rights in both departments, the intellectual debate within each department, the curricula offered, the points

of view that were considered plausible or legitimate would all change as a result of this simple administrative device.

4. *Joint work for graduate students.* The situation is the same for graduate students as it is for professors. They normally work within one department, and are often actively discouraged from doing any work at all in a second department. Only in a few departments in a few universities are students allowed to wander outside. We would turn this around too. Why not make it mandatory for students seeking a doctorate in a given discipline to take a certain number of courses, or do a certain amount of research, that is defined as being within the purview of a second department? This too would result in an incredible variety of combinations. Administered in a liberal but serious fashion, it would transform the present and the future.

While the first two recommendations we make would require financial commitments on someone's part, they should not be too onerous as a percentage of total expenditures on the social sciences. The third and the fourth recommendations would be virtually without any budgetary impact whatsoever. We do not intend these recommendations to be limiting. We intend them to encourage moves in the correct direction. There are no doubt other devices that can also move in this direction, and we encourage others to propose them. What is most important, we repeat, is that the underlying issues be debated—clearly, openly, intelligently, and urgently.