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Towards a reflexive intelligence of emerging sociology in France around 1900

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ABSTRACT: *Recent years have seen a proliferation of publications reconsidering the emergence of sociology in France. The present review discusses and compares three of these works: S. Mosbah-Natanson's bibliometric study on the fashion of sociology around 1900 (2017a); Th. Hirsch's history of the idea of social time from the Durkheimians to Les Annales (2016a); and M. Joly's enquiry into a purported sociological revolution in France and Germany at around the same time (2017a). Pushing respectively for a sociological, a historical and an epistemological history of sociology, they represent three distinct ways of renewing the historiography of the social sciences. The article argues that qualities and limitations of these works alike suggest two challenges for the history of sociology: (1) integrating sociological, historical and epistemological competences in a comprehensive intelligence of sociological texts; and (2) accounting for the reflexivity involved in a social history of the social sciences.*

KEYWORDS: *History of French sociology – social time – sociological revolution – reflexivity – Jean-Claude Perrot*

VERS UNE INTELLIGENCE RÉFLEXIVE DE LA SOCIOLOGIE NAISSANTE EN FRANCE AUTOUR DE 1900

RÉSUMÉ : Ces dernières années ont vu la parution d'ouvrages qui réexaminent la naissance de la sociologie en France. Cette chronique analyse et compare trois de ces travaux : l'étude bibliométrique sur la mode de la sociologie autour de 1900 de S. Mosbah-Natanson (2017a); l'histoire de l'idée d'un temps social des durkheimiens aux *Annales* de Th. Hirsch (2016a); l'enquête sur une prétendue révolution

sociologique en France et Allemagne à la même époque de M. Joly (2017a). En préconisant tour à tour une histoire sociologique, historique et épistémologique de la sociologie, ces trois ouvrages présentent autant de manières de renouveler l'historiographie des sciences sociales. L'article montre que leurs qualités comme leurs défauts font ressortir deux défis pour l'histoire de la sociologie : (1) intégrer les compétences sociologique, historique et épistémologique dans une intelligence compréhensive des textes sociologiques ; (2) rendre compte de la réflexivité impliquée dans une histoire sociale des sciences sociales.

MOTS-CLÉS : Histoire de la sociologie française – temps social – révolution sociologique – réflexivité – Jean-Claude Perrot

FÜR EINE REFLEXIVE INTELLIGENZ DER ENTSTEHENDEN SOZIOLOGIE IN FRANKREICH UM 1900

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG: In den letzten Jahren ist eine ganze Reihe von Werken erschienen, die von Neuem die Entstehung der Soziologie in Frankreich untersuchen. Die vorliegende Literaturschau diskutiert und vergleicht drei dieser Arbeiten: S. Mosbah-Natansons bibliometrische Studie zur Mode der Soziologie um 1900 (2017a); Th. Hirschs Geschichte der Idee sozialer Zeit von den durkheimiens bis zu Les Annales; und M. Jolys Untersuchung zu einer im selben Zeitraum stattfindenden sogenannten soziologischen Revolution in Frankreich und Deutschland (2017a). Diese Studien bieten jeweils eine soziologische, eine historische und eine epistemologische Soziologiegeschichte und stellen damit drei unterschiedliche Weisen dar, die Historiografie der Sozialwissenschaften zu erneuern. Der Artikel argumentiert, dass Stärken wie Schwächen dieser Arbeiten auf zwei Herausforderungen für die Soziologiegeschichte verweisen: (1) die Integration soziologischer, historischer und epistemologischer Kompetenzen zu einer umfassenden Intelligenz soziologischer Texte; und (2) die Reflexivität, die mit einer sozialen Geschichte der Sozialwissenschaften einhergeht.

SCHLAGWORTE: Geschichte der französischen Soziologie – soziale Zeit – soziologische Revolution – Reflexivität – Jean-Claude Perrot

朝向 1900 年前后法国社会学兴起时的反身性智慧

摘要: 近年来, 重新思考法国社会学兴起的著作不断出现。本文分析并比较其中三件: S. Mosbah-Natanson 对1900年前后社会学时尚之文献

计量分析(2017a)、Th. Hirsch 从图尔干学派到《年鉴》的社会时间思想史(2016a), 以及M. Joly 对约在此时发生于法国与德国的所谓社会学革命进行探究(2017a)。这些作品从社会学、历史学与认识论等方面, 各自提出对社会学史的观点, 也代表着在社会科学史书写的更新工作上, 三种截然不同的方式。本文主张, 这些作品的质量与限制, 能让我们看见社会学史的两大大挑战:(1) 将社会学、历史学与认识论的能力, 融合在社会学文本具包容性的智慧中;(2) 说明在某种社会科学的社会史中涉及的反身性。

关键字: 法国社会学史 - 社会时间 - 社会学革命 - 反身性 - 让-克劳德·佩罗 (Jean-Claude Perrot)

A REINVIGORATED INTEREST IN THE EMERGENCE OF SOCIOLOGY

Recent years have seen a proliferation of publications reconsidering the emergence of sociology in France.¹ These works extend our previous knowledge both in breadth and in depth. The picture has broadened in that hitherto neglected historical agents, institutions, journals, historical surveys (*enquêtes*) and transnational exchanges have entered the stage. And it has deepened in that scholars have paid attention to the minutiae of the most various contexts, to unpublished correspondences, to biographical and social trajectories as well as to mundane scholarly practices.² Beside flourishing specialized research

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- 1 On HIRSCH (Thomas), 2016, *Le Temps des sociétés. D'Émile Durkheim à Marc Bloch*, Paris, Éditions de l'École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, coll. « En temps & lieux », 472 p.; JOLY (Marc), 2017, *La Révolution sociologique. De la naissance d'un régime de pensée à la crise de la philosophie (XIX^e-XX^e siècle)*, Paris, La Découverte, coll. « Laboratoire des Sciences Sociales », 584 p.; MOSBAH-NATANSON (Sébastien), 2017, *Une « mode » de la sociologie. Publications et vocations sociologiques en France en 1900*, Paris, Classiques Garnier, coll. « Bibliothèque des sciences sociales », 298 p. The order in which the books are presented does not correspond to the chronology of their publication, but to the needs of my discussion. The varying length of the reviews correlates with the length of the books and does not imply any judgement about their respective importance. The review is written in English to help promote the reviewed works beyond the francophone sphere. All translations from French are mine. Page numbers in brackets refer to the book under discussion, if not otherwise indicated. I am grateful to Éric Brian, Johan Heilbron and Elisabeth Nemeth as well as to Matthias Fringant, Robert Frühstückl, Tommy Stöckel and Sébastien Zerilli for commenting on first drafts of this text. The responsibility for the views expressed remains, of course, with me.
- 2 To name just a few of these recent publications, see BERT, 2012; SALMON, dir., 2014; TOPALOV, 2015; see also the various special issues and edited volumes on figures such as René Worms (AUDREN and BORLANDI, dir., 2015), Gaston Richard (ROL, dir., 2015; PAPILOUD and ROL, 2019), Célestin Bouglé (MARCEL, dir., 2017) and Henri Hubert (OLIVIER, dir., 2018). There

on particular aspects of the history of French sociology, also new synthetic overviews have become available.³ This publishing activity reflects a situation where the history and sociology of the social sciences becomes increasingly a research field of its own, with its own specialized journals, its own book series, large collective research projects and an institutionalization within national and international sociological associations.⁴ The current interest in the history of sociology also clearly has a transnational dimension with, in particular, a notable parallel between France and German-speaking countries.⁵ The reasons for this recent development seem manifold and would demand a socio-historical enquiry in its own right.

In any case, the three works under review can be conceived as indicators for a renewal in the history and sociology of the French social sciences. They are written by three relatively early-career researchers (two of the three books are reworked versions of doctoral dissertations)⁶ and share roughly an object –

are also signs of a revived interest in the relatively well-researched *L'Année sociologique* (BÉRA, MARCEL and MOSBAH-NATANSON, dir., 2019; HIRSCH, 2018a).

- 3 See especially HEILBRON, 2015, 2020. Taken together with Heilbron's earlier *The Rise of Social Theory* (1995), it retraces the history of French sociology from the 17th century up to the 2000s in an exemplary combination of intellectual and social history. This important *longue durée* account of French sociology could not be included in the present review as the selection focusses only on the turn of the 20th century. For a discussion on Heilbron's book with Sébastien Mosbah-Natanson and Marc Joly, see MOSBAH-NATANSON, 2017b; JOLY, 2017b; HEILBRON, 2017.
- 4 For journals, see the *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* (1965), the *Revue d'histoire des sciences humaines* (1999) or *Serendipities* (2014). For book series, see *Sociology Transformed* (2014, Palgrave Macmillan), *Zyklus – Jahrbuch für Theorie und Geschichte der Soziologie* (2015, Springer VS) or *Socio-Historical Studies of the Social and Human Sciences* (2018, Palgrave Macmillan). For research projects, see the European Union Seventh Framework Programme project "International Cooperation in the Social Sciences and Humanities" on the institutionalization of the social sciences in Europe after 1945 (2013-2017). For the institutionalization within sociological associations, see the research groups on the history of sociology within the *American Sociological Association* (1999), the *Association française de sociologie* (2016), the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Soziologie* (2019) as well as, early on, the *International Sociological Association* (1971).
- 5 In German language, the recent tendency towards a sociological history of sociology has found its emblematic expression in a unique three-volume handbook on the history of German-speaking sociology (MOEBIUS and PLODER, dir., 2017, 2018; HOLZHAUSER, PLODER, MOEBIUS and RÖMER, 2019; see already FLECK, 1999 and the above mentioned *Zyklus* series). For a review and further background on this handbook, see STRAUSS, 2021; MOEBIUS and STRAUSS, 2021. In view of this, Joly's severe depiction of the state of the history of sociology in Germany (JOLY, 2017a, p. 21, n. 2) is no longer adequate to the current situation.
- 6 There is also a certain degree of mutual exchange between the three authors, see MOSBAH-NATANSON, 2017a; JOLY, 2017b; HIRSCH, 2018b; JOLY, 2020, p. 131-192.

emerging sociology in France around 1900. They complement each other in various respects: the selection of their historical agents, their sources, and their focal points. Importantly, all three of them engage in advanced historiographical considerations. They seek novel ways of writing the history of the social sciences which would be relieved from the biases of previous historiography. As I shall argue, they share several tendencies: (1) a diversification of the history of sociology on multiple levels, (2) its integration into the history, sociology, and philosophy of science, (3) a perspective going beyond disciplinary divisions, (4) an attention for transnational circulation and comparison, and (5) an interest for the large-scale epistemological transformations accompanying the emergence of sociology. At the same time, the three books differ considerably in the way they spell out the attempted innovation. The review will contrast them as offering respectively a sociological (Mosbah-Natanson), a historical (Hirsch) and an epistemological (Joly) history of sociology. Discussing these three works together thus allows not only for elucidating both the specific qualities and limitations of each book. It also provides an opportunity for sketching some present-day options in (re-)writing the history of (French) sociology.

In particular, the discussion will emphasize two unresolved challenges encountered in these works: (A) First, the three books raise the question of how to combine intellectual history, sociology of science and epistemology within concrete empirical enquiries in the history of the social sciences. How to account for the emergence of sociology at once historically, sociologically and philosophically and satisfy, as far as possible, the respective scholarly standards? While the reviewed works show the necessity for something like an integrated intellectual history going beyond the established academic divisions between history, sociology and philosophy, they also fall short of it, at least in some respects. I shall argue that Jean-Claude Perrot's proposal for intellectual history as a "concrete history of abstraction" can serve in this context as a fruitful reading grid, indicating a sort of ideal. Formulated initially against naïve historiographical presuppositions in the history of economic thought, it offers, by way of analogy, a reference frame for an integrated "intelligence" of the emergence of sociology.⁷

(B) Second, all three books engage in a reflexive history and sociology of sociology. They look at sociology as an editorial social fact, enquire into the socio-historical conditions of social conceptions of time or seek a sociological understanding of a sociological conceptual regime. Investigating the origins of

7 PERROT, 1992a, 1998. See also the introduction to the present issue by Éric Brian. In the anglophone context, the call for integration has been voiced in discussions about an "integrated history and philosophy of science", see e.g. STADLER, dir., 2017.

sociology, they touch upon the historical, social, and epistemological conditions which enable their own enquiries in the first place. Which are the methodological and epistemological implications of this sort of reflexivity⁸? Does it relativize the findings of these studies in that their own presuppositions appear to be historically contingent? Or does it, on the contrary, corroborate them in that these presuppositions are objectified and thus controlled? I shall argue that in the works in question the challenge of the reflexive entanglement with the object “sociology” is not always satisfactorily handled, leading in each case to peculiar problems. While this review is not the place to provide systematic answers, it seems that the issue of reflexivity will have to be addressed by any attempt at an integrated history, sociology and epistemology of the social sciences.

SOCIOLOGY AS A LABEL AND AN EDITORIAL FACT

Sébastien Mosbah-Natanson's *Une « mode » de la sociologie* invites us, first of all, to take a step back from preconceived ideas about the emergence of sociology and ask ourselves what we are actually referring to when talking about “sociology” around 1900.⁹ Right in the sense of the Durkheimian dismissal of preconceptions (*prénotions*) (247), the author faces head-on the apparently simple, but indeed intricate question: “What do we call sociology in the 1890s

8 While the *issue* of the self-application of sociology can be traced back at least to Auguste Comte's initial conception of a science thus called, it is over the last forty or fifty years that the *term* “reflexivity” has become an omnipresent catchword in the social and human sciences. The history of this process remains largely to be written (see GINGRAS, 2004 for some elements). The present discussion is mainly influenced by Pierre Bourdieu's account of the issue (see e.g. BOURDIEU and WACQUANT, 1992; BOURDIEU, 1995, 1997, 2001).

9 Sébastien Mosbah-Natanson is *maître de conférences* in sociology at Sorbonne Université since 2017 and member of the Groupe d'Etude des Méthodes de l'Analyse Sociologique de la Sorbonne (GEMASS). He is also the co-editor of *Les Sciences sociales au prisme de l'extrême droite* (MOSBAH-NATANSON and CRÉPON, dir., 2008). The book under discussion is a substantially revised version of his doctoral dissertation in sociology « *La sociologie est à la mode* ». *Productions et producteurs de sociologie en France autour de 1900* (supervised by Philippe Steiner and defended at the University of Paris IV in 2007). The claims of Mosbah-Natanson's book have been circulating for some time (*via* MOSBAH-NATANSON, 2011) and have already had an impact on recent historiography of sociology (see the references to Mosbah-Natanson in the works of Joly and Hirsch; for an application of his bibliometric approach to the German-speaking context, see FEUERHAHN 2014). *Une « mode » de la sociologie* has appeared in the book series « Bibliothèque des sciences sociales » at Classiques Garnier, directed by sociologists Philippe Steiner and François Vatin. For the reception of the book so far, see CHENU, 2017; FRINGANT, 2017b; HIRSCH, 2018b; ZERILLI, 2018; MARCEL, 2019.

and 1900s in France?” (43) He seeks an answer to this question by looking into the quantitative and qualitative features of the *use* of the term “sociology” between 1840 and 1925. The starting point of the enquiry is a widely shared perception around 1900 of a fashion of the label “sociology” (9-12 for examples). Mosbah-Natanson seeks to test this perception (123) and identify the social realities it refers to. He shows that the sense of a fashion of sociology corresponds in fact to a significant rise in the use of the term on the editorial market in the 1890s and 1900s and to the emergence of various new forms of intellectual “vocations” for the domain thus called. These various vocations taken together are thought to explain the fashion of sociology around 1900 (21, 129).

Une « mode » de la sociologie divides into four extensive chapters which constitute, in fact, two parts. The first part describes the label “sociology” as an editorial fact (*fait éditorial*) and analyses it through the publications using this term in their title. The second part focusses on the historical agents engaging in sociological publications and studies their various intellectual vocations and identities.¹⁰ In the first chapter, Mosbah-Natanson presents a critique of established historiography of sociology. He diagnoses most of existing research with “durkheimocentrism” (22 and *passim*).¹¹ This “theoretical, methodological and memorial bias” (23) consists in focussing largely on the Durkheimian group as the main agent of the academic institutionalization of sociology within the Faculty of Letters. It omits various other forms of sociology as they were practiced, for example, in the Law Faculties or in extra-academic institutions such as the *École des hautes études* (1900). Measured against the purported half-success of the Durkheimian strategy of institutionalizing sociology, these other activities are indiscriminately presented as “amateurish” (42). Durkheimocentrism thus tends towards a presentist and teleological “winners’ history” (20, 39). Against this historiography – which the author doesn’t mean to dismiss entirely, but rather to complement (38) – he formulates his own “renewed approach of the sociological movement” (23). In particular, he urges to connect the historiography of sociology with recent approaches in the sociology of science. He draws on the theory of social knowledge practices, the principles of impartiality

10 These two parts of the book correspond, according to the Durkheimian distinction, to the “social morphology” (as the author suggests himself, 54) and the “social physiology” of sociology as a social fact. Accordingly, the first part investigates the material and measurable traces of “sociology” as an editorial fact, the second part the practices and collective representations of historical agents. For this basic distinction, see MAUSS, 1927, p. 129-130 and BRIAN, 2012a, p. 61-63.

11 Emblematic of this “durkheimocentric” approach are the consecutive issues of the *Revue française de sociologie*, edited by Philippe Besnard in the 1970s and 1980s (BESNARD, dir., 1976, 1979, 1981, 1985) and the works of Victor Karady (KARADY, 1976, 1979).

and symmetry regarding past science, the theory of scientific/intellectual movements, the notion of intellectual self-concepts and, most importantly, on bibliometric methods.¹² In this perspective, he sets himself the task of determining the structure and the boundaries of what he defines as the “sociological movement” around 1900: “the collective and plural effort which aims at developing an enterprise of scientific knowledge of the social [...] and which is supported by agents who differ in their theoretical and institutional affiliations, but who share a cognitive ambition” (50).¹³ Importantly, Mosbah-Natanson doesn’t start from a substantial definition of sociology, but from the use of the word “sociology” in the titles of monographs published in the relevant time period. This procedure – which he qualifies as profoundly Durkheimian (53-54) – is supposed to reveal the real complexity of the sociological movement and avoid the presentist pitfalls of durkheimocentric historiography.

The second chapter then explores an original corpus of 428 works published between 1841 and 1925 by 238 authors which use the term “sociology” (and cognate labels such as “science sociale”) in their title (mainly monographs and so-called *brochures*). This corpus is compiled on the basis of the 19th century *Catalogue de la librairie française* by Otto Lorenz which classifies the entirety of French publications according to their subject matter (e.g. the section “socialisme, science sociale” which contains most sociological publications). Mosbah-Natanson applies a set of keywords (65) to the titles of the works cited in this catalogue in order to obtain the relevant sociological publications. He then limits the corpus to those works published in France (378 publications, 211 authors, 68). He shows that the last decade of the 19th century sees an “editorial explosion” (69) in sociological publications. 1893 is the pivotal year where production accelerates, and “sociology” becomes a generally accepted label (in comparison to “science sociale”). Analysing the set of authors then enables him to revisit established claims about the dominance of the Durkheimians and the importance of philosophy for emerging sociology. Mosbah-Natanson also offers a detailed typology of the publications in question. He insists on the material variety of types of publications

12 See respectively CAMIC, GROSS, and LAMONT, dir., 2011; FRICKEL and GROSS, 2005; GROSS, 2002; GINGRAS, 2013.

13 The original definition goes as follows: « On se propose alors d’appeler ‘mouvement sociologique’ l’effort collectif, pluriel, visant à développer une entreprise de connaissance scientifique du social dans la France de la fin du XIX^e siècle et porté par des acteurs aux affiliations théoriques et institutionnelles diverses mais qui partagent une ambition cognitive, et cela dans un espace intellectuel et académique en transformation et dans une diversité de lieux et de pratiques intellectuelles. » (50) See for comparison the definition of “scientific/intellectual movements” in FRICKEL and GROSS, 2005, p. 206.

(monographs, collective publications, *brochures*) and on their various purposes. The most important part of the corpus is made up of books (258 of 378 publications). Within the specifically French production (book publications in France by French authors), Mosbah-Natanson applies a model of “scientific texts” by Jean-Michel Berthelot (104)¹⁴ in order to measure the involvement of the publications in the scientific sociological movement. In this way, he distinguishes three poles of sociological production (111): a dominant scientific pole (around 90 of 150 books using “sociology” between 1893 and 1925), an extra-scientific pole (around 25 books) and an intermediary pole (around 30 books which are only partially meeting the criteria for scientific texts).

The third and fourth chapter complement this typology of publications with a typology of intellectual “vocations” for sociology. Taking up a remark by Durkheim from 1897, Mosbah-Natanson hereby understands the specific form of and reason for investing in sociological activity (129).¹⁵ The emphasis on vocations allows for avoiding the “paradigm of academic institutionalization and professionalization” (129) linked to the Durkheim school. It brings in the various “intellectual identities” and practices of the agents concerned. Accordingly, Mosbah-Natanson engages in a socio-biographical study of the population of authors constructed from the corpus of sociological publications. He distinguishes five different vocations which are grouped quantitatively into two major forms (the academic and the public vocation) and three minor forms (the positivistic, Leplaysian and catholic vocation). The academic vocation (135-171) is quantitatively dominant and relatively well-known. It includes the Durkheimian group but goes well beyond it and features varied intellectual backgrounds, identities, strategies, career trajectories and intensities of involvement. By contrast, the public vocation (171-201) has been neglected in the literature. It cannot be reduced to simple amateurism but takes part in the scientific pole of production according to Berthelot’s criteria. These public authors have a peculiar profile in terms of their social origins (bourgeois or aristocratic), their profession (in the administration or journalism), their sociabilities (participation in scholarly societies and academies) and the intellectual

14 Berthelot names three criteria: (1) the author of the text in question must show an explicit intention of knowledge, (2) his contribution must be acknowledged by a scholarly community and (3) it must appear in a scientific context of publication (BERTHELOT, 2003, p. 33). Berthelot concedes that these criteria “depend on what counts, at a given moment, as knowledge and science” (*idem*).

15 The typology of vocations is based on the set of authors who are defined as participating in the scientific sociological movement by publishing at least two times between 1880 and 1920 (132-133). The analysis thus applies exclusively to vocations *within* the sociological movement.

orientation of their sociological activities (more practically oriented, starting from problems in political economy). Gabriel Tarde and René Worms are the most prominent – albeit “hybrid” (172) – exponents of this vocation. Between the academic and the public vocation Mosbah-Natanson observes a competition for the legitimate definition of sociology (191).

The three minor vocations (40 publications in all) are then located “at the fringes” of the scientific sociological movement (204-229). In each case – the positivistic, Leplaysian, and catholic vocation – they are part of a peculiar intellectual tradition and their authors have certain generational, professional or intellectual properties. Finally, Mosbah-Natanson also offers an overview of the diverse set of authors and publications (around 40) which do not enter in any of the above categories and are external to the sociological movement (229-244). The use of “sociology” in these “socio-political essays” (231) is again analysed into a strong and a weak use. The former consists in drawing rhetorically on science in order to legitimize particular political views (e.g. nationalist or Fourierist). The latter consists in using “sociology” only in the title and without any further definition. This illustrates the absence of a scientific monopoly on the term “sociology” at the time (245). Mosbah-Natanson thus shows that in order to understand the use of “sociology” around 1900 in all its complexity, historiography has to go beyond the Durkheimian group, beyond the academic space, and even beyond the scientific space of production. Only taken together in their diversity do the various vocations and uses explain the editorial fashion of the term “sociology”.

Mosbah-Natanson’s *Une « mode » de la sociologie* offers an immensely rich and useful contribution to our knowledge on the rise of French sociology. It provides an innovative, thoroughly construed and exhaustively documented “cartography” (53-54) of French sociology around 1900 which might serve as a map for future research. First, an obvious merit of the author’s bibliometric approach is that it introduces several hitherto neglected or almost unknown authors and publications – the “forgotten ones of historiography” (38). Compared to established historiography, Mosbah-Natanson claims to capture around 100 new authors and 130 new publications (74-75). The book thus extends the scope of existing historiography considerably. This extension concerns authors who partake to different degrees in sociology as a scientific enterprise as well as authors who are writing in an extra-academic context with primarily political or literary interests. Mosbah-Natanson’s procedure not only allows for attributing some relative weight to the authors and their products on the editorial market by considering the number, types and places of their publications (72). It also provides resources for accounting for the specific dynamics between the different uses of “sociology” by putting them in the context of a “double struggle” (17): an internal struggle among the authors of the scientific

pole for the monopoly of the legitimate definition of scientific sociology; and an external struggle between those scientific sociologists and the authors making extra-scientific use of “sociology”. This is certainly a neglected issue in the literature which becomes only visible through the attention for the fashion of the label “sociology”. On the one hand, the historical agents’ discourse on this fashion is founded in the social reality of the sensible increase in publications. On the other hand, attributing a “merely fashionable” use of sociology to other authors served at the time as a weapon in a struggle to define legitimate sociology. Therefore such statements must be taken with precaution, if we don’t want to reproduce historical battles – for example by characterizing all of non-Durkheimian sociology as amateurish – and drift into presentism.

Second, Mosbah-Natanson’s book represents a forceful effort to integrate the historiography of sociology squarely into the wider sociology and history of science and, in fact, make it a special case of it (55-56). An original feature of the work consists in synthesizing several methodological approaches which are rarely seen together in the history of sociology. Most obvious is, of course, the application of bibliometric methods which are mainly associated with 20th century sociology of science. But there are further unexpected combinations, e.g., of the history of books,¹⁶ Bourdieusian field theory, prosopographical socio-biographical enquiry or the theories of scientific/intellectual movements and of intellectual self-concepts. This goes hand in hand with well-argued criticisms of existing historiography of sociology, for example of its “paradigm of academic institutionalization and professionalization” (129). The author’s focus on the plurality of vocations helps effectively to avoid an anachronistic and teleological definition of sociologists by profession (55, 129-130, 162). This is undoubtedly an important move to do justice to the relatively fluid transformations in the space of academic disciplines at the time. As we shall see, the problem of how to talk about emerging sociology in the absence of institutional and professional criteria also plays a central role in the works of Hirsch and Joly. All in all, Mosbah-Natanson’s work thus contains a strong case for a sociological history of sociology which looks at sociology itself as a social fact (56). Taking the label “sociology” as an “external criterion” (53), the author engages in a resolutely Durkheimian perspective to surmount – in a somewhat paradoxical move (43) – the ambient durkheimocentrism in existing historiography (53-56).

Nonetheless, some aspects of *Une « mode » de la sociologie* deserve critical discussion. First, how representative is Mosbah-Natanson’s corpus of sociological products and producers of the overall sociological production of the time? To put it in the author’s metaphor, how well does his “cartography”

16 CHARTIER and MARTIN, dir., 1990; PERROT, 1992b.

capture the actual “landscape” (249)? The author notes himself that the corpus excludes not only certain canonical publications such as Durkheim’s *Division du travail social* (65-66), but also some classical authors (e.g. Mauss, Simiand, Halbwachs who feature only indirectly as co-authors of the second series of *L’Année sociologique*, 76-77). At the same time, he argues for the representativity of his corpus by showing that it covers, if not all canonical publications, at least all of the classical authors cited in established historiography (74-75) – and many more beyond. Of course, excluding publications which simply do not correspond to the external criterion of using “sociology” in their title is the very idea of Mosbah-Natanson’s nominalist strategy. It is intended to precisely remedy the biases of a classics-oriented “history of sociological ideas”. And it is certainly instructive to push this approach to its end. But on the other hand, the corpus also excludes certain modes of production, most importantly, publishing articles (76-77). It is primarily made up of monographs and does not include journal publications (except for those published independently as *brochures*). The author argues that it is precisely because existing historiography had focussed on journals and articles that it could not grasp the entire space of sociological production (51).¹⁷ However, the precise relationship between book and article publications is not further explored. What is the respective quantity, status and function of monograph and article publications in sociology around 1900? What did it mean at the time to write books or articles and which was the importance of these respective modes of production in the scholarly areas the contributors to “sociology” came from?¹⁸ Is the sociological article a type of publication specific to the scientific pole or is it a broader phenomenon? Would considering articles introduce a change in the quantitative relations between the three poles of production? Given the importance of scholarly journals for emerging disciplines such as psychology and sociology at the time, it would seem important to complement Mosbah-Natanson’s “history of the sociological book” (249) with a “history of the sociological article” (and other types of publications, e.g., manuals and reference works). The absence of journals sheds at least some doubt on whether the corpus is finally fully appropriate for studying the emergence of sociology as a new area of knowledge. The author indicates the way “from journals to monographs” (50), but in the end it

17 Emblematic of this approach *via* scholarly journals is MUCCHIELLI, 1998, see especially p. 17-21.

18 On the importance of publishing monographs issued from doctoral dissertations in the area of philosophy, as well as on types of publication and career paths, see FABIANI, 1988, p. 81-91.

is not entirely clear how his study of books compares to and integrates into the existing historiography based on articles and journals.¹⁹

A second point concerns the determination of the structure and limits of the *scientific* sociological movement. Mosbah-Natanson clearly extends what has hitherto been considered as scientific sociology. While this has often been identified with Durkheimian sociology, Mosbah-Natanson starts from a more relativistic definition, using Frickel and Gross's theory of "scientific/intellectual movements" and Jean-Michel Berthelot's definition of "scientific texts" (62, 104-107). However, it is not always clear which criteria are used for determining whether an author or a current belongs to the scientific sociological movement or not. Is it the scientific quality of their publications, the intensity of their investment measured by the number of their publications (132-133) or their intellectual self-concept or vocation? An explicit elaboration of the connection between, on the one hand, the analysis of publications into a scientific, extrascientific and intermediary pole and, on the other, the analysis of vocations into five different forms would probably have dissolved the issue. Also, a graphical rendering of Mosbah-Natanson's cartography of the sociological movement and of the various ways of dividing up his corpus would have been useful. For example, it would have been interesting to know who and how many of the newly discovered authors finally belong to sociology as a scientific movement (Mosbah-Natanson mentions authors such as Guillaume-Léonce Duprat, Louis Bourdeau or Georges Palante, 112). Arguably, this is one of the most interesting subsets of the corpus for an intellectual history of sociology as a science.

As it stands, one might also worry that Mosbah-Natanson's definition of the "sociological movement" is too comprehensive. In the end, this movement excludes only around 40 publications which do not correspond to any criteria of scientific texts and are published by non-invested "transient producers" (133). For being a participant of the movement, it seems sufficient to share "a minimal consensus on the definition of sociology as a new form of knowledge with scientific ambition" (17). But then the very morphology of the word "sociology" as well as its first public use by Comte suggest precisely such a scientific ambition (an issue discussed by Joly, chapter 9). The risk of the methodologically relativistic strategy is to end up with a definition of the sociological

19 In fact, Mosbah-Natanson's 2007 dissertation contains an extensive last chapter on sociological journals. Regrettably, it has not made it into the book version. This chapter argues that previous historiography has focussed on only a handful of the almost one hundred journals using "sociology" or "social science" in their title between 1880 and 1920. Mosbah-Natanson proposes a statistical study of this space of sociological journals and distinguishes again a scientific, a political-practical and a literary pole (MOSBAH-NATANSON, 2007, p. 392-470).

movement where anybody using the term “sociology” with some precision becomes *eo ipso* part of a *scientific* movement. Mosbah-Natanson’s notion of the sociological movement seems, in any case, too broad to meet Frickel and Gross’s criteria of “scientific/intellectual movements”.²⁰ Participants of the sociological movement as presented by the author share neither a common research programme, nor a common adversary, a collective identity or a collective organization. They are heterogeneous to the point that it becomes even difficult to speak of a collective effort. Talking nevertheless of a “movement” might come at the risk of the notion of “scientific movement” losing its definite sense. In the end, it might have been more appropriate to distinguish various movements according to the intellectual vocations of the authors within the overall landscape of the scientific uses of “sociology”.

Finally, there is a peculiar tension in Mosbah-Natanson’s nominalist approach which raises questions as to how far we can go with this strategy. Put bluntly, is everything which has been called “sociology” *really* sociology? How – as the author asks himself (249-250) – mark the difference between a Durkheim and a Combes de Lestrade or a Louis Garriguet? While Mosbah-Natanson clearly extends what we conceive as “sociology”, he certainly does not want to draw the relativistic conclusion that all the authors discussed are equivalent (43, 151-152). Also in his own practice he is not impartial and clearly adopts a Durkheimian (not a Tardian, Wormsian, or any other) framework (43, 53). The tension is probably best resumed in the peculiar attempt of overcoming historiographical durkheimocentrism with methodological Durkheimism. However, having engaged in a (methodologically) relativistic enquiry, how can Mosbah-Natanson justify his preference for a broadly Durkheimian approach? Since he puts the “history of sociological ideas” into brackets (e.g. 23), it is not clear which criteria would allow him for doing so. If Durkheim is conceived as the sociologist who provided effectively “the most solid scientific foundations” for the discipline (38), wouldn’t it be necessary to understand precisely *why* this was the case and why these foundations are still of some use? Answering these questions would have necessitated a stronger connection between a sociological and an epistemological or intellectual history of sociology. Regrettably, the book remains silent on the issue of reintegrating both approaches. As we shall see, the epistemological perspective of Joly’s book might provide some answers

20 Frickel and Gross’s definition goes as follows: “SIM s [scientific/intellectual movements, MS] are collective efforts to pursue research programs or projects for thought in the face of resistance from others in the scientific or intellectual community.” (FRICKEL and GROSS, 2005, p. 206).

in this respect. In the absence of further explanations, Mosbah-Natanson's decision for a Durkheimian stance seems to lack a justification.

The fact that Mosbah-Natanson is not purely impartial is not *per se* an objection and does not diminish the value of his results, though. Rather it points to the peculiar reflexivity of a sociological history of sociology and to the challenge that goes with it. This kind of history appears to be engaged in a peculiar way with its object. The very methods it uses for constructing and understanding its object are at the same time part of its object. This reflexive entanglement seems to put some limits to the possibility of an impartial perspective in the social history of the social sciences. On the other hand, it introduces the demand of being explicit about the reasons for one's fundamental commitments. Mosbah-Natanson leaves the issue of his reflexive engagement with sociology unexplored. He should have gone further in justifying his position, it seems. In any case, in his study the challenge of reflexivity is closely connected with the need for an integration of sociological and epistemological perspectives in the history of sociology. We shall encounter comparable constellations in the two other works.

A HISTORY OF THE IDEA OF SOCIAL TIME

Thomas Hirsch's *Le Temps des sociétés* is in some sense situated at the opposite end of the spectrum of options for renewing the historiography of sociology.²¹ Where Mosbah-Natanson engages in a resolutely sociological history of sociology, Hirsch pushes for a thoroughly historical history of sociology, or more precisely, a problem-centred history of sociological ideas (22). His book proposes to retrace the emergence, the elaboration, and the diffusion of the peculiar idea of "social time" in the French social sciences between roughly 1900 and 1945. This is the idea that time is in some way socially conditioned and thus amenable to social scientific investigation. Different forms of temporality are

21 Thomas Hirsch was a postdoctoral fellow in the research laboratory HASTEC at the Archives nationales in Paris and the laboratory TEPIS at the Centre de recherches historiques (CRH) at École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (EHESS), Paris. He is the author of several articles on the history of French sociology (HIRSCH, 2013, 2016b, 2018a) as well as the editor of Halbwachs's lectures on "collective psychology" (HALBWACHS, 2015; for a review, see JAISSON 2015) and of political lectures of Célestin Bouglé (BOUGLÉ, 2019). His book is a reworked version of his doctoral dissertation in history *Le Temps social. Conceptions sociologiques du temps et représentations de l'histoire dans les sciences de l'homme en France, 1901-1945* (supervised by François Hartog and defended at EHESS in 2014). It has appeared in the book series « En temps & lieux » of the éditions de l'EHESS. For the reception of the book so far, see GARDELLA, 2017; LORIGA, 2018; POITRAS, 2018; MARCEL, 2019b; TOPALOV, 2019; JOLY, 2020, p. 131-192.

thought to correspond to different types of societies. Hirsch's main thesis is that this "socialization" of time (58, 418) is both the expression of and the answer to a change in the (again social) conception of historical time, namely the decline of evolutionistic and progressivist visions of history (12, 93, 406). The idea of social time is presented as a "prism" (11) which bundles, as it were, central problems of various disciplines under transformation or in the making, mainly philosophy, psychology, history, sociology, and ethnology. Hirsch's work is thus intended to contribute – starting from one specific problem – to a broader renewed understanding of the French social sciences in the first half of the 20th century.

Hirsch's study comes in three parts each of which contains five chapters and is conceived as a distinct "level of observation" (20). The first part investigates the emergence of the "new idea" (20) of social time from the 1900s up to the aftermath of the First World War. Hirsch first seeks to carve out the social and intellectual "conditions of possibility" (26) of a sociological conception of time as it was first asserted in Durkheimian sociology (chapter 1). The author cites three main factors: a "crisis of progress", a "crisis of reason", and the establishment of "the social" as a distinctive level of analysis (38). The development of a genuine sociology of knowledge in its Durkheimian form is then understood as "a product of and response to" this ambient crisis of progress and reason (93). Hirsch examines in detail the early elaborations of a sociological theory of time in the works of Henri Hubert – who evokes the idea for the first time in 1901, in a review for *L'Année sociologique*²² (chapter 2) – and in Durkheim's *Formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse* (chapter 3). He argues that Durkheim engages in his theory of social time and, more broadly, of the "categories" of human understanding in a "new foundation of progress and reason" (72-77). His "evolutionistic relativism" (an expression Hirsch borrows from Bouglé, 21, 93) combines a relativization of the categories with their new legitimation by reference to a progressive accumulation of experiences and an approximation to reality (75). Hirsch goes on to compare this enterprise with the contemporaneous works of Lévy-Bruhl and Bergson, arguing that Bergsonian philosophy and Durkheimian sociology functioned at the time as the two defining poles of French philosophy (82). As at several points in the book, Hirsch then engages in a systematic study of the reception of *Formes élémentaires* in various intellectual communities, thus retracing the "space of possibilities" in the responses to the sociological theory of the categories (86-91).

22 HUBERT, 1901. On Hubert's sociology of time, see already ISAMBERT, 1979.

After a striking portrayal of the devastating effects of the First World War on the Durkheimian “school”,²³ Hirsch reconstructs breaks as well as continuities in the debate on social time, drawing on doctoral dissertations and on manuals. On the one hand, he observes an increased scepticism about ideas of progress and evolution in the aftermath of the conflict (99) (chapter 4). In this vein, he presents Mauss’s renewal of the sociological approach to the categories as an autonomization *vis-à-vis* Durkheim’s initial evolutionistic perspective. On the other hand, he describes how the relationship between sociology and psychology becomes again a prominent object of debate (chapter 5). This reflects the success of the sociological theory of knowledge as well as the need for new demarcations on both sides. Hirsch exemplifies these struggles with Charles Blondel’s work on “collective psychology”. Blondel imports the Durkheimian theory of the categories in psychology and makes it independent from the sociology of religion and its underlying evolutionism (131). In Blondel as well as in Mauss social time becomes, according to Hirsch, an object which can be studied in modern societies just as in historical or “primitive” ones (146). General questions about its evolution are abandoned.

The second part of the book is dedicated to three specific elaborations of the idea of social time in the interwar period. Lucien Lévy-Bruhl’s numerous works on “primitive mentality” (chapters 6 and 9) mark an important step in the diffusion of the idea of social time (166) and outshine in those days largely Durkheim. Hirsch explains the success of his *La Mentalité primitive* (1922) by its “intermediary position” in a host of debates on the multiplicity of mentalities, on the relationship of sociology and psychology and on the critique of Western reason (172-173). He also shows how in Lévy-Bruhl’s later *La Mythologie primitive* (1935), Western mentality is no longer conceived as the endpoint of evolution, but as a contingent product of history (241-242). Chapters 7 and 10 present Maurice Halbwachs as the maybe most “radical” (267) continuator of the Durkheimian programme in the sociology of knowledge. In his *Cadres sociaux de la mémoire* (1925), he transforms the question about the “categories” of historical civilisations into a question about the “social frames” underpinning the collective memory of specific social groups (187). Hirsch argues that Halbwachs’s “total socialization of intelligence” (194) goes hand in hand with an “extension” of the idea of social time (199). At the same time, he claims that Halbwachs departs significantly from Durkheim’s rationalism and progressivism, emphasising instead historical variability (187, 256, 269). Hirsch finally also presents the lesser-known sinologist Marcel Granet (chapter 8). A trained historian and disciple of both Durkheim and sinologist Édouard Chavannes, Granet undertakes in his *La Pensée chinoise*

23 On the effects of the First World War on the social sciences, see also recently GINSBURGER and LAURIÈRE, dir., 2018.

(1934) the study of Chinese categories as one specific mentality. In his work on Chinese conceptions of time, he applies the Durkheimian principle of the morphological explanation of collective representations and establishes a link with representations of history (222). Hirsch argues that Granet operates a pluralization of reason and of history by taking Chinese mentality as an object. He departs from “Durkheimian evolutionism” which, according to the author, takes Western reason and society as the teleological endpoint of history (225). Hirsch thus observes in all three authors an incremental relativization and pluralization of the idea of social time. In the framework of “mentalities” (Lévy-Bruhl, Granet) and of “collective memories” (Halbwachs), Durkheim’s intention of giving a new foundation to reason and progress is being abandoned, teleological visions of history are becoming unacceptable. Western rationality and concepts of time no longer serve as a normative standard.

The third and last part of the book investigates the “transfers” (279-281) and further elaborations of the idea of social time in the two neighbouring fields of ethnology and history from the 1930s to the 1940s. Hirsch offers a detailed account of the trajectory of Durkheimism beyond sociology and pays attention to the peculiar contexts of reception (281). For each of the two “disciplines” (ethnology is just about to become one), he provides case studies. For ethnology, he shows that the teaching of Marcel Mauss at the *Institut d’ethnologie* from 1926 to 1939 functioned as the main “channel” (289) between sociology and ethnology (chapter 11). In his course on “descriptive sociology” – later edited as *Manuel d’ethnographie* (1947) –, Mauss transforms the Durkheimian interest in categories and social time into a practical, ethnological “questionnaire” (296). This had an important impact on a whole generation of young ethnologists. Its appropriation and application in concrete fieldwork is studied in the case of the ethnographer and missionary Maurice Leenhardt and the ethnologist and state official Jacques Soustelle (chapter 12). These little-known authors, working respectively on New Caledonia and Mexico, illustrate the diversity of trajectories and intellectual projects which could be associated with investigations into social time. In the case of history, Hirsch focusses on the reception and elaboration of the sociological theory of time in the works of what has become known as the “*Annales* school”. In a critical contextualization of this label, the author reconstructs the relationship between sociology and history – “the only strongly institutionalized science of man” (323) at the time. He shows through the works of Henri Lévy-Bruhl, Antonin Causse and Georges Dumézil that the history of religion served as an important “space of circulation” between both areas (348). In an analysis of the two towering figures of the *Annales*, Lucien Febvre and Marc Bloch (chapters 14), Hirsch then argues that both historians follow Lévy-Bruhl’s framework of “mentalities” rather than Durkheim (373, 377). In their interest for historical mentalities – exemplified by Marc Bloch’s *Les Rois thaumaturges*

(1924) or Lucien Febvre's *Le Problème de l'incroyance au XVI^e siècle* (1942) – they also establish a link between collective representations of time and representations of history (372). Hirsch describes in this context a final transition from a sociology of time to a pluralized history of mentalities. The idea of a teleological evolution between temporalities is replaced by the idea of neutral change between contingent historically located forms of *durée* (376-380).

The last chapter (chapter 15) functions as a conclusion and comes back on the whole process of the emergence, elaboration, and transfer of the idea of social time. How can the study of social time between 1901 and 1945 be understood as a whole? In contradistinction to Kuhn's notion of "paradigm" and Foucault's "episteme" – which Hirsch judges to be either too discipline-specific or too large – the author opts, albeit reluctantly, for the notion of "constellation", following an approach formulated by Dieter Henrich and Martin Mulso (394-396).²⁴ Accordingly, Hirsch understands the process described as an evolving holistic network of interactions within a "space of thought" (396, citing Mulso). Hirsch puts the historical deployment of this constellation of enquiries about social time in relation with evolving representations of history. The basic change he observes goes from "evolutionism" to "relativism" (400). Hirsch argues that the idea of social time is itself conditioned by a specific form of social time, namely collective representations of historical time (401-406). In response to a "crisis of progress", it first enabled restating progress and reason and later served to "make sense of history in its plurality" (406). The epilogue addresses the transformation of the problem in the subsequent generation of scholars. Comparing the works of Georges Friedmann and Raymond Aron, it shows that at the end of the process of relativizing social time new dialectical antidotes against some boundless historical relativism appear on the intellectual scene (Marxism in Friedmann and philosophy of history in Aron). The question of historical progress and the conception of social time appear again as being paradoxically tied together. While it might seem *prima facie* that relativism excludes progress, Hirsch argues that it was ultimately the specific "modernism" and progressivism of 19th century French social sciences which, ironically, supported the consistent relativization of the concept of time to specific historic communities.

Hirsch's *Le Temps des sociétés* provides an erudite and remarkably thick intellectual history of one of the maybe most original contributions of the French social sciences. It enables its reader to follow the ramifications of a new sociological model of understanding humanity in the specific case of time. Hirsch's study has various significant merits. To begin with the most visible, the author expands, just as Mosbah-Natanson, the group of agents

24 See HENRICH, 1991; MULSO, 2009; MULSO and STAMM, dir., 2005.

considered so far in established historiography, drawing attention to relatively unknown or unduly neglected figures such as Henri Hubert, Marcel Granet, Charles Blondel, Maurice Leenhardt or Jacques Soustelle. At the same time, and going beyond Mosbah-Natanson's sociological approach, he also thickens our knowledge of these protagonists, known or unknown. For each of his eleven main protagonists as well as his fourteen minor characters (19), Hirsch makes extensive use of correspondences and other unpublished archival sources. This provides not only numerous hints which might be explored in future research. The attention for the possibilities offered by this material also underlines the professed historical character of the work and makes part of its originality. In his writing, Hirsch crosses easily various sources and the perceptions of diverse historical agents, thus weaving a dense web of references. In particular, he pays systematically attention to the reception of his protagonists' work by their contemporaries. He makes methodical use of reviews as a central, newly emerging scientific practice (386).²⁵ He considers the space of "effective readings" of a work as indicating its *de facto* "meaning" at a specific moment in time (20). This seems indeed a convincing strategy for avoiding presentist projections and engaging with strictly contemporaneous issues. It is also in accordance with Hirsch's emphasis on the variety of scholarly practices – teaching, reviewing, taking notes, doing fieldwork, writing articles and monographs, entertaining correspondences and social relations etc. In the same vein, he attends not only to the programmatic statements on social time but engages with the empirical applications of this idea to the most various objects. As a result, Hirsch uncovers interesting new aspects of the history of the French social sciences, especially during the interwar period.²⁶

A second strength of Hirsch's work consists in paying due attention to what he calls the "paradox" of disciplines at the beginning of the 20th century (16). While this period is often associated with the formation of new social scientific disciplines (notably psychology, sociology, ethnology), these specialities are *not* "disciplines" at the time, at least not according to strong institutional criteria (academic diploma, academic chairs, professional specialists etc.). We have come across a similar diagnosis in Mosbah-Natanson who offers the notion of vocation in response to this problem, and we shall encounter it again in Joly. According to Hirsch, the factual "porosity" (387) between different unequally institutionalized areas of knowledge demands a somewhat "a-disciplinary" outlook (17). Such a perspective, one might argue, should not ignore the relatively solid structures in the space of disciplines and their relative autonomy

25 For this approach, see also MÜLLER, 1994, one of Hirsch's references, and BÉRA, 2012 on the function of reviews for Durkheim and *L'Année sociologique*.

26 For earlier research in this area, see HEILBRON, 1985; MARCEL, 2001.

regarding external influences.²⁷ But by taking a problem or an idea as his starting point – rather than a discipline – Hirsch avoids quite convincingly the pitfalls of a “disciplinary history” (15). He traces the migrations and reformulations of concepts without hypostatizing the various specialities involved. At the same time, this approach enables him to address directly the epistemological innovations introduced by the emergence of sociology. Here lies maybe the main historiographical innovation of Hirsch’s work.

Notwithstanding the impressively rich and suggestive panorama provided, there are some respects where Hirsch’s study might have gone further. First, there are questions about the isolation of the object, i.e. the idea of social time in the French sociological tradition. The author is, of course, aware that the Durkheimian theory of social time came within the broader framework of a theory and collective research programme for a sociological investigation of the “categories” of thought (e.g. 74). The discussion of this comprehensive agenda sometimes even outshines the specific topic of time in the book. Hirsch also remarks that a history of the idea of “social space” would have probably resulted in a different type of study and a different set of disciplines involved (396, n. 43). Nevertheless, there is ultimately no explicit argument provided for singling out time from the host of Durkheimian studies on categories. Would Hirsch argue, for example, that time played a predominant role in the whole programme, both epistemologically and regarding the quantity of production? In fact, the investigations into categories were conceived as a whole – both at the moment of devising the programme and in retrospect – and they included a division of labour within the Durkheimian group.²⁸ While it is clear that Hirsch couldn’t have provided the dense narrative, he offers without focussing on time, this focus also comes at a certain cost. For example, he cannot really attend to the mutual exchanges between the sociologies of different categories (time, space, causality, substance, totality, personality etc.) and to the way in which the whole programme justified the special enquiries and vice versa. The question of how to conceive these sociological studies of the mind as a whole and organize them collectively seems to have been an issue for at least some of the agents involved.²⁹ One might also wonder whether the focus on social time introduces a certain bias into Hirsch’s interpretation. Conceiving Durkheim’s sociological theory of the categories *as a whole* as product of and response to

27 For a recent approach to the space of scientific disciplines, see GINGRAS and HEILBRON, dir., 2015.

28 See respectively DURKHEIM and MAUSS, 1903; DURKHEIM, 1998, especially p. 318-345; and MAUSS, 1979, p. 218.

29 See for example Mauss’s insistence on studying delimited “categories” against Lévy-Bruhl’s emphasis on entire “mentalities” in his review of the second volume of Cassirer’s *Philosophie der symbolischen Formen* (MAUSS, 2004, p. 79).

the crisis of progress (93) – i.e., changing collective representations of history – seems to be a consequence of the focus on social time. It effectively amounts to conferring an explanatory privilege to the category of social time. If Hirsch intends indeed to argue that the topic of time plays such a prominent role in the broad epistemological transformation he hints at, it would have been necessary to elaborate this claim.

A further concern about the isolation of Hirsch's object is the limitation to the French context. The complex history he describes is conceived as the portrayal of a "national tradition in the sociological study of time" (17-18, 322, 344). Focussing research on one such national tradition emerging in a national academic field is, of course, perfectly legitimate. However, recent research in the history of the social sciences (partly cited by Hirsch) has insisted on the need to situate such national traditions in a transnational space of circulation in order to understand certain of their peculiarities.³⁰ For example, one could hardly understand the specific ideas of progress and evolution in French sociology without taking into account the peculiar reception of the work of Herbert Spencer.³¹ The same is true for the emergence of a "sociological theory of the categories" and the specific history of Kantianism in France.³² This transnational dimension is unfortunately absent from Hirsch's account of this "French tradition". Nevertheless, he insinuates causal hypotheses based on comparative reasoning. He suggests that it is the peculiar "modernism" of the French social sciences as compared to the "antimodernism" of the German social sciences which explains the emergence and sustained interest in the idea of social time in France (418). Such claims must remain unwarranted if comparative and/or transfer perspectives are not included. We will see that Joly makes a step in this direction.

A second set of problems concerns Hirsch's overarching narrative of a process leading from "evolutionism" to "relativism" regarding social time (400), within the context of a long "crisis of progress". Hirsch claims that there is a progressive emancipation of research on social time from Durkheim's initial ambition of providing a "new foundation for progress and reason". This narrative is questionable. Neither its starting point nor its endpoint seem entirely

30 HEILBRON, 2008, 2015; HEILBRON, GUILHOT and JEANPIERRE, 2008. This trend towards a transnational history of the social sciences can be located within earlier debates on comparative history, the theory of cultural transfers (ESPAGNE and WERNER, 1987; ESPAGNE, 1999), *histoire croisée* (WERNER and ZIMMERMANN, 2006) and the theory of the international circulation of symbolic goods (BOURDIEU, 2002).

31 See BECQUEMONT and MUCCHIELLI, 1998; LIGHTMAN, dir., 2015 for transnational studies on the reception of Spencer, as well as the indications in HEILBRON 2015, 65 and MOSBAH-NATANSON 2017a, 98-102.

32 AZOUVI and BOUREL, 1991; BONNET, 2011; FEDI, 2018.

convincing. First, while there is solid evidence for Durkheim's ambition of "renewing rationalism",³³ it is less obvious that this meant a "new *foundation* of reason" and was equivalent to a "new foundation of *progress*". There is, of course, an undeniable background of evolutionistic anthropology to Durkheimian sociology of religion and of knowledge.³⁴ But this does not amount to conceiving Western reason as the telos of a progressive evolution through history, as Hirsch suggests (225, 227). Bouglé's label of "relativistic evolutionism", which Hirsch uses repeatedly to characterize Durkheim's project, seems in this respect misleading.³⁵ Especially when Hirsch accentuates the later relativization of social time, he sometimes seems to make up a strawman, identifying Durkheim's stance almost with some sort of Spencerian evolutionism. To grasp the nuances of Durkheim's position it could have been useful to address in detail the debate between Durkheim and Lévy-Bruhl on the continuity or discontinuity between "primitive" and modern thought.³⁶ Durkheim's account of the relationship between mythical and scientific representations is indeed not one of simple evolution, but of possible simultaneity. In this sense, he counts not only the very notion of progress among the persisting *mythological* representations in modern society. Also, science and scientific rationality are conceived as dynamic "social institutions", not as a static endpoint of history.³⁷

But then also the narrative on the further elaboration of the idea of social time should be modified. Hirsch shows convincingly that the social *relatum* of social time changes in the period he considers. While, at the beginning, temporality is thought to be relative to entire civilisations, these entities are later replaced by more small-scale units like social groups, local mentalities and historical societies. But this development need not be interpreted as a relativization of reason and history. If we interpret Durkheim's "renewed rationalism" rather as an epistemological-methodological stance, as a "rationalist empiricism" open to transformations, then the continuity between the authors presented stands out. Halbwachs, who takes up this very position, would be a prominent case in point.³⁸ It is doubtful whether his stance can be quali-

33 See in particular DURKHEIM, 1955, p. 27-29, 1912, p. 26, n. 2.

34 Lukes has identified some "residual evolutionism" implied in Durkheim's method of looking for "primitive" forms as well as an "evolutionary" claim in his sociology of knowledge according to which logical notions derive from religion (LUKES, 1973, p. 456, 444-445). In both cases, he implies however that Durkheim's position is not essentially tied to evolutionism.

35 We know that Bouglé had his own issues with Durkheim's sociological theory of reason (VOGT, 1979, p. 137-139).

36 See recently MERLLIÉ, 2012, 2017.

37 See respectively DURKHEIM, 1955, p. 184, 1910, p. 44-45.

38 On this "rationalist empiricism", see especially DURKHEIM, 1895, p. VII, 1897; HALBWACHS, 1936.

fied as more “relativistic” than Durkheim’s (256, 269). More generally, given the central negative function of evolutionism and progressivism in Hirsch’s narrative, more elaborate notions of these intellectual currents would have been useful. This would imply, for example, making clear distinctions between the notions of teleology, progress, evolution, long-term social development, and simple “ordering” (*mise en ordre*) of history. It would also include a further historicization of these “ideas”, for example, by considering the peculiar career of Spencer’s evolutionism in France.³⁹ This would probably allow for going beyond the sometimes-vague reference to an evolutionist, progressivist or “modernist” (322, 418) *zeitgeist*.

A third issue concerns the methodological profile of Hirsch’s “history of the idea of social time”. He finally does not provide an explicit account of the sort of intellectual history he intends to offer. He hints in various directions, citing Perrot’s proposal for a “concrete history of abstraction” (15), Koselleck’s concept of “horizon of expectation” (402) or basic notions of Bourdieusian sociology of culture such as “space of possibilities” (e.g., 90).⁴⁰ But even when he discusses these questions at some length (chapters 1 and 15), it is difficult to discern a systematic account. Hirsch seems to settle only reluctantly on Henrich and Mulsow’s notion of intellectual “constellation” (396). There might, of course, be some virtues to a sort of methodological eclecticism which follows primarily an object, not abstract precepts. The problem is not primarily that a scholastic discussion of various methodological options is lacking. It is rather that in what Hirsch finally offers the status of the idea of social time remains somewhat undetermined. What makes, in fact, the unity and meaning of this idea through its different uses and (re)formulations across time?⁴¹ Is this idea duly isolated from others? How is it supported by other ideas and, finally, by their social conditions? It is not clear whether substituting the word “prism” for “idea” (11, 396) and “constellation” for “paradigm” or “episteme” provides a conclusive answer to these questions.

Some of these issues surface in Hirsch’s central claim that the emergence and elaboration of the idea of social time is the expression of a generalized “crisis of progress and of reason”. In other words, representations of historical

39 See the references on Spencer above. Hirsch mentions this context in his discussion of the “crisis of progress” (26-30). For the different “concepts” involved and their history, see for example KOSELLECK, 1975; WIELAND, 1975.

40 There is, however, surprisingly little discussion of the crucial criticisms of the traditional history of ideas approach by Skinner’s “Cambridge School”, nor of more recent debates on the “sociology of ideas” (CAMIC and GROSS, 2001) or on the kind of “new intellectual history” epitomized by *Modern Intellectual History* and other journals. This might be due to the limited presence of these mainly anglophone references in the francophone context.

41 For this basic argument against a traditional history of ideas, see SKINNER, 1969, p. 50-52.

time are thought to determine the rise and development of the idea of social time. In this context, Hirsch sometimes seems to use social macro developments (the “crisis of progress”, the “codification of time”, the “social question”, 27-34) to explain – directly – specific intellectual products. It is true that Hirsch presents the relation between ideas of social time and representations of history in terms of concomitance and correspondence rather than in the language of causal relation (e.g., 406). But such a causal relation is nevertheless insinuated by the idea that social time is “a product of and response to” the crisis of progress and that the “modernism” of the French social sciences “explains” the sustained relativization of social time (418). In the end, such explanations correspond quite neatly to what Mosbah-Natanson qualifies as “social and cultural history of sociology”.⁴² There is no doubt that these questions deserve our interest. What Hirsch owes to his reader, though, is an account of how these macro factors operate to bring about intellectual goods such as the idea of social time. It seems that he does not always stick to his own rule of studying the “refractions” of social events in the intellectual world (18). This might have to do with an excessive flexibility of the notion of constellation. While it designates an evolving relational pattern, the “space of thought” in which interactions are thought to take place remains porous and does not grasp, it seems, the relative autonomy of intellectual spaces. Sociologizing this space of thought by reformulating it in terms of Bourdieu’s concept of the intellectual field might be an option for spelling out the refraction index of macro trends in the specific academic spaces Hirsch investigates.⁴³ Also a more extensive argument on considering ideas as part and parcel of scientific practices and on the ambition of “holding together a broad intellectual history and a history of local forms of knowledge” (15) would have possibly dissolved some of these ambiguities.

As it stands, the question of what made the epistemological transformation described possible within the *academic* field is not conclusively answered. In particular, the study offers relatively little on the relations between philosophy – the legitimate discourse on epistemological matters at the time – and sociology. Hirsch might argue that this simply reflects what he could observe. But then “classical philosophy” is repeatedly stylized as the adversary of the idea of social time (12, 16, 21). As with evolutionism, this adversary remains relatively obscure. While Hirsch emphasises Bergson’s philosophy of *durée* (32-34, 77-82), important other parts of the philosophical backstory of the sociological theory of

42 MOSBAH-NATANSON, 2017a, p. 16, 250.

43 Given the fact that the notion of constellation has its origins in the work of Max Weber (MULSOW, 2009, p. 83; WAGNER and HÄRPFER, 2015, p. 179-184), this sociological reformulation would mirror the initial conception of “field” as a reinterpretation of Weber’s sociology of religion (BOURDIEU, 1971). For a possible combination, see also FÜSSEL, 2005.

the categories are absent. This is the case for broadly neo-Kantian theories of the categories, but also for evolutionistic theories of time such as Guyau's *La Genèse de l'idée de temps* (1890). Including some important, mainly anglo-phone works would have allowed for describing this context.⁴⁴ Hirsch might also have dwelled on the fact that some of the first formulations of the sociological theory of the categories were addressed to a philosophical public.⁴⁵ This could have provided the occasion for thinking about the different strategies pursued with different forms of publications addressed to different publics (notably dogmatic statements addressed to philosophers on the one hand and empirical works addressed to specialists on the other). For understanding the epistemological transformation at hand – the establishment of a “new model of understanding man and history” (42) – further work in this direction would be required. As we will see, Joly's book engages partly in this task.

Finally, there is the reflexive dimension of Hirsch's work. It is remarkable that the author not only describes the history of the idea of social time, but also engages actively in it. The idea of social time is approached with instruments coming from the very tradition of social time. Hirsch situates himself specifically in the continuity of the *mentalité* branch of this tradition. He thus suggests that the new historical-sociological understanding of the categories of thought and of time corresponds itself to a “change in mentality” (393). And he puts this mentality in relation with the social characteristics of his group of authors (modest social origins, Jewish or Protestant background, leftist political positions, “positivist” orientations), with their specific intellectual constellation (393-396), but most importantly, with their contemporaneous representations of history. Regarding the latter focus, he clearly follows Febvre's and Bloch's interest for the correspondence between conceptions of time and representations of history (372). Hirsch's study thus stands in a sense at the provisional end of the historical process he retraces, and which makes his own work possible in the first place (93). The suggestive force of this kind of reflexivity consists in that the social time approach seems to be able to account for its own history, thus underlining its general applicability and validity. But although Hirsch alludes repeatedly to this audacious *mise en abyme*, he does not really spell out its character or its consequences. This would require exploring questions such as: How do representations of history enter intellectual constellations to bring about specific ideas? How do intellectual constellations in turn produce specific temporalities or mentalities? And

44 For example STEDMAN JONES, 2001; RAWLS, 2004; SCHMAUS, 2004; CHIMISSO, 2008; PAOLETTI, 2012.

45 DURKHEIM, 1909; FABIANI, 1993. Hirsch is aware of this fact (71-72), but doesn't offer an analysis.

which are the representations of history supporting Hirsch's own narrative of the incremental emancipation of the investigations on social time from ideas of progress? Is this finally a story of progress (as he insinuates) or of simple change (as his methodology would suggest)? Generally, while Hirsch points to the historicity of his own approach, he does not provide many elements for understanding its rationality, i.e., how the social time approach served – and can still serve – to bring intelligibility to a specific empirical record at a given point in time. These concerns lead back to the questions about Hirsch's methodological position. While these issues do not diminish the significant and useful contribution of *Le Temps des sociétés*, they hint at a more general point. As in the case of Mosbah-Natanson, it seems that assuming plainly the reflexive character of a social history of the social sciences would imply elaborating the methodological and epistemological challenges that go with it.

SOCIOLOGICAL REVOLUTION AND THE CRISIS OF PHILOSOPHY

Marc Joly's *La Révolution sociologique* provides a resolutely epistemological⁴⁶ perspective which complements both Mosbah-Natanson's descriptive-sociological approach and Hirsch's problem-centred history of ideas approach.⁴⁷ Joly proposes an analysis of the cognitive transformations

46 I use “epistemology” here primarily in the sense linked to the French tradition of “historical epistemology”, i.e. as designating an enquiry into the structure and conditions of a specific historical state of knowledge. Joly's work is epistemological in this sense: it proposes an account of the peculiar “conceptual regime” introduced by sociology around 1900. This is, of course, different from the prevalent anglophone understanding of epistemology as a formal theory of science or as a theory of the necessary and sufficient conditions of knowledge. The comparison of the entries on “épistémologie” and “epistemology” in widely used reference works of the respective languages is in this respect revealing (GRANGER, s. d.; STEUP, 2005). See also GINGRAS, 2010 on the history of the label “historical epistemology” and HEILBRON, 1990 on the origins of this tradition in Auguste Comte. As we shall see, Joly finally goes beyond this historically-descriptive sense of epistemology and engages, at least implicitly, in a normative epistemology of the (social) sciences.

47 Marc Joly is *chargé de recherche* in sociology at the French Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS) at the research laboratory Printemps at the Université de Versailles-Saint-Quentin (UVSQ). He is the author of *Le Mythe Jean Monnet* (2007, re-edited as *L'Europe de Jean Monnet* in 2017), *Devenir Norbert Elias* (2012) (based on his 2010 thesis in history under the supervision of historian Gérard Noiriel), *Pour Bourdieu* (2018) and, most recently, *Après la philosophie. Épistémologie et histoire de la sociologie européenne* (2020). *La Révolution sociologique* has appeared in the book series « Laboratoire des sciences sociales », edited by sociologist Bernard Lahire. For the reception of the book so far, see BÉRA, 2017; CITOT, 2017; FABIANI, 2017a; FRINGANT, 2017a; CALLEGARO and GIRY, 2018; SEPULVADO, 2018; TARRAGONI, 2018.

implied in the emergence of sociology as a distinct scientific enterprise in France and Germany around 1900 and its consequences for other academic disciplines, especially philosophy. The author claims that, at the turn of the 20th century, a “sociological revolution” takes place in France and Germany as the endpoint of a development of scientification which stretches over most of the 19th century. This revolution puts into place a new “conceptual regime of the social and human sciences” which is defined by two basic requirements: first, to coordinate (i.e., separate, but combine) biological, psychological and sociological levels of analysis, corresponding to distinct layers of human reality; second, to coordinate the perspective of the individual and of society. This new conceptual regime, propelling a new picture of humanity, enters into conflict with the pre-existing “reference system” (*référentiel*) headed by philosophy and provokes a “crisis of philosophy”. In reaction to the social-scientific regime a peculiar specialized “philosophical regime” emerges. It is defined by the purported independence of its statements from empirical statements. Joly argues that this philosophical regime is not only (descriptively) reactionary, but that it has been effectively “defunctionalized” by the full deployment of the regime of the social and human sciences.

Joly’s book develops these far-reaching claims in three parts and fourteen extensive chapters. While the first two parts present each a “case study” (20) on the situation of the social sciences in France and in Germany around 1900, the third part develops a peculiar historical-epistemological essay in the “sociology of regimes of thought” (410, n. 2, 499), mainly on the relationship between sociology and philosophy in the 19th and 20th century. The first part examines the relationship between emerging sociology, psychology and philosophy through an analysis of the French controversy on “social psychology”. The dominating figure in this area is Gabriel Tarde. The first two chapters offer a socio-biographical and epistemological study of his position. In Joly’s account, Tarde appears as a figure of “compromise” (77, 130) between different social and intellectual demands. He combined in a peculiar way the push for a scientification of human affairs with literary culture (37). With his notion of imitation, he tried to coordinate – unsuccessfully, according to Joly – the “interdependent” biological, psychological and sociological level of analysis (60-61, 67). He also agreed basically with Durkheim about the need for a “post-philosophical sociology” (55, 57), despite their conflict about the role of psychology. But Tarde’s sociology remained finally innocuous and thus acceptable for academic philosophers (36, 76). In this respect, Tarde appears in Joly’s account as an ambiguous proponent of the sociological revolution. His work is rather a “symptom” (56, 406) of the changing power relations within the human sciences. By his very ambiguity, Tarde exerted a strong attraction

on the most diverse groups – from rural state officials to amateur scientists, established intellectuals and young university scholars. In the subsequent chapters, Joly shows how psychological conceptions of sociology inspired by Tarde attracted young scholars trained in philosophy. In the case of Gaston Richard (chapter 3), he argues that his preference for a peculiar historical-social psychology over Durkheimian sociology was supported by his roughly neo-Kantian philosophy and, ultimately, his inclination for Protestantism. For Paul Lapie (chapter 4), “social psychology” offered a compromise for resolving the conflict between his sociological interests and his persistently philosophical “ego-ideal”. Daniel Essertier (chapter 5), finally, performed under the same heading a subordination of sociology to psychology and of psychology to “spiritualist” philosophy (144). In all three cases, social psychology – in its Tardian or in other forms – offered a half-way solution which avoided pushing the sociological revolution to its post-philosophical end (149) and maintained the status of philosophy (107). According to Joly, it offered a platform for authors who, being educated in philosophy, refused to pay the full price of a conversion to (Durkheimian) sociology, i.e. the devaluation of their philosophical capital and the abandonment of their philosophical ego-ideal (130, 135).

The second part of the book offers a case study on the sociological revolution in the German social sciences. Joly thus extends his claim and asserts the existence of a “transnational regime of thought” (e.g. 134, 231), brought about by a “transnational cognitive revolution” (e.g. 175, 189). He starts from a petty skirmish between Tönnies and Simmel about who of the two should give the opening address at the first congress of the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Soziologie*, held in Frankfurt in 1910. This incident is, according to Joly, far from insignificant and reflects a conflict over the conception of sociology among the three most prominent founding members of the society, Simmel, Tönnies and Max Weber (156). In all three cases, Joly focusses on their respective relationship with philosophy, especially with German neo-Kantianism (chapter 7). This neo-Kantian movement is interpreted as “an offensive for the restoration of the pre-eminence of philosophy as an autonomous inquiry *vis-à-vis* the specialized sciences” (233). In Joly’s portrayal, Weber (168-195) not only mediated in the conflict between Tönnies and Simmel, but also between the demands of the new social-scientific regime and neo-Kantian philosophy in the form of Heinrich Rickert’s philosophy of science and of values. He used Rickert pragmatically for clarifying methodological problems in the social sciences while recognizing a clear division of labour between philosophers and social scientists (238). His work thus kept up a “tension” (176) between the commitment to sociology as an autonomous science and the primacy of philosophical “logic” (187-188). He didn’t “go to the end of the sociological revolution” (188),

which Joly explains eventually by Weber's attachment to the German ideology of *Bildung* and his social position (175). Compared to this intermediary position, Tönnies and Simmel marked opposite ends of the spectrum of stances on the relationship between sociology and philosophy and were "objective rivals" (198). Tönnies (195-221) went farthest in breaking with philosophy and "theory of knowledge" (*Erkenntnistheorie*). He claimed for sociology the role of coordinating other sciences and carrying a "global conception of human existence" (215). In the German context, he is, according to Joly, the author who endorses most wholeheartedly the sociological revolution (200, 210). The case of Simmel (241-250) illustrates finally that this cognitive revolution might have been conceivable in Germany but was less receivable than in France (244). After "positivistic" beginnings in the framework of *Völkerpsychologie* and after investing in sociology, Simmel settled on defining himself as a philosopher within a broadly neo-Kantian framework. Joly explains this development by Simmel's failing academic career as a "philosopher-sociologist" (246) and his essentially philosophical ego-ideal (245, 250). Simmel thus becomes a prime example for the "resistance" to the "constraints" of the social-scientific regime (277). The final chapter on the German context (chapter 8) leaves no doubt that, according to Joly, the sociological revolution finds its most accomplished expression in the work of Norbert Elias. His consistently post-philosophical theory of interdependencies fully articulates the three dimensions of human existence as well as the relationship between individual and society (254-261). It represents the "crowning achievement" (254) of the social-scientific regime and "explores all its potentialities" (261). In fact, Elias's position remains the main reference point of Joly's study.

The third part of the book blends several historical case studies with various theoretical reflections. In particular, Joly further elaborates the notion of a conceptual regime of the social and human sciences and the claim of a crisis of philosophy. He describes the social-scientific regime as a "scientific language" (chapter 9) which has come to determine the ways we conceive of ourselves as human beings (298). It has thus "defunctionalized" and replaced two other competing languages, religion and philosophy. There are two sides to the new regime (288, 372, 511-512). As a "differentiated disciplinary scientific regime" (372) it corresponds to a host of new academic disciplines (biology/physiology, psychology, sociology) and their empirical theories. As a "conceptual meta-regime" or "meta-theory" it coordinates and integrates the empirical theories of these various disciplines in a new "coherent unified picture of humanity" (288-289, 310), offering even guidance on moral questions and the meaning of life (324-325). The advent of this conceptual regime constitutes a "second scientific revolution" and the broad acceptance of words like "sociology" around

1900 indicates another *Sattelzeit* à la Koselleck (352-353). Joly conceives the new language or regime indeed as a (social) “fact” (308), pretty much in the Durkheimian sense. He defines it as a set of external constraints which apply to anyone who engages in general statements about human beings and/or their main dimensions (342, 358) and whose infraction provokes sanctions (chapter II). Two major constraints make up the content of the social-scientific regime: the requirement to coordinate the biological, psychological and sociological level on the one hand, and the relationship between individual and society on the other. According to Joly, the historical agents themselves need not be aware of this regime, and not even Durkheim grasped it as a whole (342, 355, 406; Elias seems to be a notable exception). Nevertheless, the constraints on what is “conceivable”, institutionally “possible” and empirically “knowable” left their mark on “every author” (342) and helped to “establish a new conceptual regime in their minds” (355). The material support of these constraints is ultimately nothing but reality itself: “[T]hese *constraints of what is thinkable* depend on *institutional constraints of possibilities* which in turn depend on *constraints of knowable reality*” (358, emphases by Joly, see also 377). Joly thus observes the traces of these constraints and sanctions in the intellectual and social struggles of his various historical agents. He identifies agents who consent to the new regime (e.g., Durkheim, Tönnies, Elias), others who resist (e.g. Simmel, de la Grasserie, Bergson and virtually all philosophers), and again others who take an intermediate stance (e.g. Tarde, Weber, Palante) (276).

Finally, an important portion of the third part (notably chapters 12 to 14) investigates how the social-scientific regime provoked a “sociological crisis of philosophical thought” (408) and contributed to the formation of a new, specifically “philosophical frame of reference” (*référentiel philosophique*) (402) or “philosophical conceptual regime” (17, 371, 410). Analysing the references to “philosophy”, “sociology” and “psychology” in the reception of Tarde’s *Lois de l’imitation* (1890) (chapter 12), Joly points to a transition between two meanings of “philosophy”. As a general term for knowledge, scholarship and science “philosophy” enters into crisis (384, 396) and makes room for “philosophy” in the sense of a specialized academic discipline (407). The latter meaning is epitomized by the “restoration programme” (395) of the *Revue de métaphysique et de morale*, founded by Élie Halévy and Xavier Léon in 1893 (398-402). Joly argues that the “essence” (408) and “purpose” (482) of the new autonomous philosophical discourse is to “*escape the purview of ‘biological’, ‘psychological’ and ‘sociological’ explanations*” (483, emphases by Joly) and “circumvent” (408) the social-scientific regime. Various strategies – competing with each other – are deployed to situate philosophy “before and beyond science” (482). Joly identifies this same basic motif in 19th and 20th century philosophers as

diverse as Dilthey, Spann, James, Heidegger, Bergson (chapter 13), as well as in proponents of “scientific philosophy” such as Canguilhem, Wittgenstein, and Bouveresse (chapter 14). The blueprint for their defences of philosophy is a strategy which can be called transcendental (483): Philosophy is defined as a search for the conditions which make experience possible in the first place. These conditions are conceived as being independent from the empirical statements of biology, psychology and sociology and as providing the foundations of the latter. According to Joly, philosophy thus invents its own criteria of validity independently of empirical reality (486) and enters a circle of “self-legitimation” (407). The broadly neo-Kantian philosophies of the turn of the 20th century try to reconquer an autonomous space for philosophy (421, 483) after, in the 19th century, the social sciences had started to occupy the “Kantian space” of philosophy between theology and natural science (22). Joly argues that this philosophical discourse has ultimately lost its function with the advent of the sociology of knowledge. By conquering the very conditions of knowledge as one of the last objects on which philosophy could claim authority, the sociology of knowledge deals a “fatal blow” to the Kantian model of philosophy (422, 514). Philosophy is left with a dilemma (483): Either it accepts the new social-scientific regime, but then must also acquiesce in disappearing. Or it refuses this regime, but then inevitably turns ideological. Joly diagnoses the latter outcome. Philosophy becomes an “ideological discourse” (485), a “professional ideology” (477) in defence of professional interests which are threatened by the rising social sciences. This, according to Joly, is an inevitable consequence of the decisive “cognitive reorientation” (514) introduced by sociology.

Joly’s *La Révolution sociologique* offers a multifaceted and thought-provoking study on the cognitive transformations introduced by the emergence of sociology in France and Germany. The general character of the book is maybe best understood as a persistent continuation of Elias’s “sociogenesis of sociology” and an empirical elaboration of Richard Kilminster’s claims about “sociological revolution”, “philosophical culture” and “post-philosophical sociology”.⁴⁸ As in the case of the two other books under review, a first obvious merit of Joly’s study is the sheer quantity of material it makes available. The author has intensely worked on an impressive number of unpublished personal papers – no less than twenty-six collections of papers in ten different archives in four countries

48 ELIAS, 1984; KILMINSTER, 1998, 2007, 2011. Joly refers to Kilminster’s *The Sociological Revolution* in the above sense, thus explaining the adoption of its title in French (14). Also his criticism (14-18) of Lepenies’ claim about sociology as a “third culture” between scientific and literary culture (LEPENIES, 1985) seems to be partly inspired by Kilminster’s emphasis on a distinct “culture of philosophers” (KILMINSTER, 1998, p. 3-26).

(II, 519-522). He succeeds, especially for the French context, in introducing new agents and throwing some new light on those already known (e.g., Gaston Richard, Paul Lapie, Daniel Essertier, Raoul de la Grasserie, Georges Palante).⁴⁹ He does so by studying their trajectories, the reception of their works and the conflicts about their intellectual vocations in an academic field under transformation. In the latter respect, Joly proceeds similarly to Mosbah-Natanson, but offers a more fine-grained analysis based on correspondences. This enables him in some cases to make hypotheses about the psychic economy and the “ego-ideals” of the agents involved (e.g., in the cases of Lapie and Simmel), thus adding a further subjective dimension to the study of vocations. Moreover, Joly is attentive to various scientific practices such as writing scientific reviews (II, n. 1), maintaining a network of correspondents (e.g., in the case of Tarde) and teaching (e.g. in the case Canguilhem). In this respect, he also meets with Hirsch.

A second strength of Joly’s work is the conception of the interrelations between disciplines and their transformations. The author conceives the space of disciplines as a relational structure where changes in one position have repercussions for the whole. This is plain in the case of “social psychology” which is understood as an expression of the tension between philosophy and sociology. Most prominently, it applies to the case of philosophy. Joly observes what one might call a co-constitution of philosophy, psychology, and sociology as academic disciplines. The fact that the latter emerge from philosophy does not leave “philosophy” unchanged, but fundamentally modifies its meaning. It is a merit of Joly’s book to emphasize this point.⁵⁰ The focus on disciplinary interrelations is, in some sense, similar to Hirsch’s work. But where Hirsch insists on the porosity of disciplines, Joly foregrounds their relative rigidity, inertia, and their competition. Importantly, Joly’s study also engages – most resolutely of the three books – in a transnational perspective. Considering the German case thus points to the national varieties in disciplinary hierarchies and how these have affected early sociology.

Finally, it is a remarkable feature of Joly’s book that it combines a micro-historical level of observation with far-reaching historical-epistemological claims about a sociological revolution, the obsolescence of philosophy and the establishment of a new picture of humanity. In this way, Joly puts an epistemological reflection on the emergence of sociology back on the agenda of

49 In the German context, Joly works – except for Elias – mainly with published correspondences made available in the collected works of Weber, Simmel and Tönnies (22).

50 For the analogous case of philosophy and experimental psychology in Germany, see KUSCH, 1995, especially p. 160-210. A similar process of a “purification” of philosophy in Germany is described for the case of Hermann Cohen in PINTO, 1995.

the history and sociology of the social sciences. Indeed, the cognitive transformation he is interested in is *not* simply equivalent to an institutional transformation, the former rather precedes and conditions the latter (17, 475). While this sort of enquiry is comparable in its generality with proposals by Kuhn or Foucault, not to mention Comte and Elias, it does not want to make any concessions regarding historical scholarship and sociological conceptualization. In its peculiar blend of epistemological issues with the minutiae of historical processes, Joly's book provokes a host of reflections on the intellectual history of the social sciences. It presses ahead with a question already addressed in Hirsch's study on social time: the question of the implementation of a "new vision of humanity" which supports and is supported by the social sciences. This comprehensive perspective seems indeed important in a situation where increasing specialization in the history of the social sciences might lead to side-lining overall socio-historical dynamics. Inspired by Eliasian historical sociology, Joly's book can be read as a plea for investigating the large-scale historical and intellectual processes in which the social sciences are situated and to which they contribute.

These qualities notwithstanding, several aspects of Joly's book merit critical scrutiny. First, some of the basic claims and notions of Joly's "general interpretative framework" (12) are beset with ambiguities. To begin with, this is the case with the main object of the study, "sociological revolution". Throughout the book, there is a persisting tension between the idea of radical revolution and of incremental evolution. On the one hand, the sociological revolution is supposed to introduce a radically new cognitive regime around the turn of the 20th century. On the other hand, sociology is conceived as the "achievement" or the "final touch" (12) of a pre-existing tendency of the scientification of human affairs between the 1750s and the 1930s (254) – which clearly suggests continuity rather than discontinuity. This poses a sort of dilemma. Either there is a genuinely *sociological* revolution, i.e. a radical break induced by the emergence of sociology as a field of investigation; but then it is difficult to make sense of the continuity in argumentative patterns traded between philosophy and newly emerging "disciplines" (e.g. the debates on experimental psychology). Or there is continuity in the struggle between the positive sciences, philosophy and religion, with sociology as the crowning achievement of a *more general* "scientific conceptual regime" (12, my emphasis); but then there is little reason to speak of a distinctly *sociological* revolution, sociology being in that perspective just the expression of a broader process of scientification. The underlying problem is maybe that Joly does not clearly differentiate between the general "scientific conceptual regime" and the specific "conceptual regime of the social and human sciences". This is reflected in the ambiguous chronological

localisation of the revolution. Sometimes “sociological revolution” seems to refer to the decades around the turn of the 20th century (10), sometimes to the 1860s and 1870s (320), sometimes to a process stretching over almost 150 years starting at the end of the 18th century (254, 352).

The difficulties about “sociological revolution” lead back, second, to ambiguities in Joly’s notion of conceptual regime. Regrettably, this central concept appears somewhat undertheorized. Joly doesn’t offer an unequivocal definition nor indications on the origin of the term.⁵¹ Apart from a short passage in the introduction (12), the reader must basically rely on his operational definition deployed throughout the book. Also, Joly does not situate his concept *vis-à-vis* the existing major options for treating this cognitive meta-level, e.g. the proposals of Kuhn on “paradigms” or of Foucault on “episteme”.⁵² It is somewhat puzzling to be presented with a new, but in many respects equivalent concept with barely a reference to the extensive and persistent debates on these issues in the history, philosophy and sociology of the sciences of the last decades.⁵³ The main problem is that some crucial questions connected to the notion of a conceptual regime are not addressed: How strong is the conditioning force of regimes regarding what is conceivable? How do regimes relate to empirical reality? Are they incommensurable or translatable? Is there progress or mere change and equivalence between them? Is there one regime or many at one moment in time (e.g., a social-scientific *and* a philosophical regime)? Where are these regimes with their constraints finally located, on which cognitive level and in which social processes? How are cognitive regimes supported by institutional arrangements,

51 Historically, the idea and notion of intellectual “regimes” goes back at least to Auguste Comte’s “law of the three states” which opposes at its extremes the “theological regime” and the “positive regime” (COMTE, [1830] 1975, p. 25) and has had an astonishing career in “historical epistemology”. It has possibly been passed over to Joly *via* Elias’s historical sociology which rehabilitates aspects of Comte’s work (e.g. ELIAS, 1970). Given the overall similarities of Joly’s narrative with Comte’s (especially chapter 9), the latter’s virtual absence from the book is surprising. More recently, “regime” has been used in the history of the social sciences by Johan Heilbron (1995) in order to pick out “intellectual regimes” in the pre-disciplinary history of sociology. Heilbron has also written on “disciplinary regimes” (HEILBRON, 2004), which seem to correspond at least to one dimension of Joly’s “regime of thought”.

52 At one point, however, Joly draws an explicit parallel between this notion of “regime” and Foucault’s notion of “discourse” (365). For a discussion of Kuhn, see more recently JOLY, 2018, chapter 3, “Un paradigme bourdieusien?”, p. 47-59.

53 One might think of LAKATOS and MUSGRAVE, *dir.*, 1970 as one starting point. Joly is, of course, aware of these debates, see his introduction to ELIAS, 2016.

especially academic disciplines? These questions surface in various specific claims of the book.

First, regarding the force and scope of regimes, Joly claims, for example, that a conceptual regime determines what is “conceivable” in the first place (e.g., 358). At the same time, he identifies agents who “consent” and others who “resist” to the requirements of the new regime (276). Is it consistent to conceive a regime as defining the space of what is thinkable *and* to attribute to historical agents a margin for agreeing or disagreeing with it? Also, it seems that around 1900 a social-scientific regime coexists with a philosophical regime. If the social-scientific regime is as permeating as Joly depicts it, how could there be room left for an alternative regime? Inversely, if alternative regimes coexist, is a conceptual regime more than a (group of) discipline(s) based on some compatible assumptions? Second, regarding the location of the regime, Joly makes a distinction, within the social-scientific regime, of a “disciplinary regime” and a “conceptual meta-regime” (e.g., 372). But how do these two levels support each other in creating the constraints which define the social-scientific regime? On the one hand, the conceptual meta-regime seems to be chronologically prior to the institutional organisation of full-blown academic disciplines; on the other hand, the meta-regime is thought to articulate discipline-specific empirical theories (512) and “has only sense in relation to the existence of scientific disciplines” (295). If the conceptual regime does not automatically materialize in institutions, is it maybe situated in the “minds” (355) or in the discourse of the agents? But Joly claims that none of those agents were able to grasp the cognitive revolution as a whole (maybe with the sole exception of Elias in the 1930s) (406). This leads to a third point regarding the relation between regimes of thought and empirical reality. Joly engages indeed in a realistic anchoring of the social-scientific regime. He sketches a dynamic relation between three sorts of constraints: constraints on what is “conceivable” under a certain conceptual regime, on what is institutionally “possible” at a historical state of the academic field, and, finally, “knowable reality” (377). The three dimensions of constraints seem to limit each other mutually. But how can “knowable reality” determine a conceptual regime which is presented as limiting what we can know of reality? It would have been important to elucidate this question in order to corroborate the claim that the social-scientific regime approximates empirical reality while philosophers, basically, turn away from it (514). Given that most of these questions remain unanswered, it is difficult to see what an empirical verification or refutation of Joly’s claims about conceptual regimes would amount to.

A third cluster of questions concerns the central claim about the sociological crisis of philosophy. To begin with, it is not clear how the notions

“philosophical reference system” (402) and “conceptual regime of academic philosophy” (371) relate to each other and whether they are equivalent. The former seems to designate the conceptual regime in place until the emergence of the social-scientific regime, while the latter refers to a new discipline-specific philosophical regime which emerges in response. Again, different meanings of “regime” seem to be involved and would have to be explicated. As to its content, Joly’s description of the new philosophical regime has some undeniably simplistic tendencies. Joly argues that philosophical discourse is *essentially* reactive to the new conceptual regime of the human and social sciences, and more generally, to any form of “scientific discourse” (408). The principal aim of this “professional ideology” (477) is to respond to the threat of the devaluation of the status of philosophy⁵⁴ and circumvent the scientific discourse by inventing criteria of validity independent of reality as described by biology, psychology and sociology (482-483, 486). The scope of these claims raises the obvious question whether Joly captures – as he seems to assert – all and “the essence” of philosophy since the early 19th century. It invites producing counterexamples and pointing to blind spots. In fact, there are important absentees from Joly’s panorama. There is almost no consideration of the philosophy of language and of science which develops from the 19th century on and is later attached to the label “analytic philosophy”. Considering, for example, a radically modernist philosophical orientation such as the “scientific world-conception” of the Vienna Circle would have challenged Joly’s narrative on reactive philosophical discourse, it seems. It is remarkable that when he touches on authors linked to this tradition (e.g., Austin or Reichenbach, 438-439, 488-491), suddenly appears the possibility of some viable form of philosophy, or rather “post-philosophy”. In any case, given the scope of Joly’s claim, it is hardly acceptable to leave aside a whole strand of 20th century philosophy which, in addition, focussed explicitly on the relationship between philosophy and the sciences broadly conceived. This reflects the more general absence in Joly’s narrative of the relationship between philosophy and the natural sciences, including mathematics. The latter are hardly considered, except for biology and evolutionary theory (321-326). This is problematic since the philosophical crisis Joly describes reaches, in fact, back to the successes of the natural sciences in the first half of the 19th century.⁵⁵ It is hence not obvious to qualify it as a genuinely *sociological* crisis of philosophical thought.

54 In this respect, Joly basically seems to radicalize and generalize the thesis advanced in Fritz Ringer’s study on “German mandarins” (RINGER, 1969).

55 For a classical account of how the neo-Kantian movement grows out of this situation, see KÖHNKE, 1986.

While it is undeniable that philosophy in the 19th and 20th century reacts to a general trend of scientification, it is more doubtful that it responds in the first place and *essentially* to the social and human sciences. Again, the main problem is the lack of a clear distinction between a general scientific regime and a specific social-scientific regime. Limiting the scope of Joly's claims to certain national contexts (notably France and, to a lesser degree, Germany) and, within these contexts, to certain philosophical movements, might be a viable option.

Beside these absentees, also the interpretation of the examples which Joly discusses explicitly raises some doubts. In this context, "neo-Kantianism" stands out. This polymorphic movement plays indeed a central role in Joly's narrative in that it exemplifies the "reactivation of the Kantian space" (22) after its occupation by the human sciences in the 19th century (415).⁵⁶ Joly's interpretation of neo-Kantianism, especially in its science-friendly variety, as a kind of Trojan horse for reintroducing the primacy of philosophy (233, 512) is interesting. It points to the ambiguities of Kant's strategy of the "middle course" – between scepticism and dogmatism, empiricism and rationalism, empirical science and metaphysics – recycled by neo-Kantians against "materialism", "psychologism", "sociologism", and other forms of naturalism.⁵⁷ Joly thus invites us to reconsider the implications of the basic transcendental gesture which determines so many attempts of defining the object of philosophy *vis-à-vis* the sciences since the 19th century, also beyond the neo-Kantian movement (421). However, it is doubtful whether the author's sweeping qualifications hit their target. In fact, his picture of neo-Kantianism seems determined by only a handful of proponents: the Southwest school of neo-Kantianism, especially Rickert's philosophy of values in Germany and the idealism of the founders of the *Revue de métaphysique et de morale* in France. Negatively, also Elias's rejection of the neo-Kantian tradition seems to play a role (281).⁵⁸ This *pars pro toto* leads sometimes to caricatures of this multifaceted movement. For example, Joly ascribes to all of these philosophies the assumption of an invariant, quasi-divine and "ineffable" a priori (e.g., 8, 471, 483). This vision of the a

56 Ironically, Joly seems to share his notion of neo-Kantianism and his analysis of the situation of philosophy *vis-à-vis* the sciences with the otherwise despised Heidegger (BOLLNOW and RITTER, 1973, p. 274). Of course, from the shared diagnosis of the "dispossession" of philosophy they draw contradictory conclusions. Where Heidegger re-insists on the *Seinsfrage* as the proper level of philosophical enquiry, Joly concludes that philosophy has simply lost its function and that Heidegger's ontological strategy is as ideological as the neo-Kantian response (452).

57 E.g. KANT, 1783, § 58. For the deployment of this strategy in German *Materialismustreit*, see KÖHNKE, 1986, p. 109-167, especially p. 150-151. For a recent panorama of the heterogeneous reception of Kant in France, see again FEDI, 2018.

58 E.g. ELIAS and HEILBRON, 2014, p. 12.

priori cannot be attributed to “neo-Kantians” such as Hermann Cohen or Ernst Cassirer – the latter being absent from Joly’s panorama.⁵⁹ Joly’s depiction of neo-Kantian theories of the a priori as remnants of religion goes, in fact, back to his quasi-religious interpretation of Kant’s “transcendental deduction” of the categories as a strategy of “saving God” (428). It is questionable whether Joly hits with this interpretation the core of the transcendental strategy and can understand its tenacious appeal. It would have been more promising to follow Canguilhem’s argumentation in terms of “formal functions of synthesis” deployed in judgments (466). Finally, Joly also seems to underestimate the positive exchanges between neo-Kantian philosophies and early sociology. While it may be true that the sociology of knowledge dealt a “final blow” to a certain type of Kantianism (422-423) (one should add phenomenology and philosophy of language), there is nevertheless evidence that the first proposals for a sociology of knowledge emerged in dialogue and in a certain continuity with the dominating neo-Kantian theories of knowledge.⁶⁰ This casts at least some doubt on the idea of a revolutionary break. In sum, Joly’s grand narrative of the opposition between “philosophic” and “scientific culture” (17) may have the virtue of retracing and locating large-scale processes, but it seems to come at the cost of non-negligible and in some cases hardly acceptable simplifications. Focussing on external struggles between philosophy and sociology (512), Joly inevitably minimizes the role of internal struggles – whence the claims of equivalence between opposed positions (e.g., Heidegger and the neo-Kantians, 452). The trouble is that it is not clear at the time what counts as “external” and “internal” because philosophy and sociology are just *not yet* autonomous fields.

This leads to the several historiographical and methodological issues raised by Joly’s book and, more generally, by his proposal for a “sociology of regimes of thought” (410, n. 2, 499). A first issue concerns Joly’s picture of the various “disciplines” involved. His narrative is basically one about the differentiation of disciplines and their competition with one another, involving primarily philosophy, sociology, psychology, and biology (e.g., 415-424, 482-488, 513). These struggles are seemingly supported by professional interests, especially in the case of philosophers who are thought to react to the threat of losing their status (379). However, apart from philosophy (and history, which plays only a minor role in Joly’s narrative), none of these areas is at the time a fully

59 E.g. CASSIRER, 1906. The issue has been discussed in Joly’s exchange with Jean-Louis Fabiani (FABIANI, 2017a, 2017b; JOLY, 2017c).

60 For the case of Durkheim, see SCHMAUS, 2004; STEDMAN JONES, 2001; PAOLETTI, 2012. There has even been a vivid debate on the role of the neo-Kantian heritage in Elias, see MASO, 1992, 1994, 1995; KILMINSTER and WOUTERS, 1994, 1995; GOUDSBLOM, 1995.

institutionalized discipline with university diplomas, chairs, and professional societies. Their autonomy around 1900 seems limited to specialized journals, affiliate teaching positions and some scholarly associations. Joly seems aware of this fact. Nonetheless, he continues to speak of “relatively autonomous specialized disciplines” (512) or “instituted disciplines” (513) and uses expressions which oppose “sociologists” to “philosophers” or “experimental psychologists” (e.g., 190, 408, 451-452). The author sometimes seems to artificially homogenize, oppose and even essentialize areas of scholarly activity which are at the time under transformation, in intense exchange or, in fact, institutionally interlaced (a fact considered by Hirsch).⁶¹ In particular, one might wonder about the underlying criteria for opposing “philosophers” to “sociologists” in the absence of disciplines in the full-blown sense. Why, for example, is Durkheim – despite the unequivocally “philosophical” character of his education, diplomas, of the journals, societies, and congresses in which he participated – *not* a philosopher? Assuming a stark opposition between philosophy and sociology at the time complicates rather than facilitates the understanding of certain phenomena. For example, the presentation of the *Revue de métaphysique et de morale* as a hotbed of philosophical reaction (395-405) makes it difficult to understand that the *Revue* entertained a review section entitled “L’année sociologique” since 1894, that Durkheim and his followers published outright “revolutionary” articles on the sociology of knowledge there and participated actively in the connected *Société française de philosophie* and the *Congrès internationaux de philosophie*; or that the *Revue* served as an important vehicle for the philosophy of science and, more generally, for a transversal form of rationalism which appealed to philosophers and sociologists alike.⁶² In some cases, it might be more fruitful to think about the alliances between certain trends in philosophy *and* in the (social) sciences (e.g. the commitment to “rationalism”) instead of rigidly opposing two domains, which institutionally were one at the time. In any case, Joly could have been more explicit about the various

61 Louis Pinto pinpoints the risk of opposing too rigidly philosophy and sociology for the period in question: « A une époque où la sociologie, au moins dans les facultés de lettres, n'était qu'une bifurcation interne de l'enseignement philosophique du supérieur, il serait superficiel d'opposer purement et simplement, comme deux camps bien délimités, philosophes et sociologues » (PINTO, 1993, p. 155).

62 DURKHEIM, 1909; PINTO, 1993; FABIANI, 1993. Another challenging example is the fact that Bergson – in Joly's presentation a “spectacular” proponent of the resistance to the (social) sciences (453) – supports in 1905 unequivocally the creation of a chair of “sociology” at the Collège de France, which would have been destined to Durkheim (BÉRA, 2019; PAOLETTI, 2019). Of course, this episode must be situated in the peculiar logic of the recruitment process at the Collège de France (see FEUERHAHN, dir., 2017) in order to assess the chances of integrating it into Joly's narrative.

notions of “discipline” he uses for specific periods. This might have led in the direction of a more systematic focus on vocations (Mosbah-Natanson) or on participation in specific problem-centred debates (Hirsch). As it stands, Joly’s narrative and his forthright way of presenting the issue comes dangerously close to projecting a later stage of disciplinary differentiation on the period around 1900. It thus bears the risk not only of a certain degree of anachronism, but – even if Joly explicitly refuses this perspective (377) – of a teleological and “inevitable” vision of the emergence of sociology, as it is criticized by Mosbah-Natanson.

That Joly starts from present-day rather than historical issues is maybe most palpable in his definition of “sociology”. In a sense, his approach is at the exact opposite of Mosbah-Natanson’s. Where Mosbah-Natanson brackets any preconceptions of “sociology” around 1900 in the name of the principle of impartiality, Joly knows – perhaps too well – what sociology “is”. He begins already (7) with a definite vision of sociology which is unequivocally inspired by a handful of authors – Durkheim, Bourdieu and, most importantly, Elias. Elias’s sociology of interdependencies is not only presented as the endpoint and best expression of the sociological revolution (253). The vision it contains of the relations between the “three fundamental dimensions of human existence” (256), i.e., biology, psychology and sociology, serves in fact as the blueprint for the analysis of the state of knowledge around 1900. It is little surprising that Joly is then able to read this vision off the discourse and struggles of his historical agents and that they divide into (few) assenting revolutionaries and (many) resisting reactionaries. At times, Joly cannot avoid the impression that he uses Elias as a benchmark against which other authors are measured (e.g., on Tarde, 67, 70; on Durkheim, 105; on Weber, 180; on Tönnies, 210; on neo-Kantianism, 233-234; on Simmel, 243 etc.). One might argue that this introduces a certain bias in his presentation of the historical material. In fact, two groups of authors seem to be missing from the panorama: on the one hand, historical predecessors of Joly’s own vision of sociology, especially Durkheim and Comte (Elias is extensively discussed, though); on the other hand, authors who might have complicated his narrative (e.g. Halbwachs, Blondel, Bouglé, Cassirer and Marburg neo-Kantians, emerging philosophy of science). If, for example, Durkheim is considered a decisive figure in the sociological revolution, why is there no direct investigation into his conception of sociology? It would have allowed for historicizing, particularizing and thus controlling some of the presuppositions which determine Joly’s narrative, thus achieving a sort of reflexivity which is otherwise claimed by Joly.⁶³ In spite of his insistence

63 See JOLY, 2018, p. 305-315, “Épilogue. Pour une sociologie réflexive”.

that the new conceptual regime is a simple “fact”, devoid of any epistemological presuppositions (308), Joly’s account appears as being at once normative and descriptive and as serving to draw a line between some “true sociology” (identified with a specific paradigm) and the rest. What kind of historiography is he thus offering? It is a historiography guided not only by past, but also, and maybe primarily, by present epistemological issues – and explicitly so (11).⁶⁴ The question remains whether such strong commitments are the best starting point for investigations in intellectual history. In any case, a tension remains between how Joly proceeds and his view that the history of the social sciences should avoid a “purely normative starting point” (251).

A second methodological issue concerns Joly’s selection of sources. Trying to “remain as close as possible to the practices and intimate beliefs of the agents” (11), he has a certain preference for unpublished sources: unpublished manuscripts, reading notes, especially correspondences, and even letter drafts (68). This introduces, of course, a wealth of interesting new materials and extends the corpus of sources to be considered in the history of sociology beyond the published texts of a handful of classics. Joly thus assembles many revealing documents about the perception of the emergence of sociology. However, this comes sometimes at the cost of a relative neglect of the published works and their contents. For example, Joly investigates in detail the reviews of Tarde’s *Lois de l’imitation* and undertakes even a lexicometric study of the author’s received correspondence (379-395). But the contextualisation of the content of the book within the sociological revolution (59-75) remains somewhat sketchy. Similar things could be said of the parts on Claude Bernard (338-341) or on Canguilhem (463-466, 500-510). The question is whether Joly’s choice of unpublished sources is always adequate to his objective of demonstrating a major cognitive revolution, indeed not less than a fundamental transformation in the picture of humanity. A methodological discussion of what this focus can achieve would have been desirable. For is the non-published text necessarily closer to the agents than the published text or does it contain the truth about their intentions, as suggested? Publications – understood as the products of a social process implying the censoring and stylizing of an initial expressive

64 At this point, the meaning of “epistemology” changes from a descriptive analysis of a historical state of knowledge to a normative and systematic theory of scientific knowledge. As discussed below, Joly insists on the possibility of there being a non-philosophical, purely scientific epistemology. One of his sources of inspiration in this regard is the work of the palaeontologist Stephen Jay Gould (321-326). These purportedly non-philosophical epistemological issues are still more apparent in Joly’s recent “defence” of Pierre Bourdieu (JOLY, 2018) which is conceived as a “sequel” to *La Révolution sociologique* (*ibidem*, p. 311).

intention as well as social recognition⁶⁵ – seem to contain different, but no less instructive information than unpublished pieces. And it was finally the elaboration of the content of these public works which the intellectuals under study took themselves to be their principal activity. By the relative neglect of the arguments in the published works, Joly seems to grant munition to the “internalist” who will not hesitate to deem his approach “purely externalist”.⁶⁶ If, in the Bourdieusian perspective claimed by Joly, text and context are “two translations of the same sentence” and should be used to elucidate each other,⁶⁷ then it could sometimes be more useful and more convincing to attend to the properties of the published works. As it stands, the marginal role of publications raises doubts whether, in the last resort, Joly succeeds in bringing together his ambitious epistemological interests with the micro-historical level of observation. His study sometimes leaves the impression of a sequence of sweeping long-shots and detailed close-ups. An intermediary level which would connect the two is often wanting. Hence, the detailed case studies finally do not seem to succeed entirely in verifying the general thesis on the sociological revolution.

A last methodological remark concerns the transnational dimension of Joly’s study. As mentioned, both the social-scientific regime and the sociological revolution are qualified as transnational. A perspective going beyond one national context seems indeed necessary to bolster the scope of Joly’s claims. However, the two case studies on France and on Germany are juxtaposed and remain for the most part unconnected. In the absence of systematic comparisons or a study of transfers and exchanges between the two national academic fields, it is difficult to decide whether it is indeed the same conceptual regime, the same set of constraints which is established around 1900 in France and Germany. For example, was there a requirement of “connecting the biological, psychological and sociological level” in the German social sciences and philosophy at the time? Considering the debate on *Wissenssoziologie* in the 1920s and 1930s, one might argue that constraints and sanctions went rather in the opposite direction. They included avoiding any association with “positivism”

65 BOURDIEU, 1988, p. 83-100.

66 Bourdieu aptly describes this general mechanism of a tacit complicity of externalism and internalism in the case of Heidegger: « Par leur obstination à s’interroger sur des faits biographiques sans les mettre en relation avec la logique interne de l’œuvre, les adversaires de Heidegger accordent à ses défenseurs la distinction que ceux-ci revendiquent explicitement entre ‘l’établissement critique des faits’ et ‘l’herméneutique des textes’. » (BOURDIEU, 1988, p. 11).

67 BOURDIEU, 2013, p. 92.

and respecting the *Verstehen-Erklären* distinction.⁶⁸ Agents who did not conform to these terms were effectively excluded.⁶⁹ The rapid marginalisation of Durkheimian sociology of knowledge within this debate points to non-negligible differences between both countries. It seems that Joly would have to push the transnational perspective of his study further – by investigating for example phenomena of transfer and reception – to decide whether differences or similarities ultimately prevail between the two national contexts. This seems indeed necessary for corroborating the claim of a transnational conceptual regime.

Finally, as the two other works discussed, Joly's book contains a reflexive dimension. In his case, this ambition is maybe most explicitly acknowledged. The conceptual regime of the social sciences is itself conceived as a sort of epistemological social fact and, by his methodological references, Joly places himself squarely within this regime (13-14). Arguably, he tries in his own work to “coordinate the three constitutive dimensions” and “avoid the dichotomy between individual and society”. For example, he investigates the socially conditioned psychic economy of his historical agents. It is thus from the standpoint of the social-scientific regime that Joly conceives the historical implementation of the same social-scientific regime. This strategy rejects implicitly the principle of impartiality. It assumes in a way the fact that the history of the social sciences, even with the most historicist of intentions, cannot be written in a “view from nowhere”.

However, to mitigate the risk of anachronism, Joly would have to provide two things: a demonstration of the viability of the underlying normative epistemology of the (social) sciences; and a description of how it is derived from the supposed factual existence of a historical social-scientific regime. In fact, Joly offers his theory of social-scientific knowledge only *en passant*, as part of the diagnosis of the sociological revolution, and especially in his chapter on Elias. It is presented as being “realistic”, “objective”, “natural” and “processual” (e.g. 203, 241), is thought to correspond to the “three-dimensional” picture of humanity and to be “more congruent to human reality” (145, 264). Typically, such qualifications would be thought to imply some basic philosophical claims, for example about the structure of reality, the conditions of knowing reality or the relationship between representations and reality. But the author insists,

68 This applies not only to Scheler's philosophical brand of *Wissenssoziologie* (SCHELER, 1924), but also to Mannheim (MANNHEIM, 1925, 1931).

69 This was the case of the Viennese philosopher, psychologist and sociologist Wilhelm Jerusalem who was instrumental in the importation of Durkheimian sociology of knowledge in the German-speaking world (UEBEL, 2012; HUEBNER, 2013; ROL, 2017).

again inspired by Elias, on the possibility of there being a genuinely scientific and “post-philosophical speculative method” (262-263, 299, n. 1). This peculiar kind of speculation would obviously be associated with the meta-theoretical part of the social-scientific regime. If so, the task would be to define a genuinely non-philosophical epistemology as well as a sociology of the sciences. Both would then play the role of two reflexive components within the overall social-scientific regime. Joly would have to show how to reformulate the philosophical issues raised by his implicit epistemology – questions about scientific representation and realism, the unity or disunity of the sciences, the function of laws, models, and explanation, about meaning, intention and symbolism in a naturalistic framework etc. – in a non-philosophical or simply scientific language in order to fully accomplish and control his reflexive stance. As it stands, *La Révolution sociologique* does not live up to this task. One might indeed have the impression that it would require a complementary book to do so. Joly’s further work seems to be moving in this direction.⁷⁰ Hence, it is possibly more adequate to conceive the book as one step in a long-term project which might eventually succeed in bringing together sociological, historical, and epistemological considerations.

In sum, the advantage of Joly’s grand narrative of the sociological revolution is that it attributes a concrete content and a moment in time to the epistemological transformations introduced by sociology and vaguely perceived ever since. The downside addressed in the above criticisms is that this narrative leads to simplifications and generalizations which are sometimes hard to accept from a historical point of view. The book thus points in a stimulating and provocative way to the challenges in connecting intellectual history with epistemological interests while fully embracing a reflexive stance.

(RE-)WRITING THE HISTORY OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

How to (re-)write the history of emerging French sociology? The three books in question offer markedly different, sometimes contradicting, sometimes complementary answers to this question. They have been presented as pushing respectively for a sociological (Mosbah-Natanson), for a historical (Hirsch) and for an epistemological (Joly) history of sociology. While these three dimensions are, of course, present in each one of these studies, the comparison leaves no doubt about their dominant orientation. Not only by their differences, but also by what they share the three books are indicative

⁷⁰ See JOLY, 2018, chapter 15, “Une épistémologie ‘naturaliste’?”, p. 253-279, 2020.

of certain, more general tendencies in present-day history of French sociology. These concerns show remarkable parallels with Jean-Claude Perrot's proposal for intellectual history as it has been formulated with respect to the history of political economy some twenty years ago. This might be since the situation of today's historiography of sociology is in some respects comparable to the situation of the history of political economy regarding the "history of economic thought" back then. In both cases, researchers who specialize in the history of (a) discipline(s) are confronted with established practices of teaching the history of these disciplines in higher education. In both cases, they engage in a critique of the simplistic "disciplinary memory" thus produced. In any case, Perrot's proposal offers a useful reading grid for summarizing and generalizing the shared concerns of our three authors. This indicates that Perrot's "concrete history of abstraction" might still be a fruitful framework for the history of the social sciences. The following points can be read as a list of minimal criteria for renewing the history of the emergence of French sociology and of the social sciences more broadly:

(1) *Pluralization and diversification*: All three books criticize, explicitly or implicitly, the existing historiography of French sociology for its focus on only a handful of classical authors, especially Durkheim and his group – "durkheimocentrism", to use Mosbah-Natanson's expression. The history of sociology hitherto "explore[d] only a small portion of its sources",⁷¹ one might say with Perrot. Against this sort of biased historiography, the three authors engage in a diversification on several levels. First, on the level of the agents considered. All three works enlarge the population of "sociologists" and other social scientists studied. By doing so, they also particularize the agents who dominated historical accounts so far, especially Durkheim and the Durkheimians. Second, the level of materials and sources investigated. Some of the studies draw to a large extent on unpublished sources from private as well as official archives. In particular, they make extensive use of correspondences, but also of published contemporaneous reviews.⁷² Mosbah-Natanson's bibliometric approach even generates a new, hitherto unknown corpus of published sources.⁷³ Third, the

71 « L'histoire de la pensée n'explore actuellement qu'une faible partie de ses sources. » (PERROT, 1992a, p. 9)

72 They thus respond to some of the desiderata formulated with regard to these types of sources, see respectively BÉRA, 2012, 2014; VANNIER, dir., 2020; MÜLLER, 1994; for a similar discussion in German-speaking history of sociology, see LINK, 2017.

73 Of the three books, Mosbah-Natanson's "material" approach, his history of the "sociological book" is certainly closest to Perrot's (see also the explicit reference to Perrot in MOSBAH-NATANSON, 2017a, p. 52). What he does for sociology around 1900 is in many respects analogous to what Perrot did for 17th and 18th century political economy.

shared concern with tracing “practices”. The studies in question no longer focus on a “chronology of results”⁷⁴ and on “finished” products, e.g., a given sociological claim or theory proposed in the form of a published monograph or article. Following the idea of a priority of scholarly practices,⁷⁵ they investigate early stages of research as well as other areas of scholarly activity (teaching, entertaining social networks, organizing conferences, journals etc.). In this sense, they can be said to contribute to a “concrete” history of the work of “abstraction” in the social sciences. In sum, the three books thus indicate that a history of sociology based primarily on the analysis of published texts by canonized authors has definitely become a thing of the past. This goes hand in hand with challenges mentioned in the above discussions. The abundance of new materials seems to require also new methods for treating them adequately. In the face of sprawling pools of agents, texts and practices the importance increases of making reasoned selections and balancing published and unpublished sources.

(2) *Integrating the history of sociology into the history, sociology and philosophy of science*: All three books set out – in peculiar ways – to integrate the history of sociology into present-day history, sociology, and philosophy of science. In this sense, Mosbah-Natanson applies a bibliometric approach and conceptual tools taken from contemporary sociology of science to French sociology around 1900. Hirsch locates his history of the idea of social time within research on “constellations” in intellectual history and history of science. Joly applies general lessons from Bourdieu’s theory of fields of cultural production and Elias’s historical sociology to the relationship between disciplines around 1900 and connects it with present-day issues about a thoroughgoing epistemological naturalism. Common to these three approaches is that they put an end to any kind of exceptionalism linked to the disciplinary uses and functions of the history of sociology. They consider sociology as a special case to which apply more general insights from the history, sociology, or philosophy of science.⁷⁶ Sociology becomes an object amenable to socio-historical investigation with the same methodological tools as any other area of knowledge.

74 « De la chronique des résultats, je serais tenté de dire – assez injustement – qu’elle est restée l’histoire des sciences spontanée des scientifiques. » (PERROT, 1998, p. 26).

75 « Les usages précèdent temporellement de beaucoup leur théorie. La pensée réflexive, dans l’histoire des sciences sociales aussi, ne prend son vol qu’au crépuscule de pratiques touffues. » (PERROT, 1992a, p. 30) See also CAMIC, GROSS and LAMONT, 2011b; BERT, 2012.

76 It is remarkable, though, that none of the three books draws on works from anglophone “philosophy of social science” which has developed as a subfield of the philosophy of science in the last decades. See for example the journal *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* (1971), the yearly conferences of the European Network for the Philosophy of the Social Sciences (2011) and the numerous readers and textbooks on the topic (e.g. MARTIN and

This corresponds to the demand of “treating all kinds of knowledge with the same tools”. In this sense, the three studies might be said to engage in a kind of “Durkheimian revolution” in the history of sociology.⁷⁷

(3) *Beyond disciplinary divisions*: The studies in question are all aware of the complicated processes of disciplinarization around 1900 and the historiographical challenges that go with it. How and according to which criteria do we define sociology at a time where it is still far from being an autonomous academic discipline? The three books show that writing the intellectual history of emerging sociology cannot stop at the frontiers of sociology as we conceive it today, that “such an intellectual history goes first of all beyond disciplinary divisions”.⁷⁸ This can mean, as in Mosbah-Natanson, to criticize the paradigm of institutionalization and professionalization and investigate instead the disciplinary trajectories and specific intellectual vocations of the authors producing “sociology”. It can also mean, as in Hirsch, to attend in the case of social time to the “migrations of intellectual tools across spheres of knowledge”.⁷⁹ Or it can mean, as in Joly, to investigate the competitive relationship between disciplines, specialties or areas of knowledge and observe the transformative effect of emerging sociology. In all these cases, the history of sociology is firmly embedded in a broader intellectual history and sociology of the social and human sciences. Given the tools developed in these works, generalizing claims about disciplinary or professional identities are hardly any longer acceptable.

(4) *Transnational circulation and comparison*: The three books indicate – sometimes by their limitations – that considering the transnational circulation of labels, ideas, people, and publications and engaging in cross-country comparisons becomes increasingly important in (re-)writing the history of emerging sociology. This applies also to studies focussing on one particular national setting.⁸⁰ As Mosbah-Natanson’s study shows, even an investigation centred resolutely on the French space of sociological publications cannot

MCINTYRE, dir., 1994; STEEL and GUALA, dir., 2010; CARTWRIGHT and MONTUSCHI, dir., 2014; ROSENBERG, 2015; KINCAID, dir., 2017).

77 Perrot thus characterizes the task of the history of science: « traiter tous ces savoirs avec les mêmes outils » (PERROT, 1998, p. 26). And: « Le moment d’une révolution durkheimienne est venu. Considérons, dans un premier temps du moins, les objets intellectuels comme des choses. » (PERROT, 1998, p. 28)

78 « [C]ette histoire intellectuelle déborde en premier lieu les découpages disciplinaires » (PERROT, 1998, p. 27).

79 « Finalement, l’histoire concrète de l’abstraction s’avère efficace, me semble-t-il, pour capter ces migrations d’outillages intellectuels à travers les savoirs. » (PERROT, 1998, p. 32).

80 For a history of “French sociology” in this transnational perspective, see especially HEILBRON, 1995, 2015, 2020.

ignore the circuits of importation and exportation of sociological works: Not less than one third of sociological works published between 1860 and 1880 were imported goods from other countries.⁸¹ Joly's book underscores the fact that in order to address fundamental cognitive transformations introduced by sociology, one has to engage in transnational comparisons. Even Hirsch's work, which is maybe most reticent in this respect, cannot avoid entering comparative reasoning when it comes to understanding the specific modernism of the French social sciences. In the perspective of Perrot's intellectual history, transnational circulation appears yet another case of the "migration of intellectual tools", alongside their transfer between disciplines, practices and various audiences. If the goal of this intellectual history is to identify "an explicable differentiation between intellectual practices of abstraction",⁸² then the differentiation along national contexts must surely be included.

(5) *Epistemological transformations*: Finally, all three studies take an "epistemological question" in Perrot's sense as their starting point. They try to understand intellectual formations which have become so evident that "we have lost the capacity to be astonished at their bizarreness".⁸³ How did it come that "sociology" became a designation for a definite scholarly activity (Mosbah-Natanson)? That a sociological conception of time was implemented across various disciplines (Hirsch)? That even a new sociological "picture of humanity" emerged and replaced earlier models (Joly)? The studies under discussion put a definite "epistemological questionnaire"⁸⁴ to their historical sources and are, in this sense, fine examples of "intellectual history". In this perspective, understanding the emergence of sociology around 1900 not only includes grasping institutional, social, and political processes through observations on a micro and macro level. The task is also to render intelligible major epistemological transformations through their material traces. In some cases, these changes can go beyond sociology and indicate an evolution in conceiving "humanity" or, at least, modern society. Indeed, the emergence of a discipline such as sociology might be a privileged starting point for observing

81 MOSBAH-NATANSON, 2017a, p. 98.

82 « Toutes ces enquêtes possèdent un trait commun : elles partent à la recherche d'une différenciation explicable entre pratiques intellectuelles d'abstraction. » (PERROT, 1998, p. 29)

83 « L'histoire intellectuelle a pour objet de rendre compte de ces acclimations primitivement impensables. L'impensable, l'incroyable, l'inouï : autant dire que la question initiale en histoire intellectuelle est philosophique ou épistémologique. » (PERROT, 1998, p. 33)
The notion of economic equilibrium provides an example: « Voici la surprise primitive, la surprise philosophique : nous avons perdu aujourd'hui la faculté de nous étonner devant la bizarrerie de cette idée : l'équilibre. » (*idem*)

84 PERROT, 1998, p. 27, 28.

such large-scale epistemological transformations.⁸⁵ The three works discussed thus invite us to re-engage with a “historical sociology of knowledge and culture” starting from “scientific texts”.⁸⁶

Apart from these five common tendencies, our survey identified two general challenges for a social history of the social sciences. These issues recur persistently in the reviewed books without receiving a definite answer:

(A) *Integrating sociological, historical and epistemological competences in a comprehensive intelligence of sociological texts*: Some of the respective limitations of the three studies seem to be a negative consequence of stressing either one of the sociological, historical or epistemological approach to the history of sociology. Mosbah-Natanson makes a convincing sociological case of the rise of “sociology” as an editorial fact and as an object of varied intellectual vocations; but for the limited attention to the intellectual contents and epistemological properties of emerging sociology, it becomes difficult to tell the difference between “sociology” as a label and sociology as a scientific endeavour. Hirsch offers an erudite historical panorama of the circulation of the idea of social time in the fluid space of French social sciences; but for the relative absence of sociological considerations regarding the autonomy of intellectual spaces the purported connection between this idea and a general “crisis of progress” remains relatively vague. Joly, finally, audaciously pinpoints an epistemological “revolution” introduced by sociology into the order of disciplines and the representations of “humanity”; but the scope of his claims leads to several simplifications which are hard to accept from a historical point of view.

These respective limitations point to an obstinate challenge for the history of sociology: the task of integrating epistemological, historical, and sociological “competences” in a comprehensive “intelligence” of sociological texts. Perrot has proposed one possible model for this sort of intelligence and has applied it to the history of political economy:

Ideally, [material intellectual history] mobilizes various types of competences: at the starting point an epistemological reflection; then, in the

85 « [L]es disciplines en formation me paraissent particulièrement loquaces. En effet, une discipline émergente bataille sur ses marges, mobilise ses adeptes, polémique avec ses adversaires. Ses propositions apparaissent bien souvent une première fois quasi implicites comme des pratiques de travail, une deuxième fois comme des théories, et, après un long usage, une troisième fois comme des formules de pur bon sens. » (PERROT, 1998, p. 33)

86 « Il s'agit bien de se tourner, entre autres, vers une sociologie historique de la connaissance et de la culture, mais à condition qu'elle soit calibrée précisément sur les questions qui sont bâties autour du texte scientifique. » (PERROT, 1998, p. 27)

course of research the finest possible historical erudition on the subject [...]; at the endpoint, the conclusions of this concrete history of abstractions fall under the view of the sociologist and the anthropologist.⁸⁷

There might be other models for this integration. In any case, all three books might be said to aim at such a comprehensive understanding. If they fall short of it in some respects, it is due to their inclination towards one of the competences involved. At the same time, it is this very bias which makes their specific contribution possible. This underlines that Perrot's vision is ultimately an ideal of which we might never have more than a negative grasp. The value of the works in question would then consist in pointing to the necessity of this integration of competences while exhibiting the distance which separates us from it. Obviously, the further question about how to approach this abstract ideal under the concrete conditions of the present division of intellectual labour between sociology, history and philosophy will be decisive.

(B) Reflexivity: The second challenge is intimately linked to the peculiar situation of the social sciences regarding their past. The review has shown that all three books engage reflexively with the history of sociology. They do not only study sociology as a distant object but are involved in it by drawing on its concepts and methods. They investigate the very ground on which they stand. I have argued that in each case specific problems are tied to this reflexive entanglement. Mosbah-Natanson performs a Durkheimian turn to overcome durkheimocentrism; but the tension between the methodological relativism regarding the use of "sociology" and the preference for one historical version of sociology remains unexplored. Hirsch conceives the idea of social time as the expression of peculiar representations of historical time and of a specific mentality; but the methodological profile of such a history of the "mentality of social time" remains vague. Joly tries to understand sociologically the implementation of a new sociological regime and, at the same time, takes unambiguously its part as a present-day position; but this raises the objection of anachronism if he doesn't provide a complementary defence of his implicit epistemology of the (social) sciences.

In all three cases, one might argue, the authors do not completely assume the reflexive character of their investigation. They do not spell out its conditions,

87 « Celle-ci [material intellectual history, MS] mobilise donc idéalement plusieurs types de compétences : au point de départ une réflexion épistémologique ; puis dans le déroulement de la recherche, l'érudition historique la plus fine [...] possible sur le sujet [...] ; à l'arrivée, les conclusions de cette histoire concrète de l'abstraction tombent sous le regard du sociologue et de l'anthropologue. » (PERROT, 1998, p. 31-32 ; see also PERROT, 1992a, p. 59)

effects, and consequences. Are these works undermining the validity of their claims by pointing to their socio-historical origins and conditions? Or, on the contrary, are they able to control them through this very reflexivity and improve their chances of obtaining reliable results? The ensuing debate would – once more – oppose two basic visions of the issue: reflexivity as a vice leading to relativism against reflexivity as a virtue, an infinite, individual or collective task leading to control and progress. The latter “reformist conception of reflexivity” has found a forceful expression in Bourdieu’s vision for a sociology and social history of the social sciences: The social sciences “have to confront the relativistic or sceptical circle and break it by implementing [...] all the instruments that these very sciences provide and so produce the means of countering the social determinations to which those sciences are exposed”.⁸⁸ Accordingly, we might leave aside the question of relativism for the works under discussion. The incontestable solidity of their “instruments” and results would make this objection a scholastic gesture devoid of consequences.

But even then, an issue remains. The three books show, one might argue, that the promises of reflexivity – self-transparency, autonomy, control, progress – are not automatically fulfilled with the historicization and sociologization of the presuppositions of social-scientific work. What seems to be lacking in the three cases is a complementary effort of “rationalization”, i.e., an effort of providing reasons – of all sorts – which argue that a specific socio-historical starting point can serve to bring order and intelligibility to a specific empirical record within a specific socio-historical setting. Alongside the historical and sociological reappropriation, it might thus need a form of epistemological reappropriation of those presuppositions, combining the socio-historical understanding of a peculiar state of knowledge with a systematic theory of social-scientific knowledge. This might indeed be necessary to approach the ideal of reflexive, socio-historically informed epistemological control. Again, this calls for an integration of historical, sociological, and epistemological competences. Assuming consistently the reflexivity of a social history of the social sciences will hardly be possible without combining these three competences. Vice versa, a comprehensive intelligence of sociological texts seems to require a reflexive rationalization of the very conditions of empirical intelligibility. Ultimately, both challenges appear as two sides of the same coin.

88 BOURDIEU, 2004, p. 86, 91. See also BOURDIEU, 1982, 1995, 1997, 2001; BOURDIEU and WACQUANT, 1992. For further elaborations of the topic, see BRIAN, 2012a, 2012b; GINGRAS, 2004; HEILBRON, 1999, 2017.

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