

DISSERTATION | DOCTORAL THESIS

Titel | Title

Sociologizing the *A Priori*. Kantianism and the Sociology of Knowledge in French
and German-Speaking Academic Fields, 19th-20th Century

verfasst von | submitted by

Martin Strauss BA MA

angestrebter akademischer Grad | in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Doktor der Philosophie (Dr.phil.)

Wien | Vienna, 2025

Studienkennzahl lt. Studienblatt |
Degree programme code as it appears on the
student record sheet:

UA 792 296

Dissertationsgebiet lt. Studienblatt | Field of
study as it appears on the student record
sheet:

Philosophie

Betreut von | Supervisor:

ao. Univ.-Prof. i.R. Mag. Dr. Elisabeth Nemeth |

Wolf Feuerhahn, directeur de recherche CNRS, École
des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, Paris (cotu-
telle de thèse)

Ecole doctorale de l'EHESS

Centre Maurice Halbwachs

Thèse de Doctorat préparée dans le cadre d'une cotutelle entre l'Ecole des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales et l'Université de Vienne

Discipline : Sociologie

MARTIN STRAUSS

Sociologizing the *A Priori*

***Kantianism and the Sociology of Knowledge
in French and German-Speaking Academic
Fields, 19th-20th Century***

Thèse dirigée par: Éric BRIAN † (EHESS), Elisabeth NEMETH (Université de Vienne) & Wolf FEUERHAHN (EHESS)

Date de soutenance : le 02/12/2025

- Jury
- 1 Wolf FEUERHAHN, directeur de recherche au CNRS, directeur de thèse.
 - 2 Elisabeth NEMETH, professeure émérite de philosophie à l'Université de Vienne, directrice de thèse.
 - 3 Cristina CHIMISSO, professeure de philosophie à The Open University, Londres, rapportrice.
 - 4 John Levi MARTIN, professeur de sociologie à l'Université de Chicago, rapporteur.
 - 5 Johan HEILBRON, directeur de recherche émérite au CNRS, professeur associé à l'Université de Liège, examinateur.
 - 6 Pierre DEMEULENAERE, professeur de sociologie à Sorbonne Université, président.

Pour Aube et Elisabeth

Für Elisabeth Nemeth

In memoriam *Éric Brian*

C'est alors qu'enseigner l'art de *résister aux paroles* devient utile, l'art de ne dire que ce que l'on veut dire, l'art de les violenter et de les soumettre. Somme toute fonder une rhétorique, ou plutôt apprendre à chacun l'art de fonder sa propre rhétorique, est une œuvre de salut public. (Ponge [1929–1930] 1967, 157)

ABSTRACT AND KEYWORDS

Title in English: “Sociologizing the *A Priori*. Kantianism and the Sociology of Knowledge in French and German-Speaking Academic Fields, 19th-20th Century”

Abstract: “Social” or “socially constructed categories”, “social space”, “social time”, “social conditions of possibility” or “enabling conditions”, “social”, “historical” and other “relative *a prioris*” – phrases such as these are today pervasive in the social and human sciences. They all suggest some social scientific transformation of transcendental reasoning as developed most influentially by Immanuel Kant at the end of the 18th century. But where do these expressions come from? How and why did they emerge? What can they possibly mean in epistemological and methodological terms? To illuminate these questions, the present thesis studies the history of the problem of the “sociologization of the *a priori*”, i.e. the notion that those elements of knowledge that had been qualified in philosophy since Kant as “*a priori*” – our basic categories of thought, our concepts of space and time, some of our most general ideas – might become the object of a general science of society called “sociology”. This problem emerged for the first time in the early 19th century with the institutional and intellectual transformations of the so-called “Second Scientific Revolution”. It has preoccupied social scientists, philosophers and other scholars ever since. The present study offers a “sociological problem history” of this issue in a transnational, interdisciplinary and long-term perspective. Through a series of case studies covering the period from the early 19th to the late 20th century in the French and German-speaking world, it retraces the evolution of this problem under the changing conditions of the respective academic fields. The sociologization of the *a priori* emerges as an ambivalent and adaptable hybridization strategy that navigates between the constraints of academic philosophy and the social sciences’ claim to scientific authority over the basic elements of human knowledge. Through socio-historical investigation the thesis seeks to contribute to a better theoretical, epistemological and methodological understanding of a today widespread style of reasoning in the social and human sciences.

Keywords: Sociologization of the *a priori* – Neo-Kantianism and sociology – Sociology of knowledge – Transnational history of the social sciences – Sociology of philosophy – Philosophy of the social sciences

RÉSUMÉ ET MOTS CLÉS

Titre en français : « Sociologiser l'*a priori*. Kantisme et sociologie de la connaissance dans les champs académiques français et germanophones, XIX^e-XX^e siècles »

Résumé : « Catégories sociales » ou « socialement construites », « espace social », « temps social », « conditions sociales de possibilité », « *a priori* historique », « social » ou autrement « relatif » : autant de formules qui sont aujourd'hui omniprésentes en sciences sociales et humaines. Elles suggèrent toutes une transposition en sciences sociales du raisonnement transcendantal développé par Emmanuel Kant à la fin du XVIII^e siècle. Mais d'où viennent ces expressions ? Comment et pourquoi sont-elles apparues ? Que peuvent-elles signifier du point de vue épistémologique et méthodologique ? Pour éclairer ces questions, la présente thèse étudie l'histoire du problème de la « sociologisation de l'*a priori* », c'est-à-dire l'idée que les éléments de la connaissance qualifiés d'« *a priori* » en philosophie depuis Kant – nos catégories de pensée fondamentales, nos concepts d'espace et de temps, certaines de nos idées les plus générales – pourraient devenir l'objet d'une science générale de la société appelée « sociologie ». Ce problème apparut pour la première fois au début du XIX^e siècle avec les transformations institutionnelles et intellectuelles de la soi-disant « Seconde Révolution Scientifique ». Depuis, il préoccupe sociologues, philosophes et autres savants. La présente étude propose une « histoire-problème sociologique » de cette thématique dans une perspective transnationale, interdisciplinaire et de longue durée. À travers une série d'études de cas couvrant la période allant du début du XIX^e siècle à la fin du XX^e siècle dans les pays francophones et germanophones, elle retrace l'évolution de ce problème sous les conditions changeantes des champs académiques respectifs. La sociologisation de l'*a priori* apparaît comme une stratégie d'hybridation ambivalente et adaptable qui navigue entre les contraintes de la philosophie académique et la prétention des sciences sociales à l'autorité scientifique sur les éléments de base de la connaissance humaine. Par le biais d'une enquête sociohistorique, la thèse entend contribuer à une meilleure compréhension théorique, épistémologique et méthodologique d'un style de raisonnement largement répandu aujourd'hui en sciences sociales et humaines.

Mots clés : Sociologisation de l'*a priori* – Néo-kantisme et sociologie – Sociologie de la connaissance – Histoire transnationale des sciences sociales – Sociologie de la philosophie – Philosophie des sciences sociales

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG UND SCHLAGWÖRTER

Titel auf Deutsch: „Die Soziologisierung des Apriori. Kantianismus und Wissenssoziologie in französischen und deutschsprachigen akademischen Feldern, 19.-20. Jahrhundert“

Zusammenfassung: „Sozial“ oder „sozial konstruierte Kategorien“, „sozialer Raum“, „soziale Zeit“, „soziale Möglichkeitsbedingungen“ oder „Ermöglichungsbedingungen“, „soziale“, „historische“ und andere „relative Aprioris“ – Begriffe wie diese sind heute in den Sozial- und Geisteswissenschaften allgegenwärtig. Sie alle suggerieren eine sozialwissenschaftliche Transformation transzendentalen Argumentierens, wie es maßgeblich von Immanuel Kant Ende des 18. Jahrhunderts entwickelt wurde. Doch woher stammen diese Ausdrücke? Wie und warum sind sie entstanden? Was bedeuten sie in epistemologischer und methodologischer Hinsicht? Um diese Fragen zu beleuchten, untersucht die vorliegende Arbeit die Geschichte des Problems der „Soziologisierung des Apriori“, d.h. der Vorstellung, dass jene Elemente des Wissens, die in der Philosophie seit Kant als „*a priori*“ qualifiziert wurden – unsere grundlegenden Denkkategorien, unsere Begriffe von Raum und Zeit, einige unserer allgemeinsten Ideen – zum Gegenstand einer allgemeinen Wissenschaft von Gesellschaft namens „Soziologie“ werden könnten. Dieses Problem tauchte zum ersten Mal zu Beginn des 19. Jahrhunderts mit den institutionellen und intellektuellen Umwälzungen der sogenannten „Zweiten Wissenschaftlichen Revolution“ auf. Seither hat es SozialwissenschaftlerInnen, PhilosophInnen und andere WissenschaftlerInnen immer wieder beschäftigt. Die vorliegende Studie bietet eine „soziologische Problemgeschichte“ dieses Themas in einer transnationalen, interdisziplinären und Langzeitperspektive. Anhand einer Reihe von Fallstudien, die den Zeitraum vom frühen 19. bis zum späten 20. Jahrhundert im französisch- und deutschsprachigen Raum abdecken, zeichnet sie die Entwicklung dieses Problems unter den sich wandelnden Bedingungen der jeweiligen akademischen Felder nach. Die Soziologisierung des Apriori entpuppt sich als eine ambivalente und anpassungsfähige Hybridisierungsstrategie, die zwischen den Zwängen der akademischen Philosophie und dem Anspruch der Sozialwissenschaften auf wissenschaftliche Kompetenz bezüglich der grundlegenden Elemente menschlichen Erkennens manövriert. Durch eine soziohistorische Untersuchung will die gegenwärtige Arbeit zu einem besseren theoretischen, epistemologischen und methodologischen Verständnis eines heute weit verbreiteten Denkstils in den Sozial- und Geisteswissenschaften beitragen.

Schlagwörter: Soziologisierung des Apriori – Neukantianismus und Soziologie – Wissenssoziologie – Transnationale Geschichte der Sozialwissenschaften – Soziologie der Philosophie – Philosophie der Sozialwissenschaften

CONTENTS

Abstract and Keywords	v
Résumé et mots clés	vi
Zusammenfassung und Schlagwörter.....	vii
Contents.....	ix
Analytic Table of Contents	xi
 Introduction: Towards a Long-Term History of the Sociologization of the <i>A Priori</i>	1
 PART I. ESTABLISHING THE SOCIOLOGIZATION OF THE <i>A PRIORI</i> , 2020s-1780s..	23
 Chapter 1. From Today's Transcendental Reasoning in the Social Sciences Back to the Sociologization of the <i>A Priori</i>	25
1. Introduction: Towards a history of transcendental reasoning in the social and human sciences	25
2. Instances of transcendental reasoning in the social and human sciences	28
3. The problematic unity of socio-transcendental reasoning.....	50
4. Back to the sociologization of the <i>a priori</i>	68
5. Conclusion: From present to past to past to present.....	96
 Chapter 2. Towards a Sociological Problem History	99
1. Introduction: How to investigate the sociologization of the <i>a priori</i> ?	99
2. Historiographical options: Towards a Bourdieusian approach.....	101
3. Sociological problem history: A historical and methodological profile.....	158
4. Operationalizing problem history for the sociologization of the <i>a priori</i>	221
5. Conclusion: From construction to confirmation.....	236
 Chapter 3. Neo-Kantianism and Sociology: An Anamnesis of Memorial Obstacles	239
1. Introduction: Reconsidering a research topic	239
2. Disciplinary history, collective memory and memorial obstacles.....	243
3. Narratives on neo-Kantianism and sociology.....	265
4. Historiographical problems and suggestions.....	300
5. Conclusion: Going beyond the obstacle	326

PART II. EXPLORATIONS IN THE HISTORY AND EPISTEMOLOGY OF SOCIOLOGIZING THE <i>A PRIORI</i> , 1780s-2020s	331
Chapter 4. Between Kant and Comte: A Conflict of Classifications	333
1. Introduction: A problem in the classification of knowledge and the sciences	333
2. Towards a historical sociology of Kant's and Comte's classifications of science	340
3. Sociologizing Kant: Beyond sacralization and profanation	365
4. Outline for future studies on Kant, Comte and the sociologization of the <i>a priori</i>	387
5. Conclusion: Setting the terms of the problem	392
Chapter 5. 27 February 1929, 17h15, 2 rue de Montpensier: Robert Bouvier's Long History of the <i>A Priori</i> at the Centre International de Synthèse	395
1. Introduction: A collective clarification of " <i>a priori</i> " in the social and human sciences	395
2. Henri Berr's "galaxy" and the <i>Vocabulaire historique</i>	398
3. Robert Bouvier as a mediator between France and the German-speaking world	410
4. " <i>A priori</i> " and " <i>a posteriori</i> " at the Centre international de Synthèse	418
5. Between Durkheimian sociology of knowledge and the history and philosophy of science	442
6. Conclusion: Lessons from a well-aged discussion	471
Chapter 6. Outlook: Further Studies on the Sociologization of the <i>A Priori</i>	475
1. Introduction: Looking forward	475
2. The trajectory of an ambivalent hybridization strategy	476
3. A paradigm for the sociologization of the <i>a priori</i>	529
4. Towards symbolic instrumentalism	535
5. Conclusion: Keeping the ladder	539
Conclusion: Towards a Better Understanding of Socio-Transcendental Reasoning	541
Acknowledgments	545
Archives	551
Bibliography	553
Annexe: Résumé en français	659

ANALYTIC TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract and Keywords	v
Résumé et mots clés	vi
Zusammenfassung und Schlagwörter.....	vii
Contents.....	ix
Analytic Table of Contents	xi
 Introduction: Towards a Long-Term History of the Sociologization of the <i>A Priori</i>	1
<i>The object “sociologization of the a priori”</i>	1
<i>History and epistemology of transcendental reasoning in the social and human sciences</i>	2
<i>An interdisciplinary, transnational and long-term history of a problem</i>	5
<i>The overall narrative</i>	8
<i>Strategy</i>	12
<i>Overview</i>	13
<i>Limitations</i>	16
<i>Formalities</i>	18
 PART I. ESTABLISHING THE SOCIOLOGIZATION OF THE <i>A PRIORI</i> , 2020s-1780s..	23
 Chapter 1. From Today’s Transcendental Reasoning in the Social Sciences Back to the Sociologization of the <i>A Priori</i>	25
1. Introduction: Towards a history of transcendental reasoning in the social and human sciences	25
<i>Transcendental reasoning in contemporary social and human sciences</i>	25
<i>The plan</i>	27
2. Instances of transcendental reasoning in the social and human sciences	28
<i>Recent examples from sociology</i>	28
<i>A preliminary definition of socio-transcendental reasoning</i>	34
<i>Strands and sources of socio-transcendental reasoning</i>	35
... <i>in the French context</i>	36
... <i>in the German-speaking context</i>	39
... <i>in the Anglophone context</i>	42
3. The problematic unity of socio-transcendental reasoning.....	50
<i>A family of positions in synoptic view</i>	50
<i>The problem of socio-transcendental reasoning</i>	53
<i>A problematic unity</i>	56

<i>Bourdieu on socio-transcendental conditions of knowledge</i>	58
<i>Abend on what-makes-it-possible questions in sociology</i>	62
<i>A style of reasoning?</i>	65
4. Back to the sociologization of the <i>a priori</i>	68
<i>The historical formation of the problem</i>	68
<i>The problem of the sociologization of the a priori</i>	72
<i>The space of logizations of the a priori</i>	75
<i>At the source of today's socio-transcendental reasoning</i>	77
<i>A multiple, a problem, a process</i>	79
<i>The intellectual and social conditions of the problem</i>	84
<i>An analytical category</i>	88
5. Conclusion: From present to past to past to present.....	96
Chapter 2. Towards a Sociological Problem History	99
1. Introduction: How to investigate the sociologization of the <i>a priori</i> ?	99
<i>Studying a problem</i>	99
<i>The plan</i>	101
2. Historiographical options: Towards a Bourdieusian approach.....	101
<i>The space of methodological options</i>	101
<i>Five key dimensions of the object under study</i>	105
(1) <i>Disciplines and disciplinary relations</i>	108
(2) <i>National contexts and transnational history</i>	113
(3) <i>The long-term dimension</i>	122
(4) <i>Beyond the internal-external distinction</i>	129
(5) <i>Reflexivity</i>	138
<i>The case for the Bourdieusian framework</i>	157
3. Sociological problem history: A historical and methodological profile.....	158
<i>The German-French problem of problem history</i>	158
<i>What is a problem?</i>	159
<i>The German-speaking tradition of Problemgeschichte</i>	163
<i>The French tradition of histoire-problème</i>	171
<i>Comparisons and contacts between the two traditions</i>	181
<i>The present-day interest of problem history</i>	188
<i>Sociologizing problem history</i>	193
<i>From Problemgeschichte to Mannheim's sociology of knowledge</i>	194
<i>Bourdieusian problem history</i>	198
<i>Principles of a sociological problem history</i>	208

<i>Methodological advantages and limitations</i>	211
4. Operationalizing problem history for the sociologization of the <i>a priori</i>	221
<i>Strategic research sites</i>	222
<i>Controversies</i>	224
<i>Transfers, receptions, circulations</i>	229
<i>The critique of memorial obstacles</i>	231
<i>Investigating the emergence of the problem</i>	233
<i>Limited case studies and specified ignorance</i>	235
5. Conclusion: From construction to confirmation.....	236
Chapter 3. Neo-Kantianism and Sociology: An Anamnesis of Memorial Obstacles	239
1. Introduction: Reconsidering a research topic	239
<i>From sociologizing the a priori to neo-Kantianism and sociology</i>	239
<i>The plan</i>	241
2. Disciplinary history, collective memory and memorial obstacles.....	243
<i>The illocutionary force of disciplinary histories</i>	243
<i>Some examples</i>	244
<i>Applying Halbwachs's sociology of memory</i>	249
<i>Memorial obstacles and their anamnesis</i>	258
3. Narratives on neo-Kantianism and sociology.....	265
<i>Towards a typology of narratives</i>	265
(1) <i>The positive narrative</i>	268
(2) <i>The negative narrative</i>	279
(3) <i>The indifferent narrative</i>	283
(4) <i>The ideological narrative</i>	287
(5) <i>The sociological narrative</i>	294
<i>Explaining dissent</i>	299
4. Historiographical problems and suggestions	300
<i>"Neo-Kantianism" and "sociology"</i>	300
<i>Construing the relationship</i>	315
<i>Selection and generalization</i>	317
<i>Unfortunate combinations</i>	319
<i>Reconfiguring studies on neo-Kantianism and sociology</i>	321
5. Conclusion: Going beyond the obstacle	326

PART II. EXPLORATIONS IN THE HISTORY AND EPISTEMOLOGY OF SOCIOLOGIZING THE <i>A PRIORI</i> , 1780s-2020s	331
Chapter 4. Between Kant and Comte: A Conflict of Classifications	333
1. Introduction: A problem in the classification of knowledge and the sciences	333
<i>To the roots of the problem</i>	333
<i>A persistent barbarism</i>	334
<i>Back to Kant and Comte</i>	336
<i>The plan</i>	339
2. Towards a historical sociology of Kant's and Comte's classifications of science	340
<i>Predecessors</i>	340
<i>Comte and the Second Scientific Revolution</i>	347
<i>Kant and the German university revolution</i>	349
<i>Two revolutions in one: The disciplinarization of science</i>	356
<i>Symbolic revolutionaries in the classification of science</i>	359
3. Sociologizing Kant: Beyond sacralization and profanation	365
<i>Questions on Kant and the autonomization of academic philosophy</i>	365
<i>Some obstacles</i>	366
<i>Kantian accounts of Kant</i>	369
<i>Profanating Kant</i>	374
<i>Polarized interpretations</i>	379
<i>Beyond sacralization and profanation</i>	382
4. Outline for future studies on Kant, Comte and the sociologization of the <i>a priori</i>	387
5. Conclusion: Setting the terms of the problem	392
Chapter 5. 27 February 1929, 17h15, 2 rue de Montpensier: Robert Bouvier's Long History of the <i>A Priori</i> at the Centre International de Synthèse	395
1. Introduction: A collective clarification of " <i>a priori</i> " in the social and human sciences	395
<i>27 February 1929, 17h15, 2 rue de Montpensier</i>	395
<i>The plan</i>	397
2. Henri Berr's "galaxy" and the <i>Vocabulaire historique</i>	398
<i>Berr as a scientific entrepreneur</i>	398
<i>Berr's project of "synthesis"</i>	400
<i>The Centre international de Synthèse</i>	405
<i>The Vocabulaire historique</i>	406
3. Robert Bouvier as a mediator between France and the German-speaking world	410
<i>A Swiss philosopher at the Centre international de Synthèse</i>	410
<i>Bouvier between the Centre international de Synthèse and the Vienna Circle</i>	413

<i>A convergence around encyclopaedism and Enlightenment values</i>	416
4. “ <i>A priori</i> ” and “ <i>a posteriori</i> ” at the Centre international de Synthèse	418
<i>Bouvier’s history of “a priori” and “a posteriori”</i>	418
<i>The discussion at the Centre international de Synthèse</i>	424
<i>The aftermath: Valentin Feldman’s additional note</i>	431
<i>Peculiarities of the CIS account of the a priori</i>	438
5. Between Durkheimian sociology of knowledge and the history and philosophy of science	442
<i>Berr’s querelle with Durkheimian sociology of knowledge</i>	442
<i>Metzger on the a priori in science, history and philosophy of science</i>	452
<i>Continuities in history and in the philosophy and history of science</i>	468
6. Conclusion: Lessons from a well-aged discussion	471
Chapter 6. Outlook: Further Studies on the Sociologization of the <i>A Priori</i>	475
1. Introduction: Looking forward	475
2. The trajectory of an ambivalent hybridization strategy	476
<i>Filling some gaps</i>	476
1840s-1910s: From Kant and Comte to academic sociologizations of the <i>a priori</i>	476
(1) <i>Naturalistic accounts of the a priori around the middle of the 19th century between positivism and early neo-Kantianism</i>	478
(2) <i>French neo-Kantianism and sociology? Uses and functions of Kant in France</i>	480
(3) <i>Germany’s first positivism dispute (1859-1863): Carl Twesten, Rudolf Haym and the introduction of Comte to Germany</i>	484
(4) <i>The spectre of positivism: Sociology in German neo-Kantian disputes on the classification of the sciences</i>	486
Around 1900: Exploring the peak	493
(1) <i>The a priori nationalized? From “Volksgeist” to “mentalité” in the French reception of German Völkerpsychologie</i>	494
(2) <i>Durkheimian sociology of knowledge in context: Emergence, execution and diffusion of a collective research programme on the social origins of the categories of thought</i>	498
(3) <i>A transnational controversy on the sociologization of the a priori: Reconsidering Simmel’s participation in L’Année sociologique</i>	501
(4) <i>The a priori in German-speaking debates on the sociology of knowledge, 1900s-1940s</i>	504
(5) <i>Max Adler and the social a priori: From the neo-Kantian critique of historical materialism to the sociology of knowledge</i>	507
(6) <i>A tale of two traditions: The reception of Durkheimian sociology of knowledge in France and the German-speaking world, 1900s-1940s</i>	512

(7) <i>Culturalizing or sociologizing the a priori? Cassirer's dialogue with Durkheimian sociologists</i>	514
1930s-1960s: Decline and transformation	517
1960s-2000s: Reemergence and proliferation of relativized <i>a prioris</i>	520
(1) <i>Reconstructing the transnational space of options for relativizing the a priori</i>	521
(2) <i>Bourdieu's sociology of symbolic forms between Cassirer, Durkheim and Panofsky, 1950s-2000s</i>	524
<i>A case of long-term sociological ambivalence?</i>	527
3. A paradigm for the sociologization of the <i>a priori</i>	529
<i>Rationalizing historical diversity</i>	530
<i>Variables and their possible values</i>	531
<i>Towards a typology of positions</i>	532
4. Towards symbolic instrumentalism.....	535
<i>Challenges to the sociologized a priori</i>	535
<i>Symbolic instrumentalism: Sources, claims, allies</i>	536
<i>Possible applications</i>	537
5. Conclusion: Keeping the ladder	539
Conclusion: Towards a Better Understanding of Socio-Transcendental Reasoning	541
Acknowledgments	545
Archives	551
Bibliography.....	553
Annexe: Résumé en français	659

INTRODUCTION: TOWARDS A LONG-TERM HISTORY OF THE SOCIOLOGIZATION OF THE *A PRIORI*

Ein philosophisches Problem hat die Form: “Ich kenne mich nicht aus.” (Wittgenstein [1953] 1984, 302, § 123)

The object “sociologization of the a priori”

This thesis studies the long-term history of the problem of the “sociologization of the *a priori*”.¹ This expression – besides being overly academic and hard to pronounce – is admittedly both abstract and awkward. But I mean something reasonably concrete by it: the notion that those domains of knowledge that had been qualified in philosophy since German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) with the Latin expression “*a priori*” – i.e. elements of knowledge preceding experience, such as our basic categories of thought, our concepts of space and time and some of our most general ideas – might become the object of a general science of society called “sociology”. This possibility of “sociologizing the *a priori*” I conceive here in a specific sense as a both intellectual and social “problem”. This problem has its own peculiar history – a history which can be retraced through socio-historical investigation. This is what the present work sets out to do.

The sociologization of the *a priori* was debated most prominently and explicitly in the decades around the turn of the 20th century in early French and German-speaking sociology and philosophy. Indeed, some of those who are today considered as “founding fathers” of academic sociology in Europe – Émile Durkheim (1858-1917), Georg Simmel (1858-1918) or Max Weber (1864-1920) – engaged with it and contributed to putting it on the agenda. However, the problem has a sensibly longer and broader history than is often supposed. Going backwards, this history reaches back to the first half of the 19th century when the problem emerged in the confrontation between Kant’s “transcendental philosophy” and the advent of “sociology” in French philosopher Auguste Comte’s (1798-1857) “positive philosophy”. On the other hand, going forward, the issue continued in variously modified forms through the First and Second World War – most importantly in the various debates on the subfield of the “sociology of knowledge” – up to the present day. Its consequences are arguably still with us – for instance,

¹ This general introduction has the purpose of exposition rather than demonstration (for the latter, see Part I). Accordingly, I have limited references to a minimum. I confine myself mostly to indicating the sections of the thesis where the reader may find further bibliographical information and in-depth discussion.

with the lasting controversies on various forms of “social” or “cultural constructivism” or “relativism” since the 1970s.

The goal of this thesis is to retrace – at least tentatively – this long-term process from the emergence of the problem in the early 19th century, through its vicissitudes in the 19th and 20th century up until its present-day forms.

History and epistemology of transcendental reasoning in the social and human sciences

But why bother studying the history of this arguably esoteric problem in the first place? There are different possible answers to this question. First, in a historical perspective, this process seems intrinsically interesting. The topic has not been satisfyingly addressed as such so far. The literature has paid attention to various forms of “relativization”, “dynamization” or “empiricization” of the Kantian *a priori* – for example, its “historicization”, “psychologization”, “culturalization” or “biologization”. But its peculiar “sociologization” has only been a marginal topic. Consequently, we still know relatively little about it. However, this first vaguely “historicist” answer is not entirely satisfying. It seems to deflect the question. For why pick out precisely *this* object for historical investigation *today*? What makes it “interesting”, which means inevitably “interesting *for us today*”? There is another, more “presentist” motivation for the present study.²

Looking at today’s social and human sciences, it seems that we have become accustomed to thinking in terms of “social” or “historical *a prioris*”, “social” or “historical transcendentals”, “social” or “socially constructed categories”, “social time”, “social space” and all sorts of “social”, “cultural” or “historical conditions of possibility” for all sorts of social and historical phenomena. In fact, these and similar phrases are pervasive in present-day social and human sciences – or at least in some important departments and traditions of it. These expressions all suggest – often very vaguely – a peculiar sort of social scientific reformulation of Kantian “transcendental” reasoning, i.e. reasoning in terms of *a priori* conditions making any experience or knowledge possible in the first place.³

However, neither the history nor the epistemology of this quasi-transcendental type of reasoning – I suggest speaking specifically of “socio-transcendental” or even “sociologico-transcendental” reasoning⁴ – are today clearly understood. Only in recent years awareness has grown that these ways of speaking might indicate a peculiar way of reasoning, to be

² On the tension between “historicism” and “presentism” in the history of the social and human sciences and my “problem-historical” stance on the issue, see Chapter 2.

³ For an extensive demonstration of the presence of these expressions in present-day social and human sciences, see Chapter 1.

⁴ For terminological explanations, see Chapter 1.

distinguished from other and better-established varieties of investigation – e.g. causal or comprehensive. Lately, there have been first attempts to spell out the methodological and epistemological characteristics of this type of reasoning in terms of “enabling conditions”.⁵

The current situation has provided a powerful motive for investigating the history of the sociologization of the *a priori*. I openly acknowledge this “presentist” perspective – but without abandoning the “historicist” orientation. By focussing on this problem and studying it in its socio-historical dimensions, I seek to contribute ultimately to a better both historical and epistemological understanding of a today widespread “style of reasoning”⁶ in the social and human sciences. Indeed, I think that both perspectives are necessarily intertwined: we cannot properly understand the epistemology of socio-transcendental reasoning without engaging in a study of its history; and we cannot properly understand its history without engaging with its epistemology.

On the one hand, there are several obvious historical and sociological questions to be answered: How, why and under which circumstances did these ideas of “sociologizing” Kantian transcendental reasoning come into being? How did something that might have seemed “un-thinkable” at some point – the apparently paradoxical idea that what makes experience and science possible in the first place might become itself an object of experience and science, more precisely “sociology” – enter the space of the “thinkable”? How was this idea actually “thought” and promoted as a solution for a set of epistemological and sociological problems? How was it discussed in different scholarly communities? How did it evolve and transform through several generations of social scientists and philosophers under changing institutional and intellectual conditions in various disciplinary, national and transnational contexts? And how did it finally become part of the relatively stable stock of the social and human scientific tool kit? How did we end up taking expressions like “social conditions of possibility” or “socially constructed categories” more or less for granted? If it is the task (or one of the tasks) of “intellectual history” to retrace the history of how concepts and ideas have become natural and evident to us,⁷ then the idea of “social conditions of possibility” seems to be a good candidate for such an enquiry. There is a fair amount of historical and sociological work to be done here to reconstruct and

⁵ I am thinking here of the recent work by Uruguayan sociologist Gabriel Abend on “transcendental sociological arguments”, the notion of the “moral background” and reasoning in terms of “enablers” (Abend 2014a; 2014c; [2020] 2022; for a discussion, see Chapter 1).

⁶ For a discussion of the problematic notion of “style”, see Chapter 1.

⁷ This notion of intellectual history can be found, for example, in the work of French historian of political economy Jean-Claude Perrot (1928-2021) (for further discussion, see Chapter 2). Perrot cited the idea of economic “equilibrium” as a case in point (Perrot 1998, 33; [1998] 2021, 501).

describe this peculiar socio-historical process in the perspective of a history and sociology of ideas.⁸

On the other hand, socio-transcendental reasoning also raises issues in the theory, methodology and epistemology of the social and human sciences: What are we actually doing when we are using the above phrases in an account of social phenomena? What is the underlying idea of how the social and historical world is working? How do we get to identify those “social conditions of possibility”? Do we thus arrive at some peculiar form of socio-transcendental reasoning, or do we engage just in another variety of reasoning in terms of causes or reasons? Elucidating these questions demands a more analytical and normative approach.

Inevitably, historical-sociological and the epistemological questions will inform each other. Interpretations of the historical process by which the Kantian *a priori* came under the purview of sociology will rely to some extent on an epistemological stance on what such a transformation means and whether it is possible at all. On the other hand, an epistemological position regarding transcendental reasoning in the social sciences will draw in one way or the other on the historically realized positions regarding this issue. The basic reason for this entanglement is that the socio-historical fact considered here is itself an “epistemological fact”, as it were; and, conversely, the epistemological fact we are interested in is a socio-historical fact.⁹ Instead of eschewing this circumstance, I shall try to embrace it and establish a productive dialogue between history, sociology, and epistemology.¹⁰

⁸ Arguably, the specific problem of the sociologization of the *a priori* is not the sole source of today’s larger quasi-transcendental reasoning in the social and human science. For further discussion of this distinction, see Chapter 1.

⁹ Only in retrospect did I discover a congenial notion of “epistemological fact” (*fait épistémologique*) in the work of French philosopher of science Gilles-Gaston Granger (1920-2016). In his 1987 “Leçon inaugurale” at Collège de France to launch – as an indirect successor of philosopher and historian Michel Foucault (1926-1984) – his chair on “Épistémologie comparative”, Granger defined an “epistemological fact” as follows: “Un fait de science est fait épistémologique en tant qu’il est reconnu comme fait original de connaissance, et dans la mesure où il prend une place et une fonction effectives dans un état donné d’un système de connaissance scientifique” (Granger [1987] 2022, 253). “Epistemological facts” essentially involve novelty: “un renouvellement du domaine, une métamorphose du type d’objets de la discipline en question”, “une *catégorie* nouvelle, au sens de l’établissement et de la détermination d’un domaine d’objectivité” or, simply, “l’invention d’un *outil*” (Granger [1987] 2022, 254) such as the microscope. For the context of Granger’s lecture, see Crocco and Patras 2022.

¹⁰ Arguing thus for a combination of history and epistemology is, of course, far from obvious. A whole battery of historically established distinctions withstands this idea: “descriptive” vs. “normative”, “external” vs. “internal” or “context of discovery” vs. “context of justification” (see also Kuhn [1962] 1996, 8–9). We will encounter some of them – e.g. “*quid facti*” vs. “*quid iuris*”, “empirical” vs. “transcendental” – in the course of our investigation. For further discussion, see Chapter 2. The epistemological upshot of the historical investigation is mainly spelt out in the Conclusion.

An interdisciplinary, transnational and long-term history of a problem

This tentative characterization of the topic and outlook indicates already some peculiarities of the present work. Three features of the investigation deserve preliminary mention here: its interdisciplinary dimension, its transnational dimension and its long-term dimension.¹¹

The interdisciplinary dimension is perhaps the most delicate one. Indeed, the present study cuts across and involves three different, well-institutionalized academic disciplines: sociology, philosophy and history. More precisely, it is located at the intersection of four separate but interrelated subfields which combine in each case sociology, philosophy and history, both on the object level and the analytical level. These fields are:

- (1) the history and sociology of the social sciences, in particular of early academic sociology at the turn of the 20th century;
- (2) the history and sociology of philosophy, especially of academic philosophy in the 19th and early 20th century;
- (3) the philosophy and epistemology of the social and human sciences, especially of transcendental reasoning in sociology;
- (4) and the transnational history of the social and human sciences, in particular between France and the German-speaking world.

The present work attempts to combine and integrate these different subdomains with their respective approaches and perspectives.

Speaking simultaneously to sociologists, historians and philosophers is, of course, a major challenge.¹² Each of these disciplines has its own object preferences, approaches, traditions, languages, competences, values, expectations, etc. To give an illustration, the trouble starts right with the title of the thesis and the object it picks out. Expressions like “sociologization of the *a priori*” and “socio-transcendental reasoning” are indeed far from neutral in disciplinary terms. They presuppose already some acquaintance with the specific vocabulary of academic philosophy. You need to have at least some grasp of what is meant by “*a priori*” in the Kantian tradition in order to apprehend the tension implicit in its possible sociologization. For sociologists and historians, this way of constructing the object in terms of an “idea” or a “problem” might seem odd, perhaps hopelessly “philosophical”. They would undoubtedly prefer other ways of defining the object: for example, in terms of the institutional and symbolic struggles surrounding the emergence of the subfield of the sociology of knowledge, or in terms of the

¹¹ For an extensive discussion of these dimensions, see Chapter 2.

¹² The practical and intellectual difficulties involved have been vividly described in Kuhn [1968] 1977 – at least for the particular relation between the history and the philosophy of science.

reception, transfer and circulation of specifically Kantian references in different local, national and disciplinary contexts. The tensions between these different perspectives are evident. But rather than concealing them, I suggest taking them here as a starting point for a truly interdisciplinary dialogue.¹³

In any case, the interdisciplinary perspective is required by the very nature of the object under study. Indeed, the sociologization of the *a priori* is intrinsically interdisciplinary. It designates the passage of an object – the *a priori* – from one discipline – philosophy – into another – sociology. This process involved – as an essential part – controversies on established disciplinary divisions. What is more, besides philosophy and sociology, still other disciplines and disciplines-in-the-making were involved – especially in periods where disciplinary boundaries were either inexistent, much less rigid or actively under debate. Some parts of the story of how the *a priori* became an object for sociology concern also psychology, history, anthropology, ethnography, ethnology or linguistics, in some cases even art history, classical philology, literary studies or sinology. In order to understand how the *a priori* was sociologized, we thus must go beyond the two main disciplines involved (philosophy, sociology) and look at the circulation of knowledge between further social and human science disciplines.

The second peculiarity of the present study is its transnational dimension. Indeed, I shall follow the problem of the sociologization of the *a priori* through various linguistic and national contexts. I shall compare the debates in these different contexts and retrace processes of diffusion, transfer and circulation between them. In fact, debates on making the *a priori* the object of sociology were not confined to one single national context (say Germany, where Kantian philosophy had arguably the strongest hold in academia and general culture). Rather, the issue was discussed in French, in German and in English-speaking contexts – the three languages that were arguably most central in the development of sociology in Europe, North-America and worldwide.¹⁴ These three linguistic contexts included, in turn, different national contexts with their own specificities – consider only the differences between Germany and Habsburg Austria, between France and French-speaking Switzerland or between the United Kingdom and the United States of America. The point of the transnational perspective adopted here is to show that the debates on the sociologization of the *a priori* had at least a European and to some extent even a global dimension.

¹³ On the history and sociology of academic disciplines and the discourses on disciplines, disciplinarity, inter- and transdisciplinarity, see Chapter 2. The approach of “sociological problem history” as defined there provides a framework for the collaboration of the disciplines involved.

¹⁴ For a simple and relatively uncontroversial definition of centrality in terms of the position of languages in the “world-system of translations”, see Heilbron 1999, 433–34.

As with interdisciplinarity, adopting this transnational perspective is made necessary by the properties of the object studied. The problem of the sociologization of the *a priori* is, if we look at it as a historical phenomenon, intrinsically transnational. It results to a large degree from the confrontation of different national traditions, concretely German “transcendental philosophy” and French “positive philosophy” and “sociology”. Put bluntly, it needs the German “*a priori*” and the French “*sociologie*” to come about with the problem of “sociologizing the *a priori*”.¹⁵ Moreover, once the problem had emerged, it was discussed in all three linguistic contexts mentioned above. These debates were, on the one hand, relatively independent from each other, i.e. they took different forms depending on national context. On the other hand, they were connected through various processes of transnational transfer and the international circulation of authors, ideas, idioms, argumentative patterns, problems, and so on. Accordingly, we have to study the problem both by comparing national contexts and by retracing its “international circulation”.¹⁶

A third notable feature of the present work is its long-term perspective. Indeed, the thesis covers – in varying degrees of detail – a period of roughly 250 years: from the second half of the 18th century to the early 21st century, from around the 1780s to the 2000s, sometimes indicating connections up to the 2020s. It thus passes through a sequence of multiple generations of philosophers, sociologists and scholars from other social and human science disciplines, encompassing immense institutional and intellectual transformations. The time period is, indeed, more or less coextensive with the very emergence of the social sciences, from a vague intellectual and scientific endeavour to fully institutionalized academic disciplines. As I construe it here, the sociologization of the *a priori* appears to be as old a problem as sociology itself.

While I actually started from a focus on the 1870s-1930s period, the long-term perspective appeared, as I advanced, increasingly necessary for understanding the problem at hand. In fact, it is difficult to comprehend the debates around the turn of the 20th century without considering the form that the problem had taken earlier. Its very terms – “*a priori*” and “sociology” – were laid down in the two classifications of knowledge and science in Kantian and Comtean philosophy formulated between the 1780s and the 1830s. It seemed that, if we wanted to know the origin of the problem, we had to go back to the turn of the 18th century. On the other hand, it became increasingly clear that many of today’s representations of the 1870s-1930s period – some of which formed the starting point for my own work – went back to the period between

¹⁵ All of this raises, of course, the question of “national traditions” in intellectual life and, more specifically, in the social and human sciences. For a discussion of this issue, see Chapter 2. The encounter of Kant’s transcendental philosophy and Comte’s sociology as promoted in his “positive philosophy” is studied in Chapter 4.

¹⁶ Comparativism, transfer studies, *histoire croisée* and other forms of circulation history have sometimes been conceived as incompatible and mutually exclusive. For my own stance on the issue, see Chapter 2.

the 1930s and the 2000s. Enquiring into the 1870s-1930s period thus involved to excavate and retrace several layers of interpretations and reinterpretations (with their respective socio-historical conditions) that had covered this phase since the 1930s. In sum, a double extension of the chronological borders became inevitable: back to the turn of the 19th century and forward to the turn of the 21st century.

Finally, in order to combine these three dimensions of the investigation, I have sought to work out an overall methodological approach I termed “sociological problem history” (Chapter 2). It takes inspiration from the German-speaking tradition of *Problemgeschichte* and the French tradition of *histoire-problème* but reformulates them within the overall framework of French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002). In this perspective, I suggest, we can conceive the sociologization of the *a priori* as a problem in both its intellectual and social dimensions. As any problem, it arises from an encounter between social agents – with their specific dispositions, practical schemes and categories of thought – and a social space – with its specific structure of social and intellectual positions. Thus conceived, we can follow the problem of sociologizing the *a priori* through different contexts – national, disciplinary, historical – all while embracing and controlling in a reflexive manner the present-day conditions of this “construction”. In one phrase then, the present thesis seeks to offer a reflexive interdisciplinary, transnational and long-term “problem history” of the sociologization of the *a priori*.

The overall narrative

Now, what does the story I tell look like? The process I retrace passes through several major stages. I propose the following periodization:¹⁷

(1) The emergence of the problem (1780s-1840s): The first phase, located between the 1780s and the 1840s, sees the emergence of the problem and, in fact, of its very terms: the expressions “*a priori*” and “*sociologie*”. The problem arose, as I shall try to show (Chapter 4), from a confrontation between two different ways of classifying knowledge and the sciences: on the one

¹⁷ Of course, this periodization has the same commonly known problems as any periodization: Why and how “cut history into slices”? (Le Goff 2014) The basic point of this periodization is to put some order into the record. This order – with each of its “boxes” – contains some arbitrary elements, of course. It involves controversial decisions on intrinsically ambiguous cases. The chronological limits of each period are blurry. But then this order is also based on some good reasons which might be submitted to further rational discussion involving consideration of the empirical data. Austrian cultural historian, journalist, actor and *bon mot* virtuoso Egon Friedell (1878-1938) aptly called the necessity and drive to order, categorize and divide into periods the “will to the box”: “Eine einfache Erwägung zeigt, daß alle Klassifikationen, die der Mensch jemals gemacht hat, willkürlich, künstlich und falsch sind. Aber eine ebenso einfache Erwägung zeigt, daß diese Klassifikationen nützlich und unentbehrlich und vor allem unvermeidlich sind, weil sie einer eingeborenen Tendenz unseres Denkens entspringen. Denn im Menschen lebt ein tiefer Wille zur Einteilung, er hat einen heftigen, ja leidenschaftlichen Hang, die Dinge abzugrenzen, einzufrieden, zu etikettieren. Das Lieblingsspielzeug vieler Kinder ist die Schachtel. Aber auch der Erwachsene trägt immer ein unsichtbares Quadratnetz mit sich herum.” (Friedell [1927–1931] 2007, 59)

hand, Kant's "transcendental philosophy", on the other Comte's "positive philosophy" with its introduction of "sociology" into the system of the sciences. This conflict of classifications appeared against the backdrop of structural transformations in the academic and scientific fields in Germany (especially in Prussia) and France around the turn of the 19th century. Their result was, on the one hand, the emergence of academic philosophy as a relatively autonomous domain of intellectual activity, distinct from theology, law, medicine and the natural sciences. On the other hand, the process of disciplinary differentiation associated with the so-called "Second Scientific Revolution", lead, especially in France, to the conception of a general science of society under the name of "sociology". It is in the context of the latter, in Comte's early reception of Kant, that we encounter indeed the first historical version of the *a priori* becoming the object of an autonomous science of society called sociology. The basic tension between Kant's and Comte's classifications of knowledge – epitomized by the two labels "criticism" and "positivism" – should then persist, in one form or the other, throughout most of the 19th century. The most prominent versions of sociologizing the *a priori* around 1900 should emerge from peculiar combinations of "criticism" and "positivism", especially from the interstice between "positivist criticism" and "criticist positivism".

(2) A variety of naturalizations (1840s-1880s): Sociological accounts of the *a priori* remained at first – as sociology itself – primarily an extra-academic affair. This is a main characteristic of the second phase, located roughly between the 1840s and the 1870s. In this period, various proposals came forward for "naturalizing" the *a priori*, i.e. incorporating it into the object area of one or the other empirical science. We observe a variety of empirical, materialist, physiological, psychological, biological and sometimes indeed early sociological reinterpretations of the *a priori*. They appeared in several national and linguistic contexts, ranging from England and France to the German-speaking world. Besides Comte and his "positivist" followers in various countries, we can think here of authors such as John Stuart Mill (1806-1873), Herbert Spencer (1820-1903), Karl Marx (1818-1883) and Friedrich Engels (1820-1895), Hermann von Helmholtz (1821-1894), Moritz Lazarus (1824-1903) and Heymann Steinthal (1823-1899) or Wilhelm Wundt (1832-1920). In this context, important resources for later debates on the possibility of making the *a priori* an object of the social sciences were created (e.g. biological, historical materialist, psychological accounts). But it still needed, it seems, a solidification of sociology as an academic discipline for explicitly sociological theories of the Kantian *a priori* to emerge.

(3) The sociologized *a priori* enters the university (1870s-1940s): The third period, spanning the time between the 1870s and the 1940s, is overall characterized by the entry of the problem into the universities. The sociologization of the *a priori* – professed by certain agents such as

Durkheim in France, Simmel in Germany or Max Adler (1873-1937) in Austria – appears in this context as an ambiguous strategy of hybridization that accompanied the entry of sociology into the university. The ambiguity lay in the fact that this strategy could be used in a number of ways: on the one hand, as a recognition of apriorism and therefore of the dominant institutional definition of philosophy and the role of the academic philosopher; on the other hand, as a challenge to the constitutive opposition between the empirical and the transcendental, which was not only a conceptual boundary going back to Kantian philosophy, but had also become a professional and disciplinary boundary between philosophers and scientists. Sociologizing the *a priori* could thus mean both an accommodation and a break with academic philosophy. The ambiguity of this strategy (or rather these strategies) reflected to some extent the structural “sociological ambivalence”¹⁸ in which early sociologists – coming mostly from a philosophical background dominated by neo-Kantian philosophers – found themselves when they undertook to “found” the new academic discipline of sociology, including the new social role of the sociologist. The 1870s-1940s period is the pivotal point between previous, mainly philosophical discussions on the *a priori* and today’s forms of quasi-transcendental reasoning in the social and human sciences. For reconstructing the history of the sociologization of the *a priori* it is probably the most important phase.

(4) Transformation and eclipse (1930s-1960s): The fourth period covers the time between the 1930s and the 1960s. We encounter here important transformations of the problem of sociologizing the *a priori* under the impact of several general social and intellectual factors: the rise of anti-neo-Kantian movements (phenomenology, existential philosophy, logical empiricism, Marxism, etc.) after the First World War in the context of generational conflict between the older academic elite and intellectuals coming of age in the interwar period; scholarly migration – accelerated through the two world wars – between France, Germany and the United States, accompanied by concomitant circulation of ideas; and, above all, the autonomization of the social sciences vis-à-vis philosophy, most notably through the establishment of independent undergraduate studies in these areas. In this period, we note a relative eclipse of the problem of the sociologization of the *a priori* – at least in its philosophical framing drawing on the Kantian tradition. References to philosophical vocabulary, in general, declined as sociology (and other social sciences such as anthropology) became more autonomous. At the same time, it was

¹⁸ I follow here Merton and Elinor Barber’s definition of “sociological ambivalence”: “*In its most extended sense, sociological ambivalence refers to incompatible normative expectations of attitudes, beliefs, and behavior assigned to a status (i.e., a social position) or to a set of statuses in society. In its most restricted sense, sociological ambivalence refers to incompatible normative expectations incorporated in a single role of a single social status [...]. In both the most extended and the most restricted sense, the ambivalence is located in the social definition of roles and statuses, not in the feeling-state of one or another type of personality.*” (Merton and Barber [1963] 1976, 6–7)

especially in the interwar period that enduring narratives were created on the relationship between neo-Kantianism and sociology in general and on the sociologization of the *a priori* in particular.

(5) Reemergence and proliferation (1960s-2000s): The fifth period goes roughly from the 1960s to the 2000s. This period saw a resurgence of the problem of the sociologization of the *a priori* – in explicit terms. From the 1960s onwards, criticisms of various forms of “positivism”, “functionalism” and “structuralism” took centre stage in philosophy and the social and human sciences. The scientificity of these purportedly dominant orientations came under doubt – often in the context of their import or re-import from the English-speaking world to Europe. Positions formulated against these currents – such as “Critical theory”, social phenomenology, ethno-methodology, symbolic interactionism and pragmatism, practice theories, varieties of “post-structuralism”, etc. – triggered intense debates on various forms of “constructivism”, “relativism” and “postmodernism”. The strategy of sociologizing, historicizing or otherwise relativizing the *a priori* reappeared and diffused largely in this context. It became associated with methodologically and epistemologically heterogeneous projects, including social scientists and philosophers as different as Thomas Kuhn (1922-1996), Michel Foucault (1926-1984), Jürgen Habermas (1929-), Richard Rorty (1931-2007) or Pierre Bourdieu. The strategy itself remained ambiguous and could be used in several ways. Making the *a priori* the object of the social sciences could indicate radical relativizations (as in Foucault), the refusal of relativism (as in Kuhn or Bourdieu), or the preservation of a strong empirical-transcendental opposition with foundational ambitions (as in Habermas). More than one single idea or position, the sociologization or historicization of the *a priori* indicated in this period a space of positions that were in struggle with each other. The issue was a stake in debates involving several major, later canonized contributors to the social and human sciences.

(6) Between diffusion and historical-epistemological reflection (1990s-present): Finally, we can tentatively isolate a sixth and last period that leads roughly from the mid-1990s to the present day. This period is characterized by two features: on the one hand, a large-scale diffusion of transcendental tropes in the social and human sciences; on the other hand, the beginning of historical-epistemological reflection on this mode of reasoning and on various forms of relativizing the *a priori*. The diffusion seems to have been related mainly to the large-scale international circulation and canonization of intellectuals of the 1960s-2000s period who used forms of quasi-transcendental reasoning in their work (e.g. Kuhn, Foucault, Bourdieu, Habermas or Searle). As for increased reflection, the so-called “Science Wars” at the end of the 1990s seems to have played a crucial role. In the wake of this controversy, some took their distance from the debates on relativism, constructivism and postmodernism that dominated the 1970s

and 1980s. A historical, sociological and epistemological reconsideration of the whole movement of social or cultural “constructivism” started (e.g. Hacking 1999; Zammito 2004; Boghossian 2006). In the sociology of science, for example, critical reconsiderations of the constructivist “new sociology of science” and the history of the sociology of science emerged (e.g. Dubois 1999; 2001; Bourdieu 2001b; Shinn and Ragouet 2005). Today, finally, we also find attempts to give an epistemological-methodological account of transcendental reasoning in the social and human sciences, for example, in the already cited works of sociologist Gabriel Abend.

The present thesis contributes, of course, to this last, reflexive stage. It is located at the provisional endpoint – no teleology intended – of a complex process that has spanned some two hundred years. From this historical vantage point, I shall look here, as it were, both backward and forward.

Strategy

Now, how does this long history translate concretely into the structure of the thesis? Here are some explanations on the structure, the strategy and style of the following work.

First, I will basically follow a chronological pattern. That is, the different stages in the history of the sociologization of the *a priori* will be covered one after the other, starting in the late 18th to early 19th century and ending in the late 20th to early 21st century. The only exception is the introductory part where I will – according to the problem-historical perspective I adopt – work backwards, as it were, from the present to the turn of the 19th century.

Second, since it is out of reach to cover exhaustively the long time period envisaged in a transnational and interdisciplinary perspective, I will deploy a different strategy. I will proceed mostly by case studies, i.e. relatively independent, detailed and often highly localized in-depth studies of specific episodes within the overall process of the sociologization of the *a priori*.¹⁹ This strategy might be surprising given the relatively abstract nature of the object at hand. In fact, it is a matter of the style of research in which I have engaged. I have been deeply influenced here – both consciously and unconsciously – by the ambitious-but-modest research style exemplified and promoted by Bourdieu. At several points in autobiographically oriented interviews and works, Bourdieu spoke of this strategy of translating “big questions” into empirically

¹⁹ For a more detailed discussion of the methodology of case studies and “strategic research sites”, see Chapter 2.

explorable objects, sometimes of apparently minor importance, with the purpose of establishing an effective dialogue between theory and empirical research.²⁰

The sociologization of the *a priori* as a whole certainly is one of these “big questions” since it goes to the core of 200 years of disciplinary quarrels between philosophy and sociology. Yet, I have sought to address the issue mostly through concrete empirical episodes that can be studied in historical, sociological and philosophical perspectives. What can we learn from, say, an obscure terminological article on the term “*a priori*” by an obscure collaborator of Henri Berr’s (1863-1954) Centre international de Synthèse (Chapter 5); or from the ephemeral unfortunate participation of Simmel in Durkheim’s *L’Année sociologique* (see Chapter 6)? Indeed, the challenge will be to use these very specific cases to find out more about the more general problem of which they are purportedly a case. Yet, this strategy has the great advantage of bringing a highly abstract, multifaceted and ambiguous issue back down to earth.

Then still remains the question of the criterion for selecting the cases studied. How have I concretely picked out these cases? The criterion for choosing them was that they are – as American sociologist Robert K. Merton (1910-2003) called it – “strategic research materials”. In other words, the cases had to be significant or useful in retracing the overall process we seek to understand. In the course of my work, I have identified such “research sites” partly by design, partly by accident.²¹ I have sought to focus on those that contribute most to illuminating the various dimensions of the problem considered.

Overview

Concretely, the thesis splits into the following parts and chapters. Part I basically seeks to “establish the phenomenon” (Merton 1987, 2–6) of the sociologization of the *a priori*. It delineates the issue to be studied – distinguishing it from other forms of relativizing or dynamizing the *a priori* –, expounds the methodological strategy and reviews the existing research in a historical-

²⁰ “C’est le souci de réagir contre les prétentions de la grande critique qui m’a conduit à ‘dissoudre’ les grandes questions en les posant à propos d’objets socialement mineurs, voire insignifiants, et, en tout cas, bien circonscrits, donc susceptibles d’être appréhendés empiriquement, comme les pratiques photographiques.” (Bourdieu [1985] 1987, 30) For further statements of this idea, see e.g. Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 191; Bourdieu 2001b, 216–17; 2004, 130–31. This “style of research” is, in fact, more than just a matter of taste. It comes with an elaborate epistemology and methodology of the social sciences (e.g. Bourdieu et al. [1968] 2005). A similar style of research and methodology can arguably be identified in the work of American sociologist Robert K. Merton (1910-2003). Merton’s often caricatured notion of “middle-range theories” meant less scaling down our theoretical expectations than being actually *more* ambitious *both* about theoretical *and* empirical work (e.g. Merton [1945] 1968a; [1948] 1968; [1949] 1968a).

²¹ This is a well-known combination: “The originating question must still be recast to indicate the observations that will provide a provisional answer to it. Only then has the problem been definitely posed. [Paragraph] This objective typically requires a search for empirical materials through which the problem can be investigated to good advantage. Sometimes, the investigator comes upon these materials by happy accident, recognizing their strategic character only after he has begun to work with them; sometimes, he selects them by design.” (Merton [1959] 1965, xxvi)

critical perspective. It was indispensable to work at the beginning in a backward direction, as it were, going from our contemporary situation back to the sources of the problem of sociologizing the *a priori* (whence the time marker “2020s-1780s”).²² In this sense, I hope that readers will understand Part I as more than an excessive “Foreword to a Preface for an Introduction to a Prolegomenon to a Discourse on a Certain Subject” (Merton 1969).

Chapter 1 starts off from various forms of transcendental reasoning in present-day social and human sciences. In fact, this today frequent “style of reasoning” has its own intricate history. I argue that the specific problem of sociologizing the *a priori* is one of the main historical sources of today’s socio-transcendental reasoning. I provide definitions of both terms – “sociologization of the *a priori*” and “socio-transcendental reasoning” – and show how both should be conceived in a specific sense as “problems”. In short, the problem of sociologizing the *a priori* consists in holding together two ideas: the notion that basic cognitive structures and concepts – categories, concepts of time and space, ideas, etc. – depend on and vary with historical social groups or societies; and the idea that the explanation of these basic cognitive structures falls within the purview of a relatively autonomous science of society called “sociology”. Thus defined, I shall argue that it is both useful and defensible to use “sociologization of the *a priori*” as an analytical category for constructing the historical record.

Chapter 2 defends the general methodological-theoretical approach of the thesis. I call this a “sociological problem history”. In a first step, I describe the five main dimensions of the problem of sociologizing the *a priori*: its interdisciplinary, transnational and long-term character, and the necessity to consider the issue beyond the internal-external distinction as well as in a reflexive perspective. I seek to show that, in all these respects, Bourdieusian sociology offers us a convincing unified framework. Then, I elaborate how we can conceive “problems” such as the sociologization of the *a priori* within this approach. I dwell here on the two existing traditions of problem history – German-speaking *Problemgeschichte* and French *histoire-problème* – and carve out the profile for a specifically sociological variety. I explain, finally, how I operationalize this methodological programme with regard to the problem at hand.

Chapter 3 then proposes a critical discussion of the existing literature on the topic of the relations between neo-Kantianism and sociology – the context in which the problem of sociologizing the *a priori* has mostly been discussed so far. One important aspect of the problem-historical approach was that it involved a reflexive socio-historical critique of prior problem constructions. In accordance with this precept, I offer a reconstruction of existing narratives of neo-Kantianism and sociology – narratives which have often become obstacles for a proper

²² See Chapters 2 and 3 for the rationale of this procedure in “problem history”.

socio-historical account of the sociologization of the *a priori*. I consider various historiographical problems connected with the labels “neo-Kantianism” and “sociology” and argue that we should reconfigure the way we study connections between these two purported entities. Regarding the sociologization of the *a priori*, I conclude that we should abandon the focus on neo-Kantianism and sociology around 1900. Instead, for understanding this specific problem, we must extend the time period as well as the national and disciplinary contexts considered.

Part II then presents several case studies on crucial episodes from the long history of the sociologization of the *a priori*. These cases have been picked from a larger body of exploratory studies.²³ They have been selected to illustrate the long-term, transnational, interdisciplinary and reflexive dimension of the present project.

Chapter 4 addresses the historical emergence of the problem and presents preparatory work for further studies in this area. As announced above, I trace the problem of sociologizing the *a priori* back to a conflict between Kant’s and Comte’s classifications of the sciences and of knowledge. The chapter provides a rationale for this framing by presenting the outline of a historical sociology of classifications of science and knowledge. Drawing on previous works in the historical sociology of philosophy and of the social sciences (especially Heilbron [1990] 1995; 2017a; Collins 1998a), it shows how this perspective can be applied to Kant and Comte. We can thus construe their classifications of science as responses to ongoing structural transformations in the scientific and academic fields in Germany and France. Especially for Kant, it will be necessary to analyse and surmount several “memorial obstacles” that have opposed this sort of sociological interpretation of his work. Retracing how Kant and Comte intervened with their classifications in their socio-intellectual fields will make us understand better how the Kantian *a priori* in its transcendental function supported the autonomization of academic philosophy in Germany, while the Comtean notion of “sociology” replied to the increasing disciplinary specialization of the sciences in France. In the encounter of both – specifically, in Comte’s idiosyncratic reception and appropriation of Kant – appeared for the first time the option of the *a priori* becoming the object of sociology.

Chapter 5 fast-forwards almost a century to the period between the two World Wars. It focuses on an illuminating discussion on the use of “*a priori*” in history and the social sciences at the Centre international de Synthèse founded by French philosopher and historian Henri Berr. We start here from an entry by Swiss philosopher Robert Bouvier (1886–1978) on the distinction between “*a priori*” and “*a posteriori*” that should have become part of the Centre’s – finally

²³ Some of the studies which could not be included here as chapters feature in the form of short summaries in Chapter 6. They indicate concrete ways in which the present project might be pursued further.

never published – *Vocabulaire historique*. The context and content of this entry as well as the ensuing collective discussion reveal the contemporary “space of possibilities” in the perception of the problem of sociologizing the *a priori*. Besides Durkheimian and Lévy-Bruhl’s sociology of knowledge, we will encounter here also less expected references, such as to French physician and philosopher Claude Bernard (1813-1878) or to the group of logical empiricists known as the “Vienna Circle”. It was also at the Centre international de Synthèse that historian and philosopher of science Hélène Metzger (1889-1944) presented her theory of the role of the *a priori* in science and the history of science – an extension of Lévy-Bruhl’s sociological account of “primitive mentality”. Considering this particular version of sociologizing the *a priori* will enable us to identify some noteworthy continuities with the tradition of French “historical epistemology”. Berr’s network is in this respect a decisive junction in the interwar period where, in an international and interdisciplinary context, various contemporary options for rethinking the *a priori* met, exchanged and diffused.

Chapter 6, finally, is different in character. It is both conclusive and prospective. It attempts, first, to present in a synthetic way a series of further case studies and investigations that we should conduct in the framework of the comprehensive project outlined in Part I. I draw here on research that I have either presented or published elsewhere or that has remained unfinished so far. The aim is to close several gaps left in the general narrative on the sociologization of the *a priori* and to get a better picture of the overall process, including its social conditions. As a further element of this outlook, I then provide the outline of a typology or a “paradigm” for the numerous versions of sociologizing the *a priori* that we encounter throughout history. The question remains whether there is finally a today still defensible core to all these various positions. In response, I will sketch an epistemological view that we might call “symbolic instrumentalism”. This position – going back to a certain tradition combining elements of Kantianism, the sociology of knowledge and pragmatism – could enable us to spell out and defend a contemporary version of sociologizing the *a priori* in several debates in epistemology, in the philosophy of science and in the social sciences.

Limitations

The thesis formulates, especially in Part I, a “research programme”²⁴ for studying the sociologization of the *a priori* in a socio-historical perspective. Finally, this programme turned out to be too extensive to be executed single-handedly in one dissertation project. Nonetheless, I still

²⁴ The term has, of course, been popularized by Hungarian philosopher of science Imre Lakatos (1922-1974) (Lakatos 1968; 1970b; 1970a; 1978).

stand by the programme: its general principles, its chronology, its in-principle feasibility and its fruitfulness. I hope that what I can effectively provide here will convince readers in the same sense. What I do offer in this manuscript is the following:

- (1) First, a comprehensive outline of a research programme on the problem of the sociologization of the *a priori*. Importantly, this general framework is based on a relatively high number of case studies. Some of these studies were exploratory, some have been the object of “oral publication” (Merton 1980),²⁵ some have remained incomplete; others have been published elsewhere in the meanwhile (Strauss 2020a; [forthcoming] 2024; 2025); still others have been included here as chapters. Thus, not all of the cases forming the empirical basis for the general framework have entered the present manuscript as chapters – again, limited time and space being the main reasons. Yet, it is clear – to me at least – that I would not have arrived at the research programme without the back-and-forth between case studies and theoretical-methodological reflection which I have practiced for several years.²⁶
- (2) Second, I present here at least a few selected case studies on strategically important moments of the story I try to tell. Indeed, I would hardly have stuck to this overly large project, if I had not repeatedly had the impression that my framework turned out fruitful or accurate when applied to concrete historical instances. Finally, I can present here only material on some pivotal episodes, such as the emergence of the problem in the early 19th century or its peak period around 1900. In this way, I hope to give nevertheless some convincing examples of how my general interpretative framework might be applied.
- (3) Third and finally, I provide in the prospective Chapter 6 a list of specific cases that we should study further, if we were to continue work on this project. This overview will help to substantiate, evaluate and refine our general programme. Also, it incites to reflect on how and in which form this undertaking might be completed.

The result of all this will be a sort of sketch – perhaps an “essay” in the positive, experimental sense (see *Oxford English Dictionary* [Online] 1884–2025, under essay, n.). If the experiment succeeds, I might convince the reader of the idea that it makes sense to pursue the project further.

²⁵ For the sake of brevity and clarity, I permit myself sometimes to refer to these “oral publications” as unpublished conference papers (e.g. Strauss 2024b).

²⁶ For the case studies which I could not include here, see especially Chapter 6.

Formalities

Finally, I must address some formal peculiarities of the following manuscript – most of them connected to the peculiar conditions under which this thesis was conducted.

One difficulty of this doctoral dissertation was due to the transnational situation in which I did my research and writing: a thesis conducted in a *co-tutelle* setting at both a German-speaking and a French university on primarily German-speaking and French sources but written in English. The reasons for choosing English over German and French (which would have been possible) were both methodological and pragmatic. Methodologically speaking, it was about breaking through the relative linguistic isolation of research communities concerned with my object. Writing in English seemed a good strategy to go beyond a situation where, by and large, German-speaking scholars would write in German on German-speaking phenomena, French-speaking scholars in French on French phenomena and English-speaking scholars in English on either German-speaking or French-speaking phenomena (very rarely both). English, as the smallest common denominator, seemed the best way to bring these different communities into dialogue with each other. Also, it necessitated a heuristically fruitful, constant work of translating, distancing and denaturalizing indigenous expressions – we might think, for instance, of the problematic equivalence between “*sociologie de la connaissance*”, “*Wissenssoziologie*” and “sociology of knowledge”, or between “*épistémologie*”, “*Erkenntnistheorie*” and “epistemology”.²⁷ On the pragmatic side, moreover, English was simply the language that would allow me to collect feedback by the greatest possible number of colleagues (knowledge of French and German respectively is declining, it seems, among German and French research communities as is knowledge of both among English-speaking communities).

Yet, what I did not anticipate with this decision, was that there are different conventions and expectations concerning the genre of the doctoral dissertation in German-speaking, French and English-speaking academic contexts. Differences involve the length of the submitted manuscript, its density, its relationship with the dominant genre of the scientific article, the duration allotted to research, the overall function within academic careers, and so on. I was caught in what is perhaps best described as a “reference group conflict” (e.g. Merton [1949] 1968b, 279–440) – a conflict multiplied by the interdisciplinary and long-term orientation of the project. I

²⁷ In this sense, the “interlingual” character of the present work fulfils a similarly “liberating” function as its interdisciplinary orientation. As French historian Bernard Lepetit (1948-1996) aptly put it: “Comment échapper au poids des traditions accumulées, comment oublier les catégories mentales reçues, ces ‘prisons de longue durée’, pour produire un savoir neuf? L’interdisciplinarité, parce qu’elle multiplie les regards, assure la mise à distance critique de chacun des modes de représentation du réel, permet peut-être de ne rester prisonnier d’aucun. Elle doit nous aider à penser autrement.” (Lepetit and Les Annales 1989, 1323)

had to navigate somehow through this conflict. The result is a compromise where I have integrated aspects of all three linguistic-academic traditions involved.

A first consequence concerns the handling of the different languages involved. I give here all quotations in the original language and without translations into English. I am aware of the exclusive effects of this practice. However, every other solution, unfortunately, would have been impracticable.²⁸

Connected with multilingualism, I also had to make some decisions in terms of typographic conventions.²⁹ Words and phrases in languages other than English will be italicized. I do so also in many cases where words have lost their feel of strangeness – which happens mostly in special terminologies (e.g. “*a priori*”, “*habitus*”). I also keep italics when I refer to a non-English word or concept by using double quotation marks (e.g. “*outillage mental*”). And I use italics, of course, for emphasis. However, when phrases are direct quotations from other languages, I omit the italics (otherwise, I would have been obliged to italicize all the lengthy citations in languages other than English). Also, I omit italics when the non-English word designates an institution (e.g. “*École normale supérieure*”). In general, double quotation marks are used not only for references to words and concepts and for direct quotations, but sometimes also for scare quotes – although I have sought to avoid this ambiguous use. Simple quotation marks only occur within double quotation marks; conversely, double quotation marks are used within simple quotation marks.

Another peculiarity concerns my presentation of historical individuals and authors. Whether it is hyper-canonical authors used as primary literature, such as Kant, or more esoteric authors used as secondary literature, I sought to systematically indicate – at the first mention in each chapter – dates of birth and death, nationality, profession and other relevant background information. This practice might sometimes appear pedantic – and outright bizarre when it comes to well-known figures. But it seemed to me both necessary and useful. It is not only a basic operation of historicizing the objects under study – the properties mentioned are indeed a shorthand for a host of socio-biographical information – something which is still surprisingly rare in disciplinary histories such as the history of philosophy. Moreover, it seemed best to me for the interdisciplinary public the present work seeks to address. In order to maximize accessibility for different groups – philosophers, sociologists, historians and other researchers in the social and human sciences –, I have sought to minimize the role of disciplinary background knowledge – which involves taken-for-granted knowledge of certain authors, but also of concepts, texts,

²⁸ For the French-speaking reader, I offer at least a lengthy French summary of the whole thesis (see Appendix) – as requested by the *co-tutelle* agreement.

²⁹ I follow mostly the conventions used in Abend 2008, 174, n. 1; 2023, xi–xii.

institutions, etc. Perhaps I will thus appear sometimes as “explaining the obvious”. But besides facilitating communication, the operation has also proved heuristically fruitful.

A final note on footnotes, references and bibliography. I make indeed extensive use of footnotes, some of them fairly voluminous. I am aware of the risk that this might give the text a heavy, overly academic appearance. However, footnotes serve here several important and distinct functions:³⁰ (1) they provide documentary evidence for the claims advanced in the main text, make the “data base” of my work visible and thus permit control of my interpretations (e.g. a lengthy quote from a document I am referring to); (2) they give information on bibliography, indicating how I position myself within the literature and thus contribute to transparency; (3) they contain contextualizing background facts that complement the material presented in the main text; and (4) they indicate possible further developments, historical leads and other connections going beyond the main text. I have sought, nevertheless, to uphold everywhere the possibility of a “double reading”. That is, it should be possible for the reader to follow the main argument without reading the footnotes. The notes allow to go a step further, to obtain the documentary evidence or to better understand the background of my interpretations. For assessing the argumentative force of the whole, they will remain important. But they will not be necessary for the general thread of the argument.

With the footnotes also comes a lengthy bibliography at the end of this work. The scale of this bibliography should be understood as reflecting the fact that the “fieldwork” the thesis is based on was primarily an exploration of various networks of published texts in various languages, disciplines and other contexts. The bibliography reveals also to some degree the changing technical conditions of academic work in the disciplines involved. Without the ongoing large-scale projects for digitalizing written sources (commercial as well as sponsored by private and public institutions), I would not have had access to many of the sources I used. And without such techniques as “open character recognition” (OCR) and full-text search it would certainly have been impossible to manage the enormous amounts of text involved. I have not made extensive use of “artificial intelligence” tools that have emerged since 2022, i.e. during the writing of this thesis. But I have little doubt that they would have enabled still other research strategies in handling my sources and making my arguments. In any case, since I sometimes use the same bibliographical reference as “primary literature”, as “secondary literature” or as a “historical document” and “evidence”, any division of the bibliography into categories (e.g. primary and secondary literature, sources, national, disciplinary, thematic contexts, etc.)

³⁰ For some background on the history, epistemology, and, shall I say, politics of footnotes, see Compagnon [1979] 2016; Grafton 1997; on references more generally, see Olivesi 2007.

seemed pointless. The bibliography should simply serve the reader to quickly identify the sources I am referring to in the main text in author-date style.

In general, I have aimed here at maximum transparency regarding my materials and sources. The numerous references are less about displaying the outwardly marks of academic work, demonstrating the efforts I have made, the books and papers I have consulted, etc. My basic intention was rather to increase the usability and, hopefully, the usefulness of this work by enabling others to appropriate parts or aspects of it – even if they will not accept my overall interpretation.

In his discussion of the misleading “public record” of science, Merton once cited (Merton [1967] 1968, 5; see also 2004, 274) a wish expressed in a 1714 letter sent by German mathematician and philosopher Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646-1716) from Vienna to French polymath Louis Bourguet (1678-1742):

Cependant il est bon d’étudier les découvertes d’autrui d’une manière qui nous découvre la source des inventions, et qui nous les rende propres en quelque façon à nous memes. Et je voudrais que les Auteurs nous donassent l’Histoire de leur decouvertes, et les progres par lesquels ils y sont arrivés. Quand ils ne le font point, il faut tâcher de les deviner, pour mieux profiter de leur ouvrages. Si les Journalistes le faisoient par le rapport qu’ils font des livres, ils rendroient un grand service au public. (Leibniz [1714] 1887, 568)

For my part, I have learned more than I can tell from the materials and references presented in others’ writings, quite often in their footnotes. Disclosing my own sources and other elements of the “history of my discoveries” seemed the best way to pay off this debt – even if it creates some appallingly long footers. It is part of what enables cumulativeness in science and scholarship, I guess. I should thus like to think of these long footnotes and other, sometimes circumstantial explanations as the price to pay for furthering collective work – or, in Leibniz’s more likeable terms: as a basic “service to the (scientific) public”.

**PART I. ESTABLISHING THE SOCIOLOGIZATION OF THE *A PRIORI*, 2020s-
1780s**

Take care to establish a phenomenon (or a historical event) before proceeding to interpret or explain it. (Merton 1987, 5)

CHAPTER 1. FROM TODAY'S TRANSCENDENTAL REASONING IN THE SOCIAL SCIENCES BACK TO THE SOCIOLOGIZATION OF THE *A PRIORI*

Savoir ce que l'on fait quand on fait de la science – ce qui est une définition simple de l'épistémologie –, cela suppose que l'on sache comment ont été faits historiquement les problèmes, les outils, les méthodes, les concepts qu'on utilise. (Bourdieu [1975] 1980, 81)

Over the past century, and more strikingly in the last thirty years, epistemology has been given a rough time. It has been biologized, evolutionized, naturalized, socialized, structuralized, geneticized, behaviorized, linguicized, computerized – and most recently ostracized (or, as one may say, Rorty-fied.) (Wartofsky 1987, 357)

1. Introduction: Towards a history of transcendental reasoning in the social and human sciences

Transcendental reasoning in contemporary social and human sciences

The present-day starting point for my historical investigation into the sociologization of the *a priori* is the pervasive presence in contemporary social and human sciences of a series of typical linguistic expressions.¹ I mean the widespread talk of “social” or “socially constructed categories”, “social time” or “social space”, “social” or “historical *a prioris*”, “social conditions of possibility” or social “enabling conditions”. We might also include the peculiar use of the expression “*x* makes *y* possible” (and cognates), where *x* and *y* both can stand for all sorts of social phenomena – institutions, practices, beliefs, action, etc. (Abend [2020] 2022).

We encounter these peculiar ways of speaking today in various domains of social-scientific research. They are used within diverging theoretical agendas and research programmes and applied to a great diversity of empirical objects. Sometimes these figures of speech come in

¹ This chapter goes back to several oral presentations of my project in front of non-specialized academic audiences, especially at the “École d’Automne” of the Centre européen de sociologie et de science politique, Paris in November 2019 and in the seminar of the research pole “Kritisches Denken im Plural” at Centre Marc Bloch, Berlin in June 2020. These contexts pushed me to explicate and defend the more general interest of my doctoral research beyond the strictly historical interest in neo-Kantianism and early sociology of knowledge (the starting point of my research). Ideally, this text should remain accessible for the non-specialized academic reader and convince them of engaging with the topic of the dissertation. Besides the essential contributions of Elisabeth Nemeth, Éric Brian and Johan Heilbron, I am grateful to Aube Richebourg for encouraging feedback on a very early draft of this text; to Robert Frühstückl and Lucie Fabry for helpful comments on philosophical matters; and to the members of the research group “Theorie und Geschichte der Soziologie” at the Institute of Sociology at the University of Graz for in-depth discussion of an earlier draft, especially to Barbara Hönig, Stephan Moebius, Frithjof Nungesser, Katharina Scherke and Antonia Schirgi. Finally, I thank Gabriel Abend for sharing a draft of his article on “Making things possible” (Abend 2020; [2020] 2022). His work has helped me greatly in being more explicit about the present-day relevance of my historical investigations.

association with heavily charged theoretical concepts that are supposed to resume those “social conditions of possibility”, such as: “mentality”, “*Weltanschauung*”, “*Zeitgeist*”, “*épistémè*”, “paradigm”, “ideology”, “regime”, “discourse”, “dispositif”, “vocabulary”, “lexicon”, “grammar”, “repertoire”, “background”, “style”, “practice”, “*habitus*”, “field”, etc. At other times, these ways of speaking simply stand alone, as is often the case with the “*x makes y possible*” formula.

Even when unacknowledged, these various expressions seem to imply a specific logic, epistemology and methodology of the statements involved. Something making something else possible or being its “condition of possibility” must surely differ somehow from something being a simple “condition”. In fact, for those with philosophical sensitivities these manners of speaking suggest a peculiar social scientific transformation of “transcendental” reasoning as developed most influentially by German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) at the end of the 18th century: reasoning in terms of experience-independent conditions that “make experience possible” in the first place. Yet, these “conditions of possibility” of experience now seem to have become themselves an empirical object for the social and human sciences – either as an element in accounts of the observable social world (as an *explanans*) or as something to be explained in its own right (as an *explanandum*).

I would like to argue here that these interconnected speech patterns indicate something like a heterogeneous yet distinct type of reasoning in the social and human sciences. We may give different names to this type of reasoning. We can speak of “transcendental reasoning” or “transcendental arguments”² in the social and human sciences; we can speak of “quasi-transcendental” or “transcendental-like” reasoning, marking the distance that separates this mode of reasoning in the social and human sciences from Kant’s initial model; or we might speak, a bit more specifically, of “socio-transcendental” or “historico-transcendental” reasoning, adding the prefixes to indicate that the “conditions of possibility” in question are now in some way related to the social and historical world. I shall use these different terms here interchangeably before proposing some sharper distinction later on.

If this sort of transcendental reasoning is indeed as widespread in contemporary social and human sciences as I suggest, it seems vital to understand its epistemology, its methodology and perhaps even its implicit theory of the social world. What are these statements about? What is the difference between these social “conditions of possibility” on the one hand and established explanatory categories such as “causes” and “reasons” on the other? How do these conditions

² Abend used the expression “transcendental sociological arguments” (Abend 2014c) before changing to “what-makes-it-possible questions” and “enabling relationships” (Abend [2020] 2022).

differ from “necessary” and “sufficient conditions”? How are they supposed to account for the empirically observable phenomena? How can we investigate them? How can we establish empirical claims about them? And why would all of that be important for understanding what is going on in the social world?

As stated in the general introduction, the present thesis wants to contribute to answering these questions by way of a socio-historical investigation. When we trace socio-transcendental reasoning back to its origins, I argue, we are led back to the problem of the sociologization of the *a priori*, i.e. the issue of the Kantian *a priori* becoming an object of the special science called “sociology”. The proposals and debates on this topic were certainly not the only source of today’s quasi-transcendental reasoning in the social and human sciences. Other “relativizations” of the *a priori* – to physiology, biology, psychology, history, culture, etc. – undoubtedly had their share in it too. But I would nevertheless maintain that the sociologization of the *a priori* is an essential part of the story. Without taking it into account, we will have a hard time understanding present-day socio-transcendental reasoning in its diversity yet relative unity.

In other words, if we want to “know what we are doing” (Bourdieu [1975] 1980, 81, see the epigraph) when using today expressions such as the ones cited above in the social and human sciences, we have to know how and why they became part of our conceptual and methodological toolbox. In this process, the problem of sociologizing the Kantian *a priori* played a major role.

The plan

The following chapter works its way back from present-day forms of transcendental reasoning in the social sciences to the historical problem of the sociologization of the *a priori*. The second section presents some examples from current social-scientific research, mainly from different areas of sociology. I then identify different traditions of socio-transcendental reasoning in French, German-speaking and English-speaking contexts.

The third section elaborates what these different positions have in common by drawing on the Wittgensteinian notion of “family resemblance” and the idea of depicting such resemblances in a “synoptic view” (*übersichtliche Darstellung*). I identify here what I take to be the shared problem to which instances of socio-transcendental reasoning seek to reply. I also consider whether we can speak of a peculiar socio-transcendental “style of reasoning” in the social and human sciences.

In the fourth section, finally, I argue that we can investigate the sources of today’s socio-transcendental reasoning by focusing on the formation and deployment of the problem of the sociologization of the *a priori*. I offer here a definition of this problem, clarifying its linguistic-

conceptual background and its status as an analytical category in my historical account. I also distinguish it from other forms of relativization, naturalization or “logization” of the basic structures of thought and sketch its socio-historical conditions.

In sum, the chapter thus establishes the sociologization of the *a priori* as the phenomenon to be described and explained in the thesis and argues for its strategic importance for understanding present-day issues in the epistemology and methodology of the social and human sciences.³

2. Instances of transcendental reasoning in the social and human sciences

Recent examples from sociology

Before trying to characterize socio-transcendental reasoning on a more general level, let us start with some concrete examples taken from recent research in different areas of sociology.⁴

A first example comes from the sociology of time. In 2019, the French sociological journal *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* published an issue entitled “Temps et pouvoir” (Darmon et al. 2019a). It opened with the statement that time – following the works of Durkheimian sociologists and of Norbert Elias (1897-1990) – had finally been established as an object of the social sciences:

Le temps n’est plus, s’il l’a jamais été, un objet délaissé par les sciences sociales. Durkheim et ses élèves, ou encore Elias, s’étaient déjà appliqués à montrer que le temps n’est ni une donnée naturelle, ni une structure *a priori* de l’esprit humain, mais une institution sociale, collective et contraignante, ou un phénomène socialement construit par les instruments mêmes de sa mesure. (Darmon et al. 2019b, 7)

Time, formerly thought to be an absolute observer-independent dimension of the world (in Newtonian physics) or a “pure form of intuition” (in Kantian transcendental philosophy), has – according to this narrative – been conquered at some point in time for empirical investigations in the social sciences.

Subscribing to this development, the issue then contains several empirical studies of time starting from a variety of concrete social phenomena involving schedules, timetables, calendars, school holidays, watches or clocks. These various “instruments” for measuring and organizing time are not only what provides an empirical access to phenomena of time. The editors think

³ Speaking of “establishing the phenomenon” and “strategic importance”, I use here, of course, a framing suggested by Merton 1987.

⁴ I have picked these examples from research encountered more or less by accident over the last few years and from works suggested in Abend 2014b; [2020] 2022. Although I limit myself here to sociology, it would be relatively easy to find examples from other social and human science disciplines, such as history, anthropology, the cultural sciences, philosophy, etc. The subsequent sections will suggest some.

that they are what *makes possible* different relationships towards time.⁵ In this respect, they also insist on what they call the “social relativity of time”⁶. Attitudes towards time are not only relative to societies as a whole – there is not one unique and homogeneous “time culture” –, but to specific social positions within a specific society, defined by class, primary and secondary socialisation, membership in groups, professions, etc. In this way, the editors – following Pierre Bourdieu’s (1930-2002) work on temporal dispositions (Bourdieu [1972] 2000b) – speak of a stratified “social space of relationships towards time”, or simply a “time space” (Darmon 2018). Representations of time and attitudes towards time, including scientific or objective time, are thus thought to have “social conditions of possibility” (Darmon et al. 2019b, 12) which can be explored empirically (such as prior structuring experiences in the social world). Time, having been thought of by Kant as an *a priori* condition making objective experience possible, turns out to have its own empirical “social conditions of possibility”.

But also the second “stem” of experience in Kant’s philosophy⁷ – the understanding and its “pure concepts” or “categories” – seems to enjoy a somewhat surprising career in sociology. Recent sociology of work provides an example. In her book *Troubles dans le travail. Sociologie d’une catégorie de pensée* (2021), French sociologist Marie-Anne Dujarier (1966-) embarks upon a socio-historical investigation into the notion of “work”. She retraces three principal meanings that the notion has carried from antiquity to the present: activity, works (*l’ouvrage* – the result of work) and employment. She shows how these three senses have intermingled and created confusions in the three different contexts of ordinary, institutional and scientific discourses and practices. Dujarier then extends her historical analysis to contemporary society and describes the “troubles” (Dujarier 2021, 24, 208) involved in applying the fuzzy category “work” to present phenomena such as self-employment or “bullshit jobs”. She not only describes the polysemy of “work” today but also shows how some social actors capitalize on these ambiguities. According to Dujarier, we should even consider getting rid of a category that causes to such an extent confusion. She proposes no less than an “epistemological revolution” (Dujarier 2021, 362, 372) implying an “emancipation” and “liberation” of the notion of “work”

⁵ “Dans ces différentes études, le temps n’est pas qu’un mot ou une notion philosophique. Il s’agit d’un objet, empiriquement saisi à partir d’un arsenal d’instruments destinés à *rendre possible* son appréhension – montres, chronomètres, agendas, calendriers, plannings, horaires, contrats, projets d’intervention et même martinets.” (Darmon, Dulong, and Favier 2019b, 8, my emphasis)

⁶ “Ce numéro est l’occasion de poursuivre ces investigations sur la relativité sociale du temps et les variations qui existent dans les différents rapports, de classe notamment, au temps.” (Darmon et al. 2019b, 10)

⁷ I am alluding here to Kant’s conception of knowledge as having two “stems”, i.e. sensibility (*Sinnlichkeit*) with the two “pure forms of intuition” space and time, and understanding (*Verstand*) with its “pure concepts” or “categories” (e.g. Kant [1781/1787] 1974, 66, A15/B29).

and the “invention” of new intellectual and social tools for reconsidering and reorganizing the relationship between the three principal meanings of “work” (Dujarier 2021, 368–69).

Throughout her investigation, Dujarier conceives “work” explicitly as a “category of thought” and proposes a “genealogy” and “sociology” of this category. She embeds her enterprise in a long tradition in the social sciences of “denaturalizing and historicizing categories” and offers a historical narrative of this “disciplinary history” (Dujarier 2021, 25–26, 31–36). In her own account of “categories of thought and practice”, she synthesizes elements of Durkheimian sociology of knowledge⁸, Claude Lévi-Strauss’s (1908-2009) account of “the savage mind”, Mary Douglas’s (1921-2007) work on institutions, Bourdieu’s investigations in the categories and schemes of practice and Judith Butler’s (1956-) studies on the “performativity” of gender categories. The category “work” is for Dujarier – following Bourdieu (Bourdieu 1993a) – a “real fiction” (“une fiction qui existe”, Dujarier 2021, 23–26): it is “socially constructed” through practice and discourse but at the same time firmly anchored in reality by its empirical “social conditions of possibility” (the State, law, individual socialisations) and its tangible effects. In sum, a notion incessantly used in everyday life such as “work” not only appears as a “category of thought and of practice” that makes perceptions, actions and evaluations possible. This category seems to have its own historical and social “conditions of possibility” – which might even lead to its future disappearance.

We encounter similar modes of reasoning also in areas that are less elusive and philosophically charged than the notion of time and the categories of thought. The third example comes from the sociology of emotions. In her widely read book *Why Love Hurts. A Sociological Explanation* (2012), Israeli-French sociologist Eva Illouz (1961-) analyses contemporary Western patterns of romantic love and the suffering it creates. She maintains that it is not the experience of emotional pain connected to romantic love as such that is new (Illouz 2012, 7). What she is interested in is rather the “specific modern form” (Illouz 2012, 17) that this experience takes in contemporary Western societies. This form is determined by several observable social factors such as “the de-regulation of marriage markets”, “the transformation of the architecture of choice of a mate”, “the overwhelming importance of love for the constitution of a social sense of worth” or “the rationalization of passion” (Illouz 2012, 16–17). Illouz thus reasons in terms of historical social structures that are thought to make our experiences and our most intimate

⁸ Dujarier drops in passing that Durkheim’s sociological theory of the categories broke with philosophical accounts: “Ce point de vue sociologique rompt donc explicitement avec les conceptions philosophiques antérieures qui considèrent que les catégories sont issues soit d’*a priori* universels comme le défendait Kant, soit de l’expérience individuelle, comme l’empirisme de Locke, Berkeley et Hume le plaiderait.” (Dujarier 2021, 32, n. 1)

emotions possible. The underlying basic idea is that our experiences have socially conditioned historical forms or “shapes”:

An experience is always contained and organized by institutions (a sick person in a hospital; an unruly teenager in a school; an angry woman in a family, etc.); and experiences have shapes, intensities, textures, which emanate from the way in which institutions structure emotional life. [...] [T]o be intelligible to oneself and to others, an experience must follow established cultural patterns. (Illouz 2012, 14)

Illouz conceives the specifically modern romantic suffering as the result of contradictions within these patterns, “contradictions [which] touch upon *the very possibility to articulate experience*” (Illouz 2012, 14, my emphasis). Such a contradiction exists, for example, between the individualistic, psychological language commonly used in self-interpretation and the intrinsically social conditions of romantic relationships. In Illouz’s account, highly personal romantic experiences and sufferings thus have their social and institutional conditions of possibility which “make them possible”.

Likewise, forms of behaviour and action that are more commonly recognized as objects of sociology and economics seem to have their “conditions of possibility”. A fourth example comes from economic and cultural sociology. Australian-American sociologist Lyn Spillman (1957-) has investigated in her book *Solidarity in Strategy. Making Business Meaningful in American Trade Associations* (2012) how American business associations create and maintain common economic interests among their members. The author intends to revise the established fundamental opposition between self-interested action and altruistic, solidary or social action. She does so by asking – in the most typical case of economic behaviour embodied by business activity – what makes self-interested action “meaningful” in the first place (Spillman 2012, 3–11).⁹

Spillman’s answer is that business associations accomplish a work of making strategic action meaningful by producing solidarity among their members. These institutions are “settings for routine cultural production – generating categories, networks, industry fields, collective identities, norms, status orders, and camaraderie that orient and motivate economic action” (Spillman 2012, 2). In the “discursive field” (Spillman 2012, 10) created by business associations,

⁹ “In this book I challenge this assumption that business is necessarily conducted as self-interested action in the pursuit of profit. I ask an apparently naive question: what makes self-interested action in the pursuit of profit make sense? That is, how do firms and the businesspeople who run them understand their interests? What meaning-making sustains their action? What cultural categories and vocabularies of motive make capitalist understandings of their norms of exchange, objects of exchange, and exchange partners routinely plausible – for capitalists?” (Spillman 2012, 1)

strategic self-interested action is not opposed to solidarity, but presupposes it.¹⁰ Business interests are socially and culturally “constructed” (Spillman 2012, 109).

Spillman thus asks in her investigation explicitly the question of what “makes it possible” to have and share economic interests:

We need to explore the cultural conditions for sharing an interest. The very possibility of having “an interest” depends on the existence of discourses and practices that transcend strategic language and action. [...] Culture is not only an external condition constraining or enabling particularistic strategic action. Culture is also constitutive of identities and solidarities that make “interests” possible. (Spillman 2012, 139; cited after Abend [2020] 2022, 78)

In short, economic self-interested action has specific empirically identifiable social and cultural “conditions of possibility”, such as collective identities and solidarities among members of business associations.

It is precisely this sort of formulations that have made Uruguayan sociologist Gabriel Abend describe Spillman’s arguments in his review of her book as “transcendental sociological arguments” (Abend 2014c):

Spillman talks about the “very possibility” of interests, what “makes [them] possible”, what they “depend on”, and what they “presume”. [...] While Spillman does not use this terminology, this is a “transcendental” line of argument, whose aim is to identify cultural preconditions of economic behavior and institutions. [...] [T]he point is that, in the absence of such cultural elements, those economic phenomena would not be possible at all – the way space is a condition for the possibility of material objects (Abend 2014c, 330).

But Abend makes not only a descriptive claim about transcendental arguments being factually used in sociology – in this case by Spillman. He also makes the normative claim that such arguments *should* be used. Empirically observable social “conditions of possibility” are a worthwhile subject of sociological study:

What is especially likable about [Spillman’s] book [...] is the transcendental paths it invites all of sociology to travel. It is in sociologists’ objective interest to pursue such questions, which, crucially, are not philosophical but empirical. [...] [S]ocial phenomena have conditions of possibility, which can be empirically identified, described, and explained. Therefore, sociologists should investigate not only what causes social practices, understandings, and institutions, but also what makes them possible in the first place. (Abend 2014c, 330)

¹⁰ “This examination of their meaning-making shows that solidarity and disinterestedness are as important in claims-making about the meaning of business as is the supposedly normative pursuit of particularistic interests. I argue, overall, that business culture is generated in a discursive field shaped as much by solidarity as strategy.” (Spillman 2012, 25)

Abend elaborated these notions further and put them to work in his book *The Moral Background. An Inquiry into the History of Business Ethics* (2014b). This is our last example here, pertaining to the field more recently known as the “new sociology of morality” (Abend 2008b; Hitlin and Vaisey 2010; 2013). In this work, Abend studies the activity of “business ethicists” – broadly those engaged in a discourse on improving the moral quality of business (Abend 2014b, 10) – in the United States between the 1850s and the 1930s. These business ethicists played an important role in establishing public understandings of the connection between morals and economics.¹¹ Abend argues that the behaviour and the moral norms recommended by these agents remain surprisingly constant over a long time period (Abend 2014b, 18–20). However, there is change on a more fundamental level on which behaviour and norms (“first-order morality”) are based. Abend calls this level the “moral background”. This moral background is thought to “enable” first-order morality or “make it possible”.

The moral background comprises, according to Abend, six different dimensions. It defines (1) what counts as a moral reason for behaviour or norms, (2) which concepts are used (“conceptual repertoires”), (3) what can become the object of evaluation, (4) which methods are used in moral arguments, (5) whether there is moral objectivity, and (6) what things there are on an ontological level (Abend 2014b, 33–52). The moral background defines, for instance, what counts in a given society at a given moment in time as a moral agent.¹²

In the course of his empirical investigation, Abend then shows that there was historical variation in this background. He opposes two different types of moral background, the “Christian Merchant” and the “Standards of Practice” type (Abend 2014b, chaps 6–7, esp. 262). He argues that this “background variation lies at the heart of the history of business ethics” (Abend 2014b, 18). Throughout his study, Abend not only uses deliberately the same type of “transcendental” arguments he diagnosed in Spillman’s work. He also proposes the outline of a theory of the “enabling” relationship between the moral background and first-order morality (Abend 2014b, 52–56) – and the sketch of a history and typology of this kind of reasoning, referring in particular to the works of philosophers John Searle (1932–), Charles Taylor (1931–) and Martin Heidegger (1889–1976) (Abend 2014b, 56–66).

What is more, Abend argues finally explicitly for an empirical “transcendental project” (Abend 2014b, 386) of enquiry in the social sciences and thinks of his own work on the moral

¹¹ “They are in the cultural business of designing, articulating, circulating, validating, and legitimating public understandings and accounts about social reality.” (Abend 2014b, 9)

¹² If “in society S_1 at time t_1 you’d be able to morally judge pigs and knives; pigs and knives would count as moral agents. At time t_2 that’d be impossible. In society S_2 that’d be impossible. These are significant variations not in what people do or believe, but in what’s possible for people to do and believe. What’s possible and impossible – judgments, ideas, practices, institutions – is a function of the moral background. In other words, the moral background is a tool that helps answer what-makes-it-possible questions” (Abend [2020] 2022, 78).

background as an example of this approach. The moral background identifies a quasi-transcendental level that makes moral behaviour and norms possible while it is at the same time an “empirical tool” (Abend 2014b, 20) for the social sciences. In sum, the norms and actions promoted by business ethicists are thought to have their own socio-historical “conditions of possibility”.

A preliminary definition of socio-transcendental reasoning

Which are, starting from the examples discussed so far, defining characteristics of transcendental reasoning in the social and human sciences? A first tentative “preliminary definition” (Durkheim [1894] 2007, 34–46) might help.

Transcendental reasoning in the social and human sciences seems to rely on the notion of some sort of “socio-transcendental conditions”. In fact, this type of reasoning can be defined precisely as reasoning in terms of such socio-transcendental conditions. It is reasoning in terms of the relation between socio-transcendental conditions and what they condition – just as causal reasoning is reasoning in terms of causes and effects. But how can we understand such socio-transcendental conditions? They convey the idea that experiences – scientific or ordinary –, emotions, practices, social institutions, etc., have specific conditions which make them possible, but which, in turn, are of the same socio-historical nature. The notion of socio-transcendental conditions thus seems to contain, abstractly speaking, at least two distinct elements:

- (1) The transcendental element: Our experiences, knowledge claims, emotions, practices, institutions etc. have conditions which make them possible. This dependence in terms of “making possible” or “enabling” is different from causal relations (Abend [2020] 2022, 74–76, 88–90), i.e. x is the condition for the *possibility* of y , not for its actuality (as it would be if x were y ’s cause). Another way of putting it: x determines the “form” any particular y might take. But multiple interpretations of this enabling relationship are possible.
- (2) The socio-historical element: These conditions of possibility are “things in the world” and – contrary to philosophical transcendental arguments – not independent of all experience. They are neither “objective” in the sense of being determined in some way by the nature of things (they are precisely what makes any kind of objectivity or intersubjectivity possible); nor are they “subjective” in the sense of empirical facts about the psychology of individuals; nor do they express the structure of a Kantian ahistorical “transcendental subject”. These conditions are social and historical. They vary across

human societies or groups and, as a consequence, across space and time. Also, the socio-transcendental (or enabling) relationship between condition and conditioned, between the “enabling” and the “enabled” can be explored in both directions: going from the enabling to the enabled and from the enabled to the enabling.

These two elements form together, I would argue, the notion of socio-transcendental conditions. In a first approximation, we can say that it is this idea that underlies forms of transcendental reasoning in the social sciences.

How socio-transcendental conditions are then spelt out concretely in practice seems to vary sensibly from one approach to the other. Certainly not all instances of socio-transcendental reasoning subscribe explicitly to the two statements above or interpret them in the same way. Regarding the first element, for example, authors differ manifestly in how they conceive the difference between enabling relations and causal relations.¹³ Or, concerning the second element, they disagree on what entities social conditions of possibility are relative to (civilizations, epochs, mentalities, nations, groups, etc.). Nevertheless, the ways of speaking presented above seem to suggest something like these two assumptions, even if they are not explicitly endorsed or further explained.

Strands and sources of socio-transcendental reasoning

The foregoing examples are, of course, but a small and anecdotal selection from transcendental reasoning in the social sciences today. It would be easy to find further instances of research involving “social conditions of possibility”, “social” or “historical *a priori*”, “social categories” and “making possible” or “enabling” relations. Likely, they would come from the most diverse fields of current social and human sciences.¹⁴

As a further step towards putting some order into the diversity of contemporary literature, we may try to identify various strands within this type of reasoning. Socio-transcendental reasoning seems to have its sources in several different theoretical, methodological and philosophical traditions from various disciplinary and national contexts. We can try to trace each of them back to their respective ancestors. This should help us to refine our first

¹³ Conditions of possibility are sometimes conceived themselves as “causes” or, at least, as having a causal set-up. Illouz, for example, speaks of “social mechanisms” *making possible* specific conceptions of the romantic self (Illouz 2012, 26–27). This raises the difficult question of the difference between “conditions of possibility” and “distant causes”, “causal conditions” or “social mechanisms”.

¹⁴ For some further examples from recent research, see Abend [2020] 2022, 76–79.

preliminary characterization. A rough sketch of the lineages that seem most significant and influential today might go as follows.¹⁵

... in the French context

In the French context, most traces lead – directly or indirectly – back to Émile Durkheim (1858-1917) and Marcel Mauss’s (1872-1950) work on “primitive forms of classification” (Durkheim and Mauss 1903; reedited as [1903] 2017). In this essay, the authors established genetic, functional and causal relations between the classification of things and the categories of thought, on the one hand, and social organization, on the other.¹⁶ Durkheim elaborated this initial research programme into a sociological theory of the categories and of knowledge (or at least a first sketch of it) in his *Formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse* (Durkheim [1912] 2013; see also 1909). The “category project” (Schick et al. 2022) was collectively executed over some 50 years by the sociologists grouped around Durkheim’s journal *L’Année sociologique* (1898-), such as Marcel Mauss, Henri Hubert (1872-1927), Maurice Halbwachs (1877-1945), Robert Hertz (1881-1915), Marcel Granet (1884-1940) and, in a somewhat different vein, Lucien Lévy-Bruhl (1857-1939). The Durkheimian approach inspired debates and research in other areas of the social sciences, such as ethnology and anthropology, psychology, history and linguistics.

An important case in point were the historiographical debates in the context of philosopher and historian Henri Berr’s (1863-1954) *Revue de Synthèse historique* (1900-) and the Centre international de synthèse (1925-) (Berr 1900; 1906; 1910; [1911] 1953; Biard et al. 1997). This context formed a crucial background for the historians and founders of the *Annales d’histoire économique et sociale* (1929-) Lucien Febvre (1878-1956) (Febvre 1952; 1964; 1997) and Marc Bloch (1886-1944). They contributed to shifting historical interests from questions of fact to questions of “possibility”, i.e. to the socio-historical conditions that must be in place to make certain beliefs and attitudes possible – or impossible.¹⁷ The approach was forcefully

¹⁵ The idea here is to provide a rough overview, not to be exhaustive or enter into the (mostly controversial) details. I will not undertake here a systematic empirical investigation into quasi-transcendental reasoning in today’s social and human sciences. Such a study could be conceived, though, on the model of Abend, Petre and Caitlin’s study of the use of causal arguments in ethnographic literature (Abend et al. 2013). My purpose here is only to be reasonably clear about the present-day starting point for the following historical investigation into the more restricted problem of the sociologization of the *a priori*.

¹⁶ For a quick overview of Durkheimian sociology of knowledge, see still useful Lukes [1973] 1985, 435–49.

¹⁷ “L’examen critique des faits ne peut-il nous conduire à substituer, à la formule du magistrat: ‘est-il vrai que’ – celle de l’historien: ‘comment s’expliquer que?’ – Formule humaine; formule de celui qui sait qu’à chaque moment de son développement, les croyances de l’humanité sont ce qu’elles peuvent être. [...] En deux mots, dans la pratique de l’histoire religieuse, la méthode du *Est-il vrai que* ne mènerait-elle point à une impasse? Mais celle du *Est-il possible que* ne conduirait-elle pas, au contraire, l’historien à cette fin dernière de toute histoire : non point *Savoir*, en dépit des étymologies, mais *Comprendre*? Tel est l’esprit dans lequel nous allons reprendre la question, et d’abord examiner témoignages et témoins.” (Febvre [1942] 2003, 28–29, see also 307, 328, 364–65, 406, 420) For more on the background of this approach, see Chapter 2.

demonstrated by Febvre in his study on François Rabelais's (1483 or 1494-1553) purported "atheism" (Febvre [1942] 2003). Febvre and Bloch also used occasionally the terms "*outillage mental*" (Febvre [1942] 2003, 141–42, 328–41; see also Rey et al. 1937)¹⁸ and "*mentalité*" (esp. Bloch [1924] 1961; 1939b; 1940; 1949). The latter term had at the time already been present in Durkheimian sociology, in Lévy-Bruhl's widely discussed work on "primitive mentality" (Lévy-Bruhl 1910; [1922] 2010; Chimento 2000) and in psychology (Piaget 1923; 1926; Blondel 1928; Wallon 1928).¹⁹

From the 1960s onwards, this type of research was labelled "history of mentalities" (*histoire des mentalités*) and promoted by historians such as Georges Duby (1919-1996) (Duby 1961), Robert Mandrou (1921-1984) (Mandrou 1961), Jacques Le Goff (1924-2014) (Le Goff 1974) or Philippe Ariès (1914-1984) (Ariès 1975; 1977).²⁰ Since the 1980s, this approach has been further transformed – referring again back to Febvre ([1941] 2021a) – into a "history of sensibilities" (*histoire des sensibilités*) by historians such as Alain Corbin (1936-) (Corbin 1982), Jean-Jacques Courtine (1946-) and Georges Vigarello (1941-) (Corbin et al. 2011) and continues to be pursued in various domains of history.

Parallel to these historical debates (but not without interconnections²¹), Claude Lévi-Strauss (1908-2009) revived in the aftermath of the Second World War – with Mauss (Lévi-Strauss [1950] 2013) and Granet (Granet [1934] 1999) serving as intermediaries – the Durkheimians' interest in social classification and categories within the framework of his "structural anthropology" (Lévi-Strauss [1958] 1974; [1962] 1990; 1962). The "concrete logic" encountered in the "bricolage" of magical thought displayed for Lévi-Strauss a distinctive "necessity *a posteriori*"²². For this peculiar logic, he tried to account for with his concept of "transformation groups", borrowed from algebra (Lévi-Strauss [1962] 1990, 48–50). In the debates on "structuralism"²³ in the 1960s, he happily accepted for his approach the label "Kantianism without transcendental subject", attributed to him by philosopher Paul Ricœur (1913-2005) (Ricœur 1963; Lévi-Strauss 1963). Despite the "post-structuralist" and other critiques, Lévi-Strauss's

¹⁸ For an application of Febvre's *outillages mentaux* to the history of the social sciences in terms of an "analyse génétique des catégories de l'entendement en sciences sociales", see Brian 1994, esp. 10, 21, 363, n. 9.

¹⁹ For the history of the term "*mentalité*", especially the connections with German *Völkerpsychologie* and the notion of "*Volksgeist*", see elements in Chapter 6.

²⁰ On the difference between Febvre's and Bloch's notions of "mentality", see Burguière 1983; Hulak 2008. On the problem of attributing this historiographical approach to Lucien Febvre, see Brian 2023. For a general critique of the notion of mentality, see Lloyd 1990.

²¹ See Lévi-Strauss's positive reference to Febvre's *Problème de l'incroyance* (Lévi-Strauss [1949] 1974, 38).

²² A "necessity *a posteriori*" is, of course, a "wooden iron" (*hölzernes Eisen*), i.e. an oxymoron or contradiction in terms, according to Kant's distinction between *a priori* and *a posteriori* judgments: the first are strictly universal (*allgemein*) and necessary (*notwendig*), the second are contingent (*zufällig*) (e.g. Kant [1781/1787] 1974, 46, B4–5).

²³ On the history of and the debates on this label, see Boschetti 2014b. For a broader history of the intellectual movement, see Dosse 1991; 1992.

concern for classification has more or less faithful followers in social anthropology to this day (Descola 2005; 2022).

Against the background of historiographical debates, “structuralism”, and a historically-oriented French tradition in the philosophy and history of science later called “historical epistemology”²⁴, emerged in the middle of the 1960s the work of philosopher and historian Michel Foucault (1926-1984). Foucault developed an account of the history of the social and human sciences in terms of an “archaeology” of “*épistémè*” (Foucault [1966] 1990). “*Épistémè*” picked out explicitly the level of the “historical *a priori*”, i.e. the historically changing “conditions of possibility” of ideas, sciences and experiences.²⁵ Similar two-level distinctions between enabling structures and enabled phenomena persisted in Foucault’s later analysis of “discourses” (Foucault 1971, e.g. 55–56) and his “history of subjectivity” (Foucault [1981–1982] 2001). These various conceptual tools became hugely influential in the human and social sciences through the international diffusion of Foucault under the brand of “French theory” (Cusset [2003] 2008; Sapiro and Dumont 2020).

In sociology, on the other hand, Pierre Bourdieu started to elaborate around the same time his sociology of “*habitus*”, “capital”, “field” and “symbolic power” (Bourdieu 1967a; [1972] 2000a; 1977b; 1979b; 1980b). Early on, he framed his enterprise as a “sociology of symbolic forms”, inspired by Durkheimian sociology of knowledge, neo-Kantian philosopher Ernst Cassirer (1874-1945) and art historian Erwin Panofsky (1892-1968) (Bourdieu 1970; 1971a). Indeed, he maintained this description of his intellectual project until the end of his career (Bourdieu [1997] 2003, 32; 2001b). The international reception of Bourdieu’s work (Sapiro and Bustamante 2009) diffused his concern for the “social conditions of possibility” of social phenomena on a wide scale.

²⁴ On the genealogy and problems of this label, see Gingras 2010. The label goes back to a book by philosopher of science Dominique Lecourt (1944-2022) published in 1969 (Lecourt 1969). In the Anglophone world, it has been popularized by the works of Lorraine Daston (1951-) (Daston 1994) and Ian Hacking (1936-2023) (Hacking 2002; Kusch 2010), in German language by Hans-Jörg Rheinberger (1946-) (Rheinberger 2007; Schöttler 2012a).

²⁵ “Une telle analyse [archeological, MS], on le voit, ne relève pas de l’histoire des idées ou des sciences: c’est plutôt une étude qui s’efforce de retrouver à partir de quoi connaissances et théories ont été possibles; selon quel espace d’ordre s’est constitué le savoir; sur fond de quel *a priori historique* [italics by Foucault, MS] et dans l’élément de quelle positivité des idées ont pu apparaître, des sciences se constituer, des expériences se réfléchir dans des philosophies, des rationalités se former, pour, peut-être, se dénouer et s’évanouir bientôt.” (Foucault [1966] 1990, 13) For Foucault’s explicit account of the “historical *a priori*”, see Foucault 1969b, 173–80. The topic was arguably already present in Foucault’s 1949 *mémoire de diplôme d’études supérieures* under the supervision of Jean Hyppolite (1907-1968) on the topic *La constitution d’un transcendantal historique dans La Phénoménologie de l’esprit de Hegel* (Foucault [1949] 2024; for some context, see Vuillerod 2022, chap. 6). For the relationship of Foucault’s “historical *a priori*” with Kant – evident since Foucault’s 1961 translation and introduction of Kant’s *Anthropologie in pragmatischer Hinsicht* (Kant [1798] 2000; Kant and Foucault [1964] 2008) as his *thèse complémentaire*, published in 1964 –, see Han [1998] 2002; 2003; Pelletier 2005; Goris 2012.

Taken together, Foucauldian and Bourdieusian references are today probably the most significant French sources for talk of social and historical “conditions of possibility” and “historical” and “social *a priori*” in the social and human sciences.²⁶

... in the German-speaking context

In the German-speaking context, transcendental-like reasoning in the social and human sciences had different sources and took noticeably different forms.

First, quasi-transcendental speech patterns could refer back to the obvious Kantian and neo-Kantian references used by the generation of those who would later be considered the “founding fathers” of German academic sociology, especially Ferdinand Tönnies (1855-1936), Georg Simmel (1858-1918) and Max Weber (1864-1920).²⁷ Tönnies, for example, although suggesting a more unorthodox naturalistic reinterpretation of Kant (Tönnies [1887] 1991, XVII), openly avowed his proximity with the Marburg school of neo-Kantianism (Tönnies [1912] 1991, XXV, n. 1), especially with his friend Paul Natorp (1854-1924) – who should take up Tönnies’s concept of *Gemeinschaft* in his own work (Natorp 1899). Simmel, on his part, transposed Kant’s question about the conditions of possibility of “nature” to “society” and tried to identify the “sociological *a priori*” that made society possible (Simmel [1908] 1992b). Weber, finally, used – in the context of the *Werturteilsstreit*, the controversy on value judgments that coincided partly with the foundation of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Soziologie (1909/1910) (Nau 2001) – the epistemological work of neo-Kantian philosopher Heinrich Rickert (1863-1936) to argue that historically changing cultural values were constitutive of the objects of the social and cultural sciences (Weber [1904] 1988; [1917] 1988).

Weber’s considerations then were further pursued – modified through the impacts of both Edmund Husserl’s (1859-1938) phenomenology and Marxism – in the controversy on *Wissenssoziologie* in the 1920s and 1930s (Meja and Stehr 1982a), with Max Scheler (1874-1928) and Karl Mannheim (1893-1947) as its most eminent representatives. In this context, the social determinants of the “categorical apparatus” itself became an object of socio-historical investigations (e.g. Mannheim [1931] 1995).

These debates in Germany (Scheler 1924; Deutsche Gesellschaft für Soziologie 1925; 1929b) had an important, today often forgotten precedent in the work of Austrian philosopher,

²⁶ One might also add to this list philosopher Jacques Derrida (1930-2004) and his notion of “conditions of possibility” as “conditions of impossibility” (Rorty [1989] 1991a; Doyon 2014). Derrida’s “deconstruction” had some impact on the social and human sciences under the label of “poststructuralist social sciences” (Moebius 2003; Moebius and Reckwitz 2008; Culler 2015).

²⁷ For a critical account of the narratives that were developed on the relationship between “neo-Kantianism” and “sociology” in Germany, see Chapter 3.

psychologist and sociologist Wilhelm Jerusalem (1854-1923) who introduced the notion “*Soziologie des Erkennens*” in the German-speaking debate (Jerusalem 1909). Not only did Jerusalem call – taking his distance with “neo-Kantian” accounts of the *a priori* – for a “sociological critique of human reason” (Jerusalem [1924] 1982, 28–29). He also established a link and pursued a debate between his own, independently developed (Huebner 2013, 441) conception of the sociology of knowledge and the Durkheimian programme (Durkheim 1910; Jerusalem 1921b; [1924] 1982, 29–32). He thus became one of the main importers of this programme in the German-speaking world (Lévy-Bruhl [1910] 1921).²⁸

Implied in the debates on *Wissenssoziologie* was also Austro-Marxist philosopher and sociologist Max Adler (1873-1937) (e.g. Scheler and Adler 1925). Against the background of neo-Kantian critiques of historical materialism and “neo-Kantian socialism” around the turn of the century (Adler 1904a; Sandkühler and De la Vega 1970; Willey 1978, 102–30; Widmer 2024)²⁹, Adler pursued the idea of providing a transcendental foundation for Marxism as a social science all while “socializing” the notion of the *a priori*. Throughout his life, he elaborated the notion of “the transcendental-social nature of all human cognition” and the “social *a priori*” (*Sozial-Apriori*) (Adler 1904a, 170; [1924] 1982, 155; 1936).

Although Marxist theory of “ideology” (e.g. Marx and Engels [1845–1846] 1990; Marx [1867b] 1962) had played a major role in the emergence of German *Wissenssoziologie* (e.g. Lukács [1923] 1968a), Mannheim was criticized on the left by Marxists (e.g. Neurath [1930] 1982), and especially by adherents of a Marxist “critique of ideology” and, later, “Critical Theory” (e.g. Horkheimer [1930] 1982). While Critical Theory – later known as the “Frankfurt School” – defined itself officially against German neo-Kantian academic philosophy (e.g. Horkheimer [1937] 1988, 171–72), neo-Kantianism remains an essential background for understanding the emergence of this intellectual movement (Voller 2022, 175–95).³⁰ Leading figures such as Max Horkheimer (1895-1973) or Theodor W. Adorno (1903-1969) pursued

²⁸ For Jerusalem, the debate with both Durkheim and Scheler and his marginalization within the German debate, see elements in Chapter 6

²⁹ For the crucial role of German philosopher of law Rudolf Stammler (1856-1938) (esp. Stammler [1896] 1924) in these debates, see the corresponding section of Chapter 6.

³⁰ Both Horkheimer and Adorno did their doctoral dissertations (in Horkheimer’s case also the *Habilitation*) with German philosopher Hans Cornelius (1863-1947), professor at the newly founded University of Frankfurt (1914-). Cornelius’s position was counted in contemporary historiography of philosophy as a “psychologistic transformation of criticism”, situated somewhere between Ernst Mach’s (1838-1916) “empirio-criticism” and Kant’s “transcendental philosophy” (Oesterreich [1916] 1923b, 471–72). Horkheimer did both his thesis and *Habilitation* on Kant’s philosophy: his thesis on *Zur Antinomie der teleologischen Urteilstkraft* (1922) and his *Habilitation* on *Über Kants Kritik der Urteilstkraft als Bindeglied zwischen theoretischer und praktischer Philosophie* (1925). He also worked as Cornelius’s assistant in Frankfurt. Adorno did his thesis with Cornelius on *Die Transzendenz des Dinglichen und Noematischen in Husserls Phänomenologie* (1924) and tried also to pass his *Habilitation* with Cornelius on *Der Begriff des Unbewussten in der transzendentalen Seelenlehre* (1927). He refrained from it after criticisms by Cornelius and Horkheimer and finally passed his *Habilitation* on *Kierkegaard. Konstruktion des Aesthetischen* (1931) with theologian Paul Tillich (1886-1965).

explicitly sociological solutions to issues raised by Kantian philosophy, such as the “transcendental schematism” – the problem of how the categories of understanding are applied to sense perception (Horkheimer 1937, 176–77; Horkheimer and Adorno [1944] 1988, 28, 91, 132–33; Horkheimer [1949–1952] 1991). This tendency of combining Kantianism and Marxism showed also in the marginal project of philosopher and economist Alfred Sohn-Rethel (1899–1990). He aimed explicitly to connect Marx’s “form of commodity” and Kant’s “form of thought”, Marxist economic history and Kantian epistemology, in the framework of a “sociological theory of cognition” (Sohn-Rethel [1936] 1985; [1937] 1971; 1970; 1978; 1990; Schlaudt and Willmann 2020).

The dialogue with Kantian philosophy continued in the second generation of Critical Theory. Philosopher and sociologist Jürgen Habermas (1929–) integrated in his “theory of communicative action” (Habermas 1981a) elements of transcendental philosophy, German hermeneutics, American pragmatism and Marxist theory. This combination led to a peculiar social relativization of the *a priori* – partly inspired by Max Adler (Habermas 2006, 552; republished as [2006] 2008). The *a priori* was now thought to be relative to “communicative communities” and their “life worlds” (Habermas [1976] 1984; 1981b, 199, 278–79). Close to Habermas (Nolte 1984; Schnädelbach 1997, 493), German philosopher Karl-Otto Apel (1922–2017) developed a “transcendental pragmatics” (Apel 1973b) and promoted a “cognitive-anthropological relativization of the *a priori*” (Apel [1963] 1975; 1973c, 189). He took the “communicative community” itself as an *a priori* and developed on this basis even a normative ethics (Apel 1973a).

Parallel to these tendencies, transcendental and quasi-transcendental themes popped up at various places in post-War German social sciences. For instance, sociologist Helmut Schelsky (1912–1984) – one of the main opponents of Critical Theory in German post-War sociology³¹ – proposed to pursue a truly “critical theory of the social” in the sense of Kant’s “critique”. This “transcendental theory of society” (Schelsky 1959a; Gerhardt 1979) would be situated beyond social philosophy, especially of the Marxist type, beyond general “sociological theory” promoted at the time by sociologist René König (1906–1992), and beyond empirical social research (Wöhrle 2019). It would enquire into sociological analytical categories such as “role”³², “alienation” or “integration” and try to explain them precisely against the background of man’s “freedom from society” (Schelsky 1959a, 96, 99, 106–7).

³¹ On the different “schools” in Western German post-War sociology, especially the opposition between the “Frankfurt School”, Schelsky’s “Münster School” and René König’s “Cologne School”, see Moebius 2015; 2018; Moebius and Fischer 2019.

³² See also German-British sociologist Ralf Dahrendorf’s (1929–2009) allusions to Kant’s philosophy in his influential book on role theory *Homo sociologicus* (Dahrendorf [1958] 2006, 85–101) that serves Schelsky as an example (Schelsky 1959a, 107, 108).

In a sensibly different way, also German-British sociologist Norbert Elias (1897-1990), an émigré and outsider to German academic sociology until the end of the 1960s, pursued independently topics of *Wissenssoziologie* and cultural sociology of the inter-war period in the framework of his studies on the “civilizing process” (Elias [1939] 1997a). Elias displayed a highly polemical relationship with transcendental philosophy of the Kantian type, partly due to his conflict with his doctoral supervisor Richard Höningwald (1874-1947) on the issue of the *a priori* (Elias [1984] 1990; Rosemann 1995; Elias and Heilbron 2014; Jitschin 2021, 184–96). Nevertheless, he did not stop seeking a naturalistic sociological account of the relatively stable ingredients of experience formerly known as *a priori*, such as time or, on the most general level, symbols (Elias 1984b; [1990] 2001; 2009; 2014).³³

Finally, to a certain extent we might also add to this list the historiographical current of *Begriffsgeschichte* associated with the work of German historian Reinhart Koselleck (1923-2006) and his collaborators (Brunner et al. 1972–1997; Koselleck 1979). Inspired primarily by Martin Heidegger, Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900-2002) and Carl Schmitt (1888-1985), this approach flirted nevertheless with historicized transcendental figures. It conceived “concepts” (*Begriffe*) as the conditions and limits of experience which make history possible in the first place – both the object “history” and our knowledge of it (Koselleck [1972] 1979, 120; 1975, 657, 665; Mehring 2021; Feuerhahn 2021b). Concepts would thus enable us to access – with the help of the “metahistorical categories” of “space of experience” (*Erfahrungsraum*) and “horizon of expectation” (*Erwartungshorizont*) – the peculiar experience of a historical epoch (Koselleck [1977] 1979).³⁴

Among the various German-speaking strands and sources cited, the neo-Marxist critique of ideology associated with Critical Theory and Elias’s historical sociology of knowledge have probably had the most durable impact on transcendental reasoning in contemporary social sciences. Besides, references to the “neo-Kantian heritage” of German sociology as well as to German *Wissenssoziologie* regularly reemerge.

... in the Anglophone context

When, finally, we turn to the Anglophone world, reasoning in recent social and human sciences in terms of “social conditions of possibility”, “social categories” and “categorizations”,

³³ There is a continuing controversy on Elias’s relationship with neo-Kantian philosophies, see Maso 1992; 1995; Kilminster and Wouters 1994; Goudsblom 1995; Kilminster 1998; 2007; Joly 2017. The excellent recent biography of Adrian Jitschin (Jitschin 2021) allows a reevaluation of the issue.

³⁴ For further remarks on the position of the *Begriffsgeschichte* current within the broader movement of scientific, philosophical and historical terminology, see Chapter 5.

“making possible” and “enabling” relationships seems to have today at least two main sources that are used alternatively or complementarily.

On the one hand, there is Austrian-British philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein’s (1889-1951) late philosophy of language, especially his considerations on rule-following as a practice (Wittgenstein [1953] 1984, esp. §§ 139–243).³⁵ On the other hand, there are various forms and reinterpretations of Husserl’s phenomenology, especially in the works of Martin Heidegger, Austrian-American philosopher and sociologist Alfred Schütz (1899-1959) and French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961). We can observe these two references at work today in the two wide-ranging and connected “families” of “practice theories” (Turner 1994; Schatzki 1996; Schatzki et al. 2001; Schäfer 2016) and “background theories” (Abend 2014b, 56–58).³⁶

“Background theories”, in particular, assume an “implicit”, “non-representational”, “embodied” background which “enables” in turn representations, linguistic meanings, practices and social institutions. In the Wittgensteinian line, American philosopher John Searle’s concept of “the Background” in his work on intentionality and on the construction of social reality (Searle 1983; 1995; 2010) is a prominent case in point. Searle’s Background is defined as “a set of nonrepresentational mental capacities that enable all representing to take place” (Searle 1983, 143). Searle argues that conceiving the Background itself in terms of representations would lead to the sort of infinite regress of interpretation rules described by Wittgenstein (Searle 1983, 152–53; see also 1995, 132; 2002, 264). On the one hand, Searle repudiates the idea of the Background being “transcendental” (Searle 1983, 154) and insists on it being anchored in our biological and social constitution.³⁷ On the other hand, however, he maintains talk of an

³⁵ Wittgenstein’s problem of rule-following – how is it possible to follow or apply a rule if any rule is amenable to an infinite number of interpretations? – displays some apparent similarities with Kant’s problem of the “transcendental schematism” – how can the categories, i.e. the rules of the understanding, be applied to the manifold of sense experience? Both Kant (Kant [1781/1787] 1974, 184–86, A133–136/B172–175) and Wittgenstein (Wittgenstein [1953] 1984, §§ 143, 185) offer rule-regress arguments in favor of a non-discursive competence: in Kant’s case the “faculty” of judgment (*Urteilkraft*) acquired through training on examples and the transcendental schematism as “eine verborgene Kunst in den Tiefen der menschlichen Seele, deren wahre Handgriffe wir der Natur schwerlich jemals abraten, und sie unverdeckt vor Augen legen werden” (Kant [1781/1787] 1974, 190, A142/B181–182); in Wittgenstein’s case rule-following as a “practice”, “habit” and “institution” which are all part of a collective “*Lebensform*” (Wittgenstein [1953] 1984, §§ 199–202). Whether Wittgenstein himself proposed some sort of “transcendental logic” – especially with his notion of “grammar” – or used “transcendental arguments” in a strict or a relaxed sense is a matter of controversy (e.g. Cavell 1962; Friedman 1998; Hacker 2013; Ritter 2020). The uses and functions of references to late Wittgenstein in the social and human sciences are a topic of its own (see e.g. Winch [1958] 2008; von Wright 1971; Giddens [1976] 1993; 1984; Bloor 1973; 1983; [1976] 1991; 1992; 1997; Lynch 1992a; 1992b; 1993; Friedman 1998; Pleasants 1999; Bourdieu 2002b; Kusch 2004; Ogien 2007; Strauss 2016).

³⁶ My account of strands and sources of quasi-transcendental reasoning in the Anglophone literature is particularly indebted to Abend’s work (Abend 2014c; 2014b; [2020] 2022).

³⁷ Searle himself establishes explicitly a connection between his Background and Bourdieu’s *habitus* (Searle 1995, 132).

“enabling” relationship – in terms of necessary, not sufficient conditions – between the Background and representations, linguistic statements and social institutions (Searle 1983, 158).

Another, somewhat historicized version of this idea can be found in the works of Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor. Taylor wrote, for instance, about the historically grown “background picture” underlying the modern notion of the self (Taylor 1989, 3–4, 8–9) or the modern “social imaginaries” “making possible” collective practices (Taylor 2004, 23).³⁸ Taylor’s notion of the “background” is not only connected with a certain account of Wittgenstein’s problem of rule-following – rule-following as being based on an embodied social sense (Taylor [1992] 1995; 1995)³⁹. Taylor has also put forward a certain vision of “transcendental arguments” (Taylor 1979). He sees such arguments at work not only in the philosophies of Wittgenstein, Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty, but also in parts of the social and human sciences (Taylor 1979, 152–53, 157, 158). More than Searle, Taylor thus also referred positively to the phenomenological tradition, showing how the two sources mentioned above might be brought together.

In the phenomenological line properly speaking, Alfred Schütz played an eminent role as an intermediary between European phenomenology and American social sciences (Wagner [1976] 1981). Already before arriving in the United States as an Austrian émigré in 1939, Schütz had attempted to spell out Max Weber’s notion of “*verstehende Soziologie*” with the help of Husserl’s “transcendental phenomenology” and Henri Bergson’s (1859-1941) philosophy of time (Schütz [1932] 1974).⁴⁰ Seeking to explain what the “subjective sense” (*subjektiver Sinn*) consists in that defines action according to Weber, Schütz was interested in the structuring or “interpretation” (*Deutung*) of experience through “schemes of experience” founded ultimately in the “inner consciousness of time” (Schütz 1932, 83–93). Schütz refused explicitly to identify his use of “scheme” with Kant’s (Schütz [1932] 1993, 135, n. 77). Nevertheless, the aim of his analysis remained to identify the invariant “*a priori*” of a “community of psychic life” (Schütz 1932, 42). Later, Schütz couched this problem in terms of Husserl’s talk of the “universal *a*

³⁸ Taylor refers in his account of “social imaginaries” explicitly to the background theories of Searle and American philosopher Hubert Dreyfus (1929-2017) (Taylor 2004, 25, 198).

³⁹ In his account of rule-following, Taylor refers also prominently to Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of habitus. In Taylor’s view, Bourdieu proposes a sociological theory beyond the “intellectualism” criticized by Wittgenstein and Merleau-Ponty (Taylor [1992] 1995, 171, 174, 180).

⁴⁰ The potential oneness of this interpretation of Weber is evident from a telling omission by Schütz. He wrote: “Nach Weber ist es Aufgabe der verstehenden Soziologie, ‘soziales Handeln deutend zu verstehen’, d.h. ein ‘Handeln, welches seinem von dem oder den Handelnden gemeinten Sinn nach auf das Verhalten *anderer* bezogen wird und daran in seinem Ablauf orientiert ist’.” (Schütz [1932] 1974, 24) Schütz thus simply omitted the second part of Weber’s definition of the task of sociology in the text that became known as the introduction to *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* under the title “Soziologische Grundbegriffe”: “Soziologie (im hier verstandenen Sinn dieses sehr vieldeutig gebrauchten Wortes) soll heißen: eine Wissenschaft, welche soziales Handeln deutend verstehen *und dadurch in seinem Ablauf und seinen Wirkungen ursächlich erklären will*.” (Weber 1984, 19, my emphasis) Schütz’s seemingly innocuous omission should have far-reaching consequences for subsequent interpretations of Weber and, more generally, for the opposition between “explanatory” and “comprehensive” social science. For an interpretation of Weber insisting on causal explanation, see Ringer 1997.

priori of the life-world” (Husserl 1954, § 36, 144)⁴¹ and set out to analyse the “structures of the life-world” (Schütz and Luckmann 1975).

Marginal in his own lifetime, Schütz’s social phenomenology fuelled from the 1960s on movements in American sociology that were critical both of Harvard sociologist Talcott Parsons’s (1902-1979) “structural functionalism” and established quantitative social research methods (Gross 2007, 215–20). On the one hand, Schütz was used by his students and fellow émigrés Thomas Luckmann (1927-2016) and Peter Berger (1929-2017) as a starting point for formulating a comprehensive programme for a phenomenological sociology of knowledge under the label of the “social construction of reality” (Berger and Luckmann 1966). On the other hand, Schütz was – together with Husserl and, again, Wittgenstein (Mennell 1975; Lynch 1993) – one of the main references for the movement of “ethnomethodology” inaugurated by the writings of Harold Garfinkel (1917-2011) (Garfinkel [1967] 1984a), Aaron Cicourel (1928-2023) (Cicourel 1964) and Harvey Sacks (1935-1975) (Garfinkel and Sacks [1970] 1986). Also in this tradition, the study of the categories and “categorizations” used and produced by agents in their everyday social practices played a prominent role (Fradin et al. 1994, 32–33, 35–37; Rawls 2005).

There is, one might think, a certain irony about Wittgensteinian, pragmatist and phenomenological considerations fuelling quasi-transcendental reasoning in Anglophone sociology and social theory. For, in their time, these philosophical orientations were directed precisely against a Kantian or neo-Kantian model of philosophy – characterized, as American philosopher Richard Rorty (1931-2007) put it, by “representationalism” and “foundationalism” (Rorty 1979; [1989] 1991b).

Indeed, we can observe traces of this tension between (neo-)Kantian perspectives and “post-neo-Kantian” approaches in sociology. It materialized, for example, in the criticisms directed against Talcott Parsons. Parsons explicitly claimed a neo-Kantian heritage in sociology, transmitted to him through his doctoral research in Germany and his engagement with Max Weber (Parsons [1927] 2019; 1961; 1980; Bruhns 2019) as well as through Harvard physiologist and sociologist Lawrence J. Henderson’s (1878-1942) notion of “conceptual scheme” (Henderson 1970; for the peculiar Harvard context, see Isaac 2012). The difference between this neo-Kantian orientation and the anti-Kantian aspects of the new phenomenological approach came clearly to the fore in Parsons’s discussion with Alfred Schütz in the early 1940s (Parsons and Schutz 1978; Parsons 1978a; Buxton 1994; Etzrodt 2013; see also Parsons 1978b).

⁴¹ On Husserl’s account of the *a priori*, especially his notion of a “historical *a priori*” and its connection with Foucault, see Goris 2012; 2014; 2015.

However, the official opposition to neo-Kantian epistemologies – sometimes ostentatiously staged by proponents of the new philosophy of language and phenomenology – did not stop transcendental arguments and other Kantian figures from continuing to be used. Later historical commentators (in philosophy esp. Friedman 2000; see also Nemeth 2014) were thus able to re-establish some of the continuities between neo-Kantianism and the philosophical movements which defined themselves overtly against it. In sociology, we can observe similar continuities in spite of formal opposition against neo-Kantian orientations. British sociologist Richard Kilminster (1942-), for example, has presented – in spite of the clear opposition between Schütz and Parsons on aspects of Kant’s epistemology – *both* Parsons’s theory and Schütz’s social phenomenology as the two “most influential form[s] of transcendentalism in sociology” (Kilminster 1998, 58).

A last important strand of quasi-transcendental reasoning in English-speaking social and human sciences leads back to the debates in the philosophy, history and sociology of science since the 1960s, starting with American historian and philosopher of science Thomas S. Kuhn’s (1922-1996) theory of scientific revolutions (Kuhn [1962] 1996). Kuhn’s account of revolutions in science was partly informed by the works of Russian-French historian of science Alexandre Koyré (1892-1964) (Kuhn [1962] 1996, viii–ix) – who, for his part, was implied in the philosophical, historical and sociological movements in France mentioned above (Zambelli 1995; Chimisso 2008, 123–37; Ferrari 2012). On the other hand, Kuhn drew on the then largely unknown work of Polish physician and early sociologist of science Ludwik Fleck (1896-1961) on “thought collectives” (*Denkkollektive*) and “thought styles” (*Denkstil*) – Fleck, who had, in turn, built on premises of Durkheimian sociology of “collective representations” (Fleck [1935] 1980, 46–50).

Kuhn’s central notion of “paradigm” indicated among its multiple meanings (Masterman 1970) a set of shared beliefs, values and practices in a specific historic scientific community (Kuhn [1969] 1996, 175). This set of rules and “tacit knowledge” (Kuhn [1962] 1996, 44, 191–98) were thought to “make possible” concrete activities within “normal science”, e.g. puzzle-solving, experimenting, making observations and empirical statements, formulating empirical theories, etc. (Kuhn [1962] 1996, 116, 134, 144–45, 179).⁴² In accordance with these quasi-transcendental figures, Kuhn described himself later explicitly as a “Kantian with moveable categories” (Kuhn et al. [1995] 2000, 264), in the vein of “a sort of post-Darwinian Kantianism” (Kuhn [1990] 2000, 104). Moreover, he placed his own historiography in a “neo-Kantian”

⁴² It is no coincidence that Abend introduces his concept of the “moral background” by analogy with Kuhn’s “paradigm” (Abend 2014b, 28–31). This suggests that the theoretical equivalent to the practical “moral background” would be concepts such as “paradigm” or “*épistémè*”.

tradition (Kuhn 1977, 108; Friedman 2008, 243). All of this earned Kuhn in the English-speaking world the reputation as a “Kant on wheels” (Lipton [2001] 2003).

Kuhn’s more or less explicitly sociological account (Kuhn [1962] 1996, viii–ix, xi, 175) contributed to opening up the history and philosophy of science for sociological considerations. In the philosophy of science, in particular, Kuhn’s intervention triggered wide-reaching debates on issues such as scientific progress, the “incommensurability” of paradigms, theory-choice, realism and different versions of relativism (Lakatos and Musgrave 1970). In response to generalizations from Kuhn’s notion of “paradigm”, the notions of “conceptual scheme” (Davidson 1973; Betti et al. 2019) and “framework” (Popper [1976] 1987) came under critical scrutiny – the aim being mostly to refute or dissolve the sort of “conceptual relativism” attributed to Kuhn and others.

In the sociology of science, Kuhn’s work introduced a both more micro-sociological and more epistemological approach. This perspective was put in opposition to the previously dominant functionalist or institutionalist sociology of science inaugurated in the 1930s by American sociologist Robert K. Merton (1910–2003) (Merton [1938] 1970; [1949] 1968b, pt. IV; 1973).⁴³ Kuhn thus inspired several movements in the new interdisciplinary field self-labelled as “social studies of science” or “science and technology studies”: from the “strong programme” for a “sociology of scientific knowledge” (Barnes 1974; Bloor [1976] 1991) to ethnographic laboratory studies on the “social construction of scientific facts” (Latour and Woolgar 1979; Knorr-Cetina 1981) and the ethnomethodology of scientific work (Livingston 1986; Lynch 1993).⁴⁴ In this context, interest resurged for the Durkheimian problem of the social origin of classifications and categorizations and its possible application to science (Bloor 1982).⁴⁵

Importantly, both the philosophical and the sociological debates triggered by Kuhn were fuelled by social scientific sources with arguable connections to (neo-)Kantian philosophy. In philosophy of language and science, on the one hand, several discussions (e.g. Quine [1951] 1980a, 61–62; 1960, 77–78; Davidson 1973, 6, 11–12; Popper [1976] 1987, 50) associated Kuhn with the “linguistic relativity principle” introduced by American linguist Benjamin Lee Whorf (1897–1941) (Whorf 1956). This principle can be led back via the works of ethnologists and linguists Edward Sapir (1884–1939), Franz Boas (1858–1942) and Heymann Steinthal

⁴³ Both Merton and Kuhn – coming both from the same 1930s–1940s Harvard background – publicly contested this opposition (e.g. Merton [1975] 1976, 133–38; [1977] 1979, 71–109; Kuhn 1977, xxi; see also Dubois 2020).

⁴⁴ For critical but balanced accounts of this period in the history of the sociology of science, see Dubois 2001; Gingras [2013] 2020.

⁴⁵ Bloor’s interpretation of Durkheim and Mauss as authorizing a programme of scientific “relativism” (see also recently Bloor 2020) has been contested (Buchdahl 1982; Lukes 1982; Hesse 1982; Smith 1984; Schmaus 1994; 2004; Salomone 2017; Brian 2019).

(1823-1899), to Wilhelm von Humboldt's (1767-1835) philosophy of language, formulated in partial dialogue with Kant (Bunzl 1996; Cassirer [1922] 2003).

Debates in the sociology of science, on the other hand, were informed by the reception of Durkheimian sociology of knowledge and especially of Lévy-Bruhl's writings on "primitive mentality" in British anthropology by Edward Evan Evans-Pritchard (1902-1973) (Evans-Pritchard [1934] 1970; Lévy-Bruhl [1934] 1952). Particularly important here was the latter's work on witchcraft among the Azande people (Evans-Pritchard [1937] 1976).⁴⁶ Evans-Pritchard's student Mary Douglas (1921-2007) then pursued this line further (Douglas [1966] 1984, 76–78) and connected the Durkheimian lineage explicitly with Sapir and Whorf's "linguistic relativity" (Douglas [1970] 2003, 22; Schmaus 2004, 7). Her work became, in turn, an important source of inspiration for the methodology of David Bloor's (1942-) "sociology of scientific knowledge" (Bloor 1978). In this way, Evans-Pritchard's study on the Azande with its background in Durkheim and Lévy-Bruhl became a standard reference and a sort of crucial experiment for the sociological and philosophical discussions on various forms of relativism and the idea that forms of thought and even logic depended on society (e.g. Bloor [1976] 1991, 138–46; Hollis and Lukes 1982; Latour 1987, 186–94).⁴⁷

In continuity with and response to these different debates starting from Kuhn in the last decades a discussion has emerged in the history and philosophy of science on the notion of a "relative" or "relativized *a priori*", launched primarily by American philosopher Michael Friedman (1947-2025) (Friedman 2001; Domski and Dickson 2010; Suárez and Uebel 2012; Stump 2015). Friedman has pursued both a historical and a systematic project of reviving the "neo-Kantian" tradition in the philosophy of science – a project initially informed by a historical reconsideration of Logical Empiricism as promoted by the members and associates of the Vienna Circle (Friedman 1999). Friedman's declared aim (e.g. Friedman 2001, 117) is to offer an account of the radical changes in intellectual frameworks through scientific revolutions that avoids both (1) "Quinean holism" – the idea of American philosopher and logician Willard Van Orman Quine (1902-2000) that there is no fundamental difference between "analytic" or "*a priori*" and "synthetic" or "*a posteriori*" statements and that both are equally revisable in the face of recalcitrant experience (Quine [1951] 1980b); and (2) "conceptual relativism" suggested by Kuhn's incommensurability thesis and embraced by the "sociology of scientific knowledge".

⁴⁶ Evans-Pritchard was vocal about his debt to Lévy-Bruhl: "I am sure that I could not have written my book on Zande witchcraft in the way I did or even made the observations on which it is based had I not read the books written by that noble man Lévy-Bruhl" (Evans-Pritchard [1937] 1976, 241).

⁴⁷ For a critique of the use of the Azande case in the sociology of science, see Dubois 2001, 177–203.

For this purpose, Friedman proposes the notion of a “relative” or “relativized *a priori*”, inspired by discussions on the *a priori* in Logical Empiricism (Friedman [1994] 1999). He uses in particular a distinction between two meanings of “*a priori*” introduced by German physicist and philosopher Hans Reichenbach (1891-1953) in response to Einstein’s theory of relativity: (1) a “constitutive” sense – the *a priori* as a condition of possibility for the object of knowledge; and (2) an “apodictic” sense – the *a priori* as universally and eternally valid and independent of all experience (Reichenbach 1920, 46). According to Reichenbach, the general theory of relativity with its refutation of the validity of Euclidean geometry in physics (Reichenbach 1920, 2–4; see also 1935) – the basis of Kant’s account of space as “pure form of intuition” – has shown that we must dismiss the second meaning and can only keep the first. Friedman elaborated this view with the help of German-American philosopher Rudolf Carnap’s (1891-1970) account of “linguistic frameworks” (Carnap 1934; 1950) and Kuhn’s account of “paradigms”. On this basis, he put forward his notion of the “relativized *a priori*”. Inspired by Habermas and Cassirer⁴⁸, Friedman finally tried to formulate a vision of continuity and progress across scientific revolutions that conceives consecutive sets of constitutive principles as approximations to an ideal state where adequate principles would be attained (Friedman 2001, 64–65). In Friedman’s account, the history of science thus becomes a “dynamics of reason”.

Now, although Friedman has referred in his historical work (Friedman 2000) occasionally to the role of the historical, cultural and social sciences in the debates on “neo-Kantianism”, he did not explore this hint any further, neither historically nor systematically. He rather insisted on his critique of “sociological conceptual relativism” associated with the “sociology of scientific knowledge” (Friedman 1998; 2001, 48–50) and on the anti-naturalistic aspects of his neo-Kantian programme (Friedman 1997). It is not surprising then that various commentators of Friedman’s programme have called for including pragmatic and social considerations in the conception of the “relativized *a priori*” (Uebel 2012b; Mormann 2012; Stump 2015; Nemeth 2018). Whether and how exactly this can be done, however, remains a matter of controversy. A dialogue between Friedman’s relative *a priori* and the various relativizations of the *a priori* in the social and human sciences hasn’t been established so far.

We thus observe today in Anglophone social and human sciences various strands and sources of quasi-transcendental reasoning: some going back to Wittgenstein and “ordinary language philosophy”; some to phenomenology and its effects in the social sciences; some to Kuhn and debates in the history, philosophy and sociology of science since the 1960s; some to the more recent revival of interest in neo-Kantianism represented by Friedman. In many of these cases,

⁴⁸ For a critique of Friedman’s use of Cassirer, see Ferrari 2012.

we deal with complex criss-crossing lines of reception and transformation of German-speaking and French-speaking sources.⁴⁹

3. The problematic unity of socio-transcendental reasoning

A family of positions in synoptic view

Retracing the main strands and sources of today's transcendental reasoning in the social and human sciences, we have thus encountered a great variety of intellectual traditions and positions. The argument was that, first, all of them display some form of (quasi-)transcendental reasoning; and second, that they have become sources and reference points for present-day empirical and theoretical research where we encounter the initially mentioned linguistic patterns: talk of “social conditions of possibility”, “making things possible”, “historical”, “social” or “relative *a priori*”, “social categories”, etc. The question now is: what is actually common to all these positions?

I want to be clear about the kind of unity of the phenomenon I am describing. First, I do *not* imply that all of the positions mentioned “say the same” or “*fundamentally* the same”, i.e. that they share a well-defined set of propositions, theoretical and/or empirical. In fact, there have been fierce debates and oppositions between and within the different strands outlined above, some of which have been adumbrated. To mention only some (in loose chronological order), we can think of oppositions and controversies such as Durkheim versus Simmel (most recently Fitzi 2017), Weber, Simmel, Adler versus Stammler (e.g. Härpfer and Kaden 2017), Critical Theory versus *Wissenssoziologie*, Schelsky versus Critical Theory, Schütz and social phenomenology versus Parsons, and more recently: Habermas versus Foucault (Habermas [1983] 1988, 279–343), Bourdieu versus Critical Theory (e.g. Bourdieu 1987a, 30; Bourdieu and Kraus [1988] 2005, vi; Heilbron 2020), Bourdieu versus Habermas (e.g. Bourdieu [1997] 2003, 96–98; 2001b, 161–62; Gilcher-Holtey 2020), Bourdieu versus Foucault (Bourdieu 1977b; [1981–

⁴⁹ Except for dropping some names (Quine, Davidson, Rorty), I have not addressed here American pragmatism – which has indeed been called “a form of neo-Kantianism” (Kuklick 1977, 257). Many things could be said on pragmatist reinterpretations of the Kantian *a priori*: from Charles Sanders Peirce's (1839-1914) reception of Kant (Apel 1973d; Chevalier 2016) and his new theory of the categories (Peirce [1867] 1992) to William James's (1842-1910) contacts with the French *néo-criticisme* of Charles Renouvier (1815-1903) and François Pillon (1830-1914) (Carlson 1997; Girel 2018) and Clarence Irving Lewis's (1883-1964) “pragmatic conception of the *a priori*” (Lewis 1923; 1929; see also Stump 2015; Kammer et al. 2021). In the social sciences proper, we would have to consider a movement that is often taken to be the heir to pragmatism – especially in the form presented by George Herbert Mead (1863-1931) – i.e. Chicago-based “symbolic interactionism” (for the label, see Blumer 1969; for the relationship with Kantian philosophy, see Rock 1979, chap. 2), but also the spread of Harvard “operationism” in 20th century social and human sciences (Isaac 2012, esp. 5–6, 20–22) – not to talk about the peculiar French reception of American pragmatism in sociology and the recent emergence of a *sociologie pragmatique* (for a critical overview of the French debate, see Gautier and Renault 2021). The focus of the present work being on German-speaking and French academic fields, I cannot go much further into this topic.

1983] 2015, 497–98; [1983–1986] 2016, 591, 797; more positively [1984] 2022), Bourdieu versus Schütz and ethnomethodology (e.g. Bourdieu [1972] 2000a, 237–41; 1993b; [1993] 2022), Bourdieu versus the “sociology of scientific knowledge” (Bourdieu [1990] 1994; 2001b; 2002b), Friedman versus the “sociology of scientific knowledge” (Friedman 1998), and so forth. My aim is not to minimize the divergences and oppositions between these different positions. But if it is not a common set of propositions or beliefs, what is it that connects them?

The overview I have provided in the preceding section might be conceived – using a notion coined by Wittgenstein – as a sort of tentative *übersichtliche Darstellung* or “synoptic view”⁵⁰. Wittgenstein first introduced this notion in critical response to British evolutionary anthropologist James George Frazer’s (1854-1941) classical study in comparative religion *The Golden Bough* (Frazer [1890] 1906; Wittgenstein [1931] 1967; 1977). Wittgenstein’s point against Frazer was that we do not grasp the specificity of magical and religious practices if we put them in an evolutionary scheme where they appear as a precursor of science, as a sort of “false physics” (Wittgenstein [1931] 1967, 240). At least, this is not the only possible way of ordering and presenting them. Instead we could (perhaps should) focus on the connections between those different practices, looking for real or imagined “intermediates” (*Zwischenglieder*) that point to the “resemblances” between certain facts. This would then provide us with a specific sort of comprehension that consists in “seeing the connections”, a “formal connection”, even something like – Wittgenstein cites Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s (1749-1832) *Metamorphose der Pflanzen* (1798) – a “hidden law” (Wittgenstein [1931] 1967, 241–42; [1953] 1984, § 122; Majetschak 2016, 66).

What a synoptic view offers is an overview of – introducing another Wittgensteinian term – “family resemblances” (*Familienähnlichkeiten*) between several phenomena (Bouveresse 1977, 52). Wittgenstein uses the concept of family resemblances primarily to describe language use, i.e. the use of ordinary words such as “game” or “number”. Family resemblances consist in “a complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing: sometimes overall similarities, sometimes similarities of detail” (Wittgenstein [1953] 1999, § 66), just as “the various resemblances between members of a family: build, features, colour of eyes, gait, temperament, etc. etc. overlap and criss-cross in the same way” (Wittgenstein [1953] 1999, § 67). Synoptic views then are arguably the adequate form of representing family resemblances,

⁵⁰ The question of the adequate English translation of “*übersichtliche Darstellung*” is controversial. Possibilities are “synopsis”, “synoptic view”, “survey” or “surveyable representation” (Majetschak 2016, 65–66). – I thank Elisabeth Nemeth for suggesting to introduce the notion.

especially in linguistic but also magical, religious and other practices.⁵¹ Finally, they are for Wittgenstein also a crucial instrument for fulfilling the main role of philosophy: the clarification of the use of language through an investigation into its “grammar” (Wittgenstein [1953] 1999, § 122).

We might apply some of these insights about family resemblances and synoptic views to the uses of the peculiar linguistic expressions we have observed in the social and human sciences. The terms we propose here to frame the phenomenon – “transcendental reasoning in the social sciences”, “socio-transcendental reasoning”, etc. – would then designate a specific way of representing these various uses, a way of grouping them that enables us to identify structural features of the whole set of examples, i.e. to gain a synoptic view and “see the connections”.

What does that mean concretely? We might start by what it can *not* mean. For example, already mentioned sociologist Gabriel Abend has used a similar Wittgensteinian strategy when speaking of a family resemblance between various background theories.⁵² But then he goes on stating what is *common to all* of these theories, namely the distinction between two levels – an enabling and an enabled level – and the idea of a dependence of the second on the first.⁵³ Yet, identifying properties common to each and every member of a family doesn’t square with the concept of family resemblance – unless this concept is itself substantialized and hence distorted.⁵⁴ To be fair, it is not Abend’s goal to devise an elaborate order of background theories and of reasoning in terms of “enabling relations” or to propose something like a historical genealogy (Abend 2014b, 58; [2020] 2022, 73–74).⁵⁵ However, I would suggest that – at least for

⁵¹ Majetschak considers – although refuting it as a satisfying account of *übersichtliche Darstellung* – the illuminating example of the composite photograph of Wittgenstein and his three sisters which Wittgenstein himself commissioned at a Viennese photographer in 1925 (Majetschak 2016, 71–72).

⁵² “In short, the background is genealogically related to diverse scholarly traditions and a diverse conceptual family. In Wittgenstein-speak, ‘we see a complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing.’” (Abend 2014b, 57)

⁵³ “[A]ll the members of the extended family make a distinction between two realms or levels, and pay special attention to the one that lies underneath or behind the other.” (Abend 2014b, 58)

⁵⁴ I take this to be the sense of Wittgenstein’s discussion of the use of the word “number”: “Warum nennen wir etwas ‘Zahl’? Nun etwa, weil es eine – direkte – Verwandtschaft mit manchem hat, was man bisher Zahl genannt hat; und dadurch, kann man sagen, erhält es eine indirekte Verwandtschaft zu anderem, was wir auch *so* nennen. Und wir dehnen unseren Begriff der Zahl aus, wie wir beim Spinnen eines Fadens Faser an Faser drehen. Und die Stärke des Fadens liegt nicht darin, daß irgend eine Faser durch seine ganze Länge läuft, sondern darin, daß viele Fasern einander übergreifen. [Paragraph] Wenn aber Einer sagen wollte: ‘Also ist allen diesen Gebilden etwas gemeinsam, – nämlich die Disjunktion aller dieser Gemeinsamkeiten’ – so würde ich antworten: hier spielst du nur mit einem Wort. Ebenso könnte man sagen: es läuft ein Etwas durch den ganzen Faden, – nämlich das lückenlose Übergreifen dieser Fasern.” (Wittgenstein [1953] 1984, § 67)

⁵⁵ Besides the more general problem concerning the use of “family resemblance”, the effective order Abend suggests is not entirely satisfying. He suggests three “family lines” grouped around the topics of knowledge, embodiment and shared community properties (Abend 2014b, 57). The problem is that “family members” cannot be unequivocally assigned to these “family lines”. Just consider, for example, the case of Bourdieu who tightly connects all three topics.

historical purposes – it is necessary to have a better grasp of the unity of the phenomenon described.

The problem of socio-transcendental reasoning

What are then the “connections” between the positions mentioned? What are, if any, the overarching structural features of transcendental reasoning in the social and human sciences?

Let us go back to the controversies between proponents of this type of reasoning cited above. Instead of ruining the unity of the phenomenon I try to pick out, I would argue that they indicate, on the contrary, a shared space of agonistic discussion. Following Pierre Bourdieu’s relational approach (e.g. Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 196–206), we might construct these various positions as constituting an intellectual “space of *prises de position*”.⁵⁶ This “space of stances” has to be distinguished, on the one hand, from the “space of positions” (*espace des positions*), i.e. the objective distribution of different sorts of “capital” in a circumscribed field; and on the other hand, from the “space of possibles” (*espace des possibles*), i.e. the agents’ subjective sense of possibilities in a field, mediated by their *habitus* and expressed in a perception of the space of positions as a specific set of “problems” or a “*problématique*” to be solved (Bourdieu [1975] 1988, 51–65; [1992] 1998, 378–92; 2001b, 19–20, 118–19; Hauchecorne 2020a; 2020b).

We can leave aside, for the moment, the question of the “field” which these intellectual positions are part of and of its limits (thus the question of the relevant “space of positions”). What is important is that constructing the positions observed as a space of *prises de position* enables us to conceive the unity of socio-transcendental reasoning in a way that is compatible with the notion of family resemblances. These different positions are not united through a shared set of propositions defining a sort of essence of this type of reasoning. They are united precisely through the points on which they are opposed to each other. In Bourdieusian terminology, opponents in a field of cultural production (religious, artistic, scientific and other fields)

⁵⁶ Bourdieu himself has suggested a similiarity between Wittgenstein’s *übersichtlicher Darstellung* and the structuralist method, which – pushed to its end – led him to discovering the peculiar “logic of practice”: “Pour fixer les différentes oppositions ou équivalences que l’analyse me permettait de dégager, j’avais construit, pour les différents domaines de la pratique, rites agraires, cuisine, activité féminines, périodes du cycle de vie, moments de la journée, etc., des diagrammes qui, tirant pratiquement parti de cette propriété qu’a le schéma synoptique, selon Wittgenstein, ‘de nous permettre de comprendre, c’est-à-dire précisément de ‘voir les corrélations’, donnaient une forme visible aux relations d’homologie ou d’opposition tout en restituant l’ordre linéaire de la succession temporelle. [...] C’est cette propriété même du schéma synoptique qui m’a amené à découvrir, sous la forme des contradictions manifestées par l’effet de synchronisation qu’il opère, les limites de la logique immanente aux pratiques qu’il s’efforçait de manifester.” (Bourdieu 1980b, 22–23) A convergence between Wittgenstein’s approach and a broadly structuralist perspective is further suggested by the fact that Lévi-Strauss, in his inaugural lecture at the Collège de France in 1960, cited affirmatively the very same passage from Goethe’s *Metamorphose der Pflanzen* on the “hidden law” that Wittgenstein had referred to (Lévi-Strauss [1960] 1996b, 28).

share – beyond their opposition into “orthodoxy” and “heterodoxy” – a common “*doxa*”. This *doxa* consists – besides a fundamental faith (*croyance*) in the game (*illusio*) – in a mostly non-explicit, taken-for-granted set of problems which are thought worth a solution.⁵⁷

What does this *doxa* consist in in the case of socio-transcendental reasoning? On what issue do the different positions take different stances (*prises de position*)? Asking this question, we move into the area of the space of possibles – i.e. the agents’ different perceptions of the space of social positions as a set of problems, a *problématique*. What is then the problem or the set of problems to which the different versions of socio-transcendental reasoning offer different answers? Which are the terms of this problem?

I would suggest that the problem of transcendental reasoning in the social and human sciences has the following conditions.⁵⁸ These are conditions that any solution to this problem must meet – questions that it must address, explicitly or implicitly –, if it is to count as a solution to *this* problem.⁵⁹

- (1) The distinction between two levels: Any solution to the problem must offer an account of the distinction between two different “levels” or “layers”. – It is difficult to spell out this spatial metaphor and characterize the distinction between those two levels without saying already something about their specific relationship (thus anticipating the second and third condition). One way of framing both the distinction and the relation between the two levels is the concept of “constitution”⁶⁰: one level would be

⁵⁷ Bourdieu establishes a connection between legitimate “problems” and the “field of the *doxa*” in the following passage: “La science n’a jamais d’autre fondement que la croyance collective dans ses fondements que produit et suppose le fonctionnement même du champ scientifique. L’orchestration objective des schèmes pratiques inculqués par l’enseignement explicite et par la familiarisation qui constitue le fondement du consensus pratique sur les enjeux proposés par le champ, c’est-à-dire sur les problèmes, les méthodes et les solutions immédiatement aperçus comme scientifiques, trouve elle-même son fondement dans l’ensemble des mécanismes institutionnels qui assurent la sélection sociale et scolaire des chercheurs (en fonction par exemple de la hiérarchie établie des disciplines), la formation des agents sélectionnés, le contrôle de l’accès aux instruments de recherche et de publication, etc. Le champ de discussion que dessinent, par leurs luttes, l’orthodoxe et l’hétérodoxie se découpe sur le fond du champ de la *doxa*, ensemble de présupposés que les antagonistes admettent comme allant de soi, en deçà de toute discussion, parce qu’ils constituent la condition tacite de la discussion” (Bourdieu 1975b, 109).

⁵⁸ The following problem formulation specifies the “preliminary definition” of socio-transcendental reasoning offered earlier. Conditions (1) and (2) here correspond to the first aspect of “socio-transcendental conditions” identified above, condition (3) to the second aspect.

⁵⁹ The first and the second condition have already been addressed by Abend (Abend 2014c, 58). The third condition doesn’t feature in his account. This last condition, however, is crucial for making the decisive move suggested by Abend from philosophical to sociological questions concerning “enabling relations” which can then be empirically investigated in the social sciences (Abend [2020] 2022, 72–74).

⁶⁰ My use of the vocabulary of “constitution” – “constitute”, “constituting”, “constitutive”, “constituted”, etc. – is inspired by Reichenbach’s distinction between a “constitutive” and an “apodictic” sense of Kant’s “*a priori*” (Reichenbach 1920, 46) and Friedman’s further utilization of this distinction (see above). On the history and the complex meaning of the term “constitution”, see Högrefe [1976] 2017. The “problem of constitution” is itself intimately linked to Kantian transcendental philosophy, its revival and canonization in neo-Kantianism as well as to phenomenology: “Mit Kant tritt erst das auf den Plan, was man ein K.-Problem nennen kann: das Problem nämlich, ob eine Anzahl von Regeln angegeben und als derjenige Rahmen expliziert werden kann,

“constituted”, the other “constitutive”. But there are many different and cross-cutting ways of spelling out the distinction: “empirical” vs. “transcendental”, “*a posteriori*” vs. “*a priori*” (Kant), “axioms of connection” vs. “axioms of coordination” (Reichenbach), “intentional” vs. “the Background” (Searle), “collective practices” vs. “social imagery” (Taylor), “positive knowledge” vs. “historical *a priori*” (Foucault), “puzzle-solving” vs. “paradigm” (Kuhn), “conceptual scheme” vs. “content” (Davidson), “structured structure” or “*opus operatum*” vs. “structuring structure”, “*modus operandi*” or “*habitus*” (Bourdieu), etc.

- (2) The dependence of the constituted level on the constitutive level: Any solution to the problem must offer an account of the dependence of the constituted level on the constitutive level. – There are different ways of characterizing this dependence relation: “constitution”, calling the “constitutive” level a “condition of the possibility” of the “constituted” level, “making possible”, “enabling”, “framing”, “underlying”, “founding”, “being a necessary condition”, etc. Most of these solutions are based on the idea of a specific type of dependence relation different from causal relations. Yet, this doesn’t seem to be a necessary requirement of the condition. In fact, we encounter also materialistic, physiological, biological, mechanistic and other “naturalistic” accounts of the relationship between the two levels.
- (3) The dependence of the constitutive level on the constituted level: Any solution to the problem must offer an account of how the constitutive level depends on the constituted level. – This condition introduces the possibility of change of the constitutive level as a function of the constituted level. There are different ways of spelling this out: “relativized *a priori*” (Friedman), “historical *a priori*”, “historical transcendental” (Foucault), “social conditions of possibility”, “socio-transcendental conditions” (Bourdieu), “social construction”, etc. Again, the type of dependence of the constitutive on the constituted level can be conceived differently and possible solutions do not even necessarily introduce “social” factors.

It is important that all three conditions must be met by forms of socio-transcendental or, more broadly, historico-transcendental reasoning. This is not a simple task. First, already taken individually the conditions as I have formulated them are far from being clear. They are charged

innerhalb dessen kognitive Handlungen empirisch überhaupt möglich sind. Es tritt dieses Problem im Grunde stets da auf, wo zunächst, wie bei Kant, an der empiristischen Basis festgehalten und schließlich doch eine Begründung der Erfahrung für möglich gehalten wird. Das eigentliche Dilemma dieses Problems liegt dann im Status dieser Begründung, die weder empirisch noch logisch zureichend bestimmt sein kann. In diesem Sinne ist die Frage nach der Möglichkeit synthetischer Sätze *a priori* auch die Kernfrage des K.-Problems.” (Hogrebe [1976] 2017)

with metaphor, imagery and controversial terms such as “foundation”, “construction”, “constitution”, etc.⁶¹ Still, I think that my formulation is relatively adequate in that it renders the essential ambiguity of the issue. Giving a perfectly clear formulation of the problem – say, according to the standards of contemporary analytic philosophy of language – would possibly result in dissolving it entirely, leaving us at a loss regarding the historical record.

Second, it is crucial that the conditions, taken together, pose something like an impossible puzzle. How could a solution possibly satisfy all three conditions? There are palpable tensions in the very formulation of the problem, especially between the first two and the third condition. Giving a strong solution to the first and second condition compromises the third; also emphasizing just the second jeopardizes the third; and, inversely, satisfying the third challenges the first and the second condition.

Where solutions fall short of one or two of the conditions of the problem, we encounter in fact limiting positions that mark the boundaries of specifically socio-transcendental reasoning. This is the case, for example, with certain versions of pragmatism, orthodox Marxism or the so-called “Strong Programme” in the sociology of science – positions which tend to emphasize the third condition to the point of negating the first and the second. At the other extreme, we find “transcendentalist” solutions such as those of Max Adler, Habermas or Schelsky, which emphasize the first and second condition at the expense – assumed or not – of failing the third.

It is precisely the tension between these three conditions that forms, I would argue, the problem to which respond the various positions that I have presented as cases of transcendental reasoning in the social and human sciences. The family resemblance between positions is based on this common problem – as are the differences, conflicts and oppositions which are, arguably, just as fundamental a feature of “families” (Abend 2014b, 57, n. 59).

A problematic unity

The unity of socio-transcendental reasoning that I have tried to carve out then is in a peculiar sense “problematic”. It is, in a first sense, problematic for the historical agents involved. They oppose each other on the different conditions of the problem according to their respective perspective or “space of possibles”. Different authors propose different solutions for the same problem. But the problem itself is sufficiently ambiguous that it allows for multiple interpretations and hence disagreement on what counts as a solution. This provides an almost

⁶¹ For one of the most influential radical critiques of these terms, especially Kant-inspired talk of “constitution”, see Rorty 1979, chap. 3, esp. 138–139.

inexhaustible source of conflict. As Bourdieu's relational model suggests, it is precisely through conflict and competition between agents that emerges something like a precarious unity.

But the unity of the phenomenon is also “problematic” in a second sense, namely for the intellectual historian who observes and tries to account for the agents' behaviour and position-taking.⁶² The observer tries to work out what agents have in common and what distinguishes them. He seeks to identify the unity of the problem around which these positions can be grouped in a common space of observable *prises de position*. Speaking of “socio-transcendental reasoning” and its specific problem then means one possible way of constructing such a space, looking for a sort of “grammar”⁶³ which would enable the different observable stances.⁶⁴ In this sense, the statement that all those positions are cases of socio-transcendental reasoning remains ultimately a “problematic judgment” in Kant's sense.⁶⁵ It claims only a “possible”, a constructible, a “projected” or “problematic unity” (Kant [1781/1787] 1974, 567, A647/B675).⁶⁶

What speaks in favour of this particular construction I propose is that it is useful for “seeing” a large number of “connections” – resemblances, similarities and dissimilarities at the same time. Conceiving the problem of socio-transcendental reasoning as I have suggested allows for constructing a useful “synoptic view”.⁶⁷ And, if we follow Wittgenstein's ideas further, it is

⁶² For the methodological perspective of “problem history” brought up here, see Chapter 2.

⁶³ We can think here both of Wittgenstein's notion of “grammar” and Bourdieu's utilization of American linguist and philosopher Noam Chomsky's (1928-) notion of “generative grammar” for explaining his concept of *habitus* (e.g. Bourdieu 1967a, 152).

⁶⁴ I own the reflexive character of this statement and the approach it suggests. For more on the type of reflexivity I subscribe to, see again Chapter 2.

⁶⁵ “*Problematische Urteile sind solche, wo man das Bejahen oder Verneinen als bloß möglich (beliebig) annimmt.*” (Kant [1781/1787] 1974, 114, A74/B100)

⁶⁶ A Kantian way of framing the unity of socio-transcendental reasoning that I am constructing here is to understand it as an act of “reflective judgement” (*reflektierende Urteilskraft*): starting from given “particulars” (*Besonderes*), we presume something “general” (*Allgemeines*). The unity of the phenomenon in question then has to be understood as a “regulative”, not “constitutive” principle that makes it possible to establish connections between empirically observable particulars (here: instances of transcendental reasoning in the social sciences) (Kant [1790] 1974, 24–29, 87–96, AXXIII–XXXV/BXXV–XXXVII). This operation involves a regulative “hypothetical use of reason” – not a constitutive “apodictic” one: “Der hypothetische Vernunftgebrauch geht also auf die systematische Einheit der Verstandeserkenntnisse, diese aber ist der *Probierstein der Wahrheit der Regeln*. Umgekehrt ist die systematische Einheit (als bloße Idee) lediglich nur *projektierte* Einheit, die man an sich nicht als gegeben, sondern nur als *Problem* ansehen muß; welche aber dazu dient, zu dem Mannigfaltigen und besonderen Verstandesgebrauche ein Principium zu finden, und diesen dadurch auch über die Fälle, die nicht gegeben sind, zu leiten und zusammenhängend zu machen.” (Kant [1781/1787] 1974, 567, A647/B675) For the connected “problem-historical” approach I endorse, see again Chapter 2; this reasoning involves a peculiar “methodical circle” as discussed in the works of art historian and philosopher Edgar Wind (1900–1971) (Wind [1929] 2000; 1936; [1936] 2000), Erwin Panofsky (Panofsky [1939] 1955; [1940] 1955; 1951) and Pierre Bourdieu (Bourdieu 1967a; 1968; Wind [1936] 2005).

⁶⁷ There is a noteworthy tension between the view I have been expressing and another particular interpretation of Wittgenstein's notion of *übersichtliche Darstellung* that I do not share: an anti-historical, anti-genetic and anti-evolutionary use of *übersichtliche Darstellung* that emphasizes the opposition between explanation (*Erklärung*) and description (*Beschreibung*) or comprehension (*Verständnis* or *Verstehen*) (e.g. Lynch 1992a, 256–59; 1993, 199–201). I would argue that Wittgenstein's point against Frazer's evolutionary scheme was not that it is “false”, but that it is only one possible way of grouping the facts – the alternative being a synoptic view focusing on relations between elements (Majetschak 2012, 229). Also the “evolutionary hypothesis” enables us to see formal correlations (Wittgenstein [1931] 1967, 241–42). At least in the context of a *historical*

indeed only such a synoptic view – concocted with a certain purpose in mind – that will be able to answer the problem of transcendental reasoning in the social sciences as it presents itself to the intellectual historian, namely in that basic form of any philosophical problem: “Ich kenne mich nicht aus.” (Wittgenstein [1953] 1999, § 123)⁶⁸

Once we have thus established the relative unity of socio-transcendental reasoning, the question is where the underlying problem actually comes from? In a socio-historical perspective, we must assume that even the “grammar” of the whole problem has a history of its own, that it has come into being at some point under specific conditions, that it has changed over time and might again change in the future. It is the question where the very structure of the problem comes from that leads us from present-day socio-transcendental reasoning to the issue that I shall call the “sociologization of the *a priori*”.

Bourdieu on socio-transcendental conditions of knowledge

Before making this next crucial step into the history of socio-transcendental reasoning, it is, however, worth considering a certain reluctance the reader might have at this point. Why actually introduce the fancy notion of “transcendental reasoning in the social and human sciences” and awkward expressions such as “socio-transcendental reasoning”? What can this possibly mean, and especially in the “problematic” sense outlined above? Don’t these notions create more confusion than they dissolve? Even worse, don’t they suggest a sort of dependence of sociological work on philosophical issues that has become – for very good reasons – a thing of the past? While I think that the merit of the framing I propose will have to be judged on the whole of the thesis – does it illuminate the historical record and enable us to see hitherto neglected similarities and differences? –, I can present here at least the sources that have encouraged me in using these notions. This should add a bit to the plausibility of this way of putting things.

investigation (things might be different in the context of a Wittgensteinian *philosophy* of language), a clear-cut distinction between “formal” and “empirical” or “evolutionary” perspectives, between “internal” and “external” relations (Sodoma 2022, 277), “understanding” formal structures and “explaining” via empirical hypotheses doesn’t seem useful.

⁶⁸ The English translation by G.E.M. Anscombe goes: “A philosophical problem has the form: ‘I don’t know my way about’.” (Wittgenstein [1953] 1999, § 123) For the connection between *übersichtliche Darstellung* and Wittgenstein’s conception of “problems”, see the whole sequence Wittgenstein [1953] 1999, §§ 122–127. Wittgenstein’s conception of the “work of the philosopher” in the face of such problems deserves mentioning: “Die Arbeit des Philosophen ist ein Zusammentragen von Erinnerungen zu einem bestimmten Zweck.” (Wittgenstein [1953] 1999, § 127) If we keep the ambiguity of the German “*Erinnerungen*” against Anscombe’s disambiguating “reminders”, we see more clearly the possible convergence with the work of the historian and the sociologist.

Occurrences of the word “socio-transcendental” are, in fact, extremely rare.⁶⁹ However, the term is used in one major instance by French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. In his last lectures at the Collège de France in 2000 on the sociology of science, published under the title *Science de la science et réflexivité* (Bourdieu 2001b; in English [2001] 2004), Bourdieu spoke repeatedly of “socio-transcendental conditions” (*conditions socio-transcendantales*).

On the one hand, Bourdieu used this expression to indicate a resemblance between Kuhn’s notion of “paradigm” and Durkheim’s work on “primitive classification” and on the sociology of religion: “Kuhn ne fait que retrouver la tradition de l’a priori, mais pris en un sens relativisé, historicisé, ou, plus exactement, sociologisé, comme chez Durkheim, à qui on pourrait attribuer la paternité de l’idée de *conditions socio-transcendantales*.” (Bourdieu 2001b, 158, italics by Bourdieu) Bourdieu thus attributed to Durkheim the authorship of the idea of such “socio-transcendental conditions”, speaking in passing also of a “sociologized *a priori*”⁷⁰.

On the other hand, Bourdieu situated himself in this tradition of searching for “socio-transcendental conditions” and “sociologized *a priori*”. He did so in the context of the problem that preoccupied him throughout these last lectures: formulating – with the help of his conception of the “scientific field” – a plausible intermediate position between “logician absolutism” and “historicist relativism”. Bourdieu’s description of his strategy deserves to be cited in full length:

Mais je dois d’abord dessiner à grands traits la ligne générale de la démarche que je veux suivre: dans un premier temps, j’ai substitué aux conditions universelles et aux a priori de Kant des conditions et des a priori socialement constitués, comme Durkheim l’a fait pour la religion et les principes religieux de la classification et de construction du monde dans *Les Formes élémentaires de la vie*

⁶⁹ As an indicator, a neutral Google search on 8 June, 2020 provided some 300 results in English (“socio-transcendental”), eight results in French (“*socio-transcendantal*”) and zero results in German (“sozio-transzendental”). These figures remained almost unchanged on a second search on 23 November, 2022. In English of the first ten results (by 23 November, 2022) three referred to a passage of Slovene philosopher Slavoj Žižek’s (1949-) book *The Parallax View* (Žižek 2006, 55–56), another three referred to Pierre Bourdieu’s *Science de la science et réflexivité*, two indicated a possible confusion with the Spanish expression “*un socio transcendental*” (an important partner), one referred to the work of the French philosopher Alain Roger (1936-) (for his project, see e.g. Roger 2001) and another one to the title of a Dutch PhD thesis in philosophy defended in 2001. In French, of the first ten results four referred to a presentation that I gave in 2020, two to philosopher Alain Roger (one in the context of the notions of “*schème*” and “*schéma*” in the history and philosophy of art), two to other academic papers in philosophy and one to a pedagogical report on the teaching of philosophy in French professional lycées.

⁷⁰ An earlier, but essentially equivalent statement goes: “Ainsi, tout se passe comme si Kuhn, poussant jusqu’au bout la mise en question des standards universels de rationalité déjà préfigurée dans la tradition philosophique qui avait évolué d’un universalisme ‘transcendantal’ de type kantien vers une notion de la rationalité déjà relativisée – par exemple, comme je le montrerai par la suite, chez Carnap (1950) –, retrouverait, avec la notion de paradigme, la tradition kantienne de l’a priori, mais pris en un sens relativisé, ou, plus exactement, sociologisé, comme chez Durkheim.” (Bourdieu 2001b, 39) The context of the later statement (Bourdieu 2001b, 156–61) established – very much along the lines of Friedman’s interpretation (Bourdieu refers in his book to Friedman 1996; 1998) – a connection between Carnap’s notion of “linguistic frameworks” (Carnap 1950) and Kuhn’s “paradigm”, but then also added Durkheim and Wittgenstein to the picture.

religieuse et dans son article sur “Les formes primitives de classification”; dans un deuxième temps, je voudrais montrer comment le processus d’historicisation de l’interrogation kantienne doit s’achever dans une objectivation scientifique du sujet de l’objectivation, une sociologie du sujet connaissant dans sa généralité et sa particularité, bref, par ce que j’appelle une entreprise de réflexivité, visant à objectiver l’inconscient transcendantal que le sujet connaissant investit sans le savoir dans ses actes de connaissance ou, si l’on veut, son *habitus* comme transcendantal historique, dont on peut dire qu’il est *a priori* en tant que structure structurante qui organise la perception et l’appréciation de toute expérience et *a posteriori* en tant que structure structurée produite par toute une série d’apprentissages communs ou individuels. (Bourdieu 2001b, 153–54)

For the sake of clarity, we can analyse this complex statement into the following components (and add supplementary passages from Bourdieu’s text to illuminate them):

- (1) Bourdieu explicitly wants to replace the Kantian “universal conditions of possibility” and “*a priori*” by “socially constituted conditions” and “socially constituted *a priori*”. He calls this move “the process of the historicization of the Kantian question” – speaking at other points also of a “relativization” or a “sociologization” of Kantian *a priori* (Bourdieu 2001b, 39, 158). He also distinguishes his particular version of “historicization” from others, most explicitly from Habermas’s “falsely historicized form of Kantianism” (Bourdieu 2001b, 161–62).⁷¹
- (2) Bourdieu takes Durkheim’s sociology of “primitive classifications” and of religion as a model for this “historicization of the Kantian question”. Durkheim is presented as the “father” of the idea of “socio-transcendental conditions” (Bourdieu 2001b, 158).⁷²
- (3) The “historicization of the Kantian question” results in a specific kind of “reflexivity”. This reflexivity consists in a scientific objectivation of the scientific subject (the subject of objectivation), in a “sociology of the knowing subject”. Reflexive analysis aims at investigating scientifically the subject’s “unconscious transcendental”, the “social conditions of the possibility of scientific construction” (Bourdieu 2001b, 182) or its (scientific) *habitus*. Reflexivity is the sociological equivalent of “critique” in Kant’s sense, taking now as its object the “social conditions of possibility and the limits of forms of thought” (Bourdieu 2001b, 176).

⁷¹ “Les champs scientifiques sont des univers à l’intérieur desquels les rapports de force symboliques et les luttes d’intérêts qu’ils favorisent contribuent à donner sa force au meilleur argument (et à l’intérieur desquels la théorie de Habermas est vraie, à ceci près qu’elle ne pose pas la question des conditions sociales de possibilité de ces univers et qu’elle inscrit cette possibilité dans des propriétés universelles du langage par une forme faussement historicisée de kantisme).” (Bourdieu 2001b, 161–62)

⁷² Already earlier, Durkheim’s “sociologization of the *a priori*” had been an important model for Bourdieu’s own project of a “sociology of symbolic forms” (Bourdieu 1977; 2016, 777–80).

- (4) The *habitus* is presented as a “historical transcendental” that is – depending on perspective – both *a priori* and *a posteriori*. It is *a priori* as a structure forming experience (perception, evaluation, etc.) and action (“structuring structure”). It is *a posteriori* as a structure acquired through experience, socialization and learning (“structured structure”). Accordingly, Bourdieu also qualifies scientific “disciplinary *habitus*” as “historical transcendentals”, as “a set of socio-transcendental conditions, constitutive of a style”.⁷³

Bourdieu sees, of course, the tension between this talk of socio-transcendental conditions and Kant’s doctrine. He qualifies his own project – the search for “socio-transcendental conditions of knowledge” – as “Kantian”, but at the same time as “totally excluded by Kant”:

C’est pourtant dans une perspective kantienne, mais totalement exclue par Kant, au nom de la coupure entre le transcendantal et l’empirique, que je me suis placé, en me donnant pour objet la recherche des *conditions socio-transcendantales de la connaissance*, c’est-à-dire de la structure sociale ou socio-cognitive (et pas seulement cognitive), empiriquement observable (le champ, etc.), qui rend possible les phénomènes tels que les appréhendent les différentes sciences ou, plus précisément, la construction de l’objet scientifique et du fait scientifique. (Bourdieu 2001b, 155, italics by Bourdieu)

Contrary to the Kantian opposition between transcendental and empirical levels, it is, according to Bourdieu’s sociology of science, the empirically observable structures of the scientific field and the scientific *habitus* that together “make possible” – as “social conditions of the possibility of knowledge” – scientific objects and facts. Whatever the merit of qualifications in terms of “isms”, Bourdieu’s intermediate strategy for navigating between “absolutism” and “relativism” can arguably be characterized as a form of “sociologized Kantianism”.⁷⁴

What counts here is that Bourdieu uses frequently the adjective “socio-transcendental” as well as the phrases “socio-transcendental conditions (of knowledge)” and “social conditions of possibility”. He does so in a way that links these expressions explicitly with the issue of the relativization, historicization and sociologization of the Kantian *a priori* in the social sciences, as well as with the issue of reflexivity. What is more, with his remarks on Durkheim’s authorship of the idea of socio-transcendental conditions he hints at the historical genealogy of this

⁷³ “La discipline est définie par la possession d’un capital collectif de méthodes et de concepts spécialisés dont la maîtrise constitue le droit d’entrée tacite ou implicite dans le champ. Elle produit un ‘transcendantal historique’, l’habitus disciplinaire comme système de schèmes de perception et d’appréciation (la discipline incorporée agissant comme censure). Elle est caractérisée par un ensemble de conditions socio-transcendantales, constitutives d’un style.” (Bourdieu 2001b, 129)

⁷⁴ Similarly, South Korean sociologist Kyung-Man Kim has recently spoken of “Bourdieu’s *sociologization* of Kant’s transcendental epistemology” (Kim 2023, 21).

form of reasoning. Bourdieu's suggestions might thus serve as a sort of warrant, both for using the term "socio-transcendental reasoning" and for embarking upon a historical investigation into the "sociologization of the *a priori*" (see Chapter 2).⁷⁵

Abend on what-makes-it-possible questions in sociology

A second, more recent source for talking of a peculiar type of transcendental reasoning in the social and human sciences is the already mentioned work of sociologist Gabriel Abend. As noted above, Abend introduced in a review of Spillman's *Solidarity in Strategy* (2012) the notion of "transcendental sociological arguments" (Abend 2014c). He illustrated this notion empirically in his book *The Moral Background* (Abend 2014b). In a programmatic methodological paper (Abend 2020; [2020] 2022)⁷⁶, he has since set out to systematize this kind of arguments and to establish the corresponding type of empirical enquiry under the heading of "what-makes-it-possible questions".

Abend starts – as I did at the beginning of this chapter – from the frequent use of certain expressions in today's social sciences, especially "x makes y possible", "x enables y", "x is the condition of possibility for y". He argues that we need to spell out the methodology that underlies these ways of talking in the social sciences.⁷⁷ What do we actually mean and what type of social scientific research are we conducting when we are asking what a particular social phenomenon is "enabled" or "made possible" by?

Abend first distinguishes clearly between philosophical and sociological, i.e. empirical what-makes-it-possible questions (Abend [2020] 2022, 69, 74–76). Sociological questions about what makes social phenomena possible are not – as philosophical questions, about the "conditions of the possibility for knowledge", for example – purely "logical" or "*a priori*" questions. They are "*a posteriori*" or empirical questions about empirical phenomena that call for

⁷⁵ Indeed, the remarks by Bourdieu quoted above, together with some passages from his *Méditations pascaliennes* (e.g. Bourdieu [1997] 2003, 31–32, 248–49) have been an important starting point for the present investigation.

⁷⁶ Abend's paper was pre-published online for the first time in 2020 before appearing in print in 2022. I cite the 2022 print version. My first contacts with this work go back to 2019 when my thesis project was already well under way.

⁷⁷ "While what-makes-it-possible claims haven't been central in empirical sociology, they haven't been absent either. Neither from its past nor from its present. (Nor from neighboring disciplines, such as anthropology, political science, and history.) Occasionally, cultural sociologists, sociologists of science, and sociologists of knowledge have raised this sort of question, either as a principal or an ancillary objective, yet without taking note of its peculiarities. They've talked about 'enabling' and 'making possible', but the character of enabling relationships has remained implicit, underspecified, or unclear. And no self-aware methodological approach has come about, comparable to the sophisticated literatures on causal analysis, network analysis, or ethnography. Sociological research has privileged causal explanation, and so have its valuable assistants, methodology and the logic of social inquiry. As a result, what-makes-it-possible questions aren't well understood yet. Their potential is far from having been realized." (Abend [2020] 2022, 76–77)

empirical answers. They ask for empirically observable (at least indirectly) enabling relationships between empirical social objects.⁷⁸

But while these what-makes-it-possible questions are empirical, crucially, they are distinct from the most prominent type of empirical inquiry, i.e. causal questions. Abend seeks to distinguish reasoning in terms of “enablers” from at least two other established strategies in accounting for social phenomena: on the one hand, reasoning in terms of causes (resulting in causal explanation) and, on the other hand, reasoning in terms of reasons (resulting in description, comprehension or “understanding”) (Abend [2020] 2022, 70–71).⁷⁹ One key difference between enablers and causes is, according to Abend, that the presence of enabler *x* doesn’t make phenomenon *y* *necessary* or more *probable* (as in causal and probabilistic relations), but only *possible* (Abend [2020] 2022, 75–76).⁸⁰ Conversely, the absence of *x* doesn’t make *y* less probable, but *impossible*. In other words, enablers do not bring about the enabled as a necessary consequence (as causes do), but only make it possible. Yet, the distinction between causal and enabling reasoning doesn’t exclude possible combinations in a given empirical study. Enabling conditions can in turn be accounted for causally or causes in terms of their enabling conditions.⁸¹

However, the distinction between enabling and causal relations instantly raises further questions (Abend [2020] 2022, 87–90): What is the difference between enablers and distant or background causes? Is an enabler a necessary or only a sufficient condition for the possibility

⁷⁸ “What’s the difference between philosophers’ and sociologists’ what-makes-it-possible questions? [...] The former can’t be empirically answered; rather, you’ve got to reflect on them, comfortably sitting in your arm-chair. Or, as some people say, they are *a priori*. The latter must be empirically answered; you’ve got to do research about the social world, whether you’re comfortably sitting in front of your computer, or uncomfortably sitting in the reading room of a historical archive, or even more uncomfortably standing on a street corner. Or, as some people say, they are *a posteriori*.” (Abend [2020] 2022, 72–73) Abend concedes that philosophy and sociology involve both empirical and analytical components, but: “Be that as it may, I believe you can still carve out a distinct space for sociologists to find out what makes *Y* possible. Their objects of inquiry are empirical and social: *Y* is a social thing and *X* is also a social thing – or, more likely, many *X*s, working independently or jointly. The enabling relationship between *X* and *Y* is instantiated in the social world, in social practices, institutions, and understandings (Glaeser 2011). It’s not purely logical or analytical. That’s the sort of approach I’m trying to develop.” (Abend [2020] 2022, 73)

⁷⁹ In fact, Abend introduces what-makes-it-possible questions as an eighth type of empirical enquiry, distinguishing it from seven other varieties. However, just as in Kant’s refutation of the psychological, physiological or any other empirical deduction of the categories in the *Critique of Pure Reason* (Kant [1781/1787] 1974, 125–34, A84–95/B116–129), the distinction from causal explanation takes centre stage in Abend’s discussion. The distinction from reasons remains in the background.

⁸⁰ Abend distinguishes sharply between possibility and probability (Abend [2020] 2022, 71–72) – arguably more sharply than social scientists using socio-transcendental vocabulary have done. For example, Bourdieu’s use of “social conditions of possibility” seems to be partly inspired by the probabilistic von Kries-Weber concept of *objektive Möglichkeit* (Bourdieu 1977a, chap. 3; for the background of this concept, see Heidelberger 2010) – a concept Abend explicitly rejects as expression of enabling relationships (Abend [2020] 2022, 96, n. 5).

⁸¹ “[I]t’s not as if you had to choose, either my project will address causal questions only, or it’ll address what-makes-it-possible questions only: you can do both. You can also look for the causes of enablers and the enablers of causes. Causal and enabling relationships can harmoniously coexist in your project. Just like they do in the world.” (Abend [2020] 2022, 96–97, n. 8)

of the enabled phenomenon, i.e. can the same social phenomenon have several potential enablers as it can have several different causes? Which are the relevant enablers for accounting for a given social fact? If enablers can, in turn, be accounted for in terms of causes (Abend [2020] 2022, 71), can enabling relations be reduced to causal relations? Although addressing these issues, Abend finally doesn't offer conclusive answers.⁸²

Of course, we have to take Abend's article for what it is: a first sketch. A lot more will have to be done to understand the logic and methodology of what-makes-it-possible questions in the social sciences and to establish them as a commonly acknowledged research strategy.⁸³ Be that as it may, the important point here is that Abend explicitly endorses and promotes quasi-transcendental questions in the social sciences as a genuine, legitimate and important form of empirical investigation. This fact underscores the plausibility of the framing I have offered so far. Socio-transcendental reasoning is becoming today a topic of discussion in sociological theory, methodology and the philosophy of the social sciences. My historical investigation into the sources of this type of reasoning can be understood as a contribution to this ongoing debate – at least, as a sort of historical complement to Abend's systematic project.⁸⁴

One difference between Abend's proposal and my own perspective deserves mention, however. Abend has abandoned talk of "transcendental sociological arguments", "transcendental

⁸² The absence of a convincing distinction between causal relations and enabling relations is, I would argue, the main shortcoming of Abend's proposal. For providing such an account, Abend would have had to go further in the direction he himself recommends, i.e. the "metaphysics of causation" (Abend [2020] 2022, 89). Some problems of his account may also have to do with the fact that he doesn't distinguish clearly between "tokens" or empirical particulars (e.g. a particular case of a political demonstration located at a certain point in space and time) and "types" (e.g. political demonstration as a type of collective action) (for the origin of this distinction, see Peirce 1906, 505–6). One could argue that meaningful what-makes-it-possible questions – in analogy to Kant's transcendental conditions that concern experience generally (*überhaupt*), not any particular experience – ask about "types" of action, practice, thought, concepts, etc. When we look at empirical particulars only, enablers seem difficult to distinguish from distant causal conditions and even proximate causes – the logical relationship between condition and outcome in terms of necessity and sufficiency is arguably the same (see Cheng and Novick 1991, 84).

⁸³ As far as I see, Abend hasn't pursued this project further in his recent book *Words and Distinctions for the Common Good* (Abend 2023) – although he is cursorily talking about "enablers" and "enabling" (the most interesting passages in this respect seem to me Abend 2023, 177, 290–91, 336).

⁸⁴ Abend actually addresses the issue of the historical "genealogy" of this mode of reasoning, but he doesn't explore it further: "Its genealogy in the social sciences is extensive and diverse. It harks back to the classics: Simmel's (1908) 'How Is Society Possible?' and Durkheim's and Mauss's Kantian themes and variations (Durkheim [1912] 1968; Durkheim and Mauss 1901–1902; Hubert and Mauss 1902–1903; see Godlove 1996; Schmaus 2004; Turner 2017). More family members: Foucault's 'historical a priori' and 'episteme,' and arguably his structuralist predecessors as well (Foucault 1966; see Megill 1979, 1987). Fleck, Kuhn, and Hacking (Hacking 1999, 2002; see Elwick 2012). Bourdieu's (1983, 1992, 1993) 'space of possibles [*possibles*]; critical realists' transcendental arguments (Bhaskar [1975] 2008, [1979] 2015; Lawson 1997); and Gibson's (1979) and Keane's (2016) 'affordance' (see Vetter 2018). My approach is inspired by and builds on this genealogy, but I'm not committed to these authors' views on how things are possible and what makes things possible." (Abend [2020] 2022, 73–74, for the references cited, see the bibliography of Abend's paper) As said, Abend exempts Max Weber from this "family", at least regarding his concept of "objective possibility" (*objektive Möglichkeit*) (Abend [2020] 2022, 96, n. 5). I would argue that Weber still participates in this tradition, at least via his concept of "cultural value ideas" (*Kulturwertideen*) (for this interpretation, see e.g. Stark 1958, 16).

conditions”, “conditions of possibility” and other philosophically charged vocabulary. He now prefers the less cumbersome terminology of “making things possible”, “enablers”, “enabling relationships”, etc.⁸⁵ For my part, I stick – despite their overly academic flavour – to expressions such as “transcendental reasoning in the social sciences” or “socio-transcendental reasoning”. The reason is that these older expressions underline the continuities and discontinuities with philosophical models of reasoning that interest me from a historical point of view. Keeping the older terminology also reconnects with the argumentative resources that have been accumulated for some centuries in historical controversies on transcendental philosophy and its relationship with empirical and, more specifically, sociological enquiries since the 19th century. Leaping out of the Kantian terminology might be legitimate for Abend’s systematic purposes (although I admit I remain sceptical). But it would be counterproductive in the framework of my historical enquiry. Even if expressions such as “conditions of possibility”, “transcendental” or “*a priori*” are notoriously obscure, we shouldn’t make them clearer than they were for the historical agents involved.⁸⁶ We can use Kant and his language here indeed as a “means of communication” between present and past problems.⁸⁷

A style of reasoning?

A last point deserving discussion concerns another possible way of framing the unity of transcendental reasoning in present-day social and human sciences. Should we conclude from the widespread use of the linguistic expressions cited at the beginning to the existence of a peculiar “style of reasoning”? In other words, is there today something like a unique “socio-transcendental style of reasoning”?

There are some reasons to think that notions such as “style”, “style of thought” or “style of reasoning” might be useful to capture the present-day phenomenon. As it is well-known, the concept of “thought style” (*Denkstil*) goes back to early German-speaking sociology of

⁸⁵ Abend states explicitly: “I prefer ‘enablers’, ‘enabling’, and ‘what-makes-it-possible questions/claims’ to ‘conditions of possibility’ and ‘transcendental questions/claims’. ‘Conditions of possibility’ is troublesome, because in the history of the social sciences it’s been used too vaguely too often – and not only by people whose native language is German or French.” (Abend [2020] 2022, 95, n. 1)

⁸⁶ The risk is to commit what we might call – with reference to Alfred North Whitehead’s (1861-1947) “fallacy of misplaced concreteness” (Whitehead [1925] 1948, 52) – a sort of “fallacy of misplaced clarification”.

⁸⁷ This idea is inspired by the opening sentences of American philosopher Wilfrid Sellars’s (1912-1989) *Science and Metaphysics*: “The history of philosophy is the *lingua franca* which makes communication between philosophers, at least of different points of view, possible. Philosophy without the history of philosophy, if not empty or blind, is at least dumb. Thus, if I build my discussion of contemporary issues on a foundation of Kant exegesis and commentary it is because, as I see it, there are enough close parallels between the problems confronting him and the steps he took to solve them, on the one hand, and the current situation and its demands, on the other, for it to be helpful to use him as a means of communication, though not, of course, as a means only. In their most general aspect both his problems and our perplexities spring from the attempt to take both man and science seriously.” (Sellars 1968, 1) An analogous argument can be made about the history of the social sciences.

knowledge and of science. Building on various debates in aesthetics, the history of philosophy and of science, it was used at around the same time in the 1920s by Karl Mannheim (Mannheim 1925; 1927; [1929] 1995) and Ludwik Fleck (Fleck [1927] 1983; [1935] 1980).⁸⁸ Roughly, it designated at the time the mostly implicit presuppositions of knowledge claims which depend upon training and membership in social groups or – in Fleck’s terminology – “thought collectives” (*Denkkollektive*). Later, the notion of “style” was used in intellectual history and the history of science by Australian historian of science Alistair Crombie (1915-1996) (Crombie 1952; 1953; 1994), but also in the history of sociology by Robert K. Merton (Merton 1961; [1961] 1973b).⁸⁹

More recently, since the 1980s, philosopher and historian of science Ian Hacking (1936-2023) has developed the cognate notion of “styles of scientific reasoning” (Hacking 1982; 1992; 2012).⁹⁰ Hacking insisted especially on the practical aspects of these “styles”. By contrast to “thinking”, “reasoning is also practical as well as theoretical; it involves as much doing as thinking” (Hacking 2012, 600). Finally, it is again Gabriel Abend who, lately, has applied similar notions of “style” to the social sciences. He has investigated “styles of sociological thought” in a comparative empirical study on the differences between American and Mexican sociology (Abend 2006). Studying these different national styles in sociology, he ended up proposing an “empirical sociology of epistemologies” (Abend 2006, 31) in sociology – a perspective that has since been applied to investigate specific “styles of causal thought” in ethnography (Abend et al. 2013).

The reason why notions such as “style of reasoning” might seem appropriate in the given case is that they point to the often implicit character of the epistemological commitments we incur with a certain way of speaking (for example, by using expressions such as “social conditions of possibility”). Also, the notion of “style” allows for a certain vagueness. A style of reasoning doesn’t reduce to a specific theory defined by necessary and sufficient conditions everyone subscribes to explicitly (Hacking 2012, 601). “Style of reasoning” thus seems able to capture larger “family resemblances” between various schools or traditions which, on the other hand, often oppose each other.

⁸⁸ On Mannheim and Fleck’s respective use of “*Denkstil*”, see Neun 2017. For a further examination of their respective contexts and sources, see de la Riva 2022.

⁸⁹ For an general reconstruction of the history and uses of “style” in the history of science, see Gayon 1999.

⁹⁰ For critical discussions of Hacking’s project, see Kusch 2010; Ritchie 2012; Sciortino 2017. Remarkably, Hacking presented his “styles project” itself as a “historicization” of Kant’s enquiry into how objectivity is possible (Hacking 1992, 4; Sciortino 2017, 247–48). In this sense, his proposal is interesting not only as a potential method – a way of looking at things –, but also as an object or “symptom” to be analysed. Reasoning in terms of “styles of scientific reasoning” presents itself as an exemplar of socio-transcendental reasoning. The notion of a “socio-transcendental style of reasoning” would thus be “self-exemplifying”, to use Merton’s expression (e.g. Merton [1963] 1973a, 381–82; 2004, 231–33).

One could then argue that the notion “socio-transcendental style of reasoning” designates a family of methodological approaches connected by “family resemblances”, as Wittgenstein conceives them, i.e. “a complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing” (Wittgenstein [1953] 1999, § 66). In spite of his inherent vagueness, this style could then be distinguished – at least ideally – from other families of approaches with other corresponding characteristics. The two main alternative styles of reasoning in the social sciences would be the “causal style” (e.g. deductive-nomological reasoning) and the “interpretative style” (e.g. hermeneutical approaches) (cf. Abend [2020] 2022, 70–72). The unity of this socio-transcendental style would consist in a diversity of *uses* of characteristic linguistic expressions and tropes. This unity *in* and *through* diversity would be somehow everywhere (in the whole variety of uses) and nowhere (in no single use) at the same time.⁹¹

Seductive as this framing might seem at first glance, I will not employ it here.⁹² The simple reason is that defending seriously the view that today exists a specific socio-transcendental style of reasoning would demand not only a convincing operationalization of the concept “style of reasoning”, but also a systematic empirical study on present-day social and human sciences. Such an investigation could very well be conceived and realized.⁹³ But in the present context I cannot engage in this endeavour. The primary focus of my work here is on the socio-historical conditions for the establishment of quasi-transcendental reasoning in the social and human sciences and, among them, especially the sociologization of the *a priori*; not on the forms and varieties that this reasoning might take today. The latter is the starting point and the endpoint of the present investigation – its *terminus ad quem* –, but not its proper object. Accordingly, the question of the existence of a genuine “socio-transcendental style of reasoning” – or, more humbly, the question whether conceiving things in this way is useful – can be left open.

Remaining agnostic about the issue of “style” doesn’t hinder us to maintain that there is today a family of interconnected phrases and linguistic tools in the social and human sciences that signal a reformulation of Kantian transcendental reasoning. If not a style, they suggest at least a certain type of reasoning, be it only vaguely. This is all I need to be granted so far. The unity of this type of reasoning can be construed through the three conditions of the problem outlined above: the two-level distinction, the constituted-constitutive dependence and the constitutive-constituted dependence. “Style” would be just another way of framing this

⁹¹ Much of this line of argument is inspired by Abend’s depiction of the “family” of background theories (Abend 2014b, 56–58), by Abend’s paper of “styles of sociological thought” (Abend 2006) and by Abend, Petre and Sauder’s study of “causal styles of thought” (Abend et al. 2013).

⁹² In fact, I have been using this framing in earlier stages of my work, but have come to the conclusion that it creates unnecessary complications.

⁹³ As pointed out earlier, Abend, Petre, and Sauder 2013 could serve as a model.

“problematic unity”. It is a possible framing, but not necessary for the point I want to make. In the interest of conceptual parsimony, we can leave “style of reasoning” aside.

4. Back to the sociologization of the *a priori*

The terminations *ize* (rather than *ise*), *ism*, and *ist* are applied to words of all origins: thus we have to *pulverize*, to *colonize*, *Witticism*, *Heathenism*, *Journalist*, *Tobacconist*. Hence we may make such words when they are wanted. (Whewell 1840b, cxiii)⁹⁴

[S]ociologize, v. 1. *intransitive*. To study sociology or social questions; to theorize, speculate, or reason sociologically. 2. *transitive*. To analyse, describe, or study from the point of view of sociology; (also) to render sociological. Also *reflexive*. (Oxford English Dictionary 2023b)

So far, I have sought to establish that we encounter in contemporary social and human sciences a peculiar form of transcendental reasoning. How do we get now from this present-day diagnosis to the announced historical project focusing on the sociologization of the *a priori* in France and the German-speaking world in the 19th and 20th century?

The key to this transition is the question, raised earlier, where the structure of the problem of socio-transcendental reasoning comes from, historically speaking. This question leads us back, I suggest, to the specific problem of the sociologization of the *a priori* as it evolved from the early 19th century onwards. But how does this supposedly distinct problem differ from the more general problem of transcendental reasoning in the social sciences outlined so far? For understanding this difference, it helps to recall in a first step the longer history of socio-transcendental reasoning.

The historical formation of the problem

In fact, the ways of speaking I have quoted at the beginning and the sort of socio-transcendental reasoning they express are far from obvious. If we look at the history of epistemology, they appear rather as a genuine historical achievement: the product of a complex long-term historical

⁹⁴ This passage precedes British philosopher and historian of science William Whewell’s (1794-1866) famous public introduction of the term “scientist” (Ross 1962; Merton [1993/1995] 1997), formed according to the principle expressed in the quotation. The text continues: “As we cannot use physician for a cultivator of physics, I have called him a *physicist*. We need very much a name to describe a cultivator of science in general. I should incline to call him a *Scientist*. Thus we might say, that as an Artist is a Musician, Painter, or Poet, a Scientist is a Mathematician, Physicist, or Naturalist.” (Whewell 1840b, cxiii)

process and a specific historical formation. Let us quickly remember the main stages of this process. A heavily simplified version of the story – following the largely Kant-biased textbook account of the history of epistemology⁹⁵ – might go as follows.⁹⁶

Until about 1780, there were roughly two ways on offer for conceiving space, time and our most general concepts, such as causality, number or substance. First, what has been called the “empiricist” option, with proponents such as Francis Bacon (1561-1626), John Locke (1632-1704) and David Hume (1711-1776). According to this view, our general notions were thought to be the result of a confrontation between an individual human subject and the experiences it makes. This included, on the one hand, a notion of the subject as a *tabula rasa*. On the other hand, it implied a psychological theory that explained how we acquire individually concepts from experiences, e.g. by processes of comparison, induction, deduction, association, the formation of habits, etc.

Second, there was what has been called the “rationalist” option, with proponents such as René Descartes (1596-1650), Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646-1716) or Christian Wolff (1679-1754). In this view, our general concepts were thought to exist in the individual mind prior to any experience, albeit only in an indistinct way. Human individuals were thought to participate *qua* humans in generic human rational faculties or “reason”. This option then had to explain, among other things, how knowledge from these innate concepts connected to and applied to experience (e.g. in the case of mathematized modern science).

In deliberate response to the two previous alternatives, Kant formulated a third option that he called “transcendental philosophy”. Kant alleged that time, space and our most general concepts – which he called in Aristotelean terminology “categories” (Tonelli 1964) – were prior to and independent of any experience. With an expression taken over from Leibniz and his followers in Germany, but also used by Hume, Kant characterized them as “*a priori*”. But the priority of the *a priori* was not temporal or chronological. It was logical in the peculiar sense

⁹⁵ Indeed, Kant’s transcendental philosophy came not only with a new philosophical terminology, but also with a new historiography of philosophy, sketched for example in the last section of the *Critique of Pure Reason* on “The history of pure reason” (Kant [1781/1787] 1974, 709–12, A852–856/B880–884). Defining his own “critical way” against empiricists and rationalists, Kant contributed to “constructing” his two opponents as well as a certain way of writing the history of philosophy: “Kant provided a framework for understanding the confusing seventeenth-century intellectual scene when he said that ‘Leibniz intellectualized appearances, just as Locke ... sensualized all concepts of the understanding’. He thereby created the standard version of ‘the history of modern philosophy’ according to which pre-Kantian philosophy was a struggle between ‘rationalism’, which wanted to reduce sensations to concepts, and ‘empiricism’ which wanted the inverse reduction.” (Rorty 1979, 148) For this “Kantian turn” in the historiography of philosophy, see also Mandelbaum 1976; Micheli [1988] 2015; Reichl 2020; Bartsidi 2024, 30–34. For more on this aspect of Kant’s work, see Chapter 4.

⁹⁶ Entire libraries have been written on the few indications that follow. For one of the best presentations of the philosophical and scientific issues involved, see the four volumes of Cassirer [1906–1950] 1995. For the history of the specific problem of the *a priori* and the categories from Kant to contemporary analytic philosophy, see Ferrari 2003.

of a “transcendental logic”: going back to the very form of our intuitions (in the case of space and time) or judgments (in the case of the categories), but concerning nevertheless the “material” of experience as such (not particular experiences).⁹⁷ Kant thus asked for the conditions that have to be in place in order for experience to be possible at all. The conditions he identified – space and time as “pure forms of sensibility”, the categories as “concepts of pure understanding” – he called “transcendental” (insofar as these *a priori* forms are experience-enabling). “Transcendental” meant a certain *use of a priori* notions and principles: their application to possible experience, in contradistinction to their “transcendent” use going beyond any possible experience.⁹⁸

Kant conceived these forms and categories as subjective forms of the mind *in general* – the “transcendental subject” in contradistinction to the individual psychological “empirical subject”, which appears to us only as one phenomenon among others. He thought that empirical knowledge required a combination of “sensibility” (*Sinnlichkeit*) or sensory input and “understanding” (*Verstand*) or concepts. But while the categories had to remain related to experience in order to be meaningful, by virtue of their making experience possible, they were also thought to be independent of all experience. In Kant’s seminal reconfiguration of epistemology (or, less anachronistically, “metaphysics” in one of its various meanings), the domain of the *a priori* – the concepts of space and time and the categories – was conceived as being *universal, necessary* and – by implication – *immutable*.⁹⁹

By the same token, the *a priori* was thought to be inaccessible to empirical investigation and fell into the domain of “transcendental philosophy”. The classical argument against an empirical account of the *a priori* took the form of a *petitio principii* objection: investigations of the *a priori* based on experience would presuppose the very notions of time, space and causality that were to be explained as conditions of experience.¹⁰⁰ “Transcendental conditions” were thought

⁹⁷ For the distinction between general logic and transcendental logic, see Kant [1781/1787] 1974, 97–102, A50–57/B74–83.

⁹⁸ See, for example, Kant’s distinction between “transcendental” and “transcendent” in his response to Christian Garve (1742–1798) and Johann Georg Heinrich Feder’s (1740–1821) 1782 critical review of the *Critique of Pure Reason* where they objected to Kant’s “transcendent” or “higher idealism”: “Hohe Türme und die ihnen ähnlichen metaphysisch-großen Männer, um welche beide gemeinlich viel Wind ist, sind nicht für mich. Mein Platz ist das fruchtbare *Bathos* der Erfahrung, und das Wort: transzendental, dessen so vielfältig von mir angezeigte Bedeutung vom Rezensenten nicht einmal gefaßt worden (so flüchtig hat er alles angesehen), bedeutet nicht etwas, das über alle Erfahrung hinausgeht, sondern was vor ihr (*a priori*) zwar vorhergeht, aber doch zu nichts Mehrerem bestimmt ist, als lediglich Erfahrungserkenntnis möglich zu machen. Wenn diese Begriffe die Erfahrung überschreiten, dann heißt ihr Gebrauch transzendent, welcher von dem immanenten, d.i. auf Erfahrung eingeschränkten Gebrauch unterschieden wird.” (Kant [1783] 2001, 168, n. 1)

⁹⁹ As mentioned earlier, strict universality and necessity are for Kant the explicit criteria (*Merkmal*) of *a priori* knowledge (Kant [1781/1787] 1974, 46–47, B3–4).

¹⁰⁰ Kant provided the blueprint for this argument in his refutation of a psychological or physiological “deduction” of the categories (Kant [1781/1787] 1974, 125–34, A84–95/B116–129).

not to be deducible from experience as studied by the empirical sciences, but to be entrenched once and for all in the very structure of the mind.

Historically and sociologically, this way of seeing things was tightly connected to an “academic revolution” that autonomized academic philosophy vis-à-vis theology, law and medicine (Collins 1998b, 618–87, see Chapter 4) – and implicitly also vis-à-vis the empirical natural and other sciences. Through the canonization of Kantian philosophy these ideas and notions diffused largely.¹⁰¹ But at the same time things started to change in the course of the 19th century through the expansion of the natural sciences and the rise of the social and human sciences. The above qualifications of the *a priori* got under pressure from various sides.

In mathematics and the natural sciences, from the first half of the 19th century on non-Euclidean geometries shed doubt on the universality and necessity of the three-dimensional Newtonian space which was underlying Kant’s proposal on space as a “pure form of sensibility”. At the beginning of the 20th century Einstein’s theory of relativity and later quantum physics extended these doubts to the concept of time and the category of causality.¹⁰² Meanwhile, physiology and medicine, biology, theories of evolution, experimental psychology as well as history and philosophy of science hit even closer to home as they enquired into sensory perception and the genesis of our general concepts. Finally, there was history which was becoming professionalized, ethnography, ethnology and anthropology which provided abounding material on radically different civilizations around the globe, and several social and human sciences which were becoming increasingly institutionalized at universities. All of these various new forms of knowledge contributed to undermining the idea of the universal, necessary and immutable character of the *a priori*. In some cases, they provided the basis for explicit “naturalizations” of the conditions of experience and knowledge, such as in physiology, psychology or various variants of social psychology (e.g. German *Völkerpsychologie*).

Early in the 20th century, the transformation that had taken place became also evident in the area of sociology, which was at the time on its own way of becoming an academic discipline. In France, the already mentioned article by Durkheim and Mauss on “primitive forms of classification” (1903) as well as Durkheim’s “sociological theory of knowledge” in the *Formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse* (1912) provided probably the most paradigmatic and most radical statement of the changed view of the *a priori*. Durkheim proposed a sociological theory

¹⁰¹ An indicator for the canonization of Kantian philosophy and terminology is that the word “transcendental” (with its distinction from “transcendent” as well as “empirical”) became something of a shibboleth for recognizing competence in academic philosophy, even beyond the academic field. For a nice extra-academic illustration, see Éric Rohmer’s 1990 film *Conte de printemps* (Rohmer 1990) where a dinner scene, starting from an apparently innocuous discussion about the meaning of “transcendental”, turns into an ordeal on who can most legitimately claim philosophical competence.

¹⁰² On these contexts, see for example Cassirer [1921] 2001; [1936] 2004.

not only of time and space but of all the main categories of the human mind, such as substance, causality, number, personality or totality. He conceived the domain of the *a priori* as made up of “collective representations” that vary across societies, places and historical periods.¹⁰³ And he presented this theory explicitly as an alternative to the philosophical doctrines of empiricism and apriorism (Durkheim [1912] 2013, 12–28), arguing that a sociological account would be able to combine the advantages of both doctrines while eschewing their respective problems. On the one hand, he explained the logical necessity, objectivity and (relative) universality of the categories – emphasized traditionally by apriorism – as a sort of “moral necessity” stemming from the group (Durkheim [1912] 2013, 24–25). On the other hand, conceiving categories as relative to empirically given group structure, he could account for the historical variation of categories as it was illustrated at the time by expanding ethnography, experimental psychology and history. In short, Durkheim proposed a sociological empirical account of the relatively non-empirical *a priori* constituents of experience.

And although the Durkheimian group presents probably the only case where an empirical research programme on this topic was executed collectively over several decades, they were far from being alone. Several other authors and groups of authors – some of them mentioned above – were searching at the time for a specifically *sociological* account of the *a priori*. This might have been only one source among others for the emergence of later forms of quasi-transcendental reasoning in the social and human sciences. Other inputs came, for example, from historical, psychological, evolutionist, cultural or anthropological sources. But the specific *sociologization* of the *a priori* we observe at the turn of the 20th century is undeniably an essential element of the story. It can be seen as a major episode in the history of transcendental reasoning in the social sciences.

The problem of the sociologization of the a priori

The quick look at the historical background enables us now to be more specific about the peculiar problem of the *sociologization* of the *a priori* compared to the larger phenomenon of transcendental reasoning in the social sciences. Building on our prior analysis, we can characterize this problem as follows.

Let’s recall the three conditions of the problem of socio-transcendental reasoning:

¹⁰³ We see here that Durkheim’s “idea of socio-transcendental conditions” – as Bourdieu called it later (Bourdieu 2001b, 158) – was tightly connected to his specific conception of sociology as a general, autonomous science of society, and as a science of collective representations in particular.

- (1) The two-level distinction: the distinction between a constitutive and a constituted level (e.g. in transcendental philosophy, the distinction between the *a priori* elements of cognition making experience possible and experience itself).
- (2) The constituted-constitutive dependence: the idea that the constituted level is in some way conditioned by the constitutive level (e.g. in transcendental philosophy, the *a priori* providing the “transcendental conditions” of any possible experience, thus “making it possible”).
- (3) The constitutive-constituted dependence: the idea – going beyond the framework of classical transcendental philosophy – that the constitutive level is in some way dependent upon the constituted level (e.g. *a priori* concepts on individual or collective experiences). This was the key condition that led from transcendental reasoning to *socio-transcendental* reasoning – or, for that matter, any other form of reasoning in terms of a relative, dynamic or empiricized *a priori*. It introduced the possibility of change and variation on the level of constitutive elements.

To get now from the problem of socio-transcendental reasoning to the specific problem of the sociologization of the *a priori* (or reasoning in terms of sociologized or sociological *a priors*), we need to add to these three conditions a fourth one:

- (4) The competency of sociology: It is the task of a general science of society called “sociology” (including cognates such as “social science”, “*Gesellschaftswissenschaft*”, “*Gesellschaftslehre*”, etc.) to provide an empirical and theoretical account of conditions (1)-(3). The word “sociology” has, of course, meant very different things over time, between its introduction by Auguste Comte (1798-1857) in 1839 and, say, Bourdieu’s use of it at the end of the 20th century. Accordingly, possible solutions may vary as widely as the meaning of “sociology”.

The difference between the problem of socio-transcendental reasoning and the problem of the sociologization of the *a priori* is thus an additional assumption, or rather: an additional condition that solutions to *this* problem (the *sociologization* of the *a priori*) must fulfil. What I called “transcendental reasoning in the social and human sciences” can have – as we saw in the overview of its strands and sources – different academic disciplines or forms of knowledge as its support: history, psychology, anthropology, etc. Speaking specifically of a “sociologized” or “sociological *a priori*” signifies that the competent discipline for solving the problem presented by the above conditions is sociology.

The advantage of the construal of the problem via a fourth supplementary condition is that it allows an unambiguous logical demarcation from two other issues. First, as indicated, we can

clearly distinguish in this way the more general forms of socio-transcendental reasoning (or reasoning in vaguely social or historical *a priori*s) from the more specific forms of reasoning in *sociological a priori*s (we can observe both forms in present as well as past social science). The problem of the sociologization of the *a priori* is, logically speaking, a subset of the problem of socio-transcendental reasoning.¹⁰⁴

Second, the fourth condition enables us also to be more precise about the difference between the phenomenon of the sociologization of the *a priori* and its historical relatives: the physiologization, psychologization, biologization, economicization, anthropologization, culturalization, and, more generally, the relativization, dynamization, empiricization or naturalization of the *a priori*. We can now situate the sociologization of the *a priori* vis-à-vis these other options. “Sociologizing the *a priori*” means to make the *a priori* the object of a relatively autonomous science of “sociology”. And it comes with definite ideas about what this science looks like or should look like. This specific problem should not be mixed up either with other empirical-scientific accounts of the *a priori* or with a vague “socialization”.¹⁰⁵

Keeping these distinctions in mind, we can finally propose a shorter and handier characterization of the problem (it is, of course, also analytically poorer, and less precise). What I describe as “sociologization of the *a priori*” implies two claims. Both claims can be spelt out differently in concrete accounts:

- (1) Basic cognitive structures and concepts – categories, concepts of time and space, ideas, and other matters previously characterized as “*a priori*” – depend on and thus vary with historical social groups or societies.¹⁰⁶ – This resumes above conditions (1)-(3).
- (2) The explanation of these basic cognitive structures falls within the purview of a relatively autonomous science of society called “sociology”. – This corresponds to above condition (4).

The advantage of this formulation is not only simplicity. We also grasp immediately that the notion of a “sociological” or “sociologized *a priori*” will vary depending on the interpretation

¹⁰⁴ Weren’t it for fear of abstruseness and ridicule, we could in this sense distinguish terminologically between general “socio-transcendental” and specific “sociologico-transcendental” reasoning. The latter would be a subspecies of the former. And we could say that socio-transcendental reasoning encompasses besides sociologico-transcendental reasoning also “historico-transcendental”, “psychologico-transcendental”, “anthropologico-transcendental”, “economico-transcendental”, “culturalo-transcendental” reasoning, and so on.

¹⁰⁵ For the importance of these differences in the dialogue between Cassirer and Durkheimian sociologists, see Strauss 2025.

¹⁰⁶ Whether this statement applies to the conditions of ordinary experience, to those of scientific experience or both is an issue that divides the various concrete sociological accounts of the *a priori*.

of the two notions of “*a priori*” and “sociology”. This is indeed what we shall observe historically.¹⁰⁷

The space of logizations of the a priori

While the logical relations between these various notions now seem reasonably clear, how should we understand their historical relations? It is them, finally, that interest us here in the first place.

In fact, since the 19th century, there have been multiple forms of “logization”¹⁰⁸ or “scientization” of the *a priori*, i.e. accounts that made the *a priori* the object of a particular science, a scientific discipline or an otherwise defined domain of knowledge. This included, since Kant, various physiological, psychological, biological, evolutionary, historical, cultural, anthropological, linguistic or semiotic approaches. The sociologization of the *a priori* must be put in this broader context, or, more precisely, this space of options. It is part of a more general trend towards a “naturalization” of the conditions of knowledge, i.e. a process in which these very conditions became in turn the object of various empirical sciences.¹⁰⁹

Which place did the sociologization strategy occupy in this wider space of “logizations”? On the one hand, there were undeniable connections with related endeavours. We can observe, for example, links with other, earlier or contemporary debates on the physiologization (e.g. Lange [1866] 1914b; see also already Comte [1839–1842] 1975), the biologization (e.g. Spencer [1855] 1870b, 465; [1855] 1872, 195; Durkheim 1909), the culturalization (e.g. Lazarus and Steinthal 1860; Klautke 2013a; Kusch 2019), the historicization (e.g. Dilthey [1883] 1990; [1911] 1960; Mannheim [1921–1922] 1964), the psychologization (e.g. Kusch 1995; 2003) or the lingualization (e.g. Cassirer 1945; Lévi-Strauss [1958] 1974; [1962] 1990; see also Bunzl 1996) of the *a priori*. On the other hand, just as other episodes within this larger field, say psychologization (Kusch 1995) or physiologization (Heidelberger 2015; 2019; see also Ziche 2015), the discussions on the sociologization of the *a priori* can be isolated as a relatively independent issue. This problem of sociologizing the *a priori* has its own logic: its own

¹⁰⁷ For an attempt at a tentative typology of these variations, see Chapter 6.

¹⁰⁸ For the sake of clarity, “logization” has to be terminologically distinguished from “logicization”, as for example in Logical Empiricism, where – against the Kantian concept of the “synthetic *a priori*” – the *a priori* becomes the object of formal logic (e.g. Reichenbach 1936; Stoppelkamp 2015). “Logicization” would thus be a special case of the “logization” of the *a priori*.

¹⁰⁹ For philosophical debates on various “naturalized epistemologies”, see Quine 1969; Shimony and Nails 1987. American philosopher Marx W. Wartofsky (1928–1997) put the idea neatly (and went on to propose his own “historicized epistemology”): “Over the past century, and more strikingly in the last thirty years, epistemology has been given a rough time. It has been biologized, evolutionized, naturalized, socialized, structuralized, geneticized, behaviorized, linguicized, computerized – and most recently ostracized (or, as one may say, Rortified.)” (Wartofsky 1987, 357, see the epigraph)

chronology, its own socio-historical conditions, its own space of references, its own controversies, etc.

In sum, it is thus necessary to keep in mind – conceptually and empirically speaking – the relations and interactions between the sociologization of the *a priori* and other forms of relativization, empiricization or naturalization. But I would nevertheless argue that the specific debates on the *a priori* becoming an object of the new science of “sociology” can be singled out as a relatively autonomous, arguably crucial and still relatively neglected part of this story.¹¹⁰ It is this relative autonomy of the issue that justifies its – equally relative – methodological isolation in this study.¹¹¹

The admittedly cumbersome phrase “sociologization of the *a priori*” has here a definite advantage. On the one hand, it is sufficiently broad and general to encompass different sociological accounts of the *a priori*, of the transcendental, the categories, time, space, ideas, etc. at different times and places – accounts that were sometimes opposed to each other or not connected to each other at all. Speaking of a “sociologization of the *a priori*” enables us to see the unity of a problem where the perception of unconnected diversity has dominated in the literature. On the other hand, the expression is sufficiently specific to single out one particular problem and to delimitate it from other – albeit related – problems. It allows to pick out the problem that consists in the *a priori* becoming the object of a science of society called “sociology” – and to distinguish it from other scenarios: less specific socialization, empiricization, relativization, naturalization, historicization; and more specific psychologization, biologization, culturalization, etc.

In short, the virtue of the expression “sociologization of the *a priori*” is that it both contextualizes and singularizes a specific process within the broader lexical field of “logizations of the *a priori*”, as they have emerged since the 19th century. In terms of methodology, this entails that we must seek to understand this specific sociologization relationally, i.e. both in relation to adjacent enterprises within the field of relativizations of the *a priori*, and as a relatively autonomous process in its own right.

In this perspective, the sociologization of the *a priori* shows both aspects of continuity and discontinuity with prior accounts of the non-empirical constituents of experience. It is

¹¹⁰ Recent publications on the transformations of Kant’s notion of the “transcendental” (Bouriau et al. 2018; Ajouri and Specht 2015; 2019; Specht 2017; Fournier and Tavernier 2023) do not attend to the specific problem of its sociologization. The same is true for accounts of the relativization of the *a priori* (e.g. Schnädelbach 1997).

¹¹¹ This argument is inspired by Bourdieu’s reasoning concerning the “methodological autonomization” of relatively autonomous fields: “Une telle démarche n’est fondée, cela va de soi, que dans la mesure où l’objet auquel elle s’applique, à savoir le champ intellectuel (et par là le champ culturel), est doté d’une autonomie relative, autorisant l’autonomisation méthodologique qu’opère la méthode structurale en *traitant* le champ intellectuel comme un système régi par ses lois propres.” (Bourdieu 1966, 866)

continuous with traditional transcendentalist approaches in that it maintains the two-level distinction between a constituting and a constituted level – see conditions (1) and (2) in the detailed problem formulation above.¹¹² But it is also continuous with other logizations of the *a priori* that seek to relativize, naturalize or empiricize this two-level distinction – see condition (3) above. At the same time, it is in fundamental discontinuity with the classical Kant-oriented conception where such empirical accounts of the *a priori* are excluded by definition. But then sociologizing this *a priori* is also discontinuous with other relativizations and naturalizations in that it insists that the discipline performing this empiricization of the *a priori* is a specific general science of society called “sociology” – see condition (4). In short, the sociologization of the *a priori* has both aspects of a radical revolution and of a continuous evolution – aspects that should, in my view, be understood together.¹¹³ Regarding this concomitance of break and permanency, it resembles what Bourdieu has described as “symbolic revolutions”: fundamental symbolic-cum-social changes in relatively autonomous social universes (science, art, literature, etc.) that involve continuities as well as discontinuities (Bourdieu [1998–2000] 2013, 351–78; Boschetti 2014a, 9, 339).

At the source of today’s socio-transcendental reasoning

What, on the other hand, about the historical relation between sociologizing the *a priori* and socio-transcendental reasoning? We said that, logically, the latter is more extensive in meaning than the former. Historically speaking, however, I have contended that the former is one of the main sources of the latter or, at least, that it can help us better understand the present-day phenomenon.

As said earlier, today’s quasi-transcendental reasoning in the social and human sciences has certainly various sources. They spring mostly from the space of logizations and relativizations we have just sketched. When we look at the strands and sources of present-day socio-transcendental reasoning (see above), there is no doubt that it is not only specifically *sociological* reinterpretations of the *a priori* and of transcendental reasoning that have played a role. We can observe also sources in psychological, historical, anthropological, cultural, even “national” accounts. So, the sociologization of the *a priori* is certainly not the sole source of today’s larger socio-transcendental or historico-transcendental reasoning. But what was then its actual historical role and the extent of its importance?

¹¹² Durkheim’s insistence on the duality of man is a case in point (Durkheim [1912] 2013, 635–37; [1913] 1975; 1914).

¹¹³ Recently, French sociologist Marc Joly has emphasized – and, in my sense, overemphasized – the radically revolutionary character of sociology and, especially, the sociology of knowledge (Joly 2017; 2018; 2020; [2018] 2022). For my critique of his claims in his book *La Révolution sociologique*, see Strauss 2021, 542–60.

I will not be able to give a conclusive empirical answer to this question. In fact, to know to which extent other relativizations of the *a priori* contributed specifically to today's transcendental reasoning in the social sciences would presuppose further separate investigations. Ideally, of course, we should know about these things before trying to gauge the importance of the sociologization of the *a priori*. Practically, however, this is out of the reach of the present investigation. Given that transcendental reasoning in the social and human sciences is rarely singled out and recognized as an object to be studied in the literature, we cannot build on much specific prior work in this area (for example, work on the historical sources of this type of reasoning in psychologizations of the *a priori*). The idea that the sociologization of the *a priori* was indeed important for today's forms of reasoning has the status of a hypothesis to be explored and corroborated in the following work. The formulation of this hypothesis is, in turn, based on indications suggesting that controversies on this specific topic did have palpable repercussions in the social and human sciences down to the present day.

We thus saw in our rapid “synoptic view” of the strands and sources of present-day socio-transcendental reasoning that, for example, much of the talk of “conditions of possibility” or “*a prioris*” in French-speaking history, was, in some way or the other, connected back to the Durkheimian programme on the study of the categories, including the debates it provoked. Two of the main French sources of today's ways of speaking – Foucault and Bourdieu – are going directly back to these discussions. Similarly, we found strong links to the issue of the sociologization of the *a priori* among German-speaking sources, e.g. in Critical Theory, especially in Habermas, but also in Elias. Finally, even the English-speaking origins of today's parlance led us back to this problem: think of the inspirations Kuhn took from Koyré and Fleck or of the important role of Lévy-Bruhl and Evans-Pritchard in the “new sociology of science”. Given these diverse relationships, there is reason to believe that some of the most important sources of the present-day phenomenon can be traced back to the specific problem of the sociologization of the *a priori*.

Also, a decisive strategic advantage of focusing on this more limited issue is that it enables us to do concrete empirical socio-historical studies on the origin of today's mode of reasoning. The sociologization of the *a priori* designates a specific episode or aspect within the long history of the emergence of quasi-transcendental reasoning in the social and human sciences. It is connected to the concrete, empirically observable socio-historical process of the emergence of “sociology” as a relatively autonomous scientific endeavour and, later, as an academic discipline – a process that involved, at the same time, a major reconfiguration of the ways in which we order and classify knowledge and the sciences. Focusing on the sociologization of the *a priori*, we can see *in concreto*, for instance, how and why alternative interpretations of the

sociologized *a priori* related to each other, how they opposed each other and how they demarcated themselves from other forms of reasoning (e.g. causal or comprehensive). We can learn about the various lineages and traditions that formed within and throughout these debates, sometimes merging into each other later. We can identify some of the social functions that sociologizations the *a priori* fulfilled as a both social and intellectual strategy in different contexts. And we can see how these functions were connected to larger dynamics in the academic, but also the larger cultural and political field at different times.

In this way, the focus on the sociologization of the *a priori* makes it possible to enquire empirically into at least some of the socio-historical conditions and epistemological presuppositions of contemporary transcendental reasoning in the social and human sciences. We can thus link an otherwise elusive epistemological transformation – the, according to classical transcendental philosophy, unthinkable fact that the *a priori* becomes socialized and historicized – to concrete socio-historical factors and evolutions. And we can make this first step all while acknowledging that it is certainly not the whole story, given the impact of other forms of relativization of the *a priori*.¹¹⁴

A multiple, a problem, a process

Having distinguished the sociologization of the *a priori* from various other scientizations, on the one hand, and from broader present-day socio-transcendental reasoning, on the other hand, the question now is: what type of object are we actually dealing with?

To begin with, rather than talk about *the* sociologization of the *a priori*, it would be more appropriate to speak of various sociologizations in the plural form. In historical reality, we encounter a multiplicity of sociological accounts of the *a priori*, all offering in one way or the other responses to the problem outlined above: how can the *a priori* (or things previously thus considered) become an object of sociology? Sometimes the different answers to this question are interconnected, sometimes they are standing entirely alone, without any identifiable connection to other versions.

To use a concept from the sociology of science coined by Robert K. Merton, the sociologization of the *a priori* is not a “singleton”, it is a “multiple” (Merton [1952] 1973, 213–15; [1957] 1973; [1961] 1973a; [1963] 1973a; [1963] 1973b): a “multiple independent discovery”.¹¹⁵ The

¹¹⁴ In Merton’s parlance, the more restricted phenomenon of the sociologization of the *a priori* functions as a “strategic research site” (Merton 1987, 10–23) for understanding today’s transcendental reasoning in the social sciences. This doesn’t exclude to investigate the sociologization of the *a priori*, in turn, via “strategic research sites” (as I shall suggest in Chapter 2).

¹¹⁵ “At the root of a sociological theory of the development of science is the strategic fact of the multiple and independent appearance of the same scientific discovery – what I shall, for convenience, hereafter describe as a multiple.” (Merton [1961] 1973a, 352)

“strategic” importance (see esp. Merton [1963] 1973a) of these multiple independent discoveries for the sociology of science (and, we might add, for the sociology of ideas and of culture more broadly)¹¹⁶ is that they indicate a shared socio-historical cultural background: they point to the collective dimension of scholarly and scientific work. It is against such a shared background that we can understand how different individuals could come forward independently – at the same time or in different periods – with the same or significantly similar proposals.¹¹⁷

This description applies to the case of the various observable sociologizations of the *a priori*. At various times, in various places and in significantly different socio-historical contexts emerge attempts to make the Kantian *a priori* (or what fell into its radius) the object of sociology. Sometimes these proposals are connected to each other, often they are not. Sometimes authors show awareness of similar prior or contemporary projects – leading in some isolated cases even to claims of “priority”¹¹⁸ (Merton [1957] 1973) –, often they don’t. Speaking of a “multiple” incites us to understand better what were the common collective conditions of these different proposals. As with today’s socio-transcendental reasoning above, we can ask: what makes the unity of all these different sociologizations of the *a priori*? How can the sociologization of the *a priori* be one all while being multiple?

In a first step, we can argue here analogously to the “problematic unity” of quasi-transcendental reasoning outlined above. The unity of the sociologization of the *a priori* across its multiple and diverging realizations resides in the fact that these different accounts are all (or, more precisely, can all be construed as) answers to a common problem. This is the problem defined above through the four conditions: the two-level distinction, the constitutive-constituted dependence, the constituted-constitutive dependence and the competency of sociology. The unity of the object called “sociologization of the *a priori*” lies in this problem. If the sociologization of the *a priori* is one (that is, if it can be described as such), it is so not as a definite idea or a definite theory but as a problem that opens up a field of possible responses.¹¹⁹ Indeed,

¹¹⁶ In this sense, Merton described (by way of “self-exemplification”) the idea itself of multiple independent discoveries – put forward repeatedly and independently by scientists, philosophers, historians, sociologists, anthropologists, etc. – as a multiple (Merton [1961] 1973a, 352–56).

¹¹⁷ In fact, Merton defends the even stronger thesis that *all* scientific discoveries are in principle multiples: “But I should like now to develop the hypothesis that, far from being odd or curious or remarkable, the pattern of independent multiple discoveries in science is in principle the dominant pattern rather than a subsidiary one. It is the singletons – discoveries made only once in the history of science – that are the residual cases, requiring special explanation. Put even more sharply, the hypothesis states that all scientific discoveries are in principle multiples, including those that on the surface appear to be singletons.” (Merton [1961] 1973a, 356)

¹¹⁸ The most emblematic case of such “priority management” in the area of the sociologization of the *a priori* can be found in the second part of Max Adler’s *Das Rätsel der Gesellschaft* (Adler 1936, 203–305). Adler spends some hundred pages on reviewing positions similar to his “social *a priori*” and seeks to secure in each case his priority or originality. Interestingly, Adler betrays at the same occasion that he is unaware of the Durkheimian programme pursued in France.

¹¹⁹ For the distinction between such a “problem history” and other forms of intellectual history, see Chapter 2.

various different projects have sought to solve the problem. These multiple solutions vary according to the respective positions of the authors in particular national, disciplinary and broader social and cultural contexts. Together they form a space of intellectual positions in the Bourdieusian sense of *espace des prises de position* (see above). As with socio-transcendental reasoning, the result of this problem-oriented way of conceiving things can be a “synoptic view” of “family resemblances” between the “motley”¹²⁰ of attempts to sociologize the *a priori*.

To better understand the agonistic nature of this space of intellectual positions, we should note that the introduction of the fourth condition concerning the competency of sociology introduces a new dynamic in the problem of socio-transcendental reasoning. It creates a host of occasions for conflict, i.e. questions and issues on which alternative sociological accounts of the *a priori* might disagree. How to characterize the two levels – the constituting and the constituted level – *sociologically*? Which objects or types of objects fall under each category? Are we, concerning the constitutive level, talking only about “basic” categories and concepts of experience or also about more mundane concepts used in every-day language? And what are the constituted phenomena: concrete experiences, beliefs, actions, evaluations, practices or rather their “forms”? Where do we draw the line between the constituting and the constituted phenomena? How do these two levels relate to each other in their presumed reciprocal dependence? Which are the empirically observable social processes supporting these relations? What do constituted-to-constitutive and constitutive-to-constituted investigations look like respectively? And then, are we also talking about scientific experience? If science is concerned and if sociology is conceived as a scientific enterprise of sorts, what does the sociologization of the *a priori* do to sociology’s *a prioris*? How can we conceive the science that investigates the basic elements making science possible? How can sociology account for and perhaps control reflexively the relativity of its own experience-constituting-but-relatively-experience-independent elements? In other words, how to square the sociologization of science with the scientificity of sociology? These and other questions form the matter on which solutions to the problem of the sociologization of the *a priori* have opposed each other.

However, the problem must also be understood in a broader sense. Within the space of reactions to the problem, we must distinguish positive from negative (or ambivalent) responses. On the one hand, there are the explicit proposals for making the Kantian *a priori* – or what was part

¹²⁰ Wittgenstein thus spoke of “the motley of mathematics”, declaring: “Ich will die Buntheit der Mathematik erklären.” (Wittgenstein [1956] 1984, III, § 48, 182) He refers here to the variety of techniques of proof: “Die Mathematik ist ein BUNTES *Gemisch* von Beweistechniken.” (Wittgenstein [1956] 1984, III, § 46, 176) Mühlhölzer proposes as an alternative to G.E.M. Anscombe’s translation of “buntes Gemisch” as “motley” the expression “multicoloured mixture” (Mühlhölzer 2005, 66–67, esp. n. 15). The sort of account Wittgenstein recommends for proofs is again connected to the notion of *übersichtliche Darstellung*: “Ein mathematischer Beweis muß übersichtlich sein.” (Wittgenstein [1956] 1984, III, § 1, 143)

of it: space, time, categories, ideas, conditions of the possibility of experience and science – the object of sociology. These various accounts form a space of their own, a space of sociologizations of the *a priori* that evolve partly in competition with each other. On the other hand, there are – equally important – the reactions the problem elicits beyond this restricted space. This comprises discussions – critical or approving – of contemporaries who engage with the problem of the *a priori* becoming potentially the object of sociology – without necessarily subscribing to a concrete positive solution or to the problem formulation itself. It includes those who were explicitly opposed to such attempts. Through their opposition they contributed decisively to the debate on the issue. Authors contesting sociological accounts of the *a priori* – such as broadly neo-Kantian philosophers Léon Brunschvicg (1869-1944) in France (e.g. Terzi 2022a, see also Chapter [X]) or Ernst Cassirer in Germany – are part of the space of discussion opened up by the problem.

In this way, we should clearly differentiate between the sociologization of the *a priori* in a narrow sense – the space created by the positive projects for making *a priori* elements the object of sociology – and the problem in a broader sense – the wider space of discussion including those who react to the problem without subscribing to a solution or the very terms of the problem. These two spaces were, of course, in permanent interaction with each other – which explains in part the dynamics of the debate.

I thus conceive the sociologization of the *a priori* here first of all as a problem. At the same time, however, the very linguistic form of my problem construction indicates a type of object closer to what we might call a “process”: “sociologization” – a noun derived from a transitive verb (“sociologize”) derived, in turn, from a noun (“sociology”) – suggests that something – here the *a priori* – that hadn’t been “sociological” so far becomes “sociological” and that this transition forms a sort of definite entity. Are we then dealing with a problem or a process?

I contend that we can maintain both perspectives. There is no contradiction in conceiving the sociologization of the *a priori* both as problem and a process as long as we are clear on what we are talking about. As a problem, it is the task of finding a response or a possible solution that accounts for – or rejects – the above conditions. At the same time the whole of the linguistic, intellectual and other behaviour that this problem provokes – positive, negative, indifferent, etc. – presents an overall phenomenon. This phenomenon can be conceived as a process: a process in which a specific object or object area – the *a priori* – transits from one discipline (philosophy) to another (sociology). In the course of this process, something that had seemed unthinkable at one point – an empiricized and sociologized *a priori* – becomes a matter of course at another point – with the widespread and largely automatic socio-transcendental parlance in today’s social and human sciences.

Indeed, to most philosophical epistemologies in the post-Kantian era the idea of socio-transcendental conditions, of a historicized or sociologized *a priori* was (and still is) a “barbarism” or a “mésalliance” (Foucault 1969, 174–75; Bourdieu [1983–1986] 2016, 778–80). The notion of empirical-transcendental or sociological-transcendental conditions has been perceived simply as an oxymoron, a straightforward *contradictio in adiecto*. It runs counter to the established philosophical distinction between “the empirical” and “the transcendental”, the *a posteriori* and the *a priori*. This distinction, in turn, was entrenched in an entire system of classifying philosophical and scientific disciplines.¹²¹ Since the early 20th century, by contrast, such “barbaric” ideas have become increasingly a matter of course – they are now widespread and go most of the time unquestioned.¹²²

The sociologization of the *a priori* – the entirety of the debates on the problem – can thus also be conceived as part of a major epistemological transformation – as a process within a process. The larger process connects at its extremes two “states of knowledge”: (1) a state where empirical-transcendental (and, by implication, sociologico-transcendental) conditions of knowledge are inconceivable as a self-evidence in terms of dominant classifications of knowledge; and (2) a state where socio-transcendental conditions have, in turn, become a sort of self-evidence. One automatism (ignorance, rejection) seems to have replaced another (acceptance, diffusion). Studying the sociologization of the *a priori* then means trying to grasp one aspect of the establishment and diffusion of the new self-evidence of reasoning in socio-transcendental conditions. Understanding such new, previously unheard-of self-evidences can indeed be conceived as one of the major tasks of an epistemologically oriented intellectual history.¹²³ In this sense, the expression “sociologization of the *a priori*” can refer both to a problem

¹²¹ The inconceivability of a sociological *a priori* is not only plain from Kant’s rejection of the possibility of an “empirical deduction of the categories” (Kant [1781/1787] 1974, 125–34, A84–95/B116–129), but also from the lacuna in the scheme of philosophical disciplines in Kant’s *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten* (1785). In Kant’s matrix, created by crossing the two oppositions “empirical/pure” and “material/formal”, the field “empirical-formal” remains empty. There is literally no place for an “empirical part of logic” (Kant [1785] 1974, 7, BA III-IV) (even if Kant refers in this passage primarily to general logic, this applies also to his peculiar “transcendental logic”) where a sociologized *a priori* could enter. For in-depth discussion, see Chapter 4.

¹²² Schnädelbach puts the issue nicely in the context of a clarification of the term “relative *a priori*”: “Bekanntlich hatte Kant das Apriori, so wie es die drei Kritiken exponieren, für alternativlos gehalten, weil es in der Vernunft selbst, im ‘Bewußtsein überhaupt’ oder in der unveränderlichen Vernunftnatur des Menschen gründe. Dieses alternativlose Kantische Apriori, das Kant mit guten Gründen glaubte, unmittelbar mit den Geltungscharakteren der Allgemeinheit und Notwendigkeit ausstatten zu können, ist dasjenige, von dessen Relativität wir offenbar alle mehr oder weniger überzeugt sind.” (Schnädelbach 1997, 492)

¹²³ See, for example, French historian of political economy Jean-Claude Perrot’s (1928–2021) understanding of intellectual history: “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, 33; [1998] 2021, 501) 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.” (Perrot 1998, 33; [1998] 2021, 501) By analogy, the investigation into the sociologization of the *a priori* is preceded by an initial moment

and to the intellectual and socio-historical process by which the notion of a sociological *a priori* became conceivable in the first place and by which it was diffused and established as a sort of self-evidence.

The intellectual and social conditions of the problem

So far, we have construed the problem of the sociologization of the *a priori* in analogy to the problem of transcendental reasoning in today's social and human sciences. In the latter case, we asked where the problem came from and ended up with the focus on the problem of the sociologization of the *a priori*. But where, in turn, does the structure of *this* problem come from? Which are the socio-historical conditions of the four logical conditions that make up the problem? Where was the problem located? Is it supposed to have just been floating in the air over some two centuries?

The aim of the present study is indeed to understand the problem of the sociologization of the *a priori* in *both* its intellectual and social dimensions. Which were then the shared social, intellectual and cultural conditions of sociologizing the *a priori* to which talk of a “multiple” pointed us? First, let us be clear about the intellectual conditions of the problem and answer the questions: what type of intellectual problem is the sociologization of the *a priori*? Why is there a tension in the four conditions presented above? What is this tension based on? As I conceive the problem here, it concerns primarily the ways in which knowledge and the sciences have been ordered and classified.¹²⁴

Consider the problem's conditions (1) and (2), i.e. the two-level distinction and the constituted-constitutive dependence. According to the classification of knowledge and the sciences in Kant's transcendental philosophy, there was no possibility for the constitutive *a priori* to become an object of empirical investigation. The *a priori* and its use within and beyond experience was to be studied by philosophy, not by any empirical science that was itself based on *a priori* principles. But condition (3) – the constitutive-constituted dependence – introduced precisely this idea. Something must have happened in the classification of knowledge for this to become possible and avoid the outright self-contradiction that transcendental philosophy predicted to such enterprises. In the first half of the 19th century, we observe indeed important transformations in the classification of knowledge and of the Kantian model in particular: the empiricization and naturalization of the *a priori* enters the horizon of possibilities. Most emblematic in this respect is probably the classification of the sciences proposed in France by

of “surprise” (explored in the present chapter) regarding the omnipresence and taken-for-granted nature of some sort of transcendental reasoning in today's social sciences.

¹²⁴ For the entire following line of argument, see Chapter 4.

Auguste Comte in his *Cours de philosophie positive* (1830-1842): the domain of the *a priori* came here into the purview of physiology, biology and sociology. With this, also condition (4) came in, i.e. the idea that an empirical account of the *a priori* should be given by a relatively autonomous science of society called “sociology”. The intellectual conditions for formulating the problem of the sociologization of the *a priori* were thus united around 1840.

The tension defining the problem – especially between conditions (1)-(3) – consisted in a conflict between earlier, Kant-inspired classifications of knowledge that persisted throughout the 19th century, and more recent classifications that considered that relatively experience-independent elements of experience were accessible to empirical study. In short, the sociologization of the *a priori* operated – in accord with other scientizations – a symbolic rearrangement in classifying and categorizing knowledge and scientific disciplines that entered into conflict with prior ways of doing so.¹²⁵

This is the *intellectual* background of the problem of sociologizing the *a priori*. It involves a host of reasons and arguments exchanged by philosophers, scientists and other scholars about knowledge, the sciences, their classification and the boundaries between disciplines. But what do the changes in the order, distribution and classification of knowledge and the sciences rely on, in turn? Is the evolution described just a sort of natural “development of the spirit”, some simple evidence-based “progress” or perhaps some fateful turnover in basic ways of thinking (*épistêmai*, paradigms, conceptual schemes, etc.)?

I argue in the present work that we can connect these intellectual preconditions of the problem in a meaningful way to specific, empirically observable socio-historical conditions. In fact, we have good reason to think that classifications of knowledge and science are intimately connected to the prevailing conditions in the academic field at particular moments in time. They reflect a specific state of the academic division of labour in disciplines, i.e. a specific “disciplinary regime” (Heilbron 2004; Joly 2017). Changes in these classifications, in turn, reply to the transformations of this field with its differentiation into disciplines, processes of autonomization and the emergence of new disciplines, especially in the social and human sciences.¹²⁶

¹²⁵ Austrian physicist and historian and philosopher of science Ernst Mach’s (1838-1916) characterization of the emergence of scientific “problems” seems here particularly appropriate: “Wenn aber der Erfahrungskreis durch irgendwelche Umstände sich erweitert, wenn die Gedanken mit bisher unbekannten Tatsachen in Berührung kommen, welchen sie nicht genügend angepasst sind, wenn die durch Neuanpassung modifizierten Gedanken auf die Anpassungsergebnisse älterer Perioden reagieren, dann entwickeln sich, wie die allgemeine Kulturgeschichte und die Geschichte der Wissenschaft insbesondere lehrt, reichlich neue Probleme. Die Inkongruenz der Gedanken und Tatsachen, sowie jene der Gedanken untereinander, ist die Quelle der Probleme.” (Mach [1905] 2011, 261) See also Chapter 2.

¹²⁶ I thank Johan Heilbron for suggesting this interpretation to me through several of his works (esp. Heilbron 2004; 2017a).

The Kantian classification of knowledge and the sciences was closely connected to the autonomization of academic philosophy vis-à-vis the “higher faculties” of theology, medicine and law. Philosophy – in its “transcendental” or critical part – became a “legislating” discipline, judging the validity of the claims promoted by other disciplines starting from an analysis of the possibility of knowledge.¹²⁷ This conception of philosophy was institutionalized in the German university reform of the early 19th century – with some modifications that still exalted the autonomy of philosophy (Collins 1998a, chap. 12; 1998b). The Comtean classification of the sciences, on the other hand, stood in the context of earlier French reforms of higher learning that had abolished the university and had favoured the rise of relatively independent specialized scientific disciplines. This increased disciplinary differentiation and specialization – some have spoken of a “Second Scientific Revolution” (Kuhn [1961] 1977, 220; [1971] 1977, 146–47; Hahn 1971, 275; Cohen 1985a; Heilbron 2017a) – provoked specific replies. Comte’s classification sought to account simultaneously for the diversity and the unity of these ever more specialized sciences (Heilbron 2017a). What is more, he thought that the process of differentiation could be accomplished and controlled by adding a last science of social phenomena – “social physics” or “sociology”.

Taking into account these contexts, the classifications of knowledge that supported the various conditions of the problem of sociologizing of the *a priori* can, in turn, be connected back to concrete socio-historical processes. The very logical conditions that make up the problem have their own concrete socio-historical conditions. Considering the large-scale dissemination of these social and intellectual conditions in the German-speaking world, in France – for example, via the reception of Kant in France, the reception of Comte and “sociology” in Germany or the international diffusion of the German university model (e.g. Ben-David 1971) – helps to understand the shared socio-cultural background that enabled the “multiple independent discovery” of sociological accounts of the *a priori*. It thus becomes possible to study the sociologization of the *a priori* – at first sight a quite abstract and elusive problem – in a socio-historical perspective. As we shall see (Chapter 2), this involves a specific strategy in sociologizing intellectual history or the history of ideas.

What has been said can also provide an answer to doubts the sceptical reader might have felt: What about the unity and the continuity of the problem over more than 200 years in significantly different disciplinary and national contexts? Isn’t it a bit far-fetched to suppose that

¹²⁷ For example, in a draft for the reply to German physiologist, anatomist and anthropologist Samuel Thomas Soemmerring (1755-1830) on the question of the “seat of the soul” (see Kant [1795] 1922a), Kant spoke explicitly – in a way that anticipated his *Der Streit der Fakultäten* (Kant [1798] 2005) – of philosophy as a “legislative power” (*gesetzgebende Gewalt*) and of a “*Philosophia legislativa*” (Kant [1795] 1922b, 405). See Chapter 4.

one and the same problem persists over such a long time period? The reason I think it is indeed legitimate to adopt such a long-time perspective regarding *this* problem is that the social, institutional and intellectual conditions set up in the late 18th and early 19th century – especially the demarcation issues between philosophy and sociology – have remained relatively stable in significant respects. As American sociologist Randall Collins (1941-) put it in his large-scale historical sociology of philosophy: “The period from 1765 to the present is institutionally all of a piece.” (Collins 1998a, 618) Similar claims of continuity have also been made in a more epistemological perspective by philosophers. Richard Rorty, for example, traced much of contemporary philosophy – of the so-called “analytic” as well as the “continental” variety – back to Kant’s “transcendental turn” and its fortification by neo-Kantian philosophers in the 19th century (Rorty 1979, e.g. 136, 139, 162, 164). We thus have reason to believe that the basic social and intellectual conditions underpinning the problem of sociologizing the *a priori* have persisted – not without important modifications, of course – for a relatively long time period.

Finally, once we have spelt out the social conditions of the problem, it also becomes plausible to focus a study of the issue on German-speaking and French academic fields. Having spent so far much time talking about abstract large-scale epistemological transformations, it is important to recognize that the sociologization of the *a priori* had a specific time and place – a location already indicated by the very words composing the problem formulation I suggested. In order to formulate the four conditions of the problem, you need some basic linguistic and conceptual equipment, such as a distinction between “empirical” and “transcendental”, a notion of “conditions of possibility” and a notion of a science of social phenomena called “sociology”. It was mainly people in France and the German-speaking world who came up with and cultivated these ingredients, especially transcendental philosophy and sociology. And it is, little surprisingly, in these two linguistic and cultural contexts between the 1870s and the 1940s that sociological accounts of the *a priori* made their most important breakthrough and found their first supporters. These accounts were to an important extent formulated against or in interaction with neo-Kantian philosophies, which dominated at the time at institutions of higher learning in both France and Germany (e.g. Ferrari [1997] 2001; Luft and Capeillères 2010). The sociologized *a priori* can thus indeed be seen as a fine example of a cultural transfer and a process in the “international circulation of ideas” (Bourdieu [1990] 2002) between two national traditions. Put bluntly, the problem is about the German “*a priori*” encountering French “*sociologie*”. In this perspective, it seems plausible to focus on these two closely connected yet relatively distinct and independent cultural and linguistic contexts.

An analytical category

I have started to use here the expression “sociologization of the *a priori*” and its cognates as a matter of course. But a problem remains. What is the status of this way of speaking and framing the historical record?¹²⁸

In fact, the specific syntagmata “sociologization of the *a priori*”, “sociologizing the *a priori*” or “sociologized *a priori*” are, to my best knowledge, not used by *any* of the historical agents within the timespan considered of around two centuries. Not even those whose positions I would clearly classify as positive instances of a “sociologization of the *a priori*” – Comte, Durkheim, Simmel, Adler, Mannheim, Bourdieu, etc. – employed these terms. The Durkheimians, for instance, talked rather of a “*théorie sociologique de la connaissance*” (Durkheim [1912] 2013, 25, 26, n. 2) to characterize their studies on space, time, the categories and general ideas (thus embracing, arguably, the whole domain of the *a priori* in Kant). In Germany, Simmel spoke explicitly of three “sociological *a prioris*” (Simmel [1908] 1992c, 42–61), yet in a quite peculiar sense as the conditions which “make society possible”. Max Weber, on his part, used the notion “*Kulturwertideen*” (cultural value ideas) to refer to the historically changing, quasi-aprioric conditions of our interests in and knowledge of certain socio-historical objects (Weber [1904] 1988, 175–78) – and he displayed otherwise a rather orthodox understanding of Kantian categories and *a prioris* (Weber [1907] 1988, 309–10). In Austria, Max Adler conceived the elaboration of the theory of the “social *a priori*” (*Sozialapriori*) as his lifetime project – but did not use expressions such as “sociological” or “sociologized *a priori*”. None of these authors – with the exception perhaps of the occasional remarks by Bourdieu cited above – employed the expressions “sociologized *a priori*” or “sociologization of the *a priori*” that I use to classify them.

Nevertheless, I would argue that it is an acceptable move in the construction of the object of this study to speak of a “sociologization of the *a priori*” and “sociologizations of the *a priori*” in the plural form. In fact, “sociologization of the *a priori*” as I use it here has to be understood as a “category of analysis” or “analytical category”, i.e. a category that serves primarily the present-day analysis of historical data. It is not necessarily a description the agents concerned would have employed or adopted, perhaps not even accepted. In terms of the established distinction in anthropology, it is an “etic”, not an “emic” category.¹²⁹ I introduce it with the definite purpose of ordering and understanding the historical record on a long time scale. The aim is to

¹²⁸ The following section prepares in several respects the transition towards the methodological discussions in Chapter 2.

¹²⁹ For the history of this distinction and its application in the history of science, see Jardine 2004. Jardine argues for case-to-case combinations of etics and emics in the history of science along the Kantian-Lakatosian motto “etics without emics is empty, emics without etics blind” (Jardine 2004, 275).

be able to establish a continuity among a certain number of independent as well as interconnected debates that have not been seen in connection with each other so far – mostly because they take place in different national contexts, disciplinary settings and at different times.

But – the historiographically informed reader might instantly argue – isn't there the risk of "understand[ing] the agent to be doing something which he would not – or even could not – himself have accepted as an account of what he *was* doing" (Skinner 1969, 6)? Isn't there the danger of constructing a unity that was not really there by an excessive will to systematize? And to do so perhaps only because the present-day preoccupation with quasi-transcendental manners of speaking in the social and human sciences pushed us in this direction (the risk of "anachronism")? Wouldn't that be a sort of methodological flaw, perhaps even a "moral error"¹³⁰? Where does this interpretation of the historical record in terms of a problem or process of the "sociologization of the *a priori*" come from? Is it appropriate when agents themselves do not *ever* use this description? And aren't we, when we proceed this way, prone to "confirmation bias" – looking only for positive instances confirming our interpretation while ignoring negative ones?¹³¹

If we want to make a controlled use of the analytical category "sociologization of the *a priori*", some additional linguistic, conceptual and historical considerations are indeed necessary. A first starting point is the linguistic form of the expression "sociologization of the *a priori*". The components of the expression seem simple at first glance. There is "sociologization", there is "the *a priori*", and there is "of", relating the first to the second by defining the direct object of the transitive verb "sociologize": it is "the *a priori*" that is supposed to be the object of "sociologizing". The two basic elements involved are, of course, "sociology" (implicit in "sociologize") and "*a priori*". But they take here particular linguistic forms. "Sociology", on the one hand, is complemented with the suffix "-ize", which makes of the noun a verb (in an indeterminate sense at first). We deal with a derived verb – "sociologize" – indicating action in some relation with the meaning of the initial noun "sociology". In "sociologization", this derived verb is in turn nominalized with the suffix "-ation" to indicate the process or the result of the action designated by "sociologize". "*A priori*", on the other hand, appears in the

¹³⁰ See British intellectual historian Quentin Skinner's (1940-) scathing critique of any sort of "presentist" attitude: "To demand from the history of thought a solution to our own immediate problems is thus to commit not merely a methodological fallacy, but something like a moral error." (Skinner 1969, 53) According to the Febvre-inspired conception of problem history I present in Chapter 2, it would, on the contrary, be rather a sort of moral *obligation*: the fact that the starting point for historical investigations comes inevitably from the historians' present – there is no historical "view from nowhere" – comes with the obligation to explicate this starting point historically and sociologically (see also Heilbron 2017b; 2022; Heilbron and Zerilli 2022).

¹³¹ These are, in fact, typical misgivings concerning "problem-historical" approaches (cf. Schnädelbach 1983, 16–17). See Chapter 2.

nominalized form “the *a priori*”. We deal with a nominalized Latin prepositional phrase (“*a priori*”), used otherwise as an adverb (as in “know *a priori*”) or as an adjective (as in “*a priori* knowledge”).¹³²

This formal analysis shows that the linguistic structure of the expression “sociologization of the *a priori*” is actually quite complex. While it can illuminate some aspects of the logic of the expression (for example, what has been said above about the processual character of “sociologization”), we should not forget, on the other hand, that language is also a “social fact” (Meillet 1906, 1): the meaning of words and their changes must be considered in their social contexts and with regard to the social groups that support them. We should thus complement formal analysis with socio-historical considerations concerning the words that compose it and their changing meanings in different circumstances, i.e. with some elements of “conceptual history” (e.g. Koselleck [1972] 1979), “historical semantics” (Bloch 1939a; [1949] 2020, 228–29) or “sociological semantics” (Merton and Barber 2004).¹³³

To begin with, the object of action, designated by the expression “the *a priori*”, has a long and complicated history that is far from being limited to its use by Kant.¹³⁴ Its origins reach back to the Late Middle Ages where the first attested use of the couple “*a priori/a posteriori*” can be found in a commentary of Aristotle’s (384–322 BC) *Analytica Posteriora* by Albert of Saxony (ca. 1320–1390). Until the 18th century, it referred in the Aristotelian tradition to a certain type of reasoning: “*a priori*” designated reasoning from causes to effects, “*a posteriori*” reasoning from effects to causes. Only in the 18th century appeared in authors such as Leibniz or Hume the second epistemological meaning referring to sources of knowledge: “*a priori*” meant knowledge that is independent of experience, “*a posteriori*” knowledge that depends on experience. With Kant and his new philosophical terminology, this second meaning became dominant.

However, history did not stop with Kant. In the 19th and 20th century, “*a priori*” was again used in ways that combined the previous methodological with the more recent epistemological meaning. It was also only in the course of the 19th century – probably after 1827 – that “*a priori*” started to be used in the nominalized form “the *a priori*” – expressions like the adjective

¹³² I follow in this linguistic analysis the descriptive categories used in Bauer, Lieber, and Plag 2013, esp. chap. 13 on derived verbs.

¹³³ I do not want to suggest here an equivalence between these different programmes, but only hint at a convergence in the idea that changes in language (in the meaning of terms and concepts) are both an expression and a factor of social change. For the different strands in terminographical and terminological projects, see Chapter 5.

¹³⁴ Of course, the following is but a sketch. For its sources, see Prantl 1870, 4:78; Eucken 1878; Lalande [1902–1923] 2010; Eisler 1927; [1916/1930] 2002; Bouvier 1929; Schepers et al. [1971] 2017. For an in-depth analysis, see Chapter 5 on Robert Bouvier’s (1886–1978) history of the word and idea “*a priori/a posteriori*” at the Centre international de Synthèse.

“aprioric” (*apriorisch*) and the noun “apriority” (*Apriorität*) were at the time already in use.¹³⁵ The nominalization seems to have been part of the canonization of Kantian philosophy and terminology at the time. “*A priori*” and “the *a priori*” became apparently an important element of the specialized language of the newly emerging social group of professional academic philosophers, especially in Germany (Collins 1998a, chap. 12).¹³⁶ While the expression “the *a priori*” may be “practical” (Schnädelbach 1997, 491), the nominalized form introduced, however, further potential for obscurity. This expression seems unable, indeed, to differentiate between the different senses in which Kant and other authors used the expression as an adjective or adverb to characterize objects or activities. Today, in any case, “the *a priori*” functions mostly as a shorthand term to designate the “things” Kant characterized as “*a priori*” (knowledge, forms of intuition, concepts, categories, principles, ideas, etc.) (see, for example, the debates on “the relative *a priori*” in the philosophy of science cited above). Kant’s transcendental philosophy still is the dominant reference for uses of “*a priori*” and “the *a priori*”.

What about “sociologize”? Since it is a derived verb, the condition for its appearance is the existence of the word “sociology”. In English, to start with, the first documented occurrence of “sociology” in 1842 is clearly linked to the work of Auguste Comte and his introduction of the term “*sociologie*” in print in 1839 (Oxford English Dictionary 2023c). In 1840, William Whewell – one of the most prolific inventors of neologisms in the 19th century – had already insisted that we are licensed to form new words ending on the suffix “-ize” “when they are wanted”, i.e. when there is some need or use for them (Whewell 1840b, cxiii, see the epigraph above). In this perspective, he had introduced the word “scientist” in 1833 – in a context closely connected to the transformations of the “Second Scientific Revolution” mentioned above.¹³⁷ It wasn’t long before Whewell’s licence was applied in English to the newly coined word

¹³⁵ The first occurrence of the nominalized form “the *a priori*” has, to my knowledge, not yet been identified. Schnädelbach writes: “Es ist mir nicht gelungen zu ermitteln, wann die mittellateinische Verhältnisbestimmung ‘*a priori*’, die bis ins 18. Jahrhundert als Kennzeichnung der Beweisart vom *próteron phýsei* her üblich war, zum ‘Apriori’ substantiviert wurde; Wilhelm Traugott Krug regt sich schon 1827 über die barbarischen Wörter ‘apriorisch’ und ‘Apriorität’ auf, und er erwägt ironisch auch die Rede vom ‘Apriorier’ oder ‘Nonvornigen’, ‘das Apriori’ ist offenbar noch kein Objekt seines Zorns. Dieser Ausdruck ist offenbar späteren Datums – zwar nicht schön, aber praktisch.” (Schnädelbach 1997, 491)

¹³⁶ Dutch sociologist Benjo Maso (1944-) indicated in an insightful observation concerning the later movement of “neo-Kantianism” the “major social function” of a concept like “*a priori*” for this professional group: “Like every academic ‘school’, neo-Kantianism was not only a scientific movement, it was also a community with considerable social and economic benefits for its members. Apart from its theoretical value, a concept like apriori [sic] had a major social function.” (Maso 1995, 51–52)

¹³⁷ Whewell publicly introduced the word on 24 June 1833 in a debate with Romantic poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834) at the meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science (BAAS) in Cambridge (Ross 1962; Merton [1993/1995] 1997). The BAAS had been founded in 1831 in the context of the decline and the replacement of the Royal Society by specialized disciplinary societies. The emergence of the term “scientist” must thus be understood in the context of the “Second Scientific Revolution” or, more simply, the disciplinarization of science. For more on this topic, see Chapter 4.

“sociology”: the first occurrence of “sociologize” is attested in the *Oxford English Dictionary* for the year 1851. At first, the word was used in an intransitive sense, describing the activity of doing sociology (as in “philosophize”). It took some further 80 years until 1936, it seems, until the word was used also – and then primarily – in the transitive sense of “[t]o analyse, describe, or study from the point of view of sociology; (also) to render sociological” (*Oxford English Dictionary* 2023b, see the epigraph above). It is noteworthy that this meaning of “sociologize” – the one employed in the expression “sociologization of the *a priori*” – seems, at least in English, posterior to many of the accounts that I would describe in this way.

But what about German and French, the languages of the agents I shall mostly study here? In German, the history of “*soziologisieren*” and its cognates is – in the absence of a reference work such as the *Oxford English Dictionary* – less transparent. Widely used standard dictionaries such as *Duden* do not even contain entries on “*soziologisieren*”, “*soziologisiert*” or “*Soziologisierung*”. This is also the case for the comprehensive online *Digitales Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache* (DWDS) edited by the Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften. The DWDS’s contemporary linguistic corpus (1897–today), however, indicates a limited established use of “*Soziologisierung*” (20 occurrences) and hints also at occurrences as early as 1934.¹³⁸ Complementary research on the corpus of Google Books¹³⁹ allows to go further back and identify an earlier occurrence of “*soziologisieren*” in 1908, in an article by Romanian sociologist Dimitrie Gusti (1880–1955) in the *Vierteljahrsschrift für wissenschaftliche Philosophie und Soziologie* (Gusti 1908, 166–67). Importantly, the expression also appears in the context of the seventh Deutscher Soziologentag of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Soziologie in 1930, in the discussion of a paper by German historian and sociologist Kurt Breysig (1866–1940) on “Das geistige Schaffen als Gegenstand der Gesellschaftslehre” (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Soziologie 1931, 191; Breysig 1931a). Sketchy as these few indications are, they show that “*soziologisieren*” and its cognates were available at least since the early 20th century.

In French, finally, the most comprehensive lexicographical *Trésor de la langue française informatisé* (TLFi) indicates instantly a connection between “*sociologiser*” and the pejorative notion of “*sociologisme*” (defined as “[t]endance à faire de la sociologie l’unique source explicative de l’ensemble des phénomènes sociaux”¹⁴⁰). The two meanings given for “*sociologiser*” are then (1) “faire du sociologisme”, and (2) “évoluer, se modifier au contact des méthodes de

¹³⁸ See <https://www.dwds.de/r/?corpus=dwdsxl&q=soziologisierung> (accessed 15/12/2024). The earliest occurrence of “*Soziologisierung*” indicated is located in Austrian-German legal scholar Hermann Heller’s (1891–1933) *Staatslehre* (Heller 1934, 7). Occurrences of “*soziologisieren*” and “*soziologisiert*” are still less frequent.

¹³⁹ For an account of the possibilities, limits and risks in using this corpus, see Younes and Reips 2019.

¹⁴⁰ See <https://www.cnrtl.fr/definition/sociologisme> (accessed 15/12/2024).

la sociologie”.¹⁴¹ We thus encounter in French a similar transitive-intransitive distinction as in English. Concerning the historical emergence of the expression, the TFLi refers us again back to the early 20th century with a reference to Émile Durkheim’s protest against the charge of “sociologism” in a 1902 letter to French philosopher and editor of the *Revue de métaphysique et de morale* Xavier Léon (1868-1935) (Durkheim 1975a, 465–66) – a passage, however, in which Durkheim does not use “*sociologiser*”. A complementary Google Books search indicates occurrences of “*sociologiser*” and “*sociologisation*” as early as 1897, in the proceedings of the third congress of the Institut international de sociologie led by French sociologist René Worms (1869-1926). In a general discussion on “La théorie organique des sociétés”, French sociologist Gabriel Tarde (1843-1904) recommended to “*sociologiser la biologie*” rather than “*biologiser la sociologie*”; and Hungarian-Swiss sociologist Ludwig Stein (1859-1930) criticized the organic theory as a “*sociologisation de cette erreur fondamentale de la pensée humaine*” of anthropomorphism (Novicow et al. 1898, 239, 289). “*Sociologiser*” and its cognates were thus used in French around the turn of the 20th century in the transitive sense of “render sociological” or “study from the point of view of sociology” (Oxford English Dictionary 2023b) – and especially in the context of the debates on the proper definition of the domain and method of sociology. In sum, “sociologize”, “*soziologisieren*” and “*sociologiser*” were therefore available in English, German and French in the early 20th century – the period, as we shall see, where discussions on what I describe as “sociologizations of the *a priori*” were at their peak.

But what finally about occurrences of the precise syntagmata “sociologize the *a priori*”, “sociologized *a priori*” and “sociologization of the *a priori*”? Are there any antecedent uses for them? As said, those who engaged in what I would describe as “sociologizations of the *a priori*” mostly did not employ these phrases. What we do find, however, are scattered uses of this and similar expressions in the secondary literature, mostly in literature on the history, philosophy and sociology of the social sciences. To take only some examples from the literature on Durkheim and his group, French sociologist François-André Isambert (1924-2017) attributed to Durkheim a “*sociologisation des catégories*” (Isambert 1979, 201). Similarly, French sociologist Louis Pinto (1946-) wrote that in Durkheim “le transcendantal se voit [...] sociologisé (ou historicisé)” (Pinto 2009, 53), Canadian sociologist Yves Gingras (1954-) used the expression “*historiciser les a priori kantien*s” (Gingras 2020b, 718) and French sociologist Gisèle Sapiro (1965-) wrote that in Durkheim and Mauss “[l]a notion de catégorie est socialisée” (Sapiro 2020b, 120).¹⁴² Finally, in a recent collective volume on the Durkheimian “category project”,

¹⁴¹ See <https://www.cnrtl.fr/definition/sociologiser> (accessed 15/12/2024).

¹⁴² All of the sociologists cited are in some way close to Pierre Bourdieu’s research programme.

we find several similar expressions, such as “Durkheim’s sociologizing of epistemology”, “his effort to sociologize philosophical categories” or his “sociologization of [...] time” (Schick et al. 2022, 39, 170, 193). Despite these recurring hints at the problem of sociologizing the *a priori*, I am not aware of any case where these expressions would have served as a starting point for further inquiry into the history and epistemology of these sociologizations. Talk of a “sociologization of the *a priori*” is akin to a spectre haunting the literature on early sociology (of knowledge) – a spectre that never takes clear shape.¹⁴³

In conclusion, using “sociologization of the *a priori*” as an analytical tool might contrast to some extent with the language of the historical agents involved. But on the other hand, looking at the history of the expression showed that its components go back to the very historical phenomena we are seeking to describe: the diffusion and transformation of transcendental philosophy (with “*a priori*”), the autonomization of sociology as an intellectual endeavour (with “*sociologie*”) and the issue of things previously non-sociological entering the scope of sociology in the context of the “Second Scientific Revolution” (with “sociologize”). In this way, the category of analysis proposed is at least not alien to the process it seeks to describe. It is genetically related to it, as it were. Finally, if historical agents did not use precisely the expression “sociologize the *a priori*” (and cognates), they did use quite similar expressions such as “sociological *a priori*”, “social *a priori*”, “sociological theory of the categories”, “sociological critique of human reason”, etc. I would therefore argue that my “etic” analytical category is sufficiently close to actors’ “emic” language to capture the meaning they themselves could give to their intellectual projects. At the same time, it is sufficiently distant to actors’ own vocabulary to be able to encompass a larger variety of similar proposals. For this wider perspective, we must indeed go to some extent beyond historical agents’ particular perspectives.

A last worry concerns the terminological accuracy of the expression. Why actually speak of the “sociologization of the *a priori*” and not “the sociologization of the *transcendental*”? I seem to refer primarily to *a priori* conditions that make experience or empirical phenomena possible – isn’t that what Kant meant by “transcendental” rather than “*a priori*”? Haven’t some authors been right in talking in this sense about a “historical *transcendental*” (Foucault [1949] 2024; Bourdieu 2001b, 153–54; Cavazzini and Gualandi 2006) rather than a historical or sociological *a priori*?¹⁴⁴

¹⁴³ The expression is, of course, vaguely inspired by Marx and Engels’s *Communist Manifesto* (Marx and Engels [1848] 1977, 461).

¹⁴⁴ French philosopher Raphaël Authier, for example, insisted in his recent typology of various “historicizations of the transcendental” on the necessity of distinguishing clearly between historicizing the transcendental and historicizing the *a priori* (Authier 2023, esp. 98–107).

We can reply to this question with a relatively simple argument invoking Kantian terminology. Kant is reasonably clear about the difference in meaning between the terms “*a priori*” and “transcendental”. “Transcendental” refers to a certain use or a certain knowledge of *a priori* elements insofar as they make experience possible. In this sense, space and time are not themselves transcendental – they are *a priori*. What is “transcendental” is the *knowledge* that they are *a priori* elements making experience as such possible, or the *use* of these *a priori* elements within the limits of experience.¹⁴⁵ Simply put, “*a priori*” has a larger extension than “transcendental”: everything that is “transcendental” is “*a priori*”, but not everything that is “*a priori*” is “transcendental”. Importantly, the Kantian *a priori* includes besides the pure forms of intuition (space and time) and the pure concepts of the understanding (the categories) also the “ideas of reason” that, by definition, cannot apply to any experience (at least not in a “constitutive” sense, they might still be used in a “regulative” sense). And indeed, these ideas – ideas of totality, personality, divinity, etc. – have been studied sociologically.¹⁴⁶ To be able to include these cases, it is more appropriate to speak of the sociologization of the *a priori*, not only the transcendental. Finally, this way of speaking is also concordant – at least by analogy – with the way in which philosophers and historians of science have recently discussed the “relativization of the *a priori*” (see above). It thus signals a continuity with other ongoing debates.

In the end, I might not be able to provide at this point a definitive justification of the analytical category “sociologization of the *a priori*”. Certainly, the work as a whole must achieve this through an extensive demonstration of its usefulness. So far, I can only propose “sociologization of the *a priori*” as a sort of “problem construction”. It is surely not the only possible, maybe not even the most effective or revealing one for *all* purposes. But it is effective for *our* purposes. It shows, in my view, things that have not been seen so far as clearly as they should have. The problem framing should be judged on its ability of making us “see connections”, as Wittgenstein said with regard to his notion of “synoptic view” (*übersichtliche Darstellung*)

¹⁴⁵ “Und hier mache ich eine Anmerkung, die ihren Einfluß auf alle nachfolgenden Betrachtungen erstreckt, und die man wohl vor Augen haben muß, nämlich: daß nicht eine jede Erkenntnis *a priori*, sondern nur die, dadurch wir erkennen, daß und wie gewisse Vorstellungen (Anschauungen oder Begriffe) lediglich *a priori* angewandt werden, oder möglich sein, transzendental (d.i. die Möglichkeit der Erkenntnis oder der Gebrauch derselben *a priori*) heißen müssen. Daher ist weder der Raum, noch irgend eine geometrische Bestimmung desselben *a priori* eine transzendente Vorstellung, sondern nur die Erkenntnis, daß diese Vorstellungen gar nicht empirischen Ursprungs sein, und die Möglichkeit, wie sie sich gleichwohl *a priori* auf Gegenstände der Erfahrung beziehen könne, kann transzendental heißen. Imgleichen würde der Gebrauch des Raumes von Gegenständen überhaupt auch transzendental sein: aber ist er lediglich auf Gegenstände der Sinne eingeschränkt, so heißt er empirisch. Der Unterschied des Transzendentalen und Empirischen gehört also nur zur Kritik der Erkenntnisse und betrifft nicht die Beziehung derselben auf ihren Gegenstand.” (Kant [1781/1787] 1974, 101, A56–57/B80–81)

¹⁴⁶ See, for example, the central role of the “category” of totality – corresponding to society as a whole – in Durkheim’s *Formes élémentaires* (Durkheim [1912] 2013, 630) or the study of the “category” of the person by Mauss (Mauss [1938] 1950).

(Wittgenstein [1931] 1967, 241) – ideally, connections and contexts that have not been seen before. The framing I offer fulfils this task, I would argue.

So, the expression “sociologization of the *a priori*” might be cumbersome, overly academic, difficult to pronounce and, some would say, outright ugly. But it conveniently picks out the specific, empirically observable object that I propose to study. And then we might also take some inspiration from Peirce’s coinage of the almost equally heavy “pragmaticism”: it is perhaps “ugly enough to be safe from kidnappers” (Peirce [1905] 1998, 335) – in other words: sufficiently esoteric to be safe from being invested with meanings other than those I sought to define here.

5. Conclusion: From present to past to past to present

It should now be sufficiently clear what I mean when proposing to study the “sociologization of the *a priori*” in a socio-historical perspective in French and German-speaking academic fields.

This chapter sought to establish the present-day starting point of the study I offer: the fact that there is today a relatively wide-spread, heterogeneous yet distinct type of quasi-transcendental reasoning in the social and human sciences. Starting from typical linguistic expressions, I tried to carve out the general characteristics and the problem that underlies this type of reasoning. The problem consisted in holding together the notion that there are conditions making experiences, beliefs, actions, etc. possible with the notion that these conditions can vary socially and historically – without losing the basic distinction between a constituting and a constituted level. Through a sort of “synoptic view” of the present-day phenomenon, I tried to show that this way of reasoning has its own “problematic unity” and its own history – which raised the question where this today pervasive type of reasoning comes from.

I argued that one of its most important roots are the debates on the specific problem that I called the “sociologization of the *a priori*”, i.e. the notion that the Kantian *a priori* might become the object of the particular science of “sociology”. This problem introduced an additional condition into the wider problem socio-transcendental reasoning: the investigation of the relations between constituting and constituted levels and their socio-historical variation falls under the purview of sociology. This is what distinguishes sociologizing the *a priori* from other relativizations and scientizations, on the one hand, and from less definite socio-transcendental reasoning, on the other hand. I argued that we can analyse the multiple sociologizations of the *a priori* we encounter since the 19th century in a socio-historical perspective by considering evolutions in the classifications of knowledge and the sciences and attend to how these classifications were connected to particular states and dynamics of the academic fields involved. The

very logical terms of the problem of sociologizing the *a priori* can thus be linked back to relatively concrete historical events such as the autonomization of academic philosophy and the emergence of sociology as a project for a relatively independent general science of society in the early 19th century. Given the relative stability of these social conditions, it seemed possible to undertake a long-term study of the evolution of the problem of sociologizing the *a priori* – even if talk of a “sociologization of the *a priori*” has to be taken finally as a category of analysis, not of agents’ discourse.

The general idea is thus to study debates on the sociologization of the *a priori* in order to contribute to a better both historical and epistemological understanding of present-day forms of transcendental reasoning in the social sciences. The sociologization of the *a priori* is a crucial chapter in the history of the relativization of the *a priori* and, more generally, in the history and epistemology of the social and human sciences, especially with respect to their relationship with academic philosophy. I thus hope to have convinced the reader that the importance of the object justifies the historical investigation I am going to offer.

The overall movement in the present chapter consisted in going back from the present to the past before embarking upon the journey from the past to the present that will occupy us for most of the following chapters.¹⁴⁷ So far, I have identified and established the object of the study, satisfying, I hope, “the doctrine [...] that phenomena should [...] be shown to exist or to occur before one explains why they exist or how they come to be” (Merton 1987, 1). I have concentrated on “conquering and constructing” the object of the present study, to use another expression by Bourdieu, Passeron and Chamboredon in their *Le Métier de sociologue* (Bourdieu et al. [1968] 2005, 81–94). What is still lacking to complete this operation of “construction”, however, is to clarify the theoretical-methodological approach to the object that will allow me then to corroborate empirically my interpretative hypothesis. This is the task of the next chapter. The question now is: how exactly can we go about studying the sociologization of the *a priori* as a peculiar “problem” in its various intellectual and social dimensions?

¹⁴⁷ This movement is, of course, closely connected to the adopted approach of “sociological problem history” explained in Chapter 2. See especially Febvre’s description of the procedure of a problem-historical study of the Rhine (Febvre [1933] 2021, 27).

CHAPTER 2. TOWARDS A SOCIOLOGICAL PROBLEM HISTORY

Wenn aber der Erfahrungskreis durch irgendwelche Umstände sich erweitert, wenn die Gedanken mit bisher unbekannten Tatsachen in Berührung kommen, welchen sie nicht genügend angepasst sind, wenn die durch Neuanpassung modifizierten Gedanken auf die Anpassungsergebnisse älterer Perioden reagieren, dann entwickeln sich, wie die allgemeine Kulturgeschichte und die Geschichte der Wissenschaft insbesondere lehrt, reichlich neue Probleme. Die Inkongruenz der Gedanken und Tatsachen, sowie jene der Gedanken untereinander, ist die Quelle der Probleme. (Mach [1905] 2011, 261)

Dieses unruhige wellenmäßige Nacheinander der sich ablösenden geistigen Strömungen enthüllt eben sein Geheimnis und fügt sich zu einem sinnvollen Ganzen erst zusammen, wenn man bei der Entwicklung der geistigen Problematik auch die Problematik des werdenden Lebens heranzieht und die reine Immanenz der Geistesgeschichte in dieser Weise durchbricht. Wenn irgendwo, so bewährt sich hier das Wort: daß etwas, um zum Problem zu werden, zunächst im Leben problematisch geworden sein muß. [...] Dann lautet aber die Frage folgendermaßen: Welche geistigen und lebendigen Tendenzen machten das Auftauchen eines bestimmten Problems in den Geisteswissenschaften möglich und inwiefern bedeuten sie ein Auspizium für die Lösbarkeit der Fragestellung? (Mannheim [1925] 1964, 310)

Avant tout, il faut savoir poser des problèmes. Et quoi qu'on en dise, dans la vie scientifique, les problèmes ne se posent pas d'eux-mêmes. C'est précisément ce *sens du problème* qui donne la marque du véritable esprit scientifique. Pour un esprit scientifique, toute connaissance est une réponse à une question. S'il n'y a pas eu de question, il ne peut y avoir connaissance scientifique. Rien ne va de soi. Rien n'est donné. Tout est construit. (Bachelard [1938] 2011, 16)

C'est que, poser un problème, c'est précisément le commencement et la fin de toute histoire. Pas de problèmes, pas d'histoire. (Febvre [1941] 2021b, 45)

1. Introduction: How to investigate the sociologization of the *a priori*?

Studying a problem

So far, I have sought to establish a connection between present-day forms of transcendental reasoning in the social and human sciences and the specific historical problem of the

sociologization of the *a priori*.¹ I have singled out this problem as the principal object of the present study: I want to offer a socio-historical account of its emergence, evolution and diffusion. Once we have thus established the object and the goal of the work, how exactly can we go about investigating it? This chapter presents the “general theoretical orientation” (Merton [1945] 1968a, 141–43)² and the methodological strategy I adopt. I shall frame my approach as a type of “sociological problem history”.

Towards the end of the last chapter, we already had the occasion to raise the question as to the nature of the object we refer to as “sociologization of the *a priori*”. Are we talking about an “idea”, a “problem”, a “topic”, an “issue”, a “constellation”, a “process”, a “method”, a “style of thought”, a set of cognitive “practices” – or still something else? I opted for construing this object as a “problem”. But this decision entails further questions. What does it mean to conceive the sociologization of the *a priori* as a “problem”? What is or what do we call “a problem”? What is the advantage of this way of looking at the historical record? What are its risks and difficulties? Which are the theoretical and methodological resources we can draw on to grasp this problem? Which types of historical sources and materials should we mobilize? And how can we do all this in a manageable way in a transnational, interdisciplinary and long-term

¹ The present chapter goes back to several oral presentations: a presentation in the research group “Theorie und Geschichte der Soziologie” at the Institute of Sociology at the University of Graz in January 2022; a doctoral workshop on “Ideengeschichtliche Konzepte und Methoden in der Wissenschaftsgeschichte der Frühen Neuzeit und in der Soziologie des 20. Jahrhunderts” organized by Simone De Angelis and Stephan Moebius at the University of Graz in May 2022; and a seminar on “Historiographie en langue allemande” organized by Jean-Hugo Ihl at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, Paris in May 2025. I thank the organizers and participants of these events for their feedback. Special thanks go to Éric Brian who was the first to put me on the track of “problem history” (see recently Brian 2023); and to Johan Heilbron who familiarized me with the state of the art in intellectual history and whose works – as the reader will see – often served me as a guide through the complex discussions on scholarly disciplines, national intellectual traditions, transnational historiography and reflexivity (see recently Heilbron 2024). Finally, for their comments on parts of this chapter, many thanks to Aube Richebourg, Matthias Fringant and Christian Fleck.

² I follow here American sociologist Robert K. Merton’s (1910-2003) understanding of such “general orientations”: “Most of what is described in textbooks as sociological theory consists of general orientations toward substantive materials. Such orientations involve broad postulates which indicate *types* of variables which are somehow to be taken into account rather than specifying determinate relationships between particular variables. Indispensable though these orientations are, they provide only the broadest framework for empirical inquiry. [...] Such general orientations may be paraphrased as saying in effect that the investigator ignores this *order of fact* at his peril. They do not set forth specific hypotheses. [Paragraph] The chief function of these orientations is to provide a general context for inquiry; they facilitate the process of arriving at determinate hypotheses.” (Merton [1945] 1968a, 141–42) Thus, “general theoretical orientations” as such must not be confounded with concrete testable hypotheses (of which the former are the condition), nor with “methodology” in the sense of the explication of the concrete methods employed for testing these hypotheses. Merton’s “general orientation” would correspond in Abend’s more recent explication of the word “theory” in sociology to “theory₅”, i.e. “an overall perspective from which one sees and interprets the world” (Abend 2008a, 179). Incidentally, Abend goes on to establish a parallel between this meaning of “theory” and the Kantian *a priori*: “Indeed, there are interesting similarities between theory₅ and Kant’s categories of understanding. Theory₅ can be seen as providing one with an *a priori* framework (scheme, grid, map, net, plan), a framework that is independent from experience, logically prior to any contact with the social world. Thus, it would provide the conditions for the very possibility of experience (or, more conservatively, the conditions for the intelligibility of experience).” (Abend 2008a, 180) This functional similarity doesn’t preclude, of course, these “theory₅” orientations becoming themselves the object of socio-historical investigations.

perspective? Once we have settled on considering the sociologization of the *a priori* as a problem, we thus still need an explanation of what this means in theoretical and methodological terms. The present chapter seeks to provide some answers.

The plan

The next section of this chapter considers the potential of various historiographical orientations for writing the history of the sociologization of the *a priori*. The wide-ranging space of options reaches from diverse types of intellectual history and history of science to sociological accounts of scientific and intellectual activity. I will evaluate the adequacy and usefulness of these various accounts with regard to the main aspects of the sociologization of the *a priori* as I conceive it: its transnational, interdisciplinary and long-term dimensions. I shall argue that French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's (1930-2002) theory of *habitus* and field is a credible contender for integrating the different traits of the problem.

However, it is not instantly clear how we can conceive "problems" such as the sociologization of the *a priori* in Bourdieu's framework. In the third section of the chapter, I thus try to develop the historical and methodological profile of a "sociological problem history" – the historiographical approach I endorse in the thesis. Building on German as well as French sources, I carve out the key tenets of such a problem history. I argue for its advantages in several methodological debates and show how we can account in this perspective for the transnational, interdisciplinary and long-term dimensions of the problem at hand while also leaving behind the internal-external dichotomy and practicing a specific form of reflexivity.

After these general theoretical-methodological considerations, I turn in the fourth section to operationalizing sociological problem history for the case of the sociologization of the *a priori*. I explain here how I intend to use strategic case studies on controversies and processes of international and transdisciplinary circulation for shedding light on the distinct aspects of the problem. Since every method and perspective has its blind spots, I consider also the limitations of problem history and indicate ways in which it must cooperate with other historiographical orientations. In sum, it should become clear how we can achieve the aim of writing a long-term history of the problem of sociologizing of the *a priori*.

2. Historiographical options: Towards a Bourdieusian approach

The space of methodological options

How can we go about studying an intellectual object such as the sociologization of the *a priori*? At first glance, intellectual history, the history of science, the sociology of science, the history and sociology of the social and human sciences and the history of philosophy – all these

different specialities seem to offer a multitude of methodological options (and connected general theoretical perspectives) that might potentially be interesting for writing the history of the sociologization of the *a priori*. Let us take a brief look at this wide-ranging landscape and try to bring some tentative order to it.

(1) Intellectual history: There are, first, several types of intellectual history. Already before the Second World War emerged in the United States the “history of ideas” as formulated by American historian Arthur O. Lovejoy (1873-1962) with its attention to so-called “unit-ideas” and their emergence and combination (Lovejoy 1936, esp. 3–23). From the 1960s onwards, new movements came forward that were mostly critical of Lovejoy’s approach. In Britain, historian Quentin Skinner’s (1940-) initiated historical contextualism (Skinner 1969) and the so-called “Cambridge School”, focusing mainly on the history of early-modern political thought and language. In Germany, historian Reinhart Koselleck (1923-2006) promoted *Begriffsgeschichte* (Koselleck 1972; 1979; Brunner et al. 1972–1997), offering in particular a history of the concepts emerging during and expressing the so-called *Sattelzeit* period (around 1750-1850). In France, historian and philosopher Michel Foucault (1926-1984) introduced the methodological concepts of “archaeology”, “genealogy” and “discourse” (Foucault [1966] 1990; 1969; 1971; [1971] 2001) and applied them, initially, to the history of the human sciences in the early modern and modern period. Besides, French historian of political economy Jean-Claude Perrot (1928-2021), for example, proposed in the continuity of the *Annales* and Henri Berr’s (1863-1954) idea of “historical synthesis” a conception of intellectual history as “concrete history of abstraction” (Perrot 1992; 1998; [1998] 2021; Brian 2021b). We could continue the list. More recently, intellectual history has also integrated broader historiographical trends such as global and transnational history, gender history, history of emotions, book history, etc. (Moyn and Sartori 2013; McMahon and Moyn 2014; Whatmore and Young 2016; Geroulanos and Sapiro 2024).

(2) History of science: Second, there are various types of historiography of science that might be interesting for our case, even if the focus in this field has been mostly on the natural sciences. For a long time, it was either philosophers or scientists who practiced the history of science. Things changed around the turn of the 20th century with the creation of specialized chairs in several countries – e.g. Pierre Laffitte (1823-1903) at the Collège de France in 1892 (Petit 1995) or Ernst Mach (1838-1916) at the University of Vienna in 1895 (Stadler 1982; 1997). Belgian-American historian of science George Sarton (1884-1956) then is generally acknowledged as the institutional founder of the discipline in the English-speaking world (Thackray and Merton 1972), especially with the foundation of *Isis* in 1912, the first specialized journal in the area. Sarton offered large-scale and long-term histories of the development of science, pioneering

also the systematic use of quantitative data on science (Sarton 1927–1948). From the 1930s onwards then emerged, largely in reaction to Marxist historiography of science (esp. Bukharin 1931; Hessen 1931), a polarisation between “externalism” and “internalism” (Shapin 1992; Shapin and Schaffer 2011). Things shifted again in the 1960s, especially under the impact of Thomas S. Kuhn’s (1922-1996) theory of scientific revolution (Kuhn [1962] 1996) that put the emphasis on discontinuities in scientific development, the role of small-scale scientific communities and the socialization of individual members. Kuhn’s work triggered wide-ranging debates connecting issues in the history, the philosophy and the sociology of science. This contributed to the emergence and institutionalization of a new interdisciplinary field of “science and technology studies” or “science, technology and society” (STS) with its own multitude of methodological perspectives (e.g. Felt et al. 2017).

(3) Sociology of knowledge and of science: While STS mostly broke with “classical sociology”, there remain, third, specifically sociological approaches to intellectual and scientific activity. To begin with, there are the early French and German-speaking sociologies of knowledge from the early 1900s to the 1930s – the Durkheimians, Max Scheler (1874-1928), Karl Mannheim (1893-1947), but also Norbert Elias’s (1897-1990) work on the “sociogenesis” of concepts and disciplines (Elias [1939] 1997a; 1984a). They are, on the one hand, the object of the present study, but contain, on the other hand, also methodological proposals for how to conduct sociological studies on intellectual objects such as the sociologization of the *a priori*. Then there is the sociology of science as it emerged in the 1930s with the work of American sociologist Robert K. Merton (1910-2003) (Merton [1938] 1970; [1949] 1968b; 1973), focusing on science as a functionally autonomous social institutions with its specific norms, including the later programme for a “sociological semantics” (Merton and Barber 2004; Zuckerman 2010). After the 1970s, there are the various currents of the – largely anti-Mertonian – “new sociology of science” (Knorr Cetina 1991; Dubois 1999; 2001; Shinn and Ragouet 2005) that – converging with STS – proposed micro-sociologically, ethnographically and epistemologically oriented studies of science. But there are also the various proposals for a “sociology of ideas” (Camic and Gross 2001; Geroulanos and Sapiro 2024). Finally, there is, of course, Bourdieu’s theory of fields of cultural production such as science, art or literature (e.g. Bourdieu 2001b; for an overview, see 2022a). The latter approach has, in turn, inspired remarkable works in the history and sociology of intellectuals (e.g. Charle 1990; 1994; [1996] 2001), of political ideas (e.g. Matonti 2005; 2012; Hauchecorne 2019) and of the social and human sciences (e.g. Brian 1994; Heilbron [1990] 1995; 2015; Heilbron et al. 2004).

(4) History and sociology of the social and human sciences: Fourth, there are, more specifically, the various approaches in the history and sociology of the social and human sciences.

Since the 1960s, this field has displayed increased self-awareness of its methods (e.g. Stocking 1965; Merton [1967] 1968; Lepenies 1981b). Subsequently, it has taken inspiration from methods in various other fields: general history, intellectual history, the history of science, general sociology, cultural sociology, the sociology of knowledge, the sociology of science, as well as the histories of other scientific disciplines. It has also sought to integrate aspects of “social studies of science”, some promoting the idea of “social studies of social science” (Camic et al. 2011). Unsurprisingly, methodological approaches in this domain are as diverse as in all the above cited fields combined.³

(5) History of philosophy: Fifth and finally, there are some types of historiography of philosophy that might be interesting for our topic. The history of philosophy, of course, had for a long time been intimately connected to intellectual history, the history of science and even the history of the social and human sciences. While there have been controversies on how to write the history of philosophy all along the 19th and 20th century, explicit reflections on the historiography of philosophy, including its history and philosophy, seem to be a relatively recent phenomenon, at least in the English-speaking world (e.g. Rorty et al. 1984; for further literature, see Catana and Lærke 2020).⁴ Traditionally, the history of philosophy has taken as its object “ideas”, “arguments”, “concepts”, “problems”, “systems”, “architectonics” or other intellectual entities. However, some of the available methodological approaches seek to take into account the social conditions of philosophical activity as well, for example, by investigating socio-intellectual “constellations” (Henrich 1991; Mulsow and Stamm 2005; Mulsow 2009), by attending to the concrete academic and disciplinary setting of philosophical ideas (Chimisso 2000; 2008) or by seeking a rapprochement with cultural history (König-Pralong 2017; 2019). Importantly, we encounter in this context also various proposals for a genuine sociology of philosophy. These projects differ according to their respective sources of inspiration. Some projects build on social and political history or “social psychology” (Köhnke 1986), some on the “sociology of scientific knowledge” (Bloor [1976] 1991, chap. 4; Kusch 1995; 2000; 2019; 2023), some on Bourdieu’s theory of the philosophical and the broader academic and intellectual fields (Lamont 1987; Pinto 1987; 2007; 2009; Fabiani 1988; 2010), and again some others on the sociology of science, historical sociology and general sociological theory (Collins 1987; 1989; 1998a; Heidegren and Lundberg 2010) – not to mention a long-standing and varied

³ For an overview of methodological perspectives, especially in the history of German-speaking sociology, see Moebius 2004; Dayé and Moebius 2015; Moebius and Ploder 2017. For a synopsis of current orientations in French and German-speaking history of sociology, I permit myself to refer to Strauss and Moebius 2020; Strauss 2020b; 2021.

⁴ In fact, there had been important earlier investigations on the topic both in France (Gueroult 1979–1988; Braun 1973; 1985) and in Italy (Santinello 1979–2004; Santinello and Piaia [1979–2004] 1993–2022) (see also Catana and Lærke 2020, 433–35).

Marxist tradition in the sociology of philosophy (e.g. Marx and Engels [1845–1846] 1990; Engels [1878] 1962b; Lenin [1909] 1962; Bauer [1924] 1971; Lukács [1923] 1968b; Goldmann 1945; Sohn-Rethel [1936] 1985; [1947–1990] 2018; forthcoming; Nyíri 1974).

Which of these numerous methodological options from different specialities suits best our investigation into the sociologization of the *a priori*?

Five key dimensions of the object under study

It makes little sense, of course, to discuss all these options and their relative merits *in abstracto* and seek to identify the *one* right methodological stance without regard for the object under study. Instead, we must ask ourselves which perspective is most adapted to the object – both to its intrinsic properties and to aspects that I decided, more or less by fiat, to foreground in the present enquiry. What do we *need* in terms of theoretical and methodological resources to adequately account for this specific problem? My discussion here is guided by what I take to be the main dimensions of the sociologization of the *a priori*: its interdisciplinary, transnational and long-term dimensions on the one hand; the necessity to go beyond the internalism-externalism opposition and to account for the reflexive implications of the problem on the other. Any promising theoretical-methodological approach to the sociologization of the *a priori* will have to satisfy these conditions. Let us take a closer look at them.

(1) Interdisciplinarity: First, the sociologization of the *a priori* is an intrinsically interdisciplinary object. It concerns the passage of an object (however intangible) – the *a priori* – from one “discipline”⁵ – philosophy – into another – sociology. This process provoked controversies on established disciplinary divisions and hierarchies. What is more, not only philosophy and sociology were concerned. Still other disciplines and disciplines-in-the-making were involved – especially in periods where disciplinary boundaries were either inexistent, much less rigid, or actively under debate. Thus, some aspects of how the *a priori* became an object for sociology also engage psychology, history, biology, anthropology, ethnography, ethnology or linguistics, at the margins even art history, classical philology, literary studies or sinology. In this sense, the object under study requires some account of the historically evolving system of scientific and scholarly disciplines, with a special attention to the changing relationship between philosophy and sociology.

(2) Transnationality: Second, the sociologization of the *a priori* has a strong transnational dimension. If we look at its historical origins, it is almost by definition a transnational problem.

⁵ Of course, in the early stages of the history I investigate, we cannot speak of philosophy and sociology as academic disciplines *stricto sensu*.

It results to a large degree from the confrontation of two different national traditions: German “transcendental philosophy” on the one hand, French “positive philosophy” and “sociology” on the other. Put bluntly, it needs the German “*a priori*” and the French “*sociologie*” to come about with the problem of the “sociologization of the *a priori*”. Moreover, once the problem has emerged and diffused, we observe that it takes, depending on national contexts and traditions, different forms and is discussed in separate ways. All of this raises the issue of national contexts and traditions in intellectual life and, more specifically, in the social and human sciences. We thus need an account of how to understand these national contexts, how to compare them and how to analyse phenomena of transfer and circulation between them.

(3) Long-term history: Third, the sociologization of the *a priori* has a relatively long history, spanning some 250 years from the end of the 18th century to the early 21st century. The *topos* of making what Kant designated as “*a priori*” the object of one or the other social or human science recurs in this period with surprising regularity – which does not exclude important variations in the way agents formulated and discussed it. Of course, it would be possible to focus on just one section of this history, for instance, on the period around 1900 when discussions on the sociologization of the *a priori* reached a peak. Yet, if we want to understand the problem in its socio-historical origins and conditions, we have little choice but consider a longer time period. Indeed, later debates constantly refer back to issues and argumentative patterns that emerge for the first time in the late 18th and early 19th century. There are indications that this is due to the fact that some fundamental social and intellectual ingredients – the organization of scientific disciplines and the role of universities, the “transcendentalist” disciplinary identity of philosophy or the claims of the social sciences to cover all aspects of human life, including the basic elements of knowledge – have remained relatively constant over the last 250 years. But what can the historiography of such a long-term intellectual phenomenon look like? We need here an approach that spells out the conditions and limits of the sort of intellectual long history to be offered.

(4) Beyond internalism and externalism: Fourth, we cannot consider the problem of the sociologization of the *a priori* in a purely “internalist” way. The just mentioned factors of discipline, national context and historical variation already indicate that this problem is about more than just philosophical, sociological and other intellectual arguments and ideas. It has its concrete social conditions, most obviously, the vocabularies⁶ in which it is formulated (“*a priori*”, “sociology”), which, in turn, were developed to account for a specific historical state of

⁶ French historian Lucien Febvre (1878-1956) – discussed extensively below in the context of the French tradition of “*histoire-problème*” – would speak here of an “*outillage mental*” (e.g. Febvre [1942] 2003, 328–31).

knowledge and the sciences. But then we cannot consider this object from a purely “externalist” standpoint either. It is doubtful whether such a point of view would be able to account for the contents and subtleties of the discussions on Kant’s philosophical heritage (specific issues such as the interpretation of his “transcendental method”, the “transcendental deduction of the categories”, the “transcendental schematism” or the function of the faculty of judgment within the “architectonic of pure reason”) or on various projects for a comprehensive social science called “sociology”. What we seem to need here then is an approach that can account for both aspects, a perspective that integrates or goes beyond the opposition between “internal” and “external” analyses of intellectual products.

(5) Reflexivity: Fifth and finally, the problem of the sociologization of the *a priori* has a peculiar reflexive dimension. When we sociologize the *a priori*, what does this do to sociology? If sociology is conceived as a scientific or scholarly endeavour, it has its own *a priori* conditions making sociological knowledge possible. If we conceive the *a priori* in general as an object of sociology, we must account in the same way for sociology’s own specific *a prioris*. The problem of the sociologization of the *a priori* then entails necessarily the issue of the reflexive application of sociology to itself – in other words, the issue of “self-exemplification” (e.g. Merton [1963] 1973a, 381–82; 2004, 231–33) or “reflexivity” (e.g. Gouldner 1970, chap. 13; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992; Bourdieu 2001b; 2022b). Historically, there have been various different ways of interpreting this situation: claiming an exception for sociology’s *a prioris*; concluding from reflexivity to self-refutation and then to the absurdity of any sociologization of the *a priori*; or endorsing reflexivity and developing a model that renders sociology’s self-entanglement somehow feasible or even productive. When we study the sociologization of the *a priori* we are confronted with the same problem. For how – in terms of which type of reasoning – should we study reasoning in sociological *a prioris*? In terms of causes, of reasons or – again – in terms of “sociological” or other “historical *a prioris*”? We seem obliged to make here a decision. Studying the sociologization of the *a priori* as a socio-historical object necessitates taking a stance on the issue on the analytical level, in theoretical-methodological terms. Whatever the response, we will not escape the reflexive implications of the problem. We thus need an approach that can account for this dimension.

What could be a promising approach that fulfils all five of these conditions? In each respect, several different perspectives are on offer: on disciplines and interdisciplinary relations; on transnational history, comparison and the international circulation of intellectual products; on long-term history in general and intellectual history in particular; on surmounting the internal-external opposition in the analysis of cultural and intellectual phenomena; and on the necessarily reflexive nature of any thoroughly socio-historical account of the social and human

sciences. I shall consider these different areas in turn and explain why Bourdieu's theory of the academic field provides finally the most promising theoretical and methodological overall framework for our purposes. In the subsequent section, I will then try to combine this approach with the various traditions of "problem history". In this way, the sociologization of the *a priori* can be understood as a peculiar "socio-logical" problem, that is, as being simultaneously intellectual and social-academic in kind.

(1) Disciplines and disciplinary relations

Since the late 18th and early 19th century, scientific disciplines have become the base unit of scientific production (Stichweh 1984; 1992; Heilbron 2004; Gingras [2013] 2020, 48–52). Philosophy and sociology were both part of this process of disciplinarization, though in sensibly different ways. Philosophy increasingly lost its general meaning as a scholarly activity encompassing the natural and the moral sciences and turned into one discipline among others (Heilbron 2003, 52; 2004, 35). Ever since, the question of the proper domain of this discipline has remained problematic (Collins 1998a, 619–20, 688–89).⁷ "Sociology", on the other hand, emerged for the first time as an intellectual project in response to the disciplinary specialization of science (Heilbron 2017a) before becoming later in the 19th century a subject taught at universities and then, mostly in the wake of World War II, a full-blown academic discipline.⁸ We cannot fully understand the issue of the sociologization of the *a priori* without considering these evolutions in the system of academic disciplines. But which conception of academic disciplines and disciplinary relations is most useful for the analysis of our problem?

Since their emergence around 1800, scientific disciplines themselves have incessantly produced their own "disciplinary histories" and entertained "disciplinary collective memories" (Graham et al. 1983; Levine 1995; Crothers 2015). The interest in a genuine history and sociology of scientific disciplines, however, is a relatively recent phenomenon, going mostly back to the 1960s and 1970s.⁹ That said, the topic has remained relatively marginal through the 1980s and the 1990s,¹⁰ largely due to two more general trends: on the one hand, the microsociological

⁷ Accordingly, German philosopher Herbert Schnädelbach (1936-2024) speaks in his account of German philosophy between 1831 and 1933 of an enduring "identity crisis" of philosophy in the post-idealistic age (Schnädelbach 1983, e.g. 17).

⁸ For a short overview, see Goudsblom and Heilbron 2015.

⁹ Important early publications on the topic in the 1960s-1970s period include Kuhn [1962] 1996; especially [1969] 1996, 182 where Kuhn redefines 'paradigm' as 'disciplinary matrix'; see also [1974] 1977, 297–319; Foucault [1966] 1990; 1975; Ben-David and Collins 1966; Ben-David 1971; 1991; Thackray and Merton 1972; Gieryn and Merton 1978; Bourdieu 1975; 1976; Lemaine et al. 1976; Lepenies 1978.

¹⁰ Some of the most important works in the 1980s-2000s period are Graham, Lepenies, and Weingart 1983; Lepenies 1981a; 1983; 1984; [1985] 2006; Stichweh 1984; 1992; [2001] 2015; Gieryn 1983; Bourdieu 1984; 1989; 2001b; Dogan and Pahre 1990; Wagner, Wittrock, and Whitley 1991; Kelley 1997; Abbott 2001; Boutier, Passeron, and Revel 2006.

orientation of most of the “new sociology of science” or “science and technology studies” (Heilbron 2004, 25–26) with the tendency to focus on smaller-scale communities such as laboratory groups (e.g. Latour and Woolgar [1979] 1986); on the other hand, the various programmatic proposals aiming to surmount disciplinary borders and disciplines as such: “interdisciplinarity”, “multidisciplinarity”, “transdisciplinarity”, “postdisciplinarity”, “antidisciplinarity”, etc. (e.g. Gibbons et al. 1994; Nowotny et al. 2001; for an analysis of these labels and discourses, see e.g. Shinn 2002; Feuerhahn and Mandressi 2025). Against these tendencies, the organization in disciplines has sometimes been “defended” (Jacobs 2013). Some authors (Abbott 2001, chap. 5; Heilbron and Gingras 2015) have insisted also that, despite their alleged obsolescence, disciplines have displayed a certain “resilience”: they have, in fact, remained the main organizing principle of scientific activity in terms of education, professional careers and research. In any case, the history and sociology of science offers today several different approaches regarding disciplines, the disciplinarization of knowledge and disciplinary relations. Some of them seem more, others less useful for the study of the object at hand.

I cannot engage here, of course, in a comprehensive discussion of the literature on scientific disciplines. Rather I simply want to give an idea of the location of the approach I shall endorse within in the space of options. If we limit ourselves to the most influential accounts of scientific disciplines in the last decades, we can tentatively distinguish five different orientations:

- (1) Mostly in the English-speaking literature in the 1960s and 1970s, there have been various institutionalist, functionalist or “structural-functionalist” accounts of scientific disciplines. The main proponents of this approach were Hungarian-Israeli sociologist Joseph Ben-David (1920-1986) (Ben-David and Zloczower 1962; Ben-David 1971; 1991, pt. 2) and American sociologist Robert K. Merton (1910-2003), including their respective disciples (Thackray and Merton 1972; Merton [1977] 1979; Gieryn and Merton 1978; Gieryn 1983). In this perspective, the social and institutional processes and mechanisms underpinning the formation, functioning and maintenance of disciplines with regard to scientific growth took centre stage. Disciplines were conceptualized in terms of the functionalist vocabulary of “roles”, “status” and “reference groups” (see esp. Ben-David [1958] 1991) – with “role hybridization” acting as one possible mechanism for the appearance of new disciplines (Ben-David [1960] 1991; Ben-David and Collins 1966). To some extent, one can also add here historian and philosopher of science Thomas S. Kuhn (1922-1996), although he occupied a peculiar position. Rather than focusing on the institutional dimension of disciplines and discipline formation, Kuhn emphasized the cognitive and social functions of what he

called the “disciplinary matrix” – one of the two major meanings of his term “paradigm” (Kuhn [1969] 1996; [1974] 1977; see also Fabiani 2006).¹¹

- (2) In some continuity with the “structural-functionalist” orientation, sociologist Rudolf Stichweh (1951-) has developed in Germany since the 1980s an account of the formation and functioning of the modern system of scientific disciplines (Stichweh 1984; 1992; [2001] 2015; [1994] 2013).¹² Stichweh’s approach applies systems theory as developed by American sociologist Talcott Parsons (1902-1979) (e.g. Parsons [1951] 1991) and, especially, as reformulated by German sociologist Niklas Luhmann (1927-1998) to the domain of science. Scientific disciplines are conceived here as the result of a process of functional differentiation within the social sub-system of science.
- (3) In France in the 1960s and 1970s, scientific disciplines were most prominently discussed in the works of French philosopher and historian Michel Foucault (1926-1984). Foucault proposed in his work an account of disciplines as part of “discourses”, integrated in more comprehensive epistemological constellations or “*épistémè*” (Foucault [1966] 1990; 1969; 1971, 31–38). In later work (Foucault 1975, esp. 228–264), he connected disciplines with concrete social and material practices of power (as epitomized in his well-known analysis of Jeremy Bentham’s *Panopticon*) and put them in the context of the emergence of a “disciplinary society”. In this perspective, disciplines such as psychology, psychiatry, pedagogy, criminology or sociology appeared as the manifestation of the nexus of knowledge and power.
- (4) In French sociology since the 1970s and 1980s, Pierre Bourdieu has proposed in his work on education, higher education and science (e.g. Bourdieu 1975b; Bourdieu and Saint Martin 1975; Bourdieu 1984b; 1989; 2001b) an alternative model of scientific disciplines. On the one hand, Bourdieu conceived disciplines in a relational way as forming a hierarchical space within (higher) education. On the other hand, he addressed processes of socialization within disciplines and the formation of “disciplinary *habitus*”. The statics and dynamics of scientific disciplines could accordingly be explained by the encounter of these acquired *habitus* with the changing structures of the space of disciplines.

¹¹ It must be added that, despite some manifestly functionalist tendencies in the writings of Kuhn (emphasized, for example, in Barnes 1982, esp. 123, 125), he was later mostly used as a champion of anti-functionalism (e.g. Knorr Cetina 1991). In a more fine-grained classification of approaches, Kuhn would doubtlessly deserve a category of his own.

¹² Heilbron designates – rightfully, it seems – Stichweh as “the sociologist who was perhaps most extensively published on the subject” (Heilbron 2004, 24) of scientific disciplines.

- (5) Finally, the perhaps most influential recent account of disciplines, especially of social science disciplines, has been put forward by American sociologist Andrew Abbott (1948-) (Abbott 2001). Abbott describes the relation of disciplines in terms of “fractal distinctions”, i.e. “a distinction [that] repeats a pattern within itself” (Abbott 2001, 9). Relations between and within disciplines are thus thought to reproduce larger patterns. The underlying distinctions are supposed to be both cultural and social-institutional in character and to change cyclically through interactions between the groups involved (see especially Abbott 2001, chap. 5).

Among these various perspectives, several reasons speak in my view for following Bourdieu’s approach. His account of disciplines seems in various respects superior to its immediate competitors.¹³ For example, contrary to the “objectivist” systems-theoretical and the Foucauldian power-knowledge approach (partly also the institutionalist perspective of Ben-David and Merton), Bourdieu is able to include actors’ perspectives and analyse them in their relationship with evolutions in structure. Also, especially compared to Foucault and Abbott, Bourdieu attends closely to the concrete evolutions in the system of education, higher education and the academic system. He thus seeks to account satisfyingly not only for the symbolic processes that accompany and underpin the system of disciplines and its transformation – the focus of Abbott’s “fractal distinctions” – but also for the actual social conditions of these processes. In short, Bourdieu’s account of disciplines promises to integrate social agents’ symbolic activity and the evolution of social structures in an interesting and empirically answerable way. Finally, a supplementary reason for adopting this approach is that it allows, as we shall see later, to account not only for disciplines but also for the other main dimensions of the sociologization of the *a priori* identified above.¹⁴

How then conceive the sociologization of the *a priori* in the Bourdieusian perspective on disciplines? In Bourdieu’s approach, disciplines appear as the structuring principle of academic fields. The agents who aspire to enter a scientific discipline undergo a specific socialization and acquire a “disciplinary habitus” (Bourdieu 2001b, 85) – in other words, a set of disciplinary practical schemes or categories. If we want to understand the process by which a sociological conception of the *a priori* became conceivable in the first place, we will have to observe and analyse at least two things then: on the one hand, the transformations in the structure of academic fields, especially regarding the emergence and institutionalization of new academic disciplines in the course of the 19th century; on the other hand, the disciplinary categories and

¹³ I follow here some of the criticisms, especially of Stichweh and Foucault, put forward by Johan Heilbron (Heilbron 2004, 27–30).

¹⁴ I willingly admit to the limitations of this all-to-short discussion of theories of scientific disciplines.

scholarly schemes which contemporaries applied to these transformations, including the evolution of these schemes (e.g. agents' discourses on the classification of the sciences). A Bourdieusian translation of the question about the sociologization of the *a priori* thus could go as follows: in which state of the academic field and provided which disciplinary perceptual schemes does a sociological theory of the *a priori* become an option in agents' "spaces of possibles"?

Let us consider, for instance, the canonized philosophical opposition going back to Kant between "the transcendental" (the *a priori* elements which make empirical knowledge possible) and "the empirical". Many of the agents who propose sociological theories of our quasi-aprioric cognitive structures around 1900 have received their academic socialization in the discipline of philosophy, in a context which was saturated with Kantian and neo-Kantian doctrines and vocabulary – by way of academic teachers, exam programmes, contemporaneous scientific journals, or prize questions defining what counts as a legitimate issue. By that fact, we can assume that they were by and large equipped with a specifically Kantian or neo-Kantian set of practical schemes – a "neo-Kantian *habitus*", as it were –, including symbolic oppositions such as transcendental-empirical, *a priori-a posteriori*, analytic-synthetic, theoretical-practical or fact-value/validity. What had to happen – regarding the structure of the academic field as well as the schemes by which agents perceived opportunities for their strategies within that field – in order for the empirical-transcendental dichotomy to become so porous or relative as to allow for the oxymoronic idea of a sociologized *a priori*?¹⁵ What type of social and intellectual strategy is the sociologization of the *a priori* in this disciplinary context?

These are examples of some relatively concrete empirical questions about the history of socio-transcendental reasoning that we might ask with Bourdieu's perspective on disciplines.¹⁶ The framing of the disciplinary dimension of the problem of sociologizing the *a priori* in terms of *habitus* and field allows for posing and analysing these questions both in their objective dimension (regarding the institutional system of disciplines and its evolution in different nation-states) and their subjective dimension (agents' socializations, dispositions, perceptions, strategies, practices, etc.).

¹⁵ A fine example for an analysis of the empirical-transcendental opposition in terms of cognitive dispositions and field dynamics is Louis Pinto's study on the evolution of German neo-Kantian philosopher Hermann Cohen (1842-1918) from the proto-sociological endeavour of German *Völkerpsychologie* to transcendental philosophy (Pinto 1995). Many further elements on the evolution of the empirical-transcendental scheme in Germany feature in Köhnke 1986, esp. 345–65. There is surprisingly little work in the literature on the history and sociology of this particular scheme (Collins 1998a, 618–63; Joly 2017, 425–30) and its various cycles – from being far from obvious it became a standard item of philosophical language (see Chapter 4).

¹⁶ I own the fact that these questions about socio-transcendental reasoning are themselves socio-transcendental in character. See the discussion of reflexivity below.

(2) National contexts and transnational history

What about the second major aspect of the sociologization of the *a priori*, its transnational character? Indeed, I shall follow the issue through various linguistic and national contexts, compare the debates in these different contexts, and retrace processes of diffusion, transfer and circulation between them. To be more precise, the object's transnational dimension has several distinct layers.

First, as already addressed, the problem of the sociologization of the *a priori* is intrinsically transnational. If we construe the issue in terms of a “sociologization of the *a priori*”, i.e. as an amalgam of two different vocabularies, this is somewhat “analytically true” (or true by logical implication). The two components of the problem, the “*a priori*” element and the “sociology” element, emerge and come to prominence in two different national contexts, in Germany (or, less anachronistically: German-speaking lands) and in France. The sociologization of the *a priori* as a problem is the result of an encounter of ideas, vocabularies, modes of reasoning, philosophical systems, classifications of knowledge and the sciences, etc. that originate in different national intellectual traditions.¹⁷ All of this raises the question of how to conceive “national traditions” in intellectual life and, more specifically, in the social and human sciences (Heilbron 2024), as well as the exchanges that occur between these traditions (Heilbron et al. 2008).

Second, once the problem in question had emerged, it took on a transnational character in yet another sense. In fact, debates on making the *a priori* the object of sociology were not confined to one single national context (say Germany, where Kantian philosophy had arguably the strongest hold in academia and general culture). Rather, the issue was discussed in French, in German and in English-speaking settings – the three languages that were arguably most central in the development of sociology in Europe, North-America and worldwide.¹⁸ These three linguistic contexts encompassed, in turn, different, relatively autonomous national contexts with their own specificities, such as the differences between Germany and Habsburg Austria, between France and French-speaking Switzerland or between the United Kingdom and the United States of America.¹⁹ Depending on national context and tradition, the problem took different forms and was discussed in different, relatively autonomous ways, without these national debates being necessarily connected to each other. An important task of a transnational history

¹⁷ For the encounter of Kant's transcendental philosophy and Comte's sociology as promoted in his “positive philosophy”, see Chapter 4.

¹⁸ For a simple and relatively uncontroversial definition of centrality in terms of the position of languages in the “world-system of translations”, see Heilbron 1999, 433–34.

¹⁹ For the distinction between national-political and linguistic spheres and the effects of incongruence between the two levels on cultural production, see, for example, Bourdieu [1985] 2023; [1991] 2023, 86. The Belgian case might be fruitfully compared to the Austrian situation (e.g. Pollak [1984] 1992).

of the sociologization of the *a priori* thus consists in retracing these nationally specific routes. By doing so, we might be able to establish that the topic has pervaded some of the central “sociological traditions” (Levine 1995) since the 19th century. The problem had at least a European, to some extent even a global dimension.

Starting from this observation we can also do comparisons on how the same or sensibly similar problems were formulated and discussed in different contexts. Positions regarding the problem tended indeed to maintain some sort of “national index” – national peculiarities that demand explanations. We can thus ask on which social, historical, institutional, intellectual and other factors depended the national variation in the framing and the discussion of the issue. Understanding the causes and reasons for these specificities is also important for today because later debates on various modes of socio-transcendental reasoning continued to be informed by sources from specific national and linguistic contexts.²⁰

However – and this leads to the third level of the transnational dimension –, it is not the case that, once the problem was in the room, the debates in different national and linguistic contexts proceeded entirely independently from each another. In fact, they were connected through various processes of transnational transfer and the international circulation of authors, ideas, idioms, argumentative patterns, problems, and so forth. Many of these exchanges are today forgotten. Their memory has often been crushed by the weight of national collective memories in the social and human sciences. For instance, German philosopher Wilhelm Dilthey’s (1833-1911) philosophy of the human sciences (*Geisteswissenschaften*) and the peculiar “historicization” of the *a priori* it encompassed can hardly be fully understood without its negative references to Auguste Comte (1798-1857), John Stuart Mill (1806-1873) and Herbert Spencer’s (1820-1903) “positivistic” versions of sociology and sociologized *a prioris*. Likewise, Durkheimian “collective representations” and the connected “sociological theory of knowledge” used in a traceable way ideas and argumentative patterns coming both from Germany – e.g. German *Völkerpsychologie* as promoted by Moritz Lazarus (1824-1903) and Heymann Steinthal (1823-1899) or psychologist Wilhelm Wundt’s (1832-1920) concept of *Volksseele* – and Britain – Spencer’s evolutionism, for instance.

Cases such as these show that comparison and mere juxtaposition of the debates in different national contexts will not suffice to fully understand the trajectory of the problem. We must render the story its dynamics, as it were. For this, we must retrace the processes of transfer and circulation (including translations, imports, reviews, etc.) that were fundamental for the diffusion and transformation of the issue in question. In this perspective, we will also observe how

²⁰ See the reconstruction of the main strands in socio-transcendental reasoning in Chapter 1.

in certain episodes of transfer “national traditions” were actively created and construed from an initially intermingled situation. Certain oppositions emerged from situations that were indeed much more mixed up than latter-day representations – often based on these oppositions – would have it. In short, we need to study not only the presence of the problem of the sociologization of the *a priori* across various contexts, but also the “international circulation” of this problem – once it had emerged itself from a genuinely transnational encounter.

Now, how can we characterize and situate the outlined perspective on a methodological level? In the area of transnational history broadly speaking²¹ there are today many different methodological orientations going by various names: “comparative history”, “cultural transfer studies”, “*histoire croisée*”, “shared history”, “connected history”, “entangled history”, “global history”, “world history”, etc.²² An exhaustive overview of the whole field is, again, beyond the scope of this chapter. We can focus here only on the three arguably most important options of the last few decades. These are (1) forms of comparative history, (2) forms of transfer studies, and (3) forms of *histoire croisée* (or otherwise “relational” approaches going beyond the first two perspectives, see Werner and Zimmermann 2006, 31).

Comparative history, of course, has itself a long history in the social and human sciences. The idea that comparison is essential to the social and human sciences – a sort of methodological *ersatz* for experimentation in the natural sciences – has been voiced since the 19th century, in the works, for instance, of Comte, Mill, Durkheim²³, Max Weber and others. After the First World War, programmes for a comparative and transnational historiography inspired by linguistics and ethnology emerged (e.g. Pirenne 1923; Bloch 1928; 1930), but were not instantly pursued. The more recent rise of comparative history since the 1960s and 1970s has been directed against national histories, or what would later be called “methodological nationalism” (Wimmer and Schiller 2003): the focus on single nation-states as the unit of analysis. Against this, comparisons should enable history, among other things, to generalize, to engage in large-scale explanations and to specify individual cases (Haupt 2015, 407–8).

²¹ “A transnational perspective may, generally, be defined as the study of connections across national boundaries and the circulation of ideas, people, and products these enable.” (Heilbrunn et al. 2008, 147)

²² For a short overview of the history of transnational history, especially comparative history and transfer studies, see Sapiro 2012; Haupt 2015. French historian Christophe Charle (1951–), one of the contributors to these debates, remarked some 15 years ago that the abundance of different labels and approaches might point to the relative immaturity of the field: “La multiplicité de ces termes pour étudier les champs culturels dans une perspective inter- ou transnationale atteste du caractère encore incertain et frontière de ces questions. Comme dans tous les domaines émergents, méthodes, concepts, objets, sources sont encore problématiques.” (Charle 2010, 51)

²³ E.g. “La sociologie comparée n’est pas une branche particulière de la sociologie; c’est la sociologie même, en tant qu’elle cesse d’être purement descriptive et aspire à rendre compte des faits.” (Durkheim [1894] 2007, 137)

The history of cultural transfers – promoted especially in France since the middle of the 1980s by French historian and German studies scholar Michel Espagne (1952-) and German-French historian Michael Werner (1946-) (e.g. Espagne and Werner 1985; 1987; 1988a; 1988b) – reacted to this sort of comparative history. Starting from the particular case of French-German cultural exchanges in the 19th century²⁴, transfer studies objected to comparative history that it presupposed and conserved precisely what it wanted to surmount: the nation-state as a frame of reference and the idea of self-contained national and cultural contexts.²⁵ Against this and other ailments of comparativism (see esp. Espagne 1994; 2013), transfer studies promised not to presuppose fixed *comparanda*, but to construct them by way of historical analysis out of initially intermingled situations. They engaged, furthermore, in a critique of the categories of comparison – the *tertium comparationis* – that an observer might project from one national context onto the other (Espagne 1994, 113). The focus of studies thus shifted from large-scale general patterns towards small-scale local exchanges (Espagne 1994, 115–16), with high importance attributed to cultural mediators such as the German émigré poet and journalist Heinrich Heine (1797-1856). Notwithstanding these criticisms of comparativism, transfer studies were initially conceived as a critical extension of comparative history (Espagne 1994, 121) rather than as a radical alternative.

Histoire croisée, finally, grew out of a critical engagement with both comparative history and studies of cultural transfers. Put forward in the early 2000s by Werner and French sociologist Bénédicte Zimmermann (1965-) (Werner and Zimmermann 2002; 2003; 2004a; 2006; Zimmermann 2020), it not only corroborated the criticisms against national historiographies and comparative history (such as the unquestioned assumption of univocally definable national contexts). It also extended these objections to transfer studies. According to Werner and Zimmermann, the focus on transfers would implicitly comfort ideas about stable cultural or national contexts between which transfers take place.²⁶ It would also encourage an uncritical use of categories of analysis stemming from the national contexts involved – an aspect where transfer

²⁴ The import of German philosophy into France was one of the first cases on which the new approach was tested. For the prominent episode of the introduction of Kantian philosophy to France, see Espagne and Werner 1987, 977.

²⁵ “*Le comparatisme présuppose des aires culturelles closes pour se donner les possibilités d’en dépasser ultérieurement les spécificités grâce à des catégories abstraites. [...] Comparer deux objets signifie les opposer pour énumérer leurs ressemblances et leurs différences et, par un glissement qui n’est guère évitable, pétrifier les oppositions. On ne peut comparer en effet que ce qui n’est pas confondu. [...] La comparaison conforte le clivage national et rend problématique sa remise en cause.*” (Espagne 1994, 112–13)

²⁶ “While focusing on transactions between two poles, a transfer implies a fixed frame of reference including points of departure and arrival. Any description and any analysis of transfers presupposes a beginning and an end through which the process under study becomes intelligible and interpretable. [...] Consequently, the original situation and the situation resulting from the transfer are apprehended through stable national references that are presumed known” (Werner and Zimmermann 2006, 36).

studies would display a certain “reflexivity deficit” (Werner and Zimmermann 2006, 36–37). Moreover, transfer studies would neglect the crisscrossings of transfer processes going in different directions and the effects of these interactions on the contexts of origin and of reception.

Against these weaknesses, Werner and Zimmermann proposed an approach that would combine “intercrossings” on several distinct levels (whence the term “*histoire croisée*”): on the level of the objects studied, the viewpoints endorsed, the reflexive relationship between the observer and the object and on the level of scales of observation (micro and macro) (Werner and Zimmermann 2006, 37–44). In this framework, the “historicization of categories” – both of the categories of analysis used by observers and the categories of action used by the agents involved – came to play a major role.²⁷ Emphasizing the intricate relationship between the researcher and their object, *histoire croisée* also advocated a form of critical “reflexivity” – an aspect thought to distinguish it from both comparativism and transfer studies.²⁸ These various elements should finally come together in a research operation that Werner and Zimmermann called “pragmatic induction” – a process in which the objects and the categories used to analyse them are adjusted to each other through both small-scale (or short-term) and large-scale (or long-term) observations (Werner and Zimmermann 2006, 46–48).²⁹

Now, these three orientations – comparative history, transfer studies and *histoire croisée* – have sometimes been presented as incompatible and mutually exclusive, especially by those taking part in the properly historiographical debate.³⁰ It is true that, historically speaking, they were formulated in opposition to each other. Nevertheless, at least among some researchers, a consensus seems to have emerged that, in transnational history, we need an approach that is able to integrate aspects of the three different perspectives: for instance, the structural macro perspective of comparative history, the focus on local exchanges and their agents of transfer

²⁷ In this respect, *histoire croisée* could also be considered as an exponent of the problem of the sociologization (or, at least, the historicization) of the *a priori*, not only as a potential approach for analysing it. Werner and Zimmermann’s main reference to the problem is Fradin, Widmer, and Quéré 1994 (see Werner and Zimmermann 2006, 44, n. 38), an edited volume building mainly on the ethnomethodological literature on “categorizations”.

²⁸ “L’exigence de réflexivité constitue [...] une donnée de base du projet d’histoire croisée.” (Werner and Zimmermann 2004b, 13) And: “This is one of the points that distinguishes *histoire croisée* from both comparativism – which, ideally, postulates the existence of an external point of view making it possible both to construct comparable objects and to apply to them common analytical questionnaires – and transfer studies – which, in most cases, do not question their implicit frames of reference.” (Werner and Zimmermann 2006, 48)

²⁹ “Mindful of both short-term contexts of action and the long-term structural conditions that make it possible, such an approach opens up new perspectives for analyzing change and stability at the same time.” (Werner and Zimmermann 2006, 48)

³⁰ A recent volume on German-French transfers in 18th century science, for example, deplored the polemical tone of the debate between comparativism, transfer studies and *histoire croisée* – approaches that can also be conceived as complementary (Gantet and Meumann 2019, para. 4).

studies, and the interest for the historicity of categories and reflexivity of *histoire croisée*.³¹ The need for such a combination has also become clear from the three transnational layers proper to the problem of the sociologization of the *a priori* outlined above. If we want to capture these various dimensions, we can hardly limit ourselves dogmatically to one single approach.

Fortunately, the possibility of such a synthesis exists and has actively been explored in the last years. We come here again back to the Bourdieusian *habitus*-field approach. In fact, Bourdieu has formulated from the end of the 1980s onwards a research programme of his own in the area of national traditions and transnational exchanges, in particular in his short article entitled “Les conditions sociales de la circulation internationale des idées” (Bourdieu [1990] 2002)³². This programme – Bourdieu himself spoke of “un programme pour une science des relations internationales en matière de culture” (Bourdieu [1990] 2002, 3) or of a “programme pour une sociologie de la circulation internationale des œuvres culturelles” (Bourdieu [1991] 2023) – combines arguably the main intentions of the three research orientations discussed above and reformulates them in terms of Bourdieu’s main conceptual tools (“field”, “capital” and “*habitus*”).

Bourdieu starts from the basic fact that “texts circulate without their context” (Bourdieu [1990] 2002, 4). Any transfer from one national field (literature, art, science, politics, etc.) to another will thus involve several social processes of mediation. Bourdieu analyses especially the three processes of selection, of labelling and classification and of reading (Bourdieu [1990] 2002, 4–7).³³ In each case, the structure and dynamics in the field of reception tend to override the original context in the initial field of production.³⁴ In order to understand why a product is selected (or not) for import (selection), how it is presented and classified (labelling) and how it is finally read, (mis-)understood and (mis-)used (reading), we have to attend to the structures of both the field of origin and the field of reception and analyse “structural homologies” between positions in them. Only then can we understand the specific interests and strategies underpinning the import and export of certain cultural products and account for “structural misunderstandings” (Bourdieu [1990] 2002, 4) – misunderstandings due to the different structure of the two fields involved. Methodologically speaking, Bourdieu thus intertwines the analysis

³¹ Such an “integrationist” position is advocated, for instance, by researchers pursuing Pierre Bourdieu’s research programme on the “social conditions of the international circulation of ideas”, see below.

³² The article and its first publication (Bourdieu 1990b) goes back to a lecture held in a German-French context (the opening of the Frankreich-Zentrum at the University of Freiburg) in October 1989. Bourdieu discussed issues of national traditions and transnational circulation in several further texts, lectures and encounters in the 1990s (esp. Bourdieu [1991] 2023). For the various socio-historical contexts of these works, see Poupeau and Sapiro 2023a.

³³ I follow here the English translation of the terms “sélection”, “marquage” and “lecture” (Bourdieu 1999, 222).

³⁴ “[L]e sens et la fonction d’une œuvre étrangère sont déterminés au moins autant par le champ d’accueil que par le champ d’origine” (Bourdieu [1990] 2002, 4).

of transfers (“circulation”) with comparative considerations regarding the two contexts involved. What is more, the critical inquiry into “national categories of thought” (Bourdieu [1990] 2002, 7) and their effects – on the level of agents as well as observers – takes centre stage in his programme.³⁵ Bourdieu therefore seems to offer an integration of some of the central tenets encountered in comparative history, transfer studies and *histoire croisée*.

Bourdieu can hardly be said to have executed the envisioned research programme himself.³⁶ However, several scholars – mostly former students and collaborators – have implemented his approach in the years following his death in 2002 in several areas of the social and human sciences: from the study of literature, publishing houses, translations or cinema to the sociology of science, of economics, of colonialism and the functioning of properly international, transnational or supranational fields.³⁷ Importantly, Bourdieu’s programme has also been applied and elaborated for the history and sociology of the social and human sciences (Poupeau and Sapiro 2023b, 184) – as Bourdieu himself had suggested (e.g. Bourdieu [1990] 2002, 7). It has informed a specific proposal for a “transnational history of the social sciences” (Heilbron et al. 2008); it has guided monographic studies on specific topics and episodes, either in a comparative or a circulatory perspective (e.g. Ringer 1992; Fourcade 2009; Matonti 2009; Joly 2012; Hauchecorne 2019; Sapiro 2022); and it has served as an important cornerstone for international collective projects (e.g. Heilbron et al. 2018; Fleck et al. 2019; Sapiro et al. 2020). Typically, scholars working in the line of this programme have also argued for a synthesis of comparative and transfer perspectives (e.g. Charle [1996] 2001, 28–31; 2010; 2013; Sapiro 2012; 2013; 2018).³⁸

It is Bourdieu’s programme then – differently labelled “sociology of the international circulation of symbolic goods” or “structural comparativism” (Sapiro 2013, 85; Poupeau and Sapiro

³⁵ “La liberté à l’égard des catégories nationales de pensée – à travers lesquelles nous pensons les différences entre les produits de ces catégories – ne peut venir que d’un effort pour penser, et rendre explicites, ces catégories; donc d’une sociologie et d’une histoire sociale réflexives et critiques – au sens de Kant – qui se donneraient pour objet de porter au jour, pour les maîtriser, par une socio-analyse scientifique, les structures de l’inconscient culturel national, de dévoiler, grâce à l’anamnèse historique des deux histoires nationales, et plus spécialement de l’histoire des institutions éducatives et des champs de production culturelle, les *fondements historiques* des catégories de pensée et des problématiques que les agents sociaux mettent en œuvre, sans le savoir (‘L’inconscient, c’est l’histoire’, disait Durkheim), dans leurs actes de production ou de réception culturelles.” (Bourdieu [1990] 2002, 7) It should be clear from this quote that, as *histoire croisée*, Bourdieu is as much part of the object “sociologization of the *a priori*” as of the methods available to study it.

³⁶ The currently best collection of his work in this area is Bourdieu 2023.

³⁷ For an overview of the literature, see Poupeau and Sapiro 2023b.

³⁸ See, for example, French sociologist Gisèle Sapiro’s (1965-) plea for a “structural comparativism”: “Est-ce dire que le comparatisme est une méthode à bannir? Certainement pas, tant que l’on pratique un comparatisme structural – c’est-à-dire fondé sur le principe des homologues structurales entre espaces sociaux et entre champs, mais aussi sur les principes de différenciation propre à chaque société –, qui prend en compte les échanges, les rapports de force et les relations de dépendance et d’encastrement, qu’il s’agisse de la comparaison dans l’espace (entre champs nationaux ou supranationaux) ou dans le temps (entre différents états d’un même champ) – ce que permet le concept abstrait de champ.” (Sapiro 2013, 85)

2023a) – that I shall adopt here regarding the issue of national traditions and transnational exchanges.³⁹ But how does this approach apply to the object of the sociologization of the *a priori*? How can it help to understand this specific problem?

We can address the national and transnational dimension within Bourdieu's framework in a way analogous to the first dimension of academic disciplines. Just as agents acquire disciplinary schemes through academic socialization, they internalize from early on national schemes, especially through schooling (Bourdieu 1967b). These “national categories of thought” (Bourdieu [1990] 2002, 7) make up a complex “national *habitus*” (see also Elias [1939] 1997a; 1992; Heilbron 2008, 10; 2024, 230; Kuzmics et al. 2020). Indeed, the former disciplinary schemes are embedded in the latter national schemes. National categories can be conceived as consisting of basic oppositions such as those between “*Kultur*” and “*Zivilisation*” – prominently studied by German-British sociologist Norbert Elias (1897-1990) (Elias [1939] 1997b, 89–153). These national schemes are, on the one hand, deeply entrenched in the individuals' corporal dispositions – via an individual “process of civilisation”, socialization, informal and formal education, etc. On the other hand, they are linked to the peculiar history of the State (e.g. the evolution of its class structure, its position in international power relations, etc.), who is the ultimate guarantor – the “central bank”, as it were (Bourdieu [1983–1986] 2016, 1173) – of symbolic power and thus of “principles of vision and division” (Bourdieu [1989–1992] 2012, 589–90).

In the domain of the academic field, where the problem of the sociologization of the *a priori* is located, we encounter many secondary oppositions, derived from basic national distinctions. Examples are the opposition between comprehension and explanation, between quality and quantity (Bourdieu [1990] 2002, 8), the French dichotomy between *sciences* and *lettres* or the German-speaking opposition between *Geisteswissenschaften* and *Naturwissenschaften* (see e.g. Feuerhahn 2015; 2020b; see also Heilbron 2008, 8; 2015, 221). The latter disciplinary or “supradisciplinary” schemes have a specifically national component: they vary with national contexts and operate within national schemes.⁴⁰ If we consider the sociologization of the *a*

³⁹ I admit that my approach might also be framed in terms of *histoire croisée*. If I prefer the Bourdieusian framework, it is not only because it enables a unified approach to all the main dimensions of the problem at hand (disciplines, national contexts, etc.). It is also to avoid the unnecessary polemics of the debate between comparative history, transfer studies and *histoire croisée*. Arguably, many of the main principles of *histoire croisée* (e.g. the crisscrossing and effects of transfers, the critique of categories, reflexivity) were already implicit in the programme of transfer studies (e.g. Espagne 1994). Also, the Bourdieusian approach is more transparent on its ultimate presuppositions in sociological theory (*habitus*-capital-field theory, a dispositionalist theory of action, etc.) than *histoire croisée* with its mix of mostly implicit theoretical references (to ethnomethodology, pragmatism, micro-macro debates in history and sociology, etc.).

⁴⁰ German sociologist Wolf Lepenies (1941-) seems to have been one of the first to draw attention to the properly national dimension of these classifications of science into supra-disciplinary groups, “disciplinary complexes” or “disciplinary constellations”. For example, in the history of sociology: “Innerhalb der Geschichtsschreibung der Soziologie spielt die Berücksichtigung disziplinärer Konstellationen eine zunehmend größere Rolle.

priori as a problem that involves an exchange of ideas between the German-speaking world and France, we should therefore ask: how do national contexts and corresponding national schemes impact the emergence, diffusion and discussion of this issue?

We might consider here again the empirical-transcendental distinction. Which role did national schemes of disciplinary relations play in this story? On the one hand, sociological theories of the *a priori* in France were arguably prepared by psychological interpretations of Kant's transcendental deduction of the categories by French spiritualist philosophers, making their way even into the philosophy teaching programme at French *lycées* (Schmaus 2003; 2004). These interpretations – together with some form of “positivism” (Ringer 1992, 207–8) – had already softened up the border between the empirical and the transcendental, it seems. On the other hand, there is evidence that about the same time several consecutive debates in Germany – from the struggle on materialism in the 1850s to the 1870s (*Materialismusstreit*) (Bayertz et al. 2012b; Morel 2017) to the struggle on psychologism (*Psychologismusstreit*) in the 1890s to 1910s (Kusch 1995) – contributed to rigidifying this same frontier, nourishing a conception of “pure philosophy” (in different neo-Kantian, phenomenological and logical versions). In the 1910s to 1930s, we can then observe these nationally specific disciplinary schemes in action in the reception of the first explicitly sociological theories of the *a priori*, especially when it came to the issues of relativism, reflexivity and “sociologism”.

Following Bourdieu's programme on the international circulation of symbolic goods, I shall thus analyse several processes of – often conflictual – reception and exchange concerning the topic of the sociologization of the *a priori*. For understanding these cases, we will have to reconstruct the respective national traditions involved, including their historical and structural conditions. It is national schemes and categories that inform exchange and which, at least in some cases, emerge at the occasion of transnational encounters. In this way, I will seek to combine the perspectives of comparative history, transfer studies and *histoire croisée* in a pragmatic and undogmatic way.

For the sake of clarity, we should note, finally, that when we investigate nationally specific disciplinary schemes and the corresponding field structures within Bourdieu's framework, we reason on the level of what “makes possible” the sociologization of the *a priori*. That is, we apply a version of sociologico-transcendental reasoning to the very phenomenon of sociologico-transcendental reasoning. It seems indeed that we can understand two main dimensions of the problem – disciplines and national contexts – in terms of socio-transcendental conditions.

Disziplingruppen aber müssen im Kontext nationaler Soziologietraditionen betrachtet werden.” (Lepénies 1981a, XXI; see also [1985] 2006b)

Bourdieu's approach might offer us a chance to identify some concrete "social conditions of possibility" of the very idea of social conditions of possibility. This points, of course, to the issue of reflexivity discussed below.

(3) *The long-term dimension*

The third key element of the sociologization of the *a priori* is its long-term dimension. As indicated, if we seek to go back to the problem's sources, retrace its emergence, follow its diffusion and its effects, we end up with a timespan of about 250 years, from the late 18th to the early 21st century. A full investigation of the issue would therefore have to adopt a long-term perspective. It would have to cover a sequence of multiple generations of philosophers, sociologists and scholars from other social and human science disciplines in three languages and even more national contexts. It would have to deal with the immense institutional transformations of these disciplines in this time period – in fact, their very emergence and institutionalization. The time span envisioned would actually be roughly coextensive with the rise of the social sciences, from a vague intellectual and scientific endeavour to fully institutionalized academic disciplines (for the French trajectory, see Heilbron [1990] 1995; 2015). Thus construed, the problem of the sociologization of the *a priori* would appear to be as old as the social sciences themselves, and especially sociology.

This long time frame will arouse instant suspicion. How could such a long history be done? What would it look like? Isn't it simply overambitious? Too comprehensive for one monograph? Is it possible to combine the complexity already introduced by the interdisciplinary and transnational dimensions with a long time frame? What could we expect in terms of precision and solidity when reasoning on such a large scale? Isn't there simply too much material to be earnestly managed? Why not restrict yourself to one part of the story and try to cover it more or less exhaustively? Why embark upon such an impossible mission in the first place? Doubts such as these are, of course, comprehensible and legitimate. There are, nevertheless, at least some answers I can provide to rationalize clinging to this long-term perspective.

To begin with, expectations regarding the long-term character of the history offered here must be scaled down from the beginning. The main period studied in the present work remains the period between the 1870s and the 1930s – the period where the debates on the sociologization of the *a priori* were arguably at their apex in France and the German-speaking world.⁴¹ This is also where my research on the whole topic started. Then, in the course of the work two

⁴¹ A look at the table of contents shows that most of the case studies conducted cover this period from different angles.

sorts of extensions were made: an extension towards the past, going back to the emergence of the problem in the early 19th century⁴²; and an extension towards the present with an enquiry into the literature from the 1970s to 2000s that had led me to investigating the problem in the first place. Nevertheless, the long time frame adopted remained conditioned by my focus on the 1870s-1930s period. In this sense, instead of speaking of a full-blown long-term history, it would perhaps be more appropriate to say that, starting from this central period, I examine “prequels” and “sequels”. In any case, I cannot and will not claim any kind of exhaustivity for the time spans preceding and succeeding the core period.

But if the 1870s-1930s period is so central to the whole story, why venture into a history going beyond it in the first place? The main answer is that, in the course of my work, this long-term perspective appeared increasingly necessary for understanding the problem of the sociologization of the *a priori*. First, it appeared essential for understanding the very terms of the problem. In fact, it is difficult to reconstruct the debates around the turn of the 20th century without considering the form that the problem had taken during the 19th century until the 1870s. Thus, the very terms of the problem – “*a priori*” and “sociology” – go back to two different classifications of knowledge and the sciences elaborated in Kantian and Comtean philosophy respectively. Much of the debate on the problem in the 19th and 20th century can be interpreted as coming to terms with the conflict between these two classifications formulated between the 1780s and the 1830s. If we take this hypothesis seriously and if we want to reconstruct historically the very terms of the problem, it leads us inevitably back to the turn of the 18th to the 19th century.⁴³

But why, on the other hand, follow the problem still further beyond the 1870s-1930s period until its present-day forms? During my research, it became increasingly clear that my initial project had its starting point in specific representations of the relationship between neo-Kantianism and sociology in the 1870s-1930s period. These representations, in turn, had their sources and conditions in specific intellectual and socio-historical contexts, mostly going back to the period between the 1930s and the 2000s (e.g. the general demise of neo-Kantianism in the 1920s-1930s). In order to better control my own perspective, my interest in the topic of the sociologization of the *a priori* and the way it had been “preconstructed”⁴⁴, I started to enquire

⁴² See Chapter 4 on the first case of a full-blown sociologization of the *a priori* in Auguste Comte.

⁴³ For more extensive discussion of this point, see again Chapter 4.

⁴⁴ I am referring here, obviously, to Bourdieu’s notion of “constructed” and “preconstructed objects” of research (see e.g. Bourdieu et al. [1968] 2005, 52), informed, in turn, by the Durkheimian critique of “prénotions” (e.g. Durkheim [1894] 2007, 18, 31) and French philosopher Gaston Bachelard’s (1884-1962) insistence on the “caractère polémique de la connaissance” (Bachelard [1934] 2017, 16). Prénotions are not proper to ordinary common sense, but are also produced by a specifically scientific, discipline-relative common sense. In this

into these contexts. Especially, I embarked upon a detailed case study on sociologist Pierre Bourdieu whose work had been one of the major sources of inspiration for the topic and the method of this study. In this way, it became increasingly clear that it is important to follow the debate on the problem of the sociologization of the *a priori* further through the 1930s-2000s period to understand and reflexively control the reasons why we might be interested in this problem *today*. Extending the chronological time span thus seemed to me necessary for having at least some chance to control my own standpoint. In brief, it is difficult to enquire seriously into the central 1870s-1930s period without, at the same time, excavating and critically reconstructing the several layers of interpretations and reinterpretations (with their respective socio-historical conditions) that have covered this period since the 1930s.⁴⁵

That said, even if we admit the desirability or even the necessity of such a long-term perspective, what could it look like, methodologically speaking? There are several considerations that might attenuate at least some in-principle objections. To begin with, we should note that the general scepticism against such an enterprise seems to rely mostly on an assumed contradiction between micro and macro perspectives in history and the social sciences and a certain preference for micro approaches. This tendency is itself the product of historiographical debates since the 1970s. This period saw indeed the rise of various “microhistorical” projects in Europe against the kind of large-scale social and economic history that had dominated history in the post-War era, for example in the form promoted by French historian Fernand Braudel (1902-1985), one of the most prominent proponents of the *Annales* movement at the time.⁴⁶ This debate – paralleled in sociology by the demise of “structural-functionalism” and the rise of “microsociological” approaches such as social phenomenology, ethnomethodology or symbolic interactionism⁴⁷ – created sometimes artificial oppositions between micro and macro perspectives. In response to the idea of a strict antithesis then emerged in history various proposals for an integration of these two levels – again mirrored in sociology by a sort of “integrative stage

perspective, the scientific object must be “conquered” and constructed also against the scientific preconstructions that we can encounter, for example, in what is commonly called “secondary literature”.

⁴⁵ See Chapter 3 for the different narratives on the relationship between sociology and neo-Kantianism.

⁴⁶ I cannot go into the details of this debate. For an overview, including related perspectives such as the history of everyday life (*Alltagsgeschichte*), see Port 2015. For the emergence of the programme, see Ginzburg 1994; Levi [1991] 2001. The most prominent and most widely read proponent of microhistory is, of course, Italian historian Carlo Ginzburg (1939-) with his book *Il formaggio e i vermi* (Ginzburg [1976] 2019). It should be noted, however, that in Ginzburg’s conception the “micro” in microhistory does not refer to a limitation to objects of a particularly “small” size (entities such as individuals or small, often marginalized groups), but to a certain methodology that starts from individual cases, but then employs in its explanations macro factors such as Ginzburg’s “*cultura popolare*” (instead of Febvrian “*mentalité*”) (Ginzburg [1976] 2019, XXVI; 2019, 214). See also Ginzburg’s recent stance on the relationship between microhistory and global history: “Microhistory, conceived as an analytical approach to history, far from being opposed to world history, may in fact be regarded as an indispensable tool of it.” (Ginzburg 2015, 446)

⁴⁷ For an overview of the debate in sociology, see Manzo and Cherkaoui [2001] 2015.

of the history of the micro/macro debate” (Manzo and Cherkaoui [2001] 2015, 417). Within the *Annales* movement, French historian Bernard Lepetit (1948-1996), for example, promoted the idea of surmounting the micro-macro opposition through a “reasoned variation of scales of observation” and, in fact, an empirical combination of both levels (Lepetit and Les Annales 1989)⁴⁸ – an approach that should later become popular under the expression “*jeux d’échelles*” (Revel 1996a) or “playing with scales” (de Vries 2019). Today, this historiographical debate continues mainly in the form of discussions about possible integrations of microhistory and global history.⁴⁹ The upshot for the long-term perspective envisioned here is that – against the idea of microhistory as a kind of gold standard of historical analysis and as being opposed to macrohistory – reasonable models of combining both and giving a place to macro factors are available.

Recently, there have indeed been some attempts to rehabilitate a long-term or *longue durée* perspective in history against the dominance of micro approaches since the 1970s (Guldi and Armitage 2014; see also Les Annales 2015). Connected with it, programmes and studies have also emerged promoting the application of long-term perspectives in intellectual history (Armitage 2012; 2017; Potts 2009; 2019) and the history of science (Cohen 2016).⁵⁰ This body of work – focusing on the diachronic study of “big ideas” without returning to Lovejoy’s conception of “unit-ideas” – contains some useful methodological reflections on how to implement longer time frames than usually used in intellectual history, especially since the Cambridge School of intellectual history mentioned above. For example, British historian David Armitage (1965-) commends a “method of *serial contextualism*” (Armitage 2012, 497). By this he means

the reconstruction of a sequence of distinct contexts in which identifiable agents strategically deployed existing languages to effect definable goals such as legitimation and delegitimation, persuasion and dissuasion, consensus-building and radical innovation (Armitage 2012, 498).

⁴⁸ “Pour l’observation des processus sociaux, la variation raisonnée des échelles d’observation constitue une démarche de même type. Le réglage différent de l’optique tout à la fois révèle de nouvelles configurations, souligne l’inadéquation partielle, c’est-à-dire le caractère réducteur, des catégories conceptuelles disponibles, suggère de nouveaux principes explicatifs: à chaque niveau de lecture, la trame du réel apparaît différente. Cela conduit, du côté des méthodes, à prêter une attention particulière au rôle que jouent l’observateur et ses instruments dans l’élaboration de l’analyse. Il faut briser l’opposition appauvrissante entre la micro et la macro-analyse pour approfondir la question plus essentielle des formes d’adéquation acceptables entre les questionnements, les méthodes d’étude et l’échelle d’observation des phénomènes. Du côté des principes explicatifs, cela amène à souligner qu’il n’y a pas opposition mais bien plutôt complémentarité des échelles d’analyse.” (Lepetit and Les Annales 1989, 1321) I thank Éric Brian for having pointed me to this precious text and the author behind the collective signature “Les Annales”.

⁴⁹ E.g. Ginzburg 2015; Bertrand and Calafat 2018b; esp. 2018a.

⁵⁰ For further examples of works in this direction, see Armitage 2012, 496–97.

Such serialization of contextualist studies can, according to Armitage, avoid the pitfalls of both Lovejoy's long-range "history of ideas" and the Cambridge School's small-range focus.⁵¹ We will see below how a basically similar strategy of serializing case studies on a long time frame can be operationalized for our own purposes.

Yet, what does "context" mean here? This question leads back to the Bourdieusian approach that allows, as I claimed, to cover uniformly the main dimensions of the sociologization of the *a priori*. The *habitus*-field theory enters our considerations regarding the long-term perspective precisely because it enables us to spell out the notion of context in a sociologically more tangible way than in the Cambridge School, which focused mostly on the "*linguistic context*" of utterances.⁵² The "contextualism" in Armitage's "serial contextualism" continues this tradition.⁵³ With Bourdieu, on the other hand, we can construe "context" in intellectual history in terms of the interrelations between the "space of social positions", the "space of possibles" and the "space of stances" (*prises de position*). We might then – as Armitage suggested – serialize case studies conducted in this perspective on a long chronological time scale. As a result, we might arrive at a sort of bottom-up "historical sociology"⁵⁴ of ideas (or problems, as I will argue) that integrates micro and macro, short-term and long-term perspectives through an investigation into empirically traceable socio-historical processes.

Indeed, in the area that interests us a "historical sociology of the social sciences"⁵⁵ in the vein of Bourdieusian sociology (with additional sources, for example, in the work of Elias, e.g. Elias 1984) has been developed and executed. This perspective has been successfully put into

⁵¹ Armitage opposes his "history *in* ideas" to traditional "history *of* ideas". He characterizes the "big ideas" studied in the former as follows: "The 'ideas' that lend this kind of history its structure are not disembodied entities, making intermittent entries into the terrestrial world from idealism's heavenly realm, but rather focal points of arguments shaped and debated episodically across time, each instance being consciously – or at least provably – connected with both earlier and later ones. Even amid changing assumptions, such 'ideas' are linked through time by a common name. They also remain connected by the freight of meanings accumulated from their dialogue with the past and, occasionally, with the future." (Armitage 2017, 21)

⁵² I follow here a line of reasoning deployed by Johan Heilbron (e.g. Heilbron 2017b, 282). Skinner defined his notion of context against the notion of "social context" as used at the time by Marxist intellectual historians: "The 'context' mistakenly gets treated as the determinant of what is said. It needs rather to be treated as an ultimate framework for helping to decide what conventionally recognizable meanings, in a society of *that* kind, it might in principle have been possible for someone to have intended to communicate." (Skinner 1969, 49) For further debates on the notion of context and the practice of contextualizing, see Feuerhahn, Mandressi, and Romano 2017.

⁵³ Armitage characterizes "serial contextualism" also as "deploying the distinctive procedures of Anglo-American intellectual history, but by doing so diachronically as well as synchronically" (Armitage 2012, 497).

⁵⁴ For the complicated transnational history of "historical sociology", see Steinmetz 2007; 2008. For a more general overview, see Wilson and Adams 2015. For a still more comprehensive overview of the various approaches to investigating "long-term processes in human history" in different disciplines, see Heilbron and Wilterdink 2023b. I take "historical sociology" here in a very broad sense as an attempt to understand both past and present in a both historical and sociological perspective, i.e. as both starting points and results of socio-historical processes, with an emphasis on the interconnection of micro and macro levels of analysis.

⁵⁵ For the label, see e.g. Heilbron 2015, 4; 2017b. For the Bourdieusian perspective in historical sociology, see Steinmetz 2011; 2020; Calhoun 2013. For various applications to the history of the social sciences, see Heilbron, Lenoir, and Sapiro 2004.

practice, for example, by Dutch sociologist Johan Heilbron (1952-) in studying French sociology in a long-term perspective (Heilbron [1990] 1995; 2015); or by American sociologist George Steinmetz (1957-) in his investigation of French “colonial sociology” (Steinmetz 2023). The goal of this approach on the most general level is to provide a convincing combination of social history and intellectual history as well as of macro and micro perspectives (these two distinctions are not necessarily coextensive) through the use of Bourdieusian conceptual tools such as “field”, “relative autonomy”, “structural homology”, “refraction”, etc. (e.g. Heilbron [1990] 1995, 8–11; 2015, 2–8).

However, the application of this framework to specific intellectual objects, such as the sociologization of the *a priori*, is not obvious. It seems that the objects picked out for investigation in this tradition have been primarily defined by social parameters – “French sociology”, “colonial sociology”, “French academic philosophy during the Third Republic” (Fabiani 1988), etc. – and not by intellectual issues. It is true that there are highly convincing applications of this approach to more limited topics in intellectual history such as Comte’s classification of the sciences (e.g. Heilbron 2017a; see also [1990] 1995, pt. 3) or Nicolas de Condorcet’s (1743–1794) trajectory between probability calculus and State administration (Brian 1994; 1998). But attempts to analyse in this perspective intellectual objects on a larger scale – e.g. French sociologist Marc Joly’s (1976-) recent account of the “sociological revolution” (Joly 2017) – have not always been conclusive.⁵⁶ It will be the task of the next section on “problem history” to explore what a long-term sociological and intellectual history of a specific issue could look like.

At the end, I should also add that, regarding the object in question, we can speak of a “long-history” only in a relative sense. With the roughly 250 years covered I am far away from the huge time spans imagined by Braudel when he characterized the *longue durée* perspective in the social sciences (Braudel 1958), or, for that matter, the time spans treated in recent *longue durée* intellectual history (encompassing often several millennia). It is perhaps more appropriate to speak in a comparative way simply of a *longer* history: I propose a temporal scale larger than most available discussions of the question of the sociologization of the *a priori*; and longer also than analyses tended to be in intellectual history, the history and sociology of ideas and the history and sociology of science, at least since the 1970s.

When we engage in such an intermediate longer history, we have to keep in mind that it means also to assume a *particular* perspective, i.e. a perspective that shows some things other ranges (e.g. purely micro or macro) won’t – all while obscuring, in turn, certain other aspects.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ I permit myself to refer to my criticisms in Strauss 2021.

⁵⁷ This is an instance of what Robert K. Merton (1910–2003) called – after American literary critic Kenneth Burke (1897–1993) – the “(Kenneth) Burke theorem” (Merton 1987, 24): “Any performance is discussible either from

Simply put, a map at a scale of 1:500 does not show the same as one at 1:5 or one at 1:500 000.⁵⁸ We choose a scale depending on what we want and what we need.⁵⁹ Importantly, then, our longer-term perspective must not be confused with a micro analysis writ large or, inversely, a macro analysis scaled down to “small” objects. The first case – the idea of a micro perspective exhaustively applied to a time frame of 250 years – is, in any case, unfeasible in the framework of the present work. And even if it were executed collectively, the result would probably be unreadable.⁶⁰ The second case – the application of a macro perspective to small-case objects – could result, if it neglects intermediary mechanisms, in relatively simplistic and uninteresting reductions of intellectual issues to classical macro factors such as economics, class, politics, religion or gender.⁶¹ It is not the criteria of micro or macro analysis that should be applied to such the longer history proposed here. There are inevitable trade-offs between both dimensions. What counts is rather whether the connection between both levels can be convincingly established. In this respect, it is not surprising that “meso” level concepts such as Bourdieu’s “field” – in our context, the nationally specific “academic fields” – shall help us in doing so.

the standpoint of what it attains or what it misses. Comprehensiveness can be discussed as superficiality, intensiveness as stricture, tolerance as uncertainty – and the poor pedestrian abilities of a fish are clearly explainable in terms of his excellence as a swimmer. A way of seeing is also a way of not seeing – a focus upon object A involves a neglect of object B.” (Burke [1935] 1984, 49)

⁵⁸ This point was again nicely put by Lepetit: “La carte n’est pas le territoire: deux figures, l’une au 1:25 000 et l’autre au 1:500 000 ne donnent pas à lire de la même manière l’organisation de l’espace. En effaçant les variations qui se révéleraient à d’autres échelles et donneraient du monde une autre image, toutes deux se situent, à partir d’un point de vue de connaissance spécifique et avec le souci de répondre à un usage particulier, à un niveau choisi de généralisation. Mais l’une n’est pas plus vraie que l’autre.” (Lepetit 1996, 87)

⁵⁹ This is one of the lessons of a well-known episode from English author and mathematician Lewis Carroll’s (1832-1898) *Sylvie and Bruno Concluded* (1893). There, German professor Mein Herr asks his English interlocutors: “What do you consider the *largest* map that would be really useful?” Upon the answer “About six inches to the mile”, Mein Herr recounts the latest advances on map-making in his country: “‘Only *six inches!*’ exclaimed Mein Herr. ‘We very soon got to six *yards* to the mile. Then we tried a *hundred* yards to the mile. And then came the grandest idea of all! We actually made a map of the country, on the scale of *a mile to the mile!*’ [Paragraph] ‘Have you used it much?’ I enquired. [Paragraph] ‘It has never been spread out, yet,’ said Mein Herr: ‘the farmers objected: they said it would cover the whole country, and shut out the sunlight! So we now use the country itself, as its own map, and I assure you it does nearly as well.’” (Carroll 1893, 169) It seems that historians, especially those of a broadly inductivist orientation, have not always been successful in fending off the futile ideal of a 1:1 map. As a result, the map becomes an end in itself and starts to obstruct the view of the country. We end up with taking the object as its own map, i.e. we come back to where we started without the map. Carroll’s story amounts to a sort of *reductio ad absurdum* argument for the point that maps without a purpose-guided scale are nonsensical.

⁶⁰ The problem of managing and presenting seemingly endless materials is, of course, known in reflections on long-term history. As Armitage said for the case of civil war: “A truly all-encompassing work, in multiple volumes written by many historians, collecting accounts of every conflict in world history that contemporaries or later observers thought was a civil war, is certainly imaginable. What is less conceivable is that anyone would want to read such an encyclopedic work.” (Armitage 2017, 21–22)

⁶¹ The most prominent precedent here is, of course, Marxist intellectual history and history of science. Even if works in this tradition are rarely as simplistic as their detractors have them, still they are hardly ever as sophisticated as their defenders would like them to be. For the application of this perspective to philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) himself, see Goldmann [1945] 1948, chap. 1 and further discussion in Chapter 4 below.

In the end, we can conceive the longer-term perspective adopted here simply as another principle of variation.⁶² As the spatial variation in national and linguistic contexts, the temporal variation, i.e. the consideration of structurally different historical contexts, gives us a chance to identify, as Braudel suggested, some of the “mental frames” that function as “long-term prisons” – together with their specific social conditions.⁶³ As the transnational perspective, the “transtemporal”⁶⁴ viewpoint enables us to “denaturalize” what is taken for granted by the historical agents involved, but often also by scientific observers such as historians and philosophers.⁶⁵ In this way, seemingly natural or “reasonable” oppositions such as, in philosophy after Kant, the distinction between “the transcendental” and “the empirical”, become historically specific formations that require explanation rather than automatic adherence. We will see that, if we want to account historically-sociologically for the problem of the sociologization of the *a priori* – rather than dismiss it in advance as contradictory, as philosophical common sense would suggest – we need the sort of relative liberation from dominant schemes of thought provided by the long-term perspective endorsed here – together with the interdisciplinary and the transnational standpoint.⁶⁶

(4) *Beyond the internal-external distinction*

So far, we have considered aspects that are specific to the empirical object called “sociologization of the *a priori*”: its interdisciplinary, transnational and long-term dimensions. But all three

⁶² See the line of reasoning sketched above by Lepetit (Lepetit and Les Annales 1989).

⁶³ “Songez à la difficulté de briser certains cadres géographiques, certaines réalités biologiques, certaines limites de la productivité, voire telles ou telles contraintes spirituelles: les cadres mentaux, aussi, sont prisons de longue durée.” (Braudel 1958, 731)

⁶⁴ I adopt here Armitage’s terminology who highlighted the methodological parallel between transnational history and long-term or “transtemporal history” (Armitage 2012, 498–99).

⁶⁵ Bourdieu presented such denaturalization as one of the most important results of historicisation and reflexivity, leading to a sort of freedom from the constraints imposed by unquestioned concepts, classifications, etc.: “La science sociale, qui est condamnée à la rupture critique avec les évidences premières, n’a pas de meilleure arme pour l’opérer que l’historicisation qui permet de neutraliser, au moins dans l’ordre de la théorie, les effets de la naturalisation, et en particulier l’amnésie de la genèse individuelle et collective d’un donné qui se donne avec toutes les apparences de la nature et demande à être pris pour argent comptant, *taken for granted*. Mais – et c’est ce qui fait la difficulté extrême de l’enquête anthropologique – l’effet de naturalisation s’exerce aussi, il ne faut pas l’oublier, sur la pensée pensante elle-même: l’incorporation de l’ordre scolastique sous forme de dispositions peut [...] imposer à la pensée des présuppositions et de limitations qui, s’étant faites corps, sont enfouies hors des prises de la conscience. [...] Seule la critique historique, arme majeure de la réflexivité, peut libérer la pensée des contraintes qui s’exercent sur elle quand, en s’abandonnant aux routines de l’automate, elle traite comme des choses des constructions historiques réifiées.” (Bourdieu [1997] 2003, 262–63; see also Steinmetz 2020, 804; Muel-Dreyfus 2020b)

⁶⁶ While the present work was being finished appeared American sociologist John Levi Martin’s (1964-) long-term analysis of the transformations in the “architectonic” or structure of theories of action (Martin 2024). I didn’t have the time to study Martin’s work as thoroughly as it deserves. Yet my impression is that his millenia-spanning structural history of theories of action (Martin 2024, 1–37) can be interpreted as another positive case of taking a long-term perspective on the issues of Kantianism and the social sciences. See also the convergence in Martin’s critical reference to Mannheim’s structural history of epistemologies (Mannheim [1922] 1964a; Martin 2024, 5–6) and mine below.

of them seem to concern what a sceptical historian of philosophy, of science or of ideas might call “external” or “purely external” factors. Haven’t I neglected the “internal” perspective that would offer a sort of “rational reconstruction”⁶⁷ of the issue at hand? How did the problem actually come about, what did it consist in and how was it discussed in terms of ideas, arguments, reasons, premises, conclusions and the logical relations between them? And what is the actual validity of these claims when considered in their “context of justification”, not only their “context of discovery”⁶⁸? This query demands that we clarify how the present work conceives the relationship between those “external” and “internal” factors. The short answer is that it seeks to go beyond this very opposition by drawing on Bourdieu’s conception of the “relative autonomy” of social fields.

Surmounting the internal-external opposition might appear, at first, far from obvious. A whole battery of historically established distinctions resists this idea: “descriptive” vs. “normative”, “context of discovery” vs. “context of justification”, “genesis” vs. “validity”, “empirical” vs. “transcendental”, “*quid facti*” vs. “*quid iuris*”, “is” vs. “ought”, etc.⁶⁹ They are particularly widespread in the history of philosophy where non-internalist approaches have for a long time been either stigmatized, marginalized or simply absent.⁷⁰ But similar oppositions can be encountered in other fields as well, such as the history of art, literary studies or the history of science. Even in the history of the social sciences we see comparable tensions between internal accounts focusing on the history of social thought and ideas – the history of sociological ideas⁷¹, political ideas or the history of economic thought – and external approaches focussing on institutional, political, religious and other social settings of social scientists. The relationship between both orientations is mostly polemic: internalists criticizing externalists for their neglect of the actual content and meaning of social scientists’ activities, externalists criticizing internalists for their disregard for the social conditions of these activities.⁷² This division has proved

⁶⁷ The notion of “rational reconstruction” goes back to German philosopher of science Rudolf Carnap (1891–1970) – who used the expression “*rationale Nachkonstruktion*” (e.g. Carnap [1928] 1966, para. 100) – and was further popularized (and modified) by German philosopher of science Hans Reichenbach (1891–1953) (Reichenbach 1938, 5–6) and Hungarian philosopher of science Imre Lakatos (1922–1974) (Lakatos 1970b).

⁶⁸ The distinction was introduced by Reichenbach precisely to explain the notion of “rational reconstruction” (Reichenbach 1938, 6–7).

⁶⁹ We will encounter some of these oppositions and their socio-historical conditions in the course of our investigation.

⁷⁰ See the above remarks on the still rather marginal projects for a “sociology of philosophy”.

⁷¹ The two most representative works of this orientation regarding sociology are perhaps – in French – sociologist Raymond Aron’s (1905–1983) *Les étapes de la pensée sociologique* (Aron [1967] 2014) and – in German – sociologist Friedrich Jonas’s (1926–1968) *Geschichte der Soziologie* (Jonas [1968–1969] 2021; for a sociological contextualization of Jonas’s historiography, see Moebius 2021). For various contemporary attempts to go beyond this dichotomy, see Dayé and Moebius 2015.

⁷² For the conflicts between different historiographies of sociology in the German-speaking world, I permit myself to refer to Strauss and Moebius 2020.

an obstacle for an effective cooperation between both approaches and, thus, for overcoming the very distinction they rely on.

As said earlier, the debate on internalism and externalism goes back a long way in the history, philosophy and sociology of science⁷³ – the fields where it has perhaps been debated most intensely.⁷⁴ American historian of science Steven Shapin (1943-) has traced it back to the first works in the sociology of science by Robert K. Merton in the 1930s (Shapin 1988, 594; 1992, 336–37). Shapin emphasized in particular Merton’s critical reception of Marxist history of science as it had been put forward by the Soviet delegation at the International Congress of the History of Science and Technology in London in 1931, by historians such as Nikolai Bukharin (1888-1938) and Boris Hessen (1893-1936) (Bukharin 1931; Hessen 1931).⁷⁵ Indeed, Merton had discussed in his 1935 dissertation *Science, Technology and Society in Seventeenth-Century England* (Merton [1938] 1970) Hessen’s account of Isaac Newton’s (1643-1727) *Philosophiae Naturalis Principia Mathematica* (1687) and had acknowledged his debt to Hessen’s work (Merton [1938] 1970, 206, n. 8). However, following his teacher George Sarton, Merton opposed both the idea that science was completely determined by external (economic, religious, etc.) factors and the inverse notion that it was governed only by intrinsic factors (Merton [1938] 1970, 199). For Merton, the degree to which external or internal factors determined scientific activity was not to be decided in principle but to be studied on empirical grounds. Accordingly, he sought to develop empirical measures for this relationship (Merton [1938] 1970, 200–206).⁷⁶

However, after the Second World War, the internal-external distinction came to be used primarily as an element of “boundary-work” (Gieryn 1983) between the history, philosophy and sociology of science. It came to organize the division of labour between philosophy, history and sociology of science, at least on the symbolic level. Through this opposition, historians would demarcate themselves from sociologists and philosophers from historians (Shapin 1992, 340–42). Accordingly, Merton, for instance, could be criticized as “externalist” by historians of science (e.g. Hall 1963) while historian of science Thomas Kuhn could be criticized as

⁷³ I cannot reconstruct this debate here exhaustively, of course.

⁷⁴ Bourdieu, who had worked on several fields (literature, art, etc.) where similar oppositions were used, wrote: “Il est peu de terrains où l’alternative commune, celle de l’analyse interne, qui traite la pratique scientifique comme une activité pure et parfaitement indépendante de toute détermination économique ou sociale, de l’analyse externe, qui tient la science pour un reflet direct des structures économiques et sociales, se soit imposée avec plus de force dans le domaine de la science.” (Bourdieu [1991] 2022, 277)

⁷⁵ In fact, Shapin suggested that Merton had introduced the internal-external distinction because he “was exceedingly careful to dissociate himself explicitly from any enterprise (e.g., that of the Marxist Boris Hessen) that sought to account for scientific method or knowledge by reference to social or economic considerations, or, indeed, by reference to nonscientific cultural factors such as religion” (Shapin 1988, 594). In Shapin’s narrative (influenced by the “strong programme in the sociology of knowledge”), Merton thus excluded scientific knowledge from sociological analysis. This interpretation is not quite convincing. Merton’s position was, in fact, close to the one of British sociologist Barry Barnes (1943-) (e.g. Barnes 1974, chap. 5).

⁷⁶ As we shall see, this view went already together with a certain notion of the “relative autonomy” of science.

“externalist” by philosophers (e.g. Lakatos 1970b, 120). Also, the division into internal and external history became powerful enough within the history of science that Kuhn, in his account of the discipline in 1968, would employ it to structure the field – all while arguing already for the “complementarity” of both approaches (Kuhn [1968] 1977a, 120).

Starting in the 1960s, there have been several attempts to go beyond the internal-external opposition. Kuhn himself, in his hugely influential *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962), already indicated the transgression of the internal-external distinction as well as of other connected oppositions such as between “context of justification” and “context of discovery” or between “normative” and “descriptive” approaches (Kuhn [1962] 1996, 8–9). Proponents of a “new sociology of science”⁷⁷ from the 1970s onwards took up this idea and radicalized Kuhn’s complementarity view. They thought that previous sociology of science had unjustly limited itself when conceiving social factors as external to the contents of scientific knowledge.⁷⁸ Instead, they proposed to conceive internal factors themselves as social. The sociology of science should thus become “internalist as well as externalist, concerned with the content within as well as the context of scientific work” (Knorr Cetina 1991, 524). What is more, the sociologically oriented history of science made it increasingly clear that the internal-external distinction had been a centrepiece of scientists’ own self-descriptions since the 16th century and should thus be handled with care when applied as a category of historical or sociological analysis (Shapin and Schaffer [1985] 2011, esp. 341–342). In any case, similar projects for combining internal and external analyses or for surmounting the very distinction have emerged in the sociology of philosophy (e.g. Collins 1987, 49; Kusch 1995, 23) and the sociology of the social sciences (Pollak 1978, 91; Heilbron [1990] 1995, 10). All this seems to have contributed to diminishing the importance of the inside-outside distinction in recent history and sociology of science.⁷⁹

The present study’s intention to go beyond the internal-external distinction is thus finally far from original. The question remains how to translate this general goal into a concrete strategy and how to apply it to the specific problem of the sociologization of the *a priori*. I shall follow here again Bourdieu who – like others at the time, but against the specific French intellectual background – had sought since the late 1960s to offer a solution to the externalism-internalism

⁷⁷ I cannot consider here the internal oppositions within this multifarious movement. For the history of this current, see Dubois 2001. For the label, see especially Knorr Cetina 1991. For further elements for a history and sociology of the sociology of science, see Ben-David 1991, pt. 6.

⁷⁸ See, for example, the critique British sociologist of science David Bloor (1942–) addressed in particular to the work of Merton and Joseph Ben-David: “In fact sociologists have been only too eager to limit their concern with science to its institutional framework and external factors relating to its rate of growth or direction. This leaves untouched the nature of the knowledge thus created.” (Bloor [1976] 1991, 3)

⁷⁹ For some indications on the decline of the distinction in the history of science since the end of the 1980s, see Shapin and Schaffer 2011, xiv.

dilemma.⁸⁰ I would indeed argue that Bourdieu's strategy for overcoming this opposition is superior to the solutions offered by his immediate competitors in the history and sociology of science (e.g. Marxist approaches, the "strong programme", ethnomethodology, actor-network theory, etc.).⁸¹ Simply put, through the notion of the "relative autonomy" of science, Bourdieu seems to succeed better in joining both internalist and externalist perspectives in an empirical research programme.⁸² What does this approach look like?

Starting with his first article using the notion of "field" as applied to the study of literature (Bourdieu 1966), Bourdieu had opposed the internal-external distinction. In literature, it took the form of the dichotomy between "esthétique interne" (internal aesthetic theory) and "esthétique externe" (external aesthetic theory) (Bourdieu 1966, 905; for the translation, see [1966] 1969, 118). Bourdieu insisted against this separation on the "refraction" of external forces through the internal logic proper to the intellectual field. Only by taking into account these phenomena of deflection – expressed in individual "intellectual projects" – could emerge something like a genuine "sociology of intellectual and artistic creation" (Bourdieu [1966] 1969, 118).

From the end of the 1960s onwards, Bourdieu then applied the same argumentative strategy to several further areas of cultural production: to religion, art, philosophy, science, the social sciences, etc.⁸³ Especially interesting in our context are the last three domains: science, philosophy and the social sciences. Here, Bourdieu could have hardly been more explicit about the need to dismiss the alternative of internal and external analysis for achieving a properly scientific account of scientific practice:

Une science authentique de la science ne peut se constituer qu'à condition de récuser radicalement l'opposition arbitraire (qui se retrouve aussi ailleurs, en histoire de l'art par exemple) entre une analyse immanente ou interne, qui incomberait en propre à l'épistémologie et qui restituerait la logique selon laquelle la science engendre ses propres problèmes, et une analyse externe, qui rapporte ces problèmes à leurs conditions sociales d'apparition. (Bourdieu 1975b, 94)

According to Bourdieu, the internal-external opposition itself functions as an "epistemological obstacle" – a notion coined by Gaston Bachelard (Bachelard [1938] 2011, chap. 1) which

⁸⁰ "Pierre Bourdieu's work in the sociology of culture represents an early and systematic effort to transcend the dichotomy between internal and external approaches." (Heilbron [1990] 1995, 10)

⁸¹ I am aware, of course, that demonstrating this point would demand a more thorough discussion of issues in the epistemology and methodology of the sociology of science than I can offer here.

⁸² I follow here lines of argument suggested by Bourdieu himself (Bourdieu 1990a; 1991; [1991] 2022; 2001b) and other sociologists of science (e.g. Shinn and Ragouet 2005; Gingras [2013] 2020). For a critical account of Bourdieu's sociology of science, see recently Kim 2023.

⁸³ Bourdieu's most important works in the respective areas are Bourdieu [1992] 1998; 1971a; 1971b; 2013; [1975] 1988; 2001b; 2022b.

Bourdieu had integrated in his epistemology of the social sciences (e.g. Bourdieu et al. [1968] 2005, 25). Internalism and externalism might appear as antithetic, but they are in fact complicit. They comfort each other in the belief in a clear-cut internal-external boundary. This can be regularly observed in accounts of philosophy, science or the social sciences.⁸⁴ Also, the problem is hardly solved by intermediary approaches that advocate a “combination”, “complementarity” or some sort of “eclecticism” regarding internal and external “factors” (Shapin 1992, 342–45). The particular force of the internal-external distinction stems, according to Bourdieu, from the fact that it translates a “social antagonism” – the one between philosophy and the social and human sciences since the 19th century – into scientific discourse (Bourdieu 1991, 4–5; [1991] 2022, 278). But how can we then go beyond this distinction?

The key to Bourdieu’s dismissal of the internal-external opposition is the concept of “relative autonomy”⁸⁵, understood as a property of social fields. Accordingly, fields have varying degrees of autonomy, i.e. distinct levels of dependence and independence from other fields.⁸⁶ The more a field is autonomous, the less it is subject to external influences. Depending on their degree of autonomy, fields are governed by an internal logic. This internal logic, however, is not a-social, as a strongheaded internalist would think. It is itself the result of specific social relations between the agents in the field, especially their competition for specific resources and gains. These social relations, in turn, are determined by the “structure of the field”, that is the objective distribution of power measurable through the quantity and quality of different types of “capital” (economic, cultural, social, symbolic). Fields of cultural production – religion, art,

⁸⁴ Bourdieu has described the complicity between internal and external analysis, for instance, in the case of the 1980s French controversy on German philosopher Martin Heidegger’s (1889-1976) involvement with national socialism: “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 [1975] 1988, 11)

⁸⁵ The *idea* of relative autonomy has a long and variegated history: from sources in the Marxist tradition with the much-cited letter by Friedrich Engels (1820-1895) to Conrad Schmidt (1863-1932) from 27 October 1890 where Engels speaks of the “*relative Selbständigkeit*” (relative independence) of politics or lawyers (Engels [1890–1920] 1967, 490–91; see also Merton [1945] 1973, 19; Bourdieu 1971a, 300, n. 12) to sociologist Max Weber’s (1864-1920) notion of the “*innere Eigengesetzlichkeit*” (inner autonomy) (Weber [1916] 1988, 541) of the different spheres of economics, politics, aesthetics, eroticism and knowledge, and perhaps even to German philosopher Ernst Cassirer’s (1874-1945) conception of the autonomy of “symbolic forms” (Cassirer [1923] 2010, 7; Bourdieu 1971a, 297; see also Sapiro 2019, 16; 2020a). The history of the *term* “relative autonomy”, on the other hand, is more limited. Another important use of “relative autonomy” by one of Bourdieu’s contemporaries can be found in the work of French Marxist philosopher Louis Althusser (1918-1990) who spoke in his interpretation of the Marxist tradition of the “*autonomie relative de la superstructure*” (Althusser [1970] 2011, 269–70). Bourdieu referred to this “Marxist notion of relative autonomy” at least at one occasion (Bourdieu [1985] 1987, 17). In the sociology of science, the term “relative autonomy” was used early on by Merton (e.g. Merton 1970, x, xxii–xxiii; 1973, 135, 151, 152, 209, 216) and his disciple Bernard Barber (1918-2006) (e.g. Barber 1953, 33–34).

⁸⁶ “Dire que le champ est relativement autonome par rapport à l’univers social environnant, c’est dire que le système de forces qui sont constitutives de la structure du champ (tension) est relativement indépendant des forces qui s’exercent sur le champ (pression). Il dispose en quelque sorte de la ‘liberté’ nécessaire pour développer sa propre nécessité, sa propre logique, son propre *nomos*.” (Bourdieu 2001b, 95)

literature, science, etc. – are characterized by a field-specific form of symbolic capital, i.e. a capital in “recognition” (*reconnaissance*).⁸⁷ One indicator for the level of autonomy of a field then is the convertibility between non-specific and specific capital. If the ratio between, say, economic and specifically religious capital is high, the autonomy of the field is low. In other words, external “influences” will be “refracted” only to a small extent: the “coefficient of refraction” indicating the degree of autonomy of a field (Bourdieu [1986] 1994, 68) will be low. We can thus situate fields on a spectrum leading from relatively low to relatively high autonomy. In general, fields like science will be more autonomous than fields like economics or politics.

Within science, relative autonomy varies again along disciplines. It is particularly high in mathematics and the natural sciences and particularly low in areas such as medicine and law – with the social sciences taking an intermediate position (Bourdieu 1984b, chap. 2). The variation has to do with the dual structure of the specific “scientific capital” or “scientific authority” (Bourdieu 1975b, 91–92) that agents compete for. This scientific capital has both an intellectual and a social, a “spiritual” and a “temporal” side. There is the properly scientific symbolic capital in terms of the recognition of legitimate authority on a certain subject of science; and there is the social capital in terms of power over the scientific and academic field (mostly connected to institutional, administrative or bureaucratic positions) (Bourdieu 1984b, 70–71; 2001b, 113). In highly autonomous fields, the two forms of capital and correlated forms of domination are dissociated; in less autonomous fields, they go together (Bourdieu 2001b, 114).

The crucial point here is that in Bourdieu’s conception of relatively autonomous fields, the distinction between internal and external (in terms of “factors”, “spheres”, etc.) makes no longer sense – or, at least, it loses much of its appeal. What was conceived as “internal” appears now at the same time “external”: the internal logic of the field is itself the result of a socio-historical process of autonomization and is maintained by social mechanisms such as competition or mutual critique. And what was conceived as “external” seems to become at the same time “internal”: it enters the field only as far as it is refracted according to its internal logic. The field-specific capital, agents’ interests, their strategies to acquire recognition and their routine practices are all dual in character. They are inseparably social and intellectual, “external” and “internal” according to the former distinction. In this perspective, scientific practices, for

⁸⁷ “Le capital symbolique est un ensemble de propriétés distinctives qui existent dans et par la perception d’agents dotés des catégories de perception adéquates, catégories qui s’acquièrent notamment à travers l’expérience de la structure de la distribution de ce capital à l’intérieur de l’espace social ou d’un microcosme social particulier comme le champ scientifique.” (Bourdieu 2001b, 110)

instance, are not determined by *either* internal *or* external factors, they are constantly *overdetermined*.⁸⁸

If we want to understand these essentially dual phenomena, we must subject them to a corresponding “double reading”⁸⁹: an analysis that accounts at the same time for the autonomy of cultural production and for the relative character of this autonomy. In this perspective, text and context appear as “two translations of the same phrase”.⁹⁰ Both express in their way the same social-cum-intellectual reality. To reconstruct this total reality, we must consider both texts and contexts. We must construct two systems – the space of intellectual positions (*prises de position*) and the space of social positions – and relate them systematically to each other by passing through the intermediate levels of the *habitus*, i.e. the system of corporal-cognitive dispositions, and the field in which these dispositions have been acquired.⁹¹ It is in the encounter between a field – a space of both social and intellectual positions – and a *habitus* – a system of acquired dispositions – that emerges the agents’ “space of possibles” (*espace de possibles*) – a space that, according to Bourdieu, functions as their specific “problématique” (Bourdieu 2001b, 119) and makes us understand their inextricably intellectual-cum-social strategies.

In fact, the intermediary level of the field is central to Bourdieu’s surmounting of the internal-external distinction. From its inception, one of the main functions of the concept of “field”

⁸⁸ “Du fait que toutes les pratiques sont orientées vers l’acquisition de l’autorité scientifique (prestige, reconnaissance, célébrité, etc.), enjeu intrinsèquement *double*, ce que l’on appelle communément ‘l’intérêt’ pour une activité scientifique (une discipline, un secteur de cette discipline, une méthode, etc.) est toujours à double face; et de même les stratégies qui tendent à assurer la satisfaction de cet intérêt. [...] Il découle d’une définition rigoureuse du champ scientifique comme espace objectif d’un jeu où se trouvent engagés des enjeux scientifiques, qu’il est vain de distinguer entre des déterminations proprement scientifiques et des déterminations proprement sociales de pratiques essentiellement *surdéterminées*.” (Bourdieu 1975b, 93)

⁸⁹ Bourdieu’s account of Heidegger’s “political ontology” is a compelling example of such a “double reading”: “Il faut donc abandonner l’opposition entre la lecture politique et la lecture philosophique, et soumettre à une *lecture double*, inséparablement politique et philosophique, des écrits définis fondamentalement par leur *ambiguïté*, c’est-à-dire par la référence aux deux espaces sociaux auxquels correspondent deux espaces mentaux.” (Bourdieu [1975] 1988, 10)

⁹⁰ “Il y a une métaphore spinoziste selon laquelle nous avons toujours ‘deux traductions de la même phrase’, et qui explique pourquoi, à mon avis, la science des œuvres est possible. Le monde social, quand il s’agit d’œuvres d’art ou de littérature, nous dit tout deux fois: il nous dit les choses à la fois dans les œuvres et dans le monde social au sein duquel elles ont été produites. Il ne faut pas se priver, comme le font les internalistes, de ce qui est dans le contexte. C’est comme si Champollion avait dit: ‘Je ne regarde pas la pierre de Rosette’. Et, inversement, il ne faut pas plus se priver de ce qui est dans le texte. En fait, texte et contexte sont deux traductions de la même phrase, et si on construit adéquatement le texte et le contexte, on a un sentiment de redondance qui constitue une sorte de vérification interne.” (Bourdieu [1998–2000] 2013, 92)

⁹¹ “Understanding intellectual work thus consists of relating to each other two sets of relations, the ‘space of works or discourses taken as differential stances, and the space of the positions held by those who produce them.’” (Heilbron 2015, 5) Heilbron refers to Bourdieu’s “Postface” to *Homo academicus*: “L’analyse scientifique doit opérer la mise en relation de deux ensembles de relations, l’espace des œuvres ou des discours comme prises de position différentielles et l’espace des positions occupées par ceux qui les produisent.” (Bourdieu 1987b, 296–97) In practice, the *habitus* establishes the relation between these two systems: “Un savant est un champ scientifique fait homme, dont les structures cognitives sont homologues de la structure du champ” (Bourdieu 2001b, 84).

was to go beyond internal and external analyses.⁹² Common to both of the latter is that they neglect the intermediate level of the field with its relative autonomy. Externalists miss the fact that fields of cultural production are to some extent autonomous; internalists miss that this autonomy is only relative. Both disregard the social sub-spaces where groups of specialists compete with each other for recognition and the legitimate definition of their activity. Bourdieu, on the other hand, based his insistence on these spaces of specialists on an interpretation of Max Weber's sociology of religion, in particular, the latter's conception of a competition between "priests" (orthodoxy) and "prophets" (heterodoxy or heresy) (see especially Weber [1921/1922] 2005). It is Weber's conception of a space of religious specialists that allows, according to Bourdieu, to go beyond the opposition of absolute autonomy and absolute heteronomy which haunts internalism and externalism.⁹³ Only by passing through the intermediary instance of the field can we explore the hypothesis of "correspondences" or "homologies" between social structure and mental structure (Bourdieu 1971a, 300).

In sum, Bourdieu's strategy consists in combining – through the notion of relatively autonomous fields – the strengths of both internal and external analyses while rejecting their respective weaknesses.⁹⁴ The notion of "relative autonomy" distinguishes his solution of the internalism-externalism dilemma from the above-mentioned alternative proposals for overcoming the dichotomy. The strength of Bourdieu's proposal consists in the fact that it accounts for the social conditions of scientific activity without denying or minimizing its specificity – as the "new sociology of science" tended to do since the 1970s. In fact, it explains this very specificity

⁹² "Mais elle [the notion of field, MS] a eu aussi pour fonction de récuser l'alternative de l'interprétation interne et de l'explication externe, devant laquelle se trouvaient placées toutes les sciences des œuvres culturelles, sciences religieuses, sociologie de la science, histoire de l'art ou histoire littéraire, en rappelant l'existence de ces espaces sociaux séparés et autonomes dans lesquels ses œuvres s'engendrent, champ religieux, champ littéraire, champ artistique, champ scientifique, champ juridique: en ces matières, l'opposition entre un formalisme né de la théorisation de pratiques artistiques parvenues à un haut degré d'autonomie et un réductionnisme attaché à rapporter directement les formes artistiques à des formes sociales, dissimulait que les deux perspectives avaient en commun d'ignorer le champ de production comme espace de relations objectives." (Bourdieu [1992] 2022a, 27–28)

⁹³ "C'est ici que Weber [...] fournit le moyen d'échapper à l'alternative simpliste [...], c'est-à-dire à l'opposition entre l'illusion de l'autonomie absolue du discours mythique ou religieux et la théorie réductrice qui en fait le reflet direct des structures sociales: mettant en pleine lumière ce que les deux positions opposées et complémentaires ont en commun d'oublier, à savoir le travail religieux que réalisent les producteurs et les porte-paroles spécialisés, investis du pouvoir, institutionnel ou non, de répondre, par un type déterminé de pratique ou de discours, à une catégorie particulière de besoins, propres à certains groupes sociaux, il trouve dans la genèse historique d'un corps d'agents spécialisés le fondement de l'autonomie relative que la tradition marxiste accorde, sans en tirer toutes les conséquences, à la religion." (Bourdieu 1971a, 299–300)

⁹⁴ Again, Bourdieu's study on Heidegger (Bourdieu [1975] 1988) is exemplary. If we look at the sources of this study, we see that it combines basically two perspectives: the internalist account of the history of successive interpretations of Kant provided by Bourdieu's mentor and friend, French philosopher Jules Vuillemin (1920–2001) in his *L'héritage kantien et la révolution copernicienne* (Vuillemin 1954; e.g. Bourdieu 1975c, 140); and the externalist account of political and educative positions of German academics before the rise of National Socialism provided by German-American historian Fritz Ringer (1934–2006) in his *The Decline of the German Mandarins* (Ringer [1969] 1990). Bourdieu's contribution consists in establishing systematic relations between these two perspectives and show how they are practically coordinated by Heidegger's *habitus*.

sociologically. The scientific field is a field like any other, but it is also specific in terms of its history and its internal functioning.⁹⁵ With this approach, Bourdieu seems to successfully overcome the internal-external distinction.⁹⁶

The present work seeks to apply a similar perspective in its analysis of the sociologization of the *a priori*. It focuses on the relatively autonomous spaces of specialists in philosophy and the social sciences as well as on processes of autonomization in these areas. I shall thus try to avoid the complementary traps of internalism and externalism.⁹⁷ As suggested by other successful analyses in this area (e.g. Heilbron [1990] 1995; 2015; Collins 1987; 1998a), the goal is to hold together the analysis of intellectual stances and social positions – in particular, by passing through agents’ peculiar, socially conditioned spaces of possibilities (*espace des possibles*). Regarding the specific issue of the sociologization of the *a priori*, this means to consider both the logical and the socio-structural dimensions of the problem. In other words, I shall try to work out its “socio-logical”⁹⁸ – i.e. simultaneously intellectual and social – character: to construe the logic of the problem as a “properly socio-logical logic” (Bourdieu 2022a, 660). Even if I will not claim to have entirely attained this goal, the integration of intellectual and social dimensions (previously – and unsatisfactorily – opposed as “internal” and “external”) serves as a sort of Kantian “regulative ideal” or *focus imaginarius* for our analysis.⁹⁹

(5) Reflexivity

The last – and perhaps most complex – dimension of the sociologization of the *a priori* that any convincing methodological approach needs to account for is the issue of reflexivity. As I said earlier, making the *a priori* the object of sociological analysis has far-reaching consequences for how we conceive science and, by implication, sociology itself (if we conceive sociology as

⁹⁵ “L’univers ‘pur’ de la science la plus ‘pure’ est un champ social comme un autre, avec ses rapports de forces et ses monopoles, ses luttes et ses stratégies, ses intérêts et ses profits, mais où tous ces *invariants* revêtent des formes spécifiques.” (Bourdieu 1975b, 91)

⁹⁶ By the same token, Bourdieu sought to cumulate also the strengths of the “old” (mainly Mertonian) and the “new sociology of science” while avoiding their respective pitfalls (see the strategy in Bourdieu 2001b). This came with a reconsideration of Mertonian sociology of science at the turn of the 1990s (Bourdieu 1990a). Having initially contributed to the general anti-Mertonian mood of the 1970s with his first article on the scientific field (Bourdieu 1975b), Bourdieu became aware of a crucial convergence with Merton regarding the notion of “relative autonomy”. For Bourdieu’s public revision of his position on Merton, see especially Bourdieu 2001b, 31–32.

⁹⁷ For a concrete attempt to go beyond externalism (or “profanation”) and internalism (or “sacralization”) in our understanding of Kant and Comte, see Chapter 4.

⁹⁸ For this use of “socio-logical”, see e.g. Lévi-Strauss [1962] 1990, 96; Bourdieu 1975a, 8; Katzmaier 1999; Hamberger 2002.

⁹⁹ For this use of the Kantian optical metaphor of the *focus imaginarius* (Kant [1781–1787] 1974, 565, A644, B672; the metaphor goes back to Newton, see Meer 2019), see e.g. Bourdieu 1984, 48; [1992] 1998, 13. For a similar argument concerning the integration of sociological, historical and epistemological perspectives in the analysis of the emergence of French sociology, I permit myself to refer to Strauss 2021, 560–67.

a science or as being in continuity with other sciences, of course). For sociologizing *a priori* in general implies to sociologize also the *a priori* of scientific activity and, thus, of sociological activity – the science that is supposed to investigate *a priori*. Making the *a priori* the object of sociology therefore feeds back into our conception of sociology as a science or, perhaps better, as a scientific or scholarly practice. The proposition “the *a priori* is sociological” then has a peculiar self-referential quality. Which conclusions do we draw from this? Are advocates of this proposition entering a vicious circle with the risk of committing a “performative self-contradiction”¹⁰⁰? Or, on the contrary, are they engaging in a virtuous circle that offers them the chance to know and control their own presuppositions? What does this self-referentiality imply for the present socio-historical study of the various versions of reasoning in sociologized *a priori*? We need an account, it seems, that does not repress but embrace the intrinsic reflexivity of the problem.

Indeed, the challenge of reflexivity is inevitable once we conceive the sociologization of the *a priori* itself as a socio-historical process – a process that we should consequently explore with the means of sociology (or the social sciences more broadly). It seems that we cannot *not* take a stance on the issue. As we have seen (Chapter 1), socio-transcendental reasoning constitutes a peculiar approach to social and intellectual phenomena, with far-reaching consequences in social scientific theory, methodology and epistemology. It is a way of approaching social phenomena that differs from others, such as causal or comprehensive reasoning. When we take the transcendental type of reasoning in the social sciences itself as an object of analysis and ask ourselves how to study it in a socio-historical perspective, the question of the outlook we choose for doing so is unavoidable. Which approach do we pick in investigating the sociologization of the *a priori*? A causal, a comprehensive or a socio-transcendental one? We face here again on a higher level, i.e. in the study of types of reasoning, a choice between various types of reasoning (and connected methodologies). There is a decision to be made.¹⁰¹

One might wish, for instance, to give a purely causal account of the history of sociologizing the *a priori*. In this case, one might try to explain phenomena such as the emergence, the

¹⁰⁰ The notion of “performative self-contradiction” – a sort of transcendental retortion argument claiming that the opponent presupposes performatively what they deny in the content of their proposition – has been popularized in German-language philosophy especially by German philosophers Karl-Otto Apel (1922–2017) and Jürgen Habermas (1929–) with their shared projects of “transcendental pragmatics” and “discourse ethics” (e.g. Apel 1975; see also Kranz [2005] 2017; Hintikka 1962). Earlier forms can be traced back as far as Aristotle’s anti-sceptical “elenctic proof” of the irrefutability of the principle of non-contradiction (Aristoteles 1994, 105–6, 1006a).

¹⁰¹ Of course, as the sociology of science has taught us, we can speak here of “choice” and “decision” only in a figurative sense – primarily for the purposes of analysis and clarification. In practice, most of these decisions are already taken – and not for strictly “internal” scientific reasons – by the time research and data collection starts.

obstacles or the diffusion of this type of reasoning by factors considered as “causes”: the social characteristics (class, status, religion, gender, etc.), interests, strategies and struggles of the groups involved, the institutions which support or oppose them, etc.¹⁰² Or one might prefer a comprehensive or hermeneutical account and try to understand the “sense” or “meaning” of this type of reasoning. In that case, one might explore the inner structure of the Kantian system, with its potentialities, tensions and pitfalls, and show which of these possibilities were actualized historically for what systematic reasons.¹⁰³ Both styles and strategies certainly have their merits. Practically, one might also try (or be obliged) to combine aspects of both strategies (especially, if we consider rational explanation as a peculiar type of causal explanation, see Davidson [1963] 2011). In any case, both options would treat socio-transcendental reasoning as something external to their own method of investigation. This can be seen as an advantage – it certainly reduces complexity – or as a disadvantage – it avoids a closer engagement with both the methodological merits and difficulties of the type of reasoning taken as an object of study.

Which is the perspective I endorse in the present work? In a way, the answer has already been given with my commitment to a broadly Bourdieusian approach. For Bourdieu’s sociology serves here not only as a methodological and theoretical reference. I also take it as a positive case in the long history of the sociologization of the *a priori*: Bourdieu explicitly proposed his own version of sociologizing the *a priori* and engaged in forms of socio-transcendental reasoning. His work thus enters the present study both on the analytical level and the object level. For my choice of perspective this implies, in short, that I suggest taking a socio-transcendental perspective on socio-transcendental reasoning. I propose – contrary to causal and comprehensive approaches – to take an openly reflexive route which consists in applying socio-transcendental reasoning to itself, more precisely, to its own history. In other words, I seek to offer a history of the sociologization of the *a priori* that would be “self-exemplifying” (e.g. Merton [1963] 1973a, 381–82; 2004, 231–33; see also the discussion below).

We can conceive of this admittedly baroque strategy as a sort of methodological gamble. It consists in exploring the socio-transcendental type of reasoning on two different levels at the same time: on the one hand, as a historical object of empirical investigation; on the other hand, as a method with its own present-day potential and problems. If the bet pays off, we should be

¹⁰² Of course, causal explanation can take a multitude of forms. What counts as “cause” and “causal explanation” is variously defined. For one, we might think of the explicitly causalist strategy put forward by the “strong programme” in the sociology of science (Barnes 1974; Bloor [1976] 1991) (the effective explanatory practices of proponents of this programme is another question). A causalist approach has also been attributed to Mertonian sociology of science.

¹⁰³ Again, there is a multitude of options in this “family” of reasoning. In this direction goes, for example, Jules Vuillemin’s analysis of the problem of the “Copernican Revolution” and the responses to its internal tensions by Fichte, Cohen and Heidegger (Vuillemin 1954).

able to better understand at once both the history and the epistemology of this type of reasoning – which is indeed one of the ambitions of the thesis. If it goes awry, we might end up in self-refutation, “performative self-contradiction”, relativism, or – less spectacular but more probable – useless navel-gazing. To my mind, the gamble is worth the risk. It makes us assume the intrinsic reflexivity of the problem of sociologizing the *a priori* instead of repressing it artificially. I shall be trying to stand on the ground of the very epistemological and methodological tradition which I am investigating.¹⁰⁴

We find ourselves then on the route of a vertiginous *mise en abyme*. To push this reasoning to the end, I might also say that I will be asking several “second-order socio-transcendental questions” or, more precisely, “socio-transcendental meta-questions”¹⁰⁵: What has *made possible* the socio-transcendental type of reasoning in the social sciences that produces statements of the type “*x* makes *y* possible”? Which is the socio-historical *a priori* of this talk of “socio-historical *a prioris*”? How has the idea of “social conditions of possibility” become possible in the first place? Or, put bluntly, which are the social conditions of possibility of the very idea of social conditions of possibility that has nowadays become some sort of shared evidence?

There are, in my view, several positive reasons for making this reflexive gamble. First, there is reason to believe that, today, socio-transcendental reasoning has become itself a sort of socio-transcendental condition of certain strands of work in the social and human sciences.¹⁰⁶ This is what I tried to underscore in Chapter 1 with the examples from present-day research. These illustrations show that ideas of “social conditions of possibility” or “social categories” have become part of the “conceptual repertoire” (Abend 2014b, 36–39) in the social sciences. Also, the possibility of conceiving present socio-transcendental reasoning as a sort of “style” (as discussed critically in Chapter 1) indicates the sort of reflexive application I am aiming at. For if we count the theory of “thought styles” and “thought collectives” among the avatars of socio-transcendental reasoning (as suggested, for example, in Abend 2020, 6, 14), that is, if we think that styles “make possible” empirical observations, statements and theories, then speaking of a

¹⁰⁴ The sceptical reader might, of course, ask: “Doesn’t using Bourdieu’s approach – which you have presented as an example of socio-transcendental reasoning – for the study of the history of transcendental reasoning in the social sciences lead you into a vicious circle? Into a *petitio principii* where you presuppose what you ought to establish? Into self-refutation since you historicize, relativize and hence invalidate your own position? Into performative self-contradiction since you presuppose in your approach the validity of the Bourdieusian framework while, again, you are invalidating that same framework by historicizing-relativizing it?” I mean to repudiate these possible objections with the below distinction between “relativist” and “reformist reflexivity”.

¹⁰⁵ Following Abend, “second-order socio-transcendental questions” would rather refer to empirical questions about the enablers of the enablers of a particular social phenomenon, i.e. about “second-level enablers” (Abend [2020] 2022, 71). By contrast, my “socio-transcendental meta-question” is in fact a first-order socio-transcendental question about one particular social phenomenon, i.e. the idea of socio-transcendental conditions.

¹⁰⁶ I recall that I am speaking here of socio-transcendental reasoning in general, not of the more specific reasoning in *sociological a prioris* (see for this distinction Chapter 1).

“socio-transcendental style of reasoning” means that this style (like any other) functions as a socio-transcendental condition of certain parts of social-scientific research.

But we could go even further. One could try to make the – more speculative – case that the notion of a sort of sociologized or historicized *a priori* functions not only as a socio-historical *a priori* for a specific group of specialists, i.e. researchers in the social and human sciences. More widely, it has become, one could argue, an *a priori* of contemporary conceptions of the self, life in society and the knowledge we can have of both the social and natural world. In several academic and public debates we encounter today the notion that we are socio-historical beings whose basic concepts vary historically and locally; that these variations concern not only particular experiences, beliefs, practices, emotions or norms but an underlying level or framework which makes the former possible; that experiences, beliefs, practices, etc. can only be had relative to such socio-historical, quasi-aprioric frameworks; and that there are no criteria beyond such frameworks which would enable us to judge their correctness (the equivalent of Kuhn’s “incommensurability” between paradigms). Of course, these views are far from being universally accepted and vary doubtlessly with socio-economic and other social variables. But they have become one possible, important and implicitly acknowledged option in debates on key issues, ranging from social class, sex and gender (Haslanger 1995, 98) and race to the conception of ourselves (Taylor 1989), love (Illouz 2012), birth (Gélis 1984), death (Ariès 1975; 1977; Thomas 1975), family and childhood (Ariès [1960] 1975), nature (Descola 2005) and science (Hacking 1999).¹⁰⁷ Put boldly, thinking in terms of socio-historical *a prioris* seems to have become an essential component of late-modern (self-)understanding.¹⁰⁸

How have we (or some of us) come to think that way, in the social and human sciences and beyond? Investigating the history of the sociologization of the *a priori* might offer a small contribution to this both simple and terribly intricate question.¹⁰⁹ In any case, if there is reason to believe that thinking in socio-historical *a prioris* functions itself as a socio-historical *a priori*, then we have also reason to investigate it as such, that is by using again a form of socio-

¹⁰⁷ The works cited here are, of course, only indicative – as the list is incomplete.

¹⁰⁸ One of the most visible symptoms of this situation is the enduring academic, but also public discussion on “social construction” and relativism that has been going on for some fifty years now. Some important contributions to this debate (which emphasize frequently the extra-academic dimension of the issue) are Davidson 1973; Popper [1976] 1987; Lloyd 1990; Gross and Levitt 1994; Sokal and Bricmont 1997; Hacking 1999; Pinker 2002; Boghossian 2006; Elder-Vass 2012. Today, some of the most visible public debates concern questions of realism vs. constructivism regarding sex, gender and race (see e.g. recent debates on Stock 2021).

¹⁰⁹ The diffusion of socio-transcendental modes of reasoning in the wider public beyond the social and human sciences would require an investigation of its own. Work on the diffusion of psychological and psychotherapeutic knowledge and its impact on our conception of the self could serve as a model (Illouz 2008). I cannot undertake this work here, of course. On the most general level, one might try to trace notions of historicized and socialized frameworks back to varieties of romantic or “conservative thought” (Mannheim 1927; Bloor [1976] 1991, 55–83).

transcendental reasoning. This consideration provides some support for the reflexive approach I suggest.

Still, a critic might doubt: “Does a reiteration of socio-transcendental questions regarding socio-transcendental reasoning really make sense? Isn’t this just a vain mechanic repetition that produces some superficially fancy-sounding academic questions? Why start or stop at this level instead of going ever further and investigating, say, the socio-transcendental conditions of the present work on the socio-transcendental conditions of the idea of socio-transcendental conditions? Don’t we necessarily end up with some uninteresting navel-gazing if we take that route in the first place?” To answer these queries, I want to draw on a second source of support for my strategy. If I dare to advance on the shaky ground of reflexive self-application, it is because there are indeed some promising models for doing so.

The first model – and the most important one for the present work – is again Bourdieu. As shown in Chapter 1, Bourdieu credited sociologist Émile Durkheim (1858-1917) with the “paternity of the idea of *socio-transcendental conditions*” (Bourdieu 2001b, 158, italics by Bourdieu). This attribution of “paternity” puts the finger on the fact that socio-transcendental reasoning has its own history – although, admittedly, Bourdieu only hints here at this history in terms of a not further analysed heroic act of fathering. At the same time, we have seen that Bourdieu placed his own work repeatedly in this same lineage of enquiring into “socio-transcendental conditions” (e.g. Bourdieu 1977b). In this sense, he constructed his own “mythical genealogy” (Bourdieu [1983–1986] 2016, 596) which included besides Durkheim also Marcel Mauss (1872-1950), Erwin Panofsky (1892-1968) and Ernst Cassirer (1874-1945). In the same vein, he presented his concept of *habitus* explicitly as a “historical transcendental” (Bourdieu 2001b, 154) that functions simultaneously *a priori*, as a principle organizing experience (as a “structuring structure”), and *a posteriori*, as a product of prior structuring activity (as a “structured structure”). Moreover, Bourdieu conceived his sociology of science as an attempt to identify “socio-transcendental conditions of knowledge”. This conception was, in his view, the endpoint of the “process of historicizing Kant’s question” which asked reflexively for the conditions of the objectivity of knowledge. The historicization of Kantian “critique” results in a specific sort of sociological reflexivity (Bourdieu 2001b, 155; Bourdieu and Chartier [1988] 2010, 31). It is captured in the expression “objectivation of the subject of objectivation” (Bourdieu 2003b; see also [1972] 2000a, 221–55). The basic idea is to provide a sociological account of the quasi-aprioric cognitive structures that sociologists (and other researchers) deploy in their work – to “objectivate their transcendental unconscious”, in Bourdieu’s terms (Bourdieu 2001b,

154).¹¹⁰ In this framework, a reflexive sociology and history of the social sciences comes to play an indispensable role. It enables a permanent control of the conceptual and methodological instruments (“categories” or “schemes”) employed in these sciences and guarantees their continued relevance (Bourdieu 1987b; 1993b; [1997] 2022; 2001b, 167–220; [1990] 2002; see also Heilbron et al. 2004).

Now, it is true that – besides the above cited remark on Durkheim’s “paternity” – Bourdieu himself did not undertake concrete work on a history of socio-transcendental reasoning or of the sociologization of the *a priori*. He rather contributed to this history by pursuing his own project of a “sociology of symbolic forms” and inserting it in a suggestive “mythical genealogy” (the Durkheim-Cassirer lineage). But with the elements assembled above we can easily conceive such a reflexive study along Bourdieusian lines. For this, we simply need to combine the following propositions: (1) socio-transcendental reasoning has a history; (2) the history and sociology of the social sciences has to enquire reflexively into the categories that social scientists put to work; (3) the notion of socio-transcendental conditions has itself become part of the “transcendental unconscious” of (some) social scientists. Admittedly, the last statement is not explicit in Bourdieu (contrary to the first two), but I have presented some evidence for it in Chapter 1. We thus arrive at the project for a reflexive socio-transcendental investigation into socio-transcendental reasoning within Bourdieu’s framework.

But there are also models for such a reflexive history beyond Bourdieusian sociology. A second prominent example is Michel Foucault’s “archaeology” of the human sciences. In *Les mots et les choses* (1966), he investigated how the organisation of knowledge had transformed to support the emergence of several human and social sciences (grammar, natural history and political economy). The picture which underlies the human sciences, he claimed, is that of “man” as an “empirical-transcendental doublet” (Foucault [1966] 1990, 329–33): man is conceived at the same time as an object of scientific experience (“empirical”) and as the subject that makes this experience possible in the first place (“transcendental”). According to Foucault, this conception of man is itself the “historical *a priori*” which underlies the human sciences. *Les mots et les choses* is thought to write precisely the history of this historical *a priori*.¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ For a condensed statement of this whole argument, see Bourdieu 2001b, 153–54 and my analysis of this passage in Chapter 1.

¹¹¹ The following statement sums up this reasoning: “Le mode d’être de l’homme tel qu’il s’est constitué dans la pensée moderne lui permet de jouer deux rôles: il est à la fois au fondement de toutes les positivités [i.e. transcendental, MS] et présent, d’une façon qu’on ne peut même pas dire privilégiée, dans l’élément des choses empiriques [i.e. empirical, MS]. Ce fait – il ne s’agit point là de l’essence en général de l’homme, mais purement et simplement de cet *a priori* historique, qui depuis le XIX^e siècle, sert de sol presque évident à notre pensée – ce fait est sans doute décisif pour le statut à donner aux ‘sciences humaines’, à ce corps de connaissances (mais ce mot même est peut-être trop fort: disons, pour être plus neutre encore, à cet ensemble de discours) qui prend pour l’objet l’homme en ce qu’il a d’empirique.” (Foucault [1966] 1990, 355) There is

At the same time, in writing this history, Foucault used the same kind of “empirical-transcendental” or socio-transcendental reasoning (largely conceived, that is, not specifically sociological) which he took as an object of historical study. For the central concept of “*épistémè*”, which he used to explain the advent of the human sciences, is situated precisely on the level of socio-transcendental conditions. It signifies the order of knowledge which makes specific empirical claims possible. Foucault’s “archaeology”, i.e. the investigation of the transformations in the order of knowledge (or “*épistémè*”), is then the science of the historical conditions of possibility of scientific theories and knowledge.¹¹² But now the reflexivity of Foucault’s approach becomes plain: he studies the conception of man as an “empirical-transcendental doublet” as an empirical-transcendental condition of the human sciences. He thus works clearly towards a reflexive history (or “archaeology”) of the idea of historico-transcendental conditions in the human and social sciences. Of course, Foucault’s project is much more critical of sociology as a scientific endeavour than the one I envisioned following Bourdieu.¹¹³ Nevertheless, he provides us with a positive instance of a reflexive account of the type of reasoning I am interested in.

But what about more modest and concrete studies in this reflexive vein? A third recent example of this type is French historian Thomas Hirsch’s (1982-) *Le Temps des sociétés* (2016). In this study, he retraces the emergence, elaboration and 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. The author undertakes considerable work on archival sources, personal papers, correspondences and reviews to show how this idea moves in an interdisciplinary setting between sociology,

reason to believe that the idea of the “empirical-transcendental doublet” goes back to Foucault’s close engagement with Kant’s *Anthropologie in pragmatischer Hinsicht* as well as his earlier work on the emergence of a “historical transcendental” in Hegel’s *Phenomenology* (Foucault [1949] 2024; [1961] 2008; see also [1954–1955] 2022).

¹¹² For this whole argument: “Il ne sera donc pas question de connaissances décrites dans leur progrès vers une objectivité dans laquelle notre science d’aujourd’hui pourrait enfin se reconnaître; ce qu’on voudrait mettre au jour, c’est le champ épistémologique, l’*épistémè* où les connaissances, envisagées hors de tout critère se référant à leur valeur rationnelle ou à leurs formes objectives, enfoncent leur positivité et manifestent ainsi une histoire qui n’est pas celle de leur perfection croissante, mais plutôt celle de leurs conditions de possibilité; en ce récit, ce qui doit apparaître, ce sont, dans l’espace du savoir, les configurations qui ont donné lieu aux formes diverses de la connaissance empirique. Plutôt que d’une histoire au sens traditionnel du mot, il s’agit d’une ‘archéologie’.” (Foucault [1966] 1990, 13) And a bit earlier on this “archeology”: “Une telle analyse [archeologique, MS], on le voit, ne relève pas de l’histoire des idées ou des sciences: c’est plutôt une étude qui s’efforce de retrouver à partir de quoi connaissances et théories ont été possibles; selon quel espace d’ordre s’est constitué le savoir; sur fond de quel *a priori historique* [italics by Foucault, MS] et dans l’élément de quelle positivité des idées ont pu apparaître, des sciences se constituer, des expériences se réfléchir dans des philosophies, des rationalités se former, pour, peut-être, se dénouer et s’évanouir bientôt.” (Foucault [1966] 1990, 13) For Foucault’s account of the “historical *a priori*”, see also Foucault 1969, 173–80.

¹¹³ For instance, in *Surveiller et punir* (1977), sociology figures among those “discours à prétention scientifique” – such as medicine and psychology – that contribute to and express “disciplinary society” (Foucault 1975, 65, 262–63).

philosophy, psychology, ethnology and history. Hirsch's main thesis is that the "socialization" of time (Hirsch 2016, 58, 418) is both the expression of and the answer to a change in the – again social – conception of historical time: it is a response to a "crisis of progress" and the decline of evolutionistic and progressivist visions of history (Hirsch 2016, 12, 93, 406). The idea of "social time" – one aspect of the broader sociologization the *a priori* – thus appears as having its own social "conditions of possibility" (Hirsch 2016, 26). It has been "made possible" by a non-linear conception of history and has evolved with changing representations of historical time.¹¹⁴

It is true that there are several problems with Hirsch's study. Most importantly, in contrast to the other two examples (Bourdieu and Foucault), the author doesn't really embrace or further explore the reflexivity embedded in his approach.¹¹⁵ Nonetheless, his study of the idea of social time indicates that some concrete historical work can be done to realize the sort of reflexive self-application which I suggested.

In sum, these three examples provide reason to belief in the possibility and feasibility of a reflexive sociological history of the problem which I have called the sociologization of the *a priori*. Looking at these models, it seems a little less hopeless to try identifying some socio-transcendental conditions of socio-transcendental reasoning through concrete historical investigations. At the least, these positive instances can encourage us to pursue this line of enquiry a little further.

So far, I have tried to dispel some in-principle doubts against the very idea of writing a reflexive sociological history of the sociologization of the *a priori*. We must now be more explicit about the specific notion of reflexivity involved in this endeavour, to reject some further objections. Today, the demand for some sort of "reflexivity" has become ubiquitous in the social and human sciences.¹¹⁶ Indeed, since the 1960s, several different versions of "reflexivity" (using the word or term) have been proposed and discussed – one commentator identifying no less than fifteen varieties within six larger categories (Lynch 2000). The issue itself (the idea, the problem, the concept) has been present even longer – reaching arguably back at least to the inception of "*sociologie*" in Comte's positive philosophy. Simply put, the problem is that any

¹¹⁴ For this approach, see also Hartog 2003; 2020. French historian François Hartog (1946-) was the supervisor of Hirsch's 2014 thesis, which resulted in the book *Le Temps des sociétés*.

¹¹⁵ For detailed criticism of Hirsch's book, see Strauss 2021, 530–42.

¹¹⁶ "L'exigence de réflexivité, qui s'est imposée comme un principe incontournable en sciences humaines et sociales, est l'un des apports majeurs des travaux de Pierre Bourdieu." (Bourdieu and Heilbron 2022, 9)

attempt to understand social phenomena is itself a social phenomenon.¹¹⁷ Social science itself is a social fact – a social fact that might, in turn, become the object of social science.¹¹⁸

I cannot offer here a history of the word and problem of “reflexivity”, of course.¹¹⁹ To understand and situate the version I endorse, it is necessary, however, to recall some basic facts. Notwithstanding earlier statements of the problem, it is with the emergence of projects for a sociology of knowledge at the turn of the 20th century that the topic of reflexivity rose to prominence. Arguably, the issue was already present in Durkheimian sociology of knowledge – precisely in connection with the Durkheimian version of sociologizing the *a priori* (Gingras 2020b, 718) – although it wasn’t explicitly or lengthily discussed in this tradition.¹²⁰ German sociology of knowledge (*Wissenssoziologie*) took up the topic in the interwar period and explored it more systematically, for example with Mannheim’s reflexive sociology of knowledge of the emergence of the problem of a sociology of knowledge (Mannheim [1925] 1964).¹²¹ Versions of reflexivity also featured in early forays into the sociology of science in the United States from the 1930s onwards, for instance in Merton’s notion that the sociology of science was “self-exemplifying” (e.g. Merton [1963] 1973a, 381–82; 2004, 231–33; see also Cole and

¹¹⁷ An English-speaking anthology on the “sociology of sociology” from the early 1970s displayed the apt title *The Phenomenon of Sociology* (Tiryakian 1971). Perhaps the simplest and clearest formulation of the basic problem has been given by Norbert Elias: “Wenn man verstehen will, worum es in der Soziologie geht, dann muß man in der Lage sein, in Gedanken sich selbst gegenüberzutreten und seiner selbst als eines Menschen unter anderen gewahr zu werden. Denn die Soziologie beschäftigt sich mit Problemen der ‘Gesellschaft’, und zur Gesellschaft gehört auch jeder, der über die Gesellschaft nachdenkt und sie erforscht.” (Elias [1970] 2006b, 12)

¹¹⁸ As such, this pattern of self-inclusion is not specific to the social sciences: physics can be conceived as a physical phenomenon, chemistry as a chemical phenomenon, biology as a biological phenomenon, psychology as a psychological phenomenon, history as a historical phenomenon, anthropology as an anthropological phenomenon, and so forth. It seems intrinsic to any sort of knowledge that pretends to some sort of universal validity. The difference consists, it seems, in how relevant this sort of self-inclusion is for the kind of knowledge concerned. A physical description of human beings doing physics will have relatively little repercussions on physics (except, perhaps, on the level of quantum mechanics with Heisenberg’s uncertainty principle). A sociological description of social human beings doing sociology, on the other hand, might be crucial for assessing and controlling the kind of knowledge produced by sociology.

¹¹⁹ For a sociological study of the uses of the word “reflexivity” in a long-term perspective leading up to the present, see Fringant 2023; 2024; 2025. For helpful but polemical typologies of different notions of reflexivity, especially as discussed in the field of “science and technology studies”, see Woolgar 1988; Ashmore 1989, chap. 2; Lynch 2000. For a critical discussion of this current and a confrontation with Bourdieusian reflexivity, see Gingras 2004; 2020.

¹²⁰ Besides historical contingencies such as the weakening of the Durkheimian group through the First World War, the most likely reason for this is that the self-application of sociology didn’t present a problem within the Durkheimian project in its French context.

¹²¹ In this context, Mannheim speaks explicitly of “Reflexivität”: “Die Notwendigkeit einer solchen Vorfragestellung erwächst aus unserem erweiterten Horizont und aus einer gesteigerten Reflexivität, die es uns nicht nur ermöglicht, sondern geradezu zur Pflicht macht, nicht nur gleichsam darauf los zu fragen und in dieser Weise Fragen naiv zu häufen, sondern auch die geistigen Untergründe, die Konstellationen, aus denen Fragen erwachsen, in das Blickfeld zu heben.” (Mannheim [1925] 1964, 310)

Zuckerman [1975] 2017), i.e. that it exhibited, as an emerging discipline, mechanisms studied by the sociology of science.¹²²

However, it was not until the 1970s that the topic – and especially the label “reflexivity” – really took off. Its rise was associated, on the one hand, with the demise of “structural functionalism” in English-speaking sociology, for example in American sociologist Alvin Gouldner’s (1920-1980) *The Coming Crisis of Sociology*, which argued both against Parsonian functionalism and for a “reflexive sociology” (especially Gouldner 1970, chap. 13). It was also connected to the import into American sociology of new “European” theoretical influences such as phenomenology (Wagner [1976] 1981). “Reflexion” and “reflexivity” had indeed played an important role in the phenomenological tradition. Its founder, Austrian-German philosopher and mathematician Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), for example, had insisted on “reflexion” both on the level of agents in their “natural attitude” – speaking in this case of a “natürliche Reflexion des Alltagslebens” – and on the level of the phenomenological analyst performing a “transzendental-phänomenologische Reflexion”, i.e. withholding judgment regarding the existence or non-existence of the world (the phenomenological method of *epoché*) (e.g. Husserl [1929] 2012, 34). Through Austrian philosopher and sociologist Alfred Schütz (1899-1959), who had emigrated to the United States in 1939, the topic passed into sociology. According to Schütz, social scientists proceeded – just as the social agents they observe – by “constructs” and offered “constructs of constructs” (especially typologies) according to their own “system of relevances”.¹²³

Through Schütz, the issue of reflexivity entered new theoretical-empirical research programmes that were forthcoming in the 1960s and 1970s, especially social constructionism (Berger and Luckmann 1966) and “ethnomethodology” (Garfinkel [1967] 1984a). Ethnomethodology formulated perhaps one of the most radical versions of reflexivity. According to ethnomethodology’s founder, American sociologist Harold Garfinkel (1917-2011), and his followers, reflexivity was not a privilege of the scientific observer, but a universal feature of mundane everyday social action: reflexivity was both “essential” and, as such, “uninteresting” for the agents involved (Garfinkel [1967] 1984a, 7–9). As a consequence, there is no difference in principle between the the scientific observers’ actions seeking understanding and explanation

¹²² Lynch called this sort of reflexivity depreciatively “methodological self-congratulation” (Lynch 2000, 30) and – correctly, in my view – identified a continuity with the function of reflexivity in Bloor’s “strong programme”.

¹²³ “The thought objects constructed by the social scientists refer to and are founded upon the thought objects constructed by the common-sense thought of man living his everyday life among his fellowmen. Thus, the constructs used by the social scientist are, so to speak, constructs of the second degree, namely constructs of the constructs made by the actors on the social scene whose behavior the scientist observes and tries to explain in accordance with the procedural rules of his science.” (Schuetz 1953, 3)

and social agents' ordinary actions of "accounting" reflexively for their practices.¹²⁴ Dismissing traditional "sociology" as a sort of misplaced scientific exceptionalism (e.g. Garfinkel [1967] 1984a, 66–68, 100), ethnomethodology assumed reflexively its own role as one "account" among others. Also, if reflexivity is a general feature of social action, the opposition between reflexive and non-reflexive action collapses. Reflexivity thus also loses its aura as an "epistemic virtue" (Lynch 2000) specific to scientific activity.¹²⁵ This conception of reflexivity in ethnomethodology had impacts in different areas of the social and human sciences, such as anthropology (e.g. Clifford and Marcus 1986), sociology, linguistics, literary studies and "social studies of science".

It is in this latter area – the heterogeneous field of the "new sociology of science" or, later, "social studies of science" or "science and technology studies" emerging in the 1970s (for an overview, see Dubois 1999; 2001) – that the issue of reflexivity was particularly hotly debated. It featured – besides causality, impartiality and symmetry – as one of the four tenets of the "strong programme" in the sociology of scientific knowledge put forward by British sociologist of science David Bloor (1942-). It meant, according to Bloor, that sociology of science's

patterns of explanation would have to be applicable to sociology itself. Like the requirement of symmetry this is a response to the need to seek for general explanations. It is an obvious requirement of principle because otherwise sociology would be a standing refutation of its own theories (Bloor [1976] 1991, 7).

Importantly, Bloor argued that this sort of reflexivity did not lead to self-refuting relativism. The sociology of scientific knowledge is not invalidated by the fact that it is itself a form of scientific knowledge to which the principles of causality, impartiality and symmetry can be applied. The "argument from self-refutation" (Bloor [1976] 1991, 17) against the sociology of scientific knowledge¹²⁶ is based on the premise – vigorously rejected by Bloor – that "causality

¹²⁴ "Ethnomethodological studies analyze everyday activities as members' methods for making those same activities visibly-rational-and-reportable-for-all-practical-purposes, i.e., 'accountable', as organizations of commonplace everyday activities. The reflexivity of that phenomenon is a singular feature of practical actions, of practical circumstances, of common sense knowledge of social structures, and of practical sociological reasoning." (Garfinkel [1967] 1984a, vii)

¹²⁵ American ethnomethodologist Michael Lynch (1948-), in his typological effort, characterized ethnomethodological reflexivity as follows: "The reflexivity of accounts implies interpretation – expressing, indicating or recognizing meaning – but, more than that, it alludes to the embodied practices through which persons singly and together, retrospectively and prospectively, produce *account-able* states of affairs. According to this view, reflexivity is ubiquitous and unremarkable. [...] Garfinkel speaks of the 'essential reflexivity of accounts' to describe a property of 'accounts' (verbal expressions, signifiers, texts and other formal devices) that is furnished by taken-for-granted usage in recurrent circumstances. One aspect of this version of reflexivity [...] is that it is not associated with any particular epistemic virtue, cognitive skill or emancipatory interest." (Lynch 2000, 33–34)

¹²⁶ Bloor formulates the objection as follows: "For are not sociologists bound to admit that their own thoughts are determined, and in part even socially determined? Must they not therefore admit that their own claims are false in proportion to the strength of this determination? The result appears to be that no sociological theory can be

implies error” (Bloor [1976] 1991, 18). Against this, Bloor had argued – via the principles of causality and symmetry – that true and false beliefs alike have social causes and should be explained accordingly.

While the suggested self-application of the “strong programme” has remained marginal¹²⁷, Bloor’s conception of reflexivity – in its connection with the programme’s other three principles – has provided the starting point for further intense debate in social studies of science. It resulted, for example, in a confrontation with ethnomethodological reflexivity in the context of a debate on the use of Ludwig Wittgenstein’s (1889-1951) rule-following considerations in the sociology of science (Lynch 1992a; Bloor 1992; Lynch 1992b). Reflexivity arguably also played a role in philosopher and sociologist of science Bruno Latour’s (1947-2022) critique of the “strong programme” and his radicalization (or “generalization”) of the symmetry principle. Apparently informed by ethnomethodological reflexivity, Latour argued that the “strong programme” had not been sufficiently reflexive and symmetrical about itself in privileging explanations by social causes (Latour [1991] 1997, chap. 4; see also 1988). Against this, he finally promoted a “demise of the [category of the] ‘social’ as a whole” (Latour and Woolgar 1986, 281) and abandoned sociology as conventionally understood altogether in favour of “actor-network theory” (Latour 2005).¹²⁸

Finally, reflexivity has perhaps been pushed furthest by ethnomethodologically informed researchers in science studies such as Steven Woolgar (1950-) and Malcolm Ashmore (Woolgar 1988a; Ashmore 1989). They sought to radicalize reflexivity as proposed by the “strong programme” and to develop new literary forms to display and account for the reflexivity of their own texts (for a sample of this approach, see Woolgar and Ashmore 1988). Correctly or not, this conception of reflexivity has been charged with sterility, narcissism, navel-gazing or, simply, as losing sight of the actual objects under study, i.e. scientific activity or the social world, more broadly (for such criticisms, see e.g. Bourdieu 1993b; [1993] 2022; Gingras 1995; 2004; 2020b).¹²⁹

general in its scope otherwise it would reflexively enmesh itself in error and destroy its own credibility.” (Bloor [1976] 1991, 17)

¹²⁷ The best positive example I know is Kaiser 1998.

¹²⁸ For a taste of Latour’s position: “To be sure, social factors are still there, but they are one of the things to be studied, not elements which allow us to understand. ‘Social factors’ are the particular product of professional social scientists striving to establish new types of calculations in their institutions. They define, in many various ways, what holds us all together. They call this ‘society’, and try to render their definitions indispensable to as many other people as possible, by insinuating themselves in as many other trades as possible (business, politics, academic life, journalism, the publishing industry, and so on). No matter how interesting their work, it is no different in form and purpose from that of all the others engaged in networkbuilding. In other words, the social sciences are part of the problem, not of the solution.” (Latour 1988, 161)

¹²⁹ Gingras cites in this context (Gingras 2020b, 720) the criticism of French sociologist Raymond Aron (1905-1983) – Bourdieu’s second doctoral supervisor – regarding the excessive reflexivity of German sociology of knowledge (*Wissenssoziologie*). Aron indicated, among other things, the risk that “auto-analyse” and

Now, to come back to the present project of a reflexive socio-transcendental history of socio-transcendental reasoning, it implies, as I understand it, a notion of reflexivity in the social sciences and their history that is different from those discussed far. This conception is, once more, inspired by Bourdieu. The topic of a critical self-application of the social sciences had been present – under different labels such as “vigilance épistémologique”, “auto-analyse”, “objectification of the objectifying subject” or “sociologie de la sociologie” – from the beginning of Bourdieu’s work, for example in his studies on colonial Algeria and his Béarn home region (Bourdieu and Heilbron 2022). Yet, Bourdieu integrated the notion of “reflexivity” into his vocabulary only in the late 1980s and early 1990s in response to North American sociology where, at that point, the label had been circulating for around two decades (Gingras 2004; 2020b; Fringant 2025). From the 1990s to the end of his life, “reflexivity” then became one of the catchwords of Bourdieu’s sociology (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992; Bourdieu 2001b; 2004).

What does the Bourdieusian conception of reflexivity involve? To begin with, according to Bourdieu’s notion, reflexivity (or the self-application of sociology) does not inexorably lead to relativism (or self-refutation).¹³⁰ Bourdieu distinguishes clearly between a relativistic (or “narcissistic”) and a “realist” or “reformist” (or “scientific”) interpretation of reflexivity (Bourdieu 2001b, 176, 178; see also 1993b; [1993] 2022). According to the latter notion, the social sciences can apply their means and methods to their very means and methods. This self-application, however, does not lead automatically to self-refutation. In Bourdieu’s view, it rather allows for an increased control of the tools and instruments which are thus investigated: it gives a better grasp of the limits of the valid application of these tools; it brings to consciousness the unconscious social (and not specifically scientific) constraints which impact their use; it allows for a greater “liberty” regarding the determination by those constraints; and it ensures the continued relevance and applicability of these tools.¹³¹

“sociologie de la sociologie” might lead to losing contact with the actual difficulties of research: “Enfin, elle [self-analysis, MS] risque de détourner des recherches difficiles; il est plus aisé de comprendre les idées des ethnologues que celles des Australiens.” (Aron [1935] 2007, 138)

¹³⁰ In this respect, Bourdieu’s position is comparable to Bloor’s rejection of the “argument from self-refutation” (Bloor [1976] 1991, 17) and Bloor’s “methodological relativism” (Bloor [1976] 1991, 158) – although Bourdieu is highly critical of Bloor and the “new sociology of science” in other contexts (Bourdieu 1990a; 1991; [1991] 2022; 2001b; 2002b) and criticizes a form of “relativisme autodestructif” (Bourdieu [1991] 2022, 304) – thus suggesting that some forms of relativism might indeed be self-refuting.

¹³¹ “Et on voit tout le parti qu’une conception réaliste de la réflexivité peut tirer d’analyses de cette sorte [the analysis of coding in Garfinkel and Sacks 1986, MS] [...]. Cela à condition de s’inspirer d’une intention qu’on pourra appeler *réformiste*, dans la mesure où elle se donne explicitement pour projet de chercher dans la science sociale et dans la connaissance qu’elle peut procurer, notamment à propos de la science sociale elle-même, de ses opérations et de ses présupposés, des instruments indispensables à une critique réflexive capable de lui assurer un degré supérieur de liberté à l’égard des contraintes et des nécessités sociales qui pèsent sur elle comme sur toute activité humaine.” (Bourdieu 2001b, 176)

According to Bourdieu, the social sciences have to “confront the relativistic or sceptical circle” created by their self-application – and “break it” (Bourdieu [2001] 2004, 86). The break with relativistic circularity consists precisely in using the scientific tools of the social sciences for controlling the uncontrolled non-scientific aspects of these very same tools.¹³² Bourdieu thus conceives precisely the historicization of conceptual tools and methods as a crucial strategy for “de-historicizing” them.¹³³ The basic reformist intention is clear: the task is to understand the socio-historical determinations of social-scientific concepts and tools through a reflexive investigation in order to better control them and increase our chances of gaining more objective knowledge.

As mentioned earlier, Bourdieu conceived this reformist reflexivity explicitly as the endpoint of a historicization of Kant’s project of “critique”.¹³⁴ He stated this idea in several passages in his work. Perhaps most clearly, he declared in a radio interview with French historian Roger Chartier (1945-) in 1988 that he took Kant as a sort of “theoretical model”: “en fait, si j’avais un modèle théorique, ce serait le modèle kantien, qui consiste à soumettre à la critique réflexive les instruments avec lesquels on pense la réalité” (Bourdieu and Chartier [1988] 2010, 31). At the same occasion, he described how he transposed the Kantian model into sociological enquiries into various “categories of thought”, for example in his study on “Les catégories de l’entendement professoral” (Bourdieu and Saint Martin 1975; for a revised version, see Bourdieu 1989, chap. 2). By the same token, he characterized his sociology of science as a “scientific” and “resolutely historicist redefinition of the Kantian project” (Bourdieu [1991]

¹³² The following passage condenses this whole line of reasoning: “Pour porter au jour le caché par excellence, ce qui échappe au regard de la science parce qu’il se cache dans le regard même du savant, l’inconscient transcendantal, il faut historiciser le sujet de l’historicisme, objectiver le sujet de l’objectivation, c’est-à-dire le *transcendantal historique* dont l’objectivation est la condition de l’accès de la science à la conscience de soi, c’est-à-dire à la connaissance de ses présupposés historiques. Il faut demander à l’instrument d’objectivation que constituent les sciences sociales le moyen d’arracher ces sciences à la relativisation à laquelle elles sont exposées aussi longtemps que leur productions restent déterminées par les déterminations inconscientes qui sont inscrites dans le cerveau du savant ou dans les conditions sociales à l’intérieur desquelles il produit. Et pour cela, il leur [the social sciences, MS] faut affronter le cercle relativiste ou sceptique et le briser en mettant en œuvre, pour faire la science des sciences sociales et des savants qui les produisent, tous les instruments que fournissent ces sciences mêmes et produire ainsi des instruments permettant de maîtriser les déterminations sociales auxquelles elles sont exposées.” (Bourdieu 2001b, 169)

¹³³ “Je pense que l’arme par excellence de la *réflexivité critique* est l’analyse historique: paradoxalement, l’historicisme méthodique des instruments de la pensée rationnelle (catégories de pensée, principes de classification, concepts, etc.) est un des moyens les plus puissants de les arracher à l’histoire.” (Bourdieu 2002a, 272)

¹³⁴ “Mais cette réflexivité pratique ne prend toute sa force que si l’analyse des implications et des présupposés des opérations routinières de la pratique scientifique se prolonge dans une véritable critique (au sens de Kant) des conditions sociales de possibilité et des limites des formes de pensée que le savant ignorant de ces conditions engage sans le savoir dans sa recherche et qui réalisent à son insu, c’est-à-dire à sa place, les opérations les plus spécifiquement scientifiques, comme la construction de l’objet de la science.” (Bourdieu 2001b, 176)

2022, 308).¹³⁵ In the same vein, he also spoke of a “sociological critique of sociological reason” and assigned it a fundamental and indispensable role for progress in the social sciences:

Or la science sociale peut attendre ses progrès les plus décisifs d’un effort constant pour procéder à une critique sociologique de la raison sociologique: elle doit travailler à reconstruire la genèse sociale non seulement des catégories de pensée qu’elle met consciemment ou inconsciemment en œuvre [...], mais aussi des concepts qu’elle utilise [...] ou des problèmes qu’elle se propose (Bourdieu 1987b, 291).¹³⁶

Reflexivity, in Bourdieu’s conception, hence, does not lead into a vicious – “relativistic” or “sceptical” – circle but into a virtuous one, spiralling the social sciences upwards towards progress. A decisive ingredient of this progressive reading of reflexivity, which distinguished Bourdieu from most other advocates of reflexivity in the “new sociology of science”, is the already discussed notion of science as a relatively autonomous field. Many “new sociologists of science” discarded the notion of the autonomy of science and knowledge as a whole (e.g. Bloor [1976] 1991, 8–13) – mostly in an attempt to take their distance with Mertonian sociology of science and present the latter as obsolete – and levelled, in some cases, all differences between scientific and ordinary activity in a radical “anti-differentiationist” gesture (Shinn and Ragouet 2005, chap. 2). Bourdieu, on the other hand, had insisted from the beginning (e.g. Bourdieu 1975b; 1976) on the relative autonomy of science. Science is one kind of social activity among others, obeying to general mechanisms that apply also in other areas of social life such as politics or economics. But it is also a *specific* social activity with a peculiar internal functioning (an “inner law”) that makes it relatively independent from outside social forces.

Relative autonomy has important consequences for reflexivity. When a relatively autonomous science turns upon itself, it has a chance to identify, critique and eliminate relatively

¹³⁵ The passage deserves to be cited in full: “Dans la mesure où elle pose scientifiquement la question des conditions historiques de l’émergence de cette forme de discours universel qu’est le discours scientifique, l’analyse sociologique du champ scientifique peut apparaître comme une redéfinition scientifique (d’autres diront *scientiste*) du projet kantien: à une *analyse réflexive* visant à découvrir des universaux ignorés (les universaux de la capacité humaine de parler par exemple), se trouve substituée une *exploration empirique* des lois de fonctionnement des champs sociaux (qui sont autant de marchés linguistiques), conçues comme des conditions institutionnelles inscrites dans une certaine situation historique et fonctionnant comme conditions sociales de possibilité de tel ou tel type de production symbolique. Il ne suffit pas d’enregistrer le fait que, à chaque champ comme ‘forme de vie’ (*Lebensform*), correspond un ‘jeu de langage’ [possibly a critical allusion to Bloor 1983, MS]: il faut chercher dans une analyse sociologique des lois de fonctionnement particulières de chacun de ces espaces de jeu les fondements objectifs du tableau des contraintes et des règles de production d’expressions (donc de connaissances) qui définit en propre chacun de ces ‘jeux de langage’ (par une redéfinition résolument historiciste du projet kantien de dégager des acquis des sciences une représentation *définitive* des conditions de production des connaissances).” (Bourdieu [1991] 2022, 308; cp. 1991, 22–23)

¹³⁶ For the indispensability of reflexivity for a truly scientific practice in the social sciences, see also: “L’histoire sociale et la sociologie de la sociologie, entendues comme une exploration de l’inconscient scientifique du sociologue à travers l’explication de la genèse des problèmes, des catégories de pensée et des instruments d’analyse qu’il met en œuvre, constituent un préalable absolue à la pratique scientifique.” (Bourdieu [1993] 2022, 57)

heteronomous elements in its relatively autonomous practice. It does so by focusing not on the social scientist as an individual empirical subject (this would lead to what Bourdieu calls “narcissistic reflexivity”) but as an – empirically conditioned – “scientific subject”.¹³⁷ By eliminating or reappropriating empirical constraints on the scientific subject, reflexivity works towards bringing the empirical-scientific subject closer to a truly scientific subject, towards increasing relative autonomy – “progress” in the logic of the scientific field.¹³⁸ Without taking into account Bourdieu’s notion of relative autonomy, his reformist notion of reflexivity hardly makes sense. It will appear as “hyper-objectivistic” (Lynch 2000, 30) or naively progressivist or optimistic. On the contrary, its finality consists not in some “hyper-objectivity”, but simply in science and scientists truly “becoming (scientific) subjects” of their activity: “c’est à condition de s’appropriier les instruments de pensée, et aussi les objets de pensée que l’on reçoit, que l’on peut devenir un petit peu le sujet de ses pensées” (Bourdieu and Chartier [1988] 2010, 41).¹³⁹

Now, what implications does this Bourdieusian conception of reflexivity have for the present work? For our case, the reformist interpretation of reflexivity means that writing the history of socio-transcendental reasoning by using the tools of this very tradition doesn’t imply invalidating these tools. A critic might argue that by investigating the historical and social origins of this mode of reasoning, I show that its validity is “only relative” to specific historical circumstances. What validity could I then claim for my own results? A socio-transcendental account of socio-transcendental reasoning would lead into a “performative self-contradiction”: if my findings are valid, then they invalidate the very method by which I found them, and the findings themselves must thus be invalid too. However, we now understand that this critique is based on a specific relativistic or constructionist reading reflexivity (and relativity) which is far from obvious and has its own peculiar history. Nothing obliges us to subscribe to the underlying dogma that the self-application of a procedure pointing to the socio-historical conditions of knowledge claims leads necessarily to self-refutation of this same procedure.

¹³⁷ In this sense, reflexivity consists in “travailler à rendre compte du ‘sujet’ empirique dans les termes mêmes de l’objectivité construite par le sujet scientifique [...] et, par là, se donner la conscience et la maîtrise (possible) des contraintes qui peuvent s’exercer sur le sujet scientifique à travers tous les liens qui l’attachent au sujet empirique” (Bourdieu [1993] 2022, 58). Bourdieu’s distinction between empirical and scientific subject reminds, of course, of Kant’s distinction between empirical and transcendental subject.

¹³⁸ Progress in the knowledge of the empirical constraints of the scientific subject is equivalent, according to Bourdieu, to progress in the knowledge of the scientific object (constructed by the scientific subject): “à tout progrès de la connaissance des conditions sociales de production des ‘sujets’ scientifiques correspond un progrès dans la connaissance de l’objet scientifique, et inversement” (Bourdieu [1993] 2022, 59).

¹³⁹ We are not far away from a verse in Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s (1749-1832) *Faust* (1808), used by neo-Kantians such as Cohen (Cohen [1885] 1987, XVIII): “Was du ererbst von deinen Vätern hast, erwirb es, um es zu besitzen”.

In accordance with the reformist notion of reflexivity I also think that by investigating the historical and social origins of the idea of “socio-transcendental conditions”, we can obtain a better grasp at once of the conditions, limits and the potential continuing interest of this notion (and other forms of sociologized *a priori*s). The socio-transcendental history of socio-transcendental reasoning in the social sciences I propose can contribute to what Bourdieu called a “sociological critique of sociological reason” – and thus to some form of progress in the social and human sciences. It gives us a chance to better understand and control some of the conceptual instruments we are today using in the social and human sciences. The only thing peculiar about my project is that the “forms of classification” and “categories” I investigate happen to be those of “social categories”, “social conditions of possibility”, “social time”, “social space”, etc. My project thus participates in the very tradition it describes. It relies on yet another avatar of “sociologized Kantianism”, especially its Bourdieusian form.

Still, a critic might come up and argue that this strategy is just the last ruse (or rather a bad joke) of the “sociological critique of sociological reason”: a sociological critique of the sociological critique of sociological reason. And that by doing so, I set the course for an “infinite regress” which relativizes and invalidates the value of a sociological critique of sociological reason. But here again, we can appeal to the reformist conception of reflexivity. By applying the procedure of sociological critique to sociological critique as an object, we create just another instance in which the operation of sociological critique can be tested and confirmed – and potentially produce some specific progress. While I engage in the tradition of sociologized Kantianism, historicizing and sociologizing it also implies taking a reflexive distance. It is this distance which opens finally a space for “reform”, in this case a reform of conceptual tools such as the idea of “social conditions of possibility”.

Finally, how will I put reformist reflexivity concretely to work? This will be done mainly through specific case studies. I shall investigate, for example, the social and intellectual conditions of the formulation and elaboration of Bourdieu’s own project of a “sociology of symbolic forms”, developed in the 1960s in dialogue with Durkheim, Panofsky and Cassirer.¹⁴⁰ How did Bourdieu encounter Cassirer during his academic socialization at École normale supérieure in the 1950s? How was it possible for him to perceive a convergence between Durkheimian sociology of knowledge and Cassirer’s “philosophy of symbolic forms” from the 1960s on? What enabled him, finally, to credit Durkheim with the “paternity of the idea of socio-transcendental conditions” and to conceive his own intellectual project in this lineage? By historicizing and sociologizing Bourdieu’s perception of these genealogical lines, I will thus historicize one of

¹⁴⁰ For some elements of this history, see Strauss 2020a; 2025.

the main starting points for the present project on the history of socio-transcendental reasoning. This does not amount to relativizing my starting point or getting lost in third-order socio-transcendental questions about what made my own thesis project possible. Rather the reflexive investigation into Bourdieu's "sociology of symbolic forms" will allow for understanding and controlling some of the main social and intellectual conditions of the present project.

Besides, I shall also offer some elements for historicizing the very notion of reflexivity which I employ here in following Bourdieu. In fact, various conceptions of reflexivity and its consequences in the sociology of knowledge were already discussed in the first reception and diffusion of Durkheim's sociological theory of the *a priori* in the first half of the 20th century. In this context, we encounter an opposition similar to the one outlined above between a relativistic and a reformist notion of reflexivity. The comparative analysis of debates in French and German contexts shows that national traditions and disciplinary schemes might have been involved in this opposition. Understanding some socio-transcendental conditions of different conceptions of reflexivity should also enable me to better control my own assumptions in this area.

To sum up, by studying the history of socio-transcendental reasoning in the social sciences and using the very tools of this mode of reasoning, I propose to contribute to a better understanding and control of today ubiquitous expressions and tropes such as "socially constructed categories", "social conditions of possibility", "social time", "social space" or simply "making things possible". Among the various accounts on offer, Bourdieu's reformist conception of reflexivity seems most promising to me. Using this notion, we can reject, as we have seen, both self-refutation and infinite regress arguments against a socio-transcendental study of socio-transcendental reasoning. Bourdieu's ideas about the essential role of the history and sociology of the social sciences also seems most appropriate for engaging into a historical study of the sociologization of the *a priori* that fully embraces the intrinsic reflexivity of this problem.

The reflexive approach I propose might evoke the image of the German literary character Baron Münchhausen pulling himself out of the swamp by his own hair (English readers might prefer the metaphor of "bootstrapping"). I think indeed that we are very much in this situation if we take the idea of historical and sociological *a priors* to its logical conclusions. But this kind of bootstrapping appears a bit less hopeless if we conceive it itself as a social process: an endless, collective task, a sort of collective reflexivity entrenched in a mechanism of mutual

criticism enabling “epistemological vigilance”.¹⁴¹ I hope that the present project can make at least a small contribution to this necessarily collaborative undertaking.

The case for the Bourdieusian framework

Regarding the five key dimensions of the object under study – disciplines, national contexts, the long-term perspective, surmounting the internal-external dichotomy and reflexivity – we have seen that each and all of them can be conveniently conceived within a broadly Bourdieusian framework. I have provided specific arguments for this above. Yet, we can still make a more general case.

Bourdieu provides, in fact, a coherent and unified theoretical-methodological perspective that accounts for all the main dimensions of the object of investigation at the same time. This enables us to construe the different aspects of the problem in a homogeneous way.¹⁴² The Bourdieusian framework hence has a specific cumulative strength which I do not see in other possible approaches to the problem of sociologizing the *a priori*.¹⁴³ Having started from the “space of methodological options” in general, we thus have a rationale for choosing the Bourdieusian approach as the most appropriate option for the project at hand.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴¹ On this sort of “collective reflexivity”: “À quoi il faut ajouter, pour achever de marquer la différence avec la réflexivité narcissique, que la réflexivité réformatrice n’est pas l’affaire d’un seul et qu’elle ne peut s’exercer pleinement que si elle incombe à l’ensemble des agents engagés dans le champ. La vigilance épistémologique sociologiquement armée que chaque chercheur peut exercer pour son propre compte ne peut être que renforcée par la généralisation de l’impératif de réflexivité et la divulgation des instruments indispensables pour lui obéir, seule capable d’instituer la réflexivité en loi commune du champ, qui se trouverait ainsi voué à une critique sociologique de tous par tous capable d’intensifier et de redoubler les effets de la critique épistémologique de tous par tous.” (Bourdieu 2001b, 178–79)

¹⁴² For example, Bourdieu’s theory of *habitus* and field enables an integration of the level of disciplines and national contexts: “By historical, and more precisely academic, unconscious (or ‘transcendental’), I mean the set of cognitive structures which can be attributed to specifically educational experiences and which is therefore to a large extent common to all the products of the same (national) educational system or, in a more specified form, to all the members of the same discipline at a given time. It is what explains why, beyond differences linked in particular to the disciplines, and in spite of the competition between them, the products of a national education system present a set of common dispositions, often attributed to ‘national character’, which means that they can understand each other with a nod and a wink, and that, for them, many things go without saying which are crucial, such as what, at a given moment, does or does not deserve discussion, what is important and interesting (a ‘beautiful subject’ or, on the contrary, a ‘banal’ idea or ‘trivial’ theme).” (Bourdieu 2003b, 284–85)

¹⁴³ I admit here to the risk of circularity. Having conceived my project under the impression of Bourdieu’s statements about the problem of socio-transcendental conditions and the relationship between sociology and the Kantian tradition, it is little surprising that Bourdieu’s approach turns out to be most appropriate for treating the subject. In my defence, however, I did consider and discuss the viability of possible other approaches above.

¹⁴⁴ This choice is not, as I hope will be evident from the previous and the following discussion, about choosing an academic totem with its associated group and serving it slavishly. The use I make of Bourdieu’s work and notions such as *habitus*, field, capital, symbolic power, circulation, reflexivity, and so forth, is mainly heuristic. I follow here Heilbrun’s notion of a “sensitizing framework”: “In the chapters that follow, my aim has not been to apply field theory as rigorously as possible to the case of sociology in France, but rather to use it as a heuristic model or, more modestly, as a sensitizing framework. Field theory indicates the most significant analytical dimensions to take into account, even when the material that I gathered often remained too fragmentary to allow a full-fledged field analysis.” (Heilbrun 2015, 5)

Having said that, a question remains. I have insisted on conceiving what I called the “sociologization of the *a priori*” as a “problem” and proposing a “sociological problem history”. So far, we have not come closer to understanding what either of this means. With our decision for a broadly Bourdieusian account a new issue arises: how can we construe “problems” such as the sociologization of the *a priori* within this framework? What does a sociological history of such problems involve? In order to answer these questions, we now must attend to the peculiar methodological tradition of “problem history” and seek to integrate it in the Bourdieusian perspective elaborated so far.

3. Sociological problem history: A historical and methodological profile

The German-French problem of problem history

The study at hand wants to offer a “sociological problem history” of the problem of the sociologization of the *a priori*. What does that mean? What is a “problem” and how to write the history of such a problem in a socio-historical perspective? What does “problem history” mean and in which sense can it be said to be “sociological”? When we try to conceive our object in this perspective, we face instant challenges about what such an approach actually amounts to.¹⁴⁵ In the methodological literature in intellectual and general history, we find surprisingly little answers.¹⁴⁶

It turns out that there isn’t actually one coherent historiographical tradition of problem history, but that there are rather two relatively distinct national traditions which are rarely ever connected and entertain mostly unclear relations: a better known French tradition associated with the *Annales* historiography of the interwar period (usually called “*histoire-problème*”); and an earlier and lesser-known German tradition related to neo-Kantian historiography of philosophy around the turn of the 20th century (usually called “*Problemgeschichte*”). This ambiguity is one of the main “problems of problem history” (Oexle 2001a). Are “*histoire-problème*” and “*Problemgeschichte*” synonymous – but how then explain the fundamental differences between both traditions? Or are they homonymous, i.e. a sort of French-German *faux amis* – but how then explain certain remarkable convergences? The complex situation obliges us to engage in both historical and methodological clarifications concerning “problem history”. Only if we have some mastery on both levels can we assemble in a controlled and

¹⁴⁵ Again, I thank Éric Brian for suggesting to me a framing of my study in terms of “problem history” (see also Brian 2023). As the following discussion shows, this hint turned out inspiring and fruitful – but also more complicated than expected.

¹⁴⁶ To take the example of a recent handbook on the history and sociology of ideas, there is no discussion of problem history in Geroulanos and Sapiro 2024.

circumspect way the elements for something like a sociological problem history adapted to the problem of the sociologization of the *a priori*.

In what follows, I first provide some background on the history of the word and concept “problem” and sketch the two traditions of problem history, considering similarities, differences as well as historical contacts between them. I will then try to provide a rationale for reviving problem history in the present-day situation of the history and sociology of the social and human sciences. This renewal implies in my view to integrate problem history into wider sociological theory and the sociology of science and of culture. Drawing on sociologist of knowledge Karl Mannheim and – again – on Bourdieu, I will seek to formulate the principles of a sociological problem history that can be integrated in the general Bourdieusian framework described above. I will also describe the general advantages of this approach in the context of several methodological debates as well as its specific strengths for analysing the sociologization of the *a priori*. The question of how to operationalize problem history for the latter case will be treated in the subsequent section.¹⁴⁷

What is a problem?

Any account of problem history must start with some notion of what is meant by “problem”. So, what is a “problem”?

In ordinary use, “problem” designates a difficult, unresolved task, a puzzle, a question, an obstacle or simply a difficulty of any sort.¹⁴⁸ This common-sense notion, however, doesn’t lead us very far. “Problem” is used so frequently and, shall I say, unproblematically – in English it is today among the 500 most commonly used words¹⁴⁹ – that it has lost any specific meaning. Things as diverse as climate change, socio-economic inequality, a mathematical equation, tensions in a romantic relationship, a scheduling conflict or a malfunctioning fridge are “problems”. And even when there is no problem, we insist on stating that there is “no problem”. The ubiquity and ambiguity of “problem” in its ordinary use makes it rather inept as a starting point for defining the object of problem history.

However, there is also an established specific use of “problem”. Indeed, the word has been used over a long time period in various sciences. This scientific use and its history provide us

¹⁴⁷ It must be clear that the following discussion can be little more than a sketch. Both the history and the methodology of problem history are complex and deserve a more detailed account than I can offer here. I hope to present a more satisfying treatment in a future article.

¹⁴⁸ See, for example, the respective entries in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the *Trésor de la langue française informatisé* and the *Digitales Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache*.

¹⁴⁹ According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, “problem is one of the 500 most common words in modern written English [...] similar in frequency to words like *high*, *large*, *own*, *under*, and *work*” (Oxford English Dictionary 2023a).

with some indications on what problem history might be about.¹⁵⁰ To begin with, the word itself is, of course, of Ancient Greek origin. “Problem” in modern languages comes from Greek “πρόβλημα”. The latter, in turn, is a nominalization deriving from the verb “προβάλλειν”, “to throw or lay before” (*A Greek-English Lexicon* [1843] 1996, under ‘προβάλλω’). In this sense, a problem is “*anything thrown forward or projecting*” (*A Greek-English Lexicon* [1843] 1996, under ‘πρόβλημα , ατος, τό’).¹⁵¹ In fact, some of the first documented uses of “πρόβλημα” – in Herodotus, Aeschylus, Euripides and Plato – seem to occur in a military context where the word refers to a protective barrier.¹⁵² From the fourth century BC onwards, however, the word appeared already as a technical term in at least three different scientific discourses, namely in (1) geometry, (2) logic and (3) physics (Holzhey [1989] 2017, col. 1397).

In the first context, “problem” was prominently used with reference to Euclid’s *Elements* (*Στοιχεῖα*, around 300 BC) – for around 2000 years certainly the most important manual of geometry and mathematics in the West. There it designated a “proposition in which a specified action is required to be done (originally in *Geometry*, contrasted with a *theorem*, where something is proved)” (Oxford English Dictionary 2023a). For example, Euclid’s 47th “problem” (Euclides 1883, 110–15), more commonly known as the Pythagorean theorem, starts by posing the problem of the relationship between the squares of the sides of a rectangular triangle. It then constructs step by step the geometrical proof showing that the area of the square on the hypotenuse (the side opposite the right angle) equals the sum of the area of the squares on the two other sides. Having done so, it restates the problem – but now in the form of a “theorem” demonstrated through geometrical construction: “quod erat demonstrandum” (“ὅπερ ἔδει δεῖξαι”) (Euclides 1883, 114–15). We can retain from this geometrical use is that problems are difficult tasks that demand some sort of action (geometrical construction in Euclid’s case) to resolve or reply to them. It is “theorems” that reply to “problems” via some specific constructive activity.

¹⁵⁰ The best starting point I could find for the history of the scientific use of “problem” is philosopher and scholar of neo-Kantianism Helmut Holzhey’s (1937-) history of the concept “Problem” in the *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie* (Holzhey [1989] 2017). The following reconstruction relies heavily on this article – without necessarily subscribing to Holzhey’s hypothesis that the ordinary use of “problem” is the result of the levelling of the specialized scientific use.

¹⁵¹ The closest Latin-rooted equivalent to “problem” would probably be “project” (from *proicere*, with the past participle *proiectus* and the nominalization *proiectio*). “Project” might be understood analogously to the way psychoanalysts have used the German noun “*Introjekt*” (with an emphasis on the second syllable) to designate the “introjected”, i.e. as the product or object of the process of “introjection” (Laplanche and Pontalis [1967] 1972, 235–37). In the same way, a “project” would designate the object or result of the activity of “projection”. The advantage of this – admittedly speculative – etymological consideration is that it allows to establish a connection between “problems” and Bourdieu’s important notion of “projet intellectuel” (Bourdieu 1966) (see below). Having said that, I admit that Marburg neo-Kantian philosopher Paul Natorp (1854-1924) suggested as Latin equivalent to “problem” rather the word “object” (Natorp 1910, 33; Hänel 2001, 113).

¹⁵² For the exact references, see Holzhey [1989] 2017, cols 1398, 1405.

The action called for by a “problem” is, at the very least, to say whether something is the case or not. This leads to the specifically logical meaning of the word. In this sense, “problem” occurred, for example, in Plato as a “task to solve”. More specifically, Aristotle used the word in his *Topics* in the sense of a “*question as to whether a statement is so or not*” (*A Greek-English Lexicon* [1843] 1996, under ‘πρόβλημα, ατος, τό’; Aristoteles 1997, 101b28, 104b1). From here, we can also see the transition to a specifically physical use of “problem” where the word refers basically to an *aporia* concerning the physical world with contradicting interpretations of phenomena being opposed and pondered. In this sense, Aristotle is said to have written a lost text on physical *Προβλήματα* – a tradition continued in the Peripatetic school (Holzhey [1989] 2017).

In late Antiquity and the Middle Ages, the logical sense of “problem” dominated, overshadowing the geometrical-mathematical sense. Starting from Aristotle’s *Topics*, the former was further developed – e.g. by Boethius (ca. 480-524) – into the medieval theory and practice of *quaestio* – the basic structure employed in scholarly discussion and exposition – most famously, perhaps, in Thomas Aquinas’s (1225-1274) *Summa theologiae* (composed between 1265 and 1274), organized into such *quaestiones*. The geometrical sense of “problem” made its comeback only in the modern era, for example in René Descartes’ (1596-1650) *Regulae ad directionem ingenii* (started around 1619, unfinished) where “problems” were also associated with a specifically “analytical” method (Holzhey [1989] 2017, cols 1400–1401). These various elements came together in Antoine Arnauld (1612-1694) and Pierre Nicole’s (1625-1695) *La logique ou l’art de penser*, the so-called *Logique de Port-Royal* (1662) – where they described the “analyse des géomètres” as examining, in the case of “theorems”, the truth or falsity of propositions and, in the case of “problems”, their possibility or impossibility.¹⁵³ Through Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646-1716) a similar notion of “problem” connected to the geometrical method of analysis entered the work of Christian Wolff (1679-1754) and German *Schulphilosophie*. However, this current also promoted again the Aristotelean logical meaning of “problem”, now associating it with “dialectics” (Holzhey [1989] 2017, cols 1401–1402).

In Kant – an important point of reference for the German tradition of *Problemgeschichte*, as we will see – several of these strands came together. Through Wolff and Georg Friedrich Meier (1718-1777) – whose *Auszug aus der Vernunftlehre* (1752) Kant used as the basis of his lectures

¹⁵³ “Une question leur [to geométriciens, MS] ayant été proposée, dont ils ignorent la vérité ou la fausseté, si c’est un théorème, la possibilité ou l’impossibilité, si c’est un problème, ils supposent que cela est comme il est proposé; et, examinant ce qui s’ensuit de là, s’ils arrivent, dans cet examen, à quelque vérité claire dont ce qui leur est proposé soit une suite nécessaire, ils en concluent que ce qui leur est proposé est vrai [...]. Mais s’ils tombent, par une suite nécessaire de ce qui leur est proposé, dans quelque absurdité ou impossibilité, ils en concluent que ce qu’on leur avait proposé est faux et impossible.” (Arnauld and Nicole [1662] 1992, 287; cp. Holzhey [1989] 2017, col. 1401)

on logic (Kant [1800] 1977) – Kant defined problems in the geometrical sense as “demonstrable, einer Anweisung bedürftige Sätze, oder solche, die eine Handlung aussagen, deren Art der Ausführung nicht unmittelbar gewiß ist” (Kant [1800] 1977, para. 38). On the other hand, he also continued the Aristotelean logical-dialectical meaning of “problem” when he called “problematische Urteile” those judgments “wo man das Bejahen oder Verneinen als bloß *möglich* (beliebig) annimmt” (Kant [1781/1787] 1974, 114, A75/B100) – in contradistinction from “assertoric” and “apodictic” judgments that concern respectively reality and necessity. Furthermore, he integrated the latter sense of “problem” into his new transcendental philosophy, especially in his critique of traditional metaphysics in the “transcendental dialectics” of the *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (1781/1787). There, he called the “pure concepts of reason” (*reine Vernunftbegriffe*) or “transcendental ideas” (*transzendente Ideen*) – notions originating in pure reason such as the world as a whole, the soul or God – such “problems”: they are both inevitable and unanswerable (because never “given” through sensibility).¹⁵⁴ “Problems” and “problematic” are thus opposed in Kant’s terminology to “axioms”, “constitutive”, “apodictic” and “assertoric” (Holzhey [1989] 2017, col. 1402).

Finally, there is – continuing the dialectical sense of “problem” – an important association in Kant between “problem”, “task” (*Aufgabe*) and “hypothesis”. In his discussion of the difference between a “constitutive” and a “regulative use of reason” (Kant [1781–1787] 1974, 563–82, A642–668/B670–696), Kant argues that transcendental ideas cannot be “constitutive” (as the categories of the understanding are) because they do not provide concepts for possible objects of experience. However, they can have an important “regulative” use. They can serve us to bring systematic unity to our diverse experiences or, in other words, to understand our particular experiences in the light of general rules. The systematic unity of experience is never given (it goes beyond experience), but it can be presupposed as a “task” or a *focus imaginarius* with the purpose of extending our knowledge.¹⁵⁵ The presupposed unity of particular

¹⁵⁴ Arguably, the *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* started precisely from these “problems”. Remember its very first sentence, at the beginning of the preface to the first edition: “Die menschliche Vernunft hat das besondere Schicksal in einer Gattung ihrer Erkenntnisse: daß sie durch Fragen belästigt wird, die sie nicht abweisen kann, denn sie sind ihr durch die Natur der Vernunft selbst aufgegeben, die sie aber auch nicht beantworten kann, denn sie übersteigen alles Vermögen der menschlichen Vernunft.” (Kant [1781/1787] 1974, 11, A VII)

¹⁵⁵ “Ich behaupte demnach: die transzendentalen Ideen sind niemals von konstitutivem Gebrauche, so, daß dadurch Begriffe gewisser Gegenstände gegeben würden, und in dem Falle, daß man sie so versteht, sind es bloß vernünfteln (dialektische) Begriffe. Dagegen aber haben sie einen vortrefflichen und unentbehrlich notwendigen regulativen Gebrauch, nämlich den Verstand zu einem gewissen Ziele zu richten, in Aussicht auf welches die Richtungslinien aller seine Regeln in einen Punkt zusammenlaufen, der, ob er zwar nur eine Idee (*focus imaginarius*), d. i. ein Punkt ist, aus welchem die Verstandesbegriffe wirklich nicht ausgehen, indem er ganz außerhalb den Grenzen möglicher Erfahrung liegt, dennoch dazu dient, ihnen die größte Einheit neben der größten Ausbreitung zu verschaffen.” (Kant [1781/1787] 1974, 565, A644/B672)

experiences in a general rule or hypothesis remains a “problem”, it is only a “projected unity”.¹⁵⁶ Kant hence qualifies this use of reason as “hypothetical”.¹⁵⁷ We shall encounter the association of problems with the empirically informed hypotheses again in the various traditions of problem history.¹⁵⁸

The German-speaking tradition of Problemgeschichte

There are clear connections between the Kantian use of “problem” and the German neo-Kantian strand of *Problemgeschichte*. Chronologically speaking, the latter can roughly be located in the period between the 1870s and the 1930s. Reflections on “problems” and their history played an important role in both of the main “schools” of German “neo-Kantianism”¹⁵⁹: in the so-called “Marburg school”, associated mainly with the works of Hermann Cohen (1842-1918), Paul Natorp (1854-1925) and Ernst Cassirer (1874-1945); and in the so-called “South-West school” or “Baden school”, connected to philosophers Wilhelm Windelband (1848-1915), Heinrich Rickert (1863-1936) and Emil Lask (1875-1915).

In the context of the Marburg school, the notion of “problem” was developed, on the one hand, in a systematic Kantian perspective in epistemology. “Problem” became an important element in Cohen’s and Natorp’s reconceptualization of Kant’s “transcendental method”. Kant’s “fact of science” – his starting from factually existing synthetic judgments *a priori* in mathematics and natural science – was conceived, in turn, as a “problem” that requires investigating the conditions of knowledge (Holzhey [1989] 2017, col. 1403; see also Cassirer 1912b,

¹⁵⁶ “Der hypothetische Vernunftgebrauch geht also auf die systematische Einheit der Verstandeserkenntnisse, diese aber ist der *Proberstein der Wahrheit der Regeln*. Umgekehrt ist die systematische Einheit (als bloße Idee) lediglich nur *projektierte* Einheit, die man an sich nicht als gegeben, sondern nur als *Problem* ansehen muß; welche aber dazu dient, zu dem Mannigfaltigen und besonderen Verstandesgebrauche ein Principium zu finden, und diesen dadurch auch über die Fälle, die nicht gegeben sind, zu leiten und zusammenhängend zu machen.” (Kant [1781/1787] 1974, 567, A647/B675) Note that Kant seems to establish here a correlation between “problem” and “projection” as suggested above.

¹⁵⁷ “Wenn die Vernunft ein Vermögen ist, das Besondere aus dem Allgemeinen abzuleiten, so ist entweder das Allgemeine schon *an sich gewiß* und gegeben, und alsdenn erfordert es nur *Urteilstkraft* zur Subsumtion, und das Besondere wird dadurch notwendig bestimmt. Dieses will ich den apodiktischen Gebrauch der Vernunft nennen. Oder das Allgemeine wird nur *problematisch* angenommen, und ist eine bloße Idee, das Besondere ist gewiß, aber die Allgemeinheit der Regel zu dieser Folge ist noch ein Problem; so werden mehrere besondere Fälle, die insgesamt gewiß sind, an der Regel versucht, ob sie daraus fließen, und in diesem Falle, wenn es den Anschein hat, daß alle anzugebende besondere Fälle daraus abfolgen, wird auf die Allgemeinheit der Regel, aus dieser aber nachher auf alle Fälle, die auch an sich nicht gegeben sind, geschlossen. Diesen will ich den hypothetischen Gebrauch der Vernunft nennen.” (Kant [1781/1787] 1974, 566–67, A646–647/B674–675) We recognize in this passage Kant’s distinction between “determining” and “reflective judgments” (e.g. Kant [1790] 1974, 24–29, 87–96, AXXIII–XXXV/BXXV–XXXVII).

¹⁵⁸ I do not follow the history of “problem” here any further (see Holzhey [1989] 2017, cols 1402–1405; Bianco 2018b) but pass over to the history of “problem history”. We should note only that the insistence on “problems” is not, as one might think from the above, limited to philosophers commonly classified as “rationalists”. We also find it in “empiricists” such as Mach (Mach [1905] 2011, see the epigraph of the present chapter), Carnap, Popper or Wittgenstein.

¹⁵⁹ For a discussion of the problems associated with the label “neo-Kantianism” and the conception of the unity and diversity of the Kant movement, see Chapter 3.

253). “Problem” was also applied, especially by Natorp, to what Kant had called the “thing-in-itself” (*Ding an sich*) or the “object of knowledge”, thought to be ultimately unattainable and accessible only through the approximations of science.¹⁶⁰

At the same time, “problem” served in Marburg neo-Kantianism as a historiographical notion and a sort of motto. It was associated with the necessity of combining a “historical” and “systematic” perspective in the historiography of philosophy. Already in his foundational *Kants Theorie der Erfahrung* (1871), Cohen had positioned himself in this way in the context of the important historiographical controversy between Kuno Fischer (1824-1907) and Adolf Trendelenburg (1802-1872) on the interpretation of Kant’s conception of space and time.¹⁶¹ In the dispute on how to understand the “historical Kant”, he had insisted on the inevitable systematic presuppositions of historical interpretations, making systematic work on these presuppositions necessary.¹⁶² He had also rejected the idea of a system-independent “objective-historical conception” of Kant: every historical reconstruction engages implicitly the philosophy of the historian or critic who undertakes it.¹⁶³

In his important 1896 “Introduction” to his mentor Friedrich Albert Lange’s (1828-1875) *Geschichte des Materialismus* (1866), Cohen then insisted again on the connection between systematic philosophy and the history of philosophy – precisely because philosophy was intrinsically connected with science in its historical development. It is from science – as well as from other “orientations of culture” – that philosophy obtained “problems” as its building blocks (organizing them then into “systems”).¹⁶⁴ Cohen accordingly described the method of the

¹⁶⁰ “Das Wissen des Nichtwissens bedeutet die Erkenntnis des Problems; das Problem aber ist, ganz wörtlich, der Vorwurf, also die Voraussetzung der Lösung; es ist genau was die Mathematik ausdrückt durch das X der Gleichung; deren sichere Formulierung schon die Garantie der Lösung einschließt. Aber das große X der Erkenntnis, welches der ‘Gegenstand’ heißt, bedeutet allerdings nicht *ein*, sondern *das* Problem, und garantiert, als ewiges Problem, keine andere Lösung, als die im ewigen Fortgang der *ganzen* gewaltigen Rechnung der Erkenntnis besteht.” (Natorp 1911, 20)

¹⁶¹ On this crucial controversy for the emergence of Marburg neo-Kantianism and the German neo-Kantian movement in general, see Köhnke 1986, 257–72; Beiser 2013, 107–20.

¹⁶² “Um Kant nach seinem Wortlaute zu verstehen, ist es unumgänglich, die von einander verschiedenen Auffassungen, welche derselbe möglich gemacht hat, auf ihren Wert für die Theorie der Erkenntnis eigens zu prüfen: die systematische Parteinahme ist unvermeidlich. Denn es sind nicht die äusseren Tatsachen von Worten, welche festgestellt werden sollen, sondern die Zusammenhänge geschlossener Gedanken, deren Sinn die historische Forschung gegenüber von Auffassung und Deutungen zu erhellen hat, welche nicht minder aus der gesamten Weltansicht der Urteilenden fließen. Man kann kein Urteil über Kant abgeben, ohne in jeder Zeile zu verraten, welche Welt man im eigenen Kopfe trägt.” (Cohen [1871] 1987, XI; see also Hänel 2001, 103–4)

¹⁶³ “Das Verständnis einer Kritik über Kant erheischt deshalb das Verständnis der Philosophie des Kritikers, welche als der geheime Urheber nicht bloss jener Kritik, sondern eben so sehr jener scheinbar objectiv-historischen Auffassung im Auge zu behalten ist.” (Cohen [1871] 1987, XI–XII) In this sense, Cohen insisted in the same passage on the necessity of what he called a “meta-critique” (*Metakritik*) of critics’ presuppositions – a strategy not dissimilar to the one employed by Lucien Febvre (see below).

¹⁶⁴ “Wir fordern für das Studium der Philosophie die Verbindung von Systematik und Geschichte, weil wir diese Verbindung auch für die Arbeit und die Darstellung, für die Forschung und die Entwicklung der Philosophie selbst fordern. Der Zusammenhang mit der Geschichte bedeutet zuvörderst den Zusammenhang mit der Wissenschaft. Und der Zusammenhang mit der Wissenschaft erweitert sich folgerichtig zu dem mit der allgemeinen

philosophy of history as a form of “surveying projection” (*überschauende Projektion*), i.e. as guided by “ideas”, which he equated with “hypotheses” and – arguably – “problems”.¹⁶⁵ In this respect, philosophy and the history of philosophy proceeded in the same way as the sciences – indeed, Cohen conceived both of them as sciences.

Cohen’s study on *Das Prinzip der Infinitesimal-Methode und seine Geschichte* (Cohen [1883] 1968) provided an eloquent example for the Marburg practice of connecting systematic and historical interests around a specific philosophical-scientific “problem”. This tradition was continued by Cohen and Natorp’s disciple Ernst Cassirer in his four-volume *Das Erkenntnisproblem in der Philosophie und Wissenschaft der neueren Zeit* (Cassirer [1906–1950] 1995). In this monumental study on the interrelations between scientific and philosophical thought between the Renaissance and the early 20th century, Cassirer conceived the “problem of knowledge” as the “Grundproblem der neueren Philosophie”: “Alle gedanklichen Bestrebungen der neueren Zeit fassen sich zuletzt zu einer gemeinsamen höchsten Aufgabe zusammen: es ist ein neuer Begriff der *Erkenntnis*, der in ihnen in stetigem Fortgang erarbeitet wird.” (Cassirer [1906/1922, reprint of 3rd edition] 1995, V) At the same time, Cassirer assumed the fact that writing the history of this problem involved a sort of construction or “synthesis” of the historical record based on “subjective principles”. However, he insisted – expressing his Kantian convictions – that this was the case for any kind of knowledge and didn’t fundamentally compromise his history of the problem of knowledge.¹⁶⁶ As already in Cohen (see again Cohen [1896] 1914, 7–11), Marburg *Problemgeschichte* thus positioned itself against both uncontrolled present-day projections on history and against the illusion of an “objective” history that wouldn’t involve

Kultur. Denn die Philosophie bedeutet seit Sokrates das *System* der Philosophie, den einheitlichen Zusammenhang aller ihrer verschiedenartigen Probleme. [Paragraph] Diese verschiedenen Arten der Probleme entsprechen aber den verschiedenen *Richtungen der Kultur*, den Richtungen auf die *Wissenschaft*, auf die *Sittlichkeit* in ihren Kulturgebilden und auf die *Kunst*.” (Cohen [1896] 1914, 10–11)

¹⁶⁵ “Die Geschichte der Philosophie *insbesondere* [...] hat aus diesem Sachverhalt [the intrinsic connection between the history of philosophy and the history of science] ihre Methode herzuleiten. Und diese erweist sich daher als die einer überschauenden *Projektion*.” (Cohen [1896] 1914, 19; see also Hänel 2001, 103) Again, we encounter here a semantic association between “problem” and “projection”.

¹⁶⁶ “Daß die innere *Einheit*, die die einzelnen Tatsachen verknüpft, nicht direkt mit diesen selber mitgegeben, sondern immer erst durch gedankliche *Synthesen* zu erschaffen ist: dies muß freilich von Anfang an erkannt werden. Das Recht derartiger Synthesen wird heute – da auch die erkenntnistheoretischen Voraussetzungen der Geschichte klarer begriffen und formuliert sind – keines besonderen Erweises mehr bedürfen; nicht das allgemeine Verfahren, sondern nur seine besondere Anwendung kann kritisch bestritten werden. Die Geschichte der Philosophie kann, so wahr sie Wissenschaft ist, keine Sammlung bedeuten, durch die wir die Tatsachen in bunter Folge kennen lernen; sie will eine *Methode* sein, durch die wir sie verstehen lernen. Daß die *Prinzipien*, auf die sie sich hierbei stützt, zuletzt ‘subjektiv’ sind, ist freilich wahr; aber es besagt nichts anderes, als daß unsere Einsicht hier wie überall durch die Regel und das Gesetz unserer *Erkenntnis* bedingt ist.” (Cassirer [1906/1922, reprint of 3rd edition] 1995, VII–VIII)

construction, synthesis or hypothesis on the part of the historian. We recognize here problem history's double repudiation of "presentism" and "historicism" that will interest us below.¹⁶⁷

Marburg neo-Kantianism practiced *Problemgeschichte* principally as a method of historical-systematic research.¹⁶⁸ But it is the historiographical production of the South-West school of neo-Kantianism that is most frequently presented as the *locus classicus* for *Problemgeschichte* (e.g. Krüger 1984, 79; Geldsetzer et al. [1989] 2017, col. 1411), especially Windelband's influential 1892 *Lehrbuch der Geschichte der Philosophie* (Windelband 1892) which went through 15 editions until 1957 (Windelband [1892] 1957).¹⁶⁹ There, Windelband contrasted his focus on "problems" with the traditional historiography in terms of individual philosophers and their doctrines. By concentrating on "problems" and the "concepts produced to solve them", he sought to offer a history of philosophy proper, not of philosophers.¹⁷⁰ Windelband conceived the problems themselves – quite similar to Kant's notion in the transcendental dialectics – as eternal, recurring and unavoidable "tasks" (*Aufgaben*) for the human mind.¹⁷¹ Nevertheless, he conceded that the internal development of these problems (what he called – misleadingly, given our present-day use – the "pragmatic factor") is often interfering with broader cultural history (the "cultural-historical factor") as well as the individual history of philosophers (the "individual factor"). In this respect, philosophy "receives" its problems from history. The interest for

¹⁶⁷ For a precious analysis of Cassirer's historiographical method and its relationship with Windelband's conception of *Problemgeschichte*, see Luft 2015. Luft argues that Cassirer's historiography is an "application of the transcendental method" and that it comes with a specific conception of a "historical *a priori*" (Luft 2015a, 201–2).

¹⁶⁸ For this notion of "Problemgeschichte als Forschung", see Hänel 2001, 108–9.

¹⁶⁹ We should note, however, that Windelband's student and other main proponent of the South-West school Heinrich Rickert later explicitly rejected *Problemgeschichte*. Arguing that problems in philosophy are always interconnected Rickert instead proposed a history of philosophical systems (Rickert 1931b, 45; Geldsetzer et al. [1989] 2017, col. 1415).

¹⁷⁰ "Das Lehrbuch, welches ich deshalb hier dem Publikum und in erster Linie der akademischen Jugend biete, will ausdrücklich eine Geschichte nicht der Philosophen, sondern der Philosophie sein. [...] Ich habe [...] mich auch von dem üblichen Schema, wonach die Geschichte der Lehren an die Reihenfolge der philosophierenden Persönlichkeiten geknüpft zu werden pflegt, frei zu machen gesucht, um in der Hauptsache nur eine *Geschichte der Probleme und der zu ihrer Lösung erzeugten Begriffe* zu geben." (Windelband [1889] 1908, III) See also: "Den Schwerpunkt legte ich, wie schon in der äusseren Form zu Tage tritt, auf die Entwicklung desjenigen, was im philosophischen Betracht das Wichtigste ist: *die Geschichte der Probleme und der Begriffe*. Diese als ein zusammenhängendes und überall in einander greifendes Ganzes zu verstehen, ist meine hauptsächliche Absicht gewesen." (Windelband [1892] 1908, IV) Windelband later called this method also the "synoptic-critical method" (Windelband [1892] 1908, V).

¹⁷¹ "Denn die Probleme der Philosophie sind der Hauptsache nach gegeben, und es erweist sich darin, dass sie im historischen Verlaufe des Denkens als die 'uralten Räthsel des Daseins' immer wieder kommen und gebieterisch immer von Neuem die nie vollständig gelungene Lösung verlangen. Gegeben aber sind sie durch die Unzulänglichkeit und widerspruchsvolle Unausgeglichenheit des der philosophischen Besinnung zu Grunde liegenden Vorstellungsmaterials. [...] [S]o wiederholen sich in der Geschichte der Philosophie nicht nur die Hauptprobleme, sondern auch die Hauptrichtungen ihrer Lösung. Eben diese Constanz in allem Wechsel, welche, von aussen betrachtet, den Eindruck macht, als sei die Philosophie erfolglos in stets wiederholten Kreisen um ein nie erreichtes Ziel bemüht, beweist doch nur, dass ihre Probleme unentfliehbar Aufgaben für den menschlichen Geist sind." (Windelband 1892, 9–10)

certain problems and their solution are conditioned by various historical and social circumstances, including science, religion, art and socio-political organization.¹⁷²

Yet, the most explicit methodological reflection on *Problemgeschichte* was proposed by Cohen and Natorp's student and later successor of Natorp in Marburg Nicolai Hartmann (1882-1950).¹⁷³ Starting apparently from the Marburgers' insistence on the connection between historic and systematic research, Hartmann explicitly invested the label "*Problemgeschichte*" (Hartmann 1909, 462; see also [1936] 1957) and pleaded for a transformation of the history of philosophy into a history of problems in order to establish some sort of historical continuity in philosophy.¹⁷⁴ He argued against the idea of a pure "history of facts" (*Faktengeschichte*) (Hartmann 1909, 475), insisting that facts themselves needed "viewpoints" (*Gesichtspunkte*) to be appropriately selected and to truly become history. "Problems" provided exactly such viewpoints.¹⁷⁵ For Hartmann, they were based on systematic grounds and existed independently of historical contingencies, which only influenced the degree to which they came to consciousness.¹⁷⁶ Problems were for Hartmann not less than the "transcendental conditions of the possibility of history".¹⁷⁷ As Cohen, he equated them with "hypotheses" and argued that the history of philosophy used the same method as the exact sciences and as transcendental

¹⁷² "Denn aus den Vorstellungen des allgemeinen Zeitbewusstseins und aus den Bedürfnissen der Gesellschaft empfängt die Philosophie ihre Probleme, wie die Materialien zu deren Lösung. Die grossen Errungenschaften und die neu auftauchenden Fragen der besonderen Wissenschaften, die Bewegungen des religiösen Bewusstseins, die Anschauungen der Kunst, die Umwälzungen des gesellschaftlichen und des staatlichen Lebens geben der Philosophie ruckweise neue Impulse und bedingen die Richtungen des Interesses, welches bald diese, bald jene Probleme in den Vordergrund drängt und andere zeitweilig bei Seite schiebt, nicht minder aber auch die Wandlungen, welche Fragestellung und Antwort im Laufe der Zeit erfahren." (Windelband 1892, 10)

¹⁷³ On Hartmann's role within the tradition of problem history, see also Hänel 2001, 115–18. Hartmann later turned away from Marburg neo-Kantianism to develop a metaphysics of knowledge and a new ontology.

¹⁷⁴ "Es fragt sich, ob sie [philosophy, MS] nicht Mittel und Wege besitzt, aus sich selbst heraus eine neue, eigentümliche Art des Zusammenhanges, eine *eigentümliche Art historischer Kontinuität* zu erzeugen, welche den Ansprüchen ihrer besonderen Interessen entspreche? Eine solche liesse sich wenigstens prinzipiell sehr wohl denken, – nämlich wenn es gelänge, sie aus dem inneren systematischen Wesen der Philosophie heraus zu gewinnen, aus dem sachlichen Gehalt ihrer Probleme. Nur würde das freilich zur Folge haben, dass der ganze Begriff der Philosophiegeschichte verschoben würde und sich in dieser Verschiebung präziserte zum *Begriff einer Geschichte der Probleme*." (Hartmann 1909, 461)

¹⁷⁵ "So bedarf alles Faktische erst der Gesichtspunkte. Und worin sollten nun diese Gesichtspunkte wohl anders liegen als in den *Problemen*, die das systematische Denken uns stellen lässt und in denen sich alle unsere philosophische Arbeit bewegt? Ja, unter welchen anderen Gesichtspunkten könnte das Faktenmaterial, zur Geschichte gereinigt, eine 'Geschichte der Probleme' ergeben?" (Hartmann 1909, 475–76)

¹⁷⁶ "*Das Problem selbst* als solches *steht fest*; es hat nur seinen *systematischen Grund* zur eigenen Bestimmung, und alle historische Variabilität an ihm betrifft nicht es selbst, sondern nur die Grade oder Stufen seines Hindurchdringens zum Selbstbewusstsein." (Hartmann 1909, 470)

¹⁷⁷ "Hiermit haben wir nun die Bedeutung und die *methodische Leistung der systematischen Probleme* für die Philosophiegeschichte: sie werden für sie zu *leitenden Gesichtspunkten*, unter denen eine Geschichte des reinen Denkens erst möglich wird. Sie werden zu *Grundlegungen*, zu *transscendentalen Bedingungen der Möglichkeit der Geschichte*. Denn das heisst 'Problemgeschichte' im Unterschied von aller anders verstandenen Philosophiegeschichte: dass die historisch forschende Methodik erst *ihre 'Probleme' an die Geschichte stellen* muss, auf die diese dann aus dem Schatz ihrer Quellen hervor Antwort schaffen soll." (Hartmann 1909, 476)

philosophy itself – implying also the same sort of hypothetical tentativeness (*Vorläufigkeit*) of its results.¹⁷⁸

It was basically Hartmann's version of a neo-Kantian conception of *Problemgeschichte* that became the target of the younger generation of anti-neo-Kantian philosophers, such as Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900-2002) – initially a doctoral student of Natorp and Hartmann who operated from 1923 onwards under the influence of Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) (Geldsetzer et al. [1989] 2017, cols 1415–1416; Hänel 2001, 115–18). As early as 1924, Gadamer criticized the notion of timeless, perennial problems he attributed to neo-Kantian *Problemgeschichte*: the history of philosophy should not be understood as the “Verwaltung eines (ewigen) Problemgutes” (Gadamer 1924, 63). Gadamer insisted on the historicity of problems; their transhistorical identity was much more precarious than *Problemgeschichte* had thought. Rather than simply shared words and concepts, it presupposed a much more fundamental similar “Grunderfahrung und [...] Grundauffassung des Daseins” (Gadamer 1924, 63). In his 1960 *Wahrheit und Methode* (Gadamer [1960] 1986), Gadamer further radicalized this critique. The identity of problems presupposed by neo-Kantians was simply a “void abstraction” based on the illusion of an a-historical standpoint.¹⁷⁹ *Problemgeschichte* was for Gadamer lastly nothing but a “bastard of historicism”, i.e. the desperate and hopeless attempt to rescue some sort of historical continuity and stability against the 19th century sweeping historicization of all areas of life and knowledge.¹⁸⁰ Thus, with the decline of neo-Kantianism and the rise of phenomenology, of Heidegger's “fundamental ontology” and of hermeneutics in the interwar period,

¹⁷⁸ “Die Methode der Philosophiegeschichte hat sich der Methode der exakten Forschungsgebiete, und namentlich der der Philosophie selbst, in einem wichtigen Punkt genähert. Denn wir halten jetzt den Punkt in Händen, in welchem sie mit der Urform der transscendentalen Methode, der *Methode der ὑπόθεσις* arbeitet. Der Unterschied von der gleichen Methode auf anderen Gebieten ist nur der, dass hier nicht Prinzipien für Probleme zugrundegelegt werden, sondern *die Problemstellungen selbst*. Oder genauer gesprochen: *die systematischen Problemstellungen sind die Grundlagen für die historischen Probleme*. Denn sie sind die prinzipiellen Einheiten, unter denen sich das Mannigfaltige der historischen Stufen als kontinuierliche Abfolge begreifen lässt.” (Hartmann 1909, 481–82)

¹⁷⁹ “Problemgeschichte wäre nur wahrhaft Geschichte, wenn sie die Identität des Problems als eine leere Abstraktion erkennen und sich den Wandel in den Fragestellung eingestehen würde. Einen Standort außerhalb der Geschichte, von dem aus sich die Identität eines Problems im Wandel seiner geschichtlichen Lösungsversuche denken ließe, gibt es in Wahrheit nicht.” (Gadamer [1960] 1986, 381)

¹⁸⁰ “Es ist bezeichnend, daß im 19. Jahrhundert, mit dem Zusammenbruch der unmittelbaren Tradition des philosophischen Fragens und dem Aufkommen des Historismus, der Problem-begriff zu universaler Geltung aufsteigt –, ein Zeichen dafür, daß das unmittelbare Verhältnis zu den Sachfragen der Philosophie nicht mehr besteht. So kennzeichnet es die Verlegenheit des philosophischen Bewußtseins gegenüber dem Historismus, daß es sich in die Abstraktion des Problem-begriffs flüchtete und kein Problem darin sah, in welcher Weise Probleme eigentlich ‘sind’. Die Problemgeschichte des Neukantianismus ist ein Bastard des Historismus. Die Kritik am Problem-begriff, die mit den Mitteln einer Logik der Frage und Antwort geführt wird, muß die Illusion zerstören, als gäbe es die Probleme wie die Sterne am Himmel. Die Besinnung auf die hermeneutische Erfahrung verwandelt die Probleme zurück in Fragen, die sich erheben und ihren Sinn aus ihrer Motivation haben.” (Gadamer [1960] 1986, 382–83)

also *Problemgeschichte* in German philosophy became marginal – even if “problem” in a loose sense continued to be massively used in the discipline.

Still, the portrait of the German tradition of *Problemgeschichte* would be incomplete without mentioning another, more subterranean but not less important strand – not in philosophy, but in general history, sociology or what several authors at the time called “historical cultural science” (*historische Kulturwissenschaft*). This particular tradition has primarily been unearthed – and to some extent constructed – by German historian Otto Gerhard Oexle (1939-2016) (Oexle 1996; 2001a; esp. 2001b; 2011). Oexle developed a narrative where *Problemgeschichte* figures as a “third way” in historiography between “positivist” Rankeans and “constructivist” Nietzscheans – an option that was marginalized after 1918 and especially after 1933 (e.g. Oexle 1996, 12; 2001b, 15–17).¹⁸¹ In Oexle’s narrative, jurist, political economist and sociologist Max Weber (1864-1920) plays a crucial role as one of the main proponents of a general “programme of historical knowledge as problem history (*Problemgeschichte*)” (Oexle 2001b, 15). Oexle located this project primarily in Weber’s seminal 1904 article on “objectivity” in the social and political sciences (Weber [1904] 1988) and sought to extract from it a conception of problem history as hypothesis-driven empirical research.¹⁸²

Indeed, Weber emphasized repeatedly that research in the social sciences presupposed “problems”, “cultural problems” (*Kulturprobleme*) and “cultural value ideas” (*Kulturwertideen*): “Nicht die ‘sachlichen’ Zusammenhänge der ‘Dinge’, sondern die *gedanklichen* Zusammenhänge der *Probleme* liegen den Arbeitsgebieten der Wissenschaften zugrunde” (Weber [1904] 1988, 166). It is the ever-changing cultural problems and connected value ideas that form the – historical – “transcendental condition of all *cultural science*”.¹⁸³ As cultural problems change, so do the cultural sciences with regard to what interests them, which objects they select and how they study them – the source of what Weber called these sciences’ “eternal youthfulness”.¹⁸⁴ The social sciences’ theoretical “concepts” (*Begriffe*) depended on “problems”, and the latter, in turn, on the changing content of “culture”.¹⁸⁵ “Objectivity” and

¹⁸¹ Oexle himself also tried to pursue this tradition further and offered several such “problem histories” (e.g. Oexle 1996; 1998). His own conception of problem history is not always clear. It is best resumed in Oexle 1996, 9–15.

¹⁸² For a condensed statement of Oexle’s interpretation of Weber, see Oexle 1996, 15.

¹⁸³ “Transzendente Voraussetzung jeder *Kulturwissenschaft* ist *nicht* etwa, daß wir eine bestimmte oder überhaupt irgend eine ‘Kultur’ *wertvoll* finden, sondern daß wir *Kulturmenschen* sind, begabt mit der Fähigkeit und dem Willen, bewußt zur Welt *Stellung* zu nehmen und ihr einen *Sinn* zu verleihen.” (Weber [1904] 1988, 180)

¹⁸⁴ “[E]s gibt Wissenschaften, denen ewige Jugendlichkeit beschieden ist, und das sind alle *historischen* Disziplinen, alle die, denen der ewig fortschreitende Fluß der Kultur stets neue Problemstellungen zuführt. Bei ihnen liegt die Vergänglichkeit *aller, aber* zugleich die Unvermeidlichkeit immer neuer idealtypischer Konstruktionen im Wesen der Aufgabe.” (Weber [1904] 1988, 206)

¹⁸⁵ Weber says explicitly “daß in den Wissenschaften von der menschlichen Kultur die Bildung der Begriffe von der Stellung der Probleme abhängt, und daß diese letztere wandelbar ist mit dem Inhalt der Kultur selbst” (Weber [1904] 1988, 207).

“objective validity” in these sciences then is possible only under these historical conditions and the – historically particular – valorisation of truth through empirical knowledge as such.¹⁸⁶

As others before him, Oexle recognized in these ideas Weber’s debts to German neo-Kantianism, especially to the work of his former schoolmate, friend and colleague Heinrich Rickert.¹⁸⁷ Indeed, Weber connected explicitly the question of problems in the cultural sciences with Rickert’s notion of “*Wertbeziehung*” – although he rejected Rickert’s idea of a sphere of objective, transhistorical values.¹⁸⁸ In this vein, Oexle depicted Weber’s *Problemgeschichte* as a Kantian “criticist theory of historical knowledge” (Oexle 2001b, 23) and encouraged research into the connections with neo-Kantianism and, especially, the work of Ernst Cassirer (see especially Hänel 2001).¹⁸⁹

Oexle’s interpretation and appropriation of Weber for the programme of a general *Problemgeschichte* might not be entirely convincing.¹⁹⁰ Nevertheless, it offers a hypothesis that sheds new light on a whole group of authors and historiographical debates. We shall see, for instance, that the tradition portrayed by Oexle was later pursued further by Karl Mannheim (see also Laube 2001; 2004). Therefore, while German *Problemgeschichte* was primarily a movement within the historiography of philosophy, we might also identify a strand in general history, the “cultural sciences” and sociology.

¹⁸⁶ “Die *objektive* Gültigkeit alles Erfahrungswissens beruht darauf und nur darauf, daß die gegebene Wirklichkeit nach Kategorien geordnet wird, welche in einem spezifischen Sinn *subjektiv*, nämlich die *Voraussetzung* unserer Erkenntnis darstellend, und an die Voraussetzung des *Wertes* derjenigen Wahrheit gebunden sind, die das Erfahrungswissen allein uns zu geben vermag. Wem diese Wahrheit nicht wertvoll ist – und der Glaube an den Wert wissenschaftlicher Wahrheit ist Produkt bestimmter Kulturen und nichts Naturgegebenes –, dem haben wir mit den Mitteln unserer Wissenschaft nichts zu bieten.” (Weber [1904] 1988, 212–13) From here, a direct route led to Merton’s early works in the historical sociology of science (Merton [1938] 1968a, 591).

¹⁸⁷ For the extensive literature on Weber and Rickert – and the problem this focus poses in the context of research on the relationship between neo-Kantianism and sociology, see Chapter 3.

¹⁸⁸ “Die Problemstellungen der empirischen Disziplinen sind zwar ihrerseits ‘wertfrei’ zu beantworten. Sie sind keine ‘Wertprobleme’. Aber sie stehen im Bereich unserer Disziplinen unter dem Einfluß der Beziehung von Realitäten ‘auf’ Werte. Ueber die Bedeutung des Ausdruckes ‘Wertbeziehung’ muß ich mich auf eigene frühere Äußerungen und vor allem auf die bekannten Arbeiten von H. Rickert beziehen. [...] Es sei daher nur daran erinnert, daß der Ausdruck ‘Wertbeziehung’ lediglich die philosophische Deutung desjenigen spezifisch wissenschaftlichen ‘*Interesses*’ meint, welches die Auslese und Formung des Objektes einer empirischen Untersuchung beherrscht.” (Weber [1904] 1988, 511) For the differences between Rickert and Weber, see also Ringer 1997, chap. 2.

¹⁸⁹ Indeed, the analysis of Cassirer’s references to sociology shows that he cited Max Weber approvingly and saw the latter’s work as a confirmation of his own conception of the cultural sciences as sciences of “form” (Strauss 2025).

¹⁹⁰ In particular, Weber didn’t use or invest the label “*Problemgeschichte*” anywhere in his collected methodological writings (Weber [1922] 1988a). Also, his use of “problem” is far from terminological – perhaps the only exception being his notion of “*Kulturprobleme*”. Oexle thus seems, at least in part, to project *Problemgeschichte* on Weber. Within a “problem history of problem history” as Oexle suggests it, this sort of construction isn’t surprising or reprehensible as such. But, arguably, Oexle should have made his peculiar interpretation – and the sources of this interpretation – more explicit. His construction of the genealogy of *Problemgeschichte* becomes particularly precarious when it comes to suggesting a relationship between Max Weber and the *Annales* movement, especially Marc Bloch (Oexle 1990; for a critique, see Schöttler 2015a, 12–13, 16). Oexle also characterized the latter – quite speculatively – as “following the orientations of Immanuel Kant” (Oexle 2011, 18).

The French tradition of histoire-problème

“Problem history” in philosophy continues to refer today primarily to German *Problemgeschichte* in the historiography of philosophy (e.g. Schnädelbach 1983, 16–17; Krüger 1984, 79–85; Sgarbi 2008; 2010; 2011). Yet, the situation is entirely different in history. There, “problem history” is associated first and foremost with the French tradition of *histoire-problème*, understood as one of the major historiographical innovations of the *Annales* movement¹⁹¹, starting in the interwar period around the journal *Annales d'histoire économique et sociale* (1929–1945), founded by historians Lucien Febvre (1878–1956) and Marc Bloch (1886–1944). In the historical accounts of this so-called “school”, “problem history” is a recurring feature. According to British historian Peter Burke (1937–), for example, “the substitution of a problem-oriented analytical history for a traditional narrative of events” (Burke 1990, 2) is one of the three main aspects of the *Annales*’s innovations (the others being the rejection of the focus on political history and the emphasis on interdisciplinarity). However, despite its apparent centrality, the origin and meaning of this *histoire-problème* are not entirely clear.¹⁹²

Most commonly, the inception of *histoire-problème* is attributed to Lucien Febvre (e.g. Massicotte 1981; more recently Anheim 2018, 11–26). However, although we find prominent occurrences of the term “*problème*” in Febvre’s work, he used the label “*histoire-problème*” only incidentally¹⁹³ and did not provide an elaborate methodological statement on what such an approach would amount to. What has been called “Febvre’s method” of *histoire-problème* (see the subtitle of Massicotte 1981) then is chiefly a later reconstruction based on various

¹⁹¹ It has today become common to use the labels “*Annales* school” or “*école des Annales*” (e.g. Burke 1990; Burguière 2006b). I try to avoid these terms. While there is indeed some intergenerational continuity through master-pupil ties between the 1930s and the present, the term “school” hardly applies to the initial movement launched by Febvre and Bloch which I am mainly interested in here. What is more, a lot of the continuity attributed to the “*Annales* school” seems to be the result of later symbolic (re-)constructions – the talk of “*histoire-problème*”, “*histoire des mentalités*” being a case in point. I thank Éric Brian for calling my attention to these issues.

¹⁹² French historian François Furet (1927–1997), for example, in his much-cited article on the (then) recent transition from a “*histoire-récit*” to a “*histoire-problème*” (Furet 1975) didn’t name any historians as instigators of this new style, but located the origins of this change rather vaguely in a “general crisis of progress” (Furet 1975, 117). Oexle, on the other hand, refers – when it comes to the French tradition – to Bloch (Oexle 2001b, 12–13) and omits Febvre altogether.

¹⁹³ Swiss historian Bertrand Müller (1955–) – as the editor of the three-volume correspondence between Febvre and Bloch (Bloch and Febvre 1994–2003) an authority on the subject – noted in passing: “La notion de ‘problème’ – on ne trouve pas celle d’‘histoire-problème’ – n’est pas prioritairement une exigence théorique, mais elle est une posture critique.” (Müller 2003, 403) I couldn’t yet identify the first occurrence of the term “*histoire-problème*”, but Febvre did indeed employ the term in his 1940 review of Bloch’s *La société féodale* (Bloch 1939b). He reproached Bloch with falling in his book sometimes back behind such a “*histoire-problème*”: “De l’histoire-problème, avec tout ce qu’elle implique de sacrifices, à l’histoire pour l’histoire, sachons qu’un glissement est toujours à redouter. Soyons armés contre ce danger: ‘terrain glissant, gare au dérapage!’” (Febvre 1940, 43) The term reappeared in the late 1940s in articles by Febvre’s student, collaborator and heir Fernand Braudel (e.g. Braudel 1947; 1949) where it was already thought to designate one of the main innovations of Febvre and Bloch’s *Annales*. The proliferation of the word then seems to go back to the 1970s, with Furet’s 1975 article (Furet 1975) apparently becoming one of the main references for the canonical opposition between “*histoire-problème*” and “*histoire-récit*”.

heterogeneous sources: Febvre's historical practice (especially Febvre [1942] 2003), his occasional statements on methodological issues (collected mainly in Febvre [1952] 2021) and his extensive work as a reviewer and critic of others' publications (Müller 2003).

How did Febvre conceive the role of problems in history? A look at the collection of his mostly methodological writings between 1906 and 1952 (Febvre [1952] 2021) suffices to see that Febvre put much emphasis on the term "*problème*" in presenting his conception of history. Problems were for Febvre not only the starting point but also the endpoint and goal of all history: without problems, there simply couldn't be history in an emphatically scientific sense.¹⁹⁴ It was, according to Febvre, through problems that history constructed its facts in the first place: without problems and questions, there couldn't be a science of anything, there simply was nothing.¹⁹⁵ Febvre accordingly imagined history as a whole, in its cooperation with other disciplines, as a "*science de problèmes à poser*" (Febvre [1936] 2021, 100) – not to mention the fact that he conceived also the *Encyclopédie française*, which he supervised and edited from 1932 onwards, as an "*Encyclopédie de problèmes, et non de références*" (Febvre [1952] 2021, 636, n. 5; see also Müller 2002).

This insistence on problems served, first, a polemical purpose. It was directed against certain representations of history which had dominated in France at the turn of the 20th century, which Febvre himself had known in his days as a student (e.g. Febvre [1933] 2021, 26; [1941] 2021b, 45–46) and against which he (and the programme of the *Annales*) sought to demarcate themselves. The target was, in particular, a conception of history as a collection of facts, as a basically inductive science putting the emphasis on establishing and reporting sources on individual events, mostly in political history. This approach – often resumed under the label "*École méthodique*" (Bourdé [1983] 1997) or "*positiviste*" (for a critique of this attribute, see Carbonell 1978) – was represented at the time primarily by the *Revue historique* (1876), founded by historians Gabriel Monod (1844–1912) and Gustave Fagniez (1842–1927), by the methodological writings of Charles Seignobos (1854–1942) and Charles-Victor Langlois (1863–1929) (especially Langlois and Seignobos 1898) and, institutionally, by the *École des Chartes* (1821). Since the 1900s, Febvre's mentor philosopher and historian Henri Berr (1863–1954)¹⁹⁶ had subjected

¹⁹⁴ See the quotation used as a motto for this chapter and its wider context: "C'est que, poser un problème, c'est précisément le commencement et la fin de toute histoire. Pas de problèmes, pas d'histoire. Des narrations, des compilations. Or, rappelez-vous: si je n'ai point parlé de 'science' de l'histoire, j'ai parlé 'd'étude scientifiquement conduite'. Ces deux mots n'étaient point là pour faire riche. 'Scientifiquement conduite', la formule implique deux opérations, celles-là mêmes qui se trouvent à la base de tout travail scientifique moderne: poser des problèmes et formuler des hypothèses." (Febvre [1941] 2021b, 45)

¹⁹⁵ "Élaborer un fait, c'est construire. Si l'on veut, c'est à une question fournir une réponse. Et s'il n'y a pas de question, il n'y a que du néant." (Febvre [1933] 2021, 25)

¹⁹⁶ For the relationship between Febvre and Berr, see Febvre 1997; 1955; 1964; Müller 1996. For more on Berr and his various enterprises, see Chapter 5.

this orientation to a vigorous critique, denouncing it as a form of “*histoire historisante*”.¹⁹⁷ Febvre basically followed Berr’s methodological criticisms.¹⁹⁸ But he substituted for Berr’s general mantra of “synthesis” the more pluralistic motto of a history oriented towards specific “problems” (Müller 1996; 2003, 398–401).¹⁹⁹

The historians of the “École méthodique” had been insisting – inspired by German historian Leopold von Ranke (1795–1886) (Bourdé [1983] 1997, 185–86, 207–8) – on the reliable establishment of historical facts. Against a speculative philosophy of history, including the conception of progress in Comtean “positivism” (e.g. Langlois and Seignobos 1898, 248–49), they had been wary of introducing interpretations, general hypotheses, laws and, more generally, going beyond the particular documented case.²⁰⁰ With his emphasis on “problems”, Febvre challenged precisely the underlying conception of “fact” and sought to reintroduce hypotheses and theory into historical research.²⁰¹ For Febvre, “facts” were never “brute”; they already presupposed problems, hypotheses and theory – or in other, quite Kantian-sounding words, “forms of our mind” (*formes de notre esprit*) (Febvre [1936] 2021, 97). History was not just an indifferent collection of facts for its own sake. It consisted in making choices between objects and their different aspects – depending on questions that interest us at present, i.e. at a particular moment in history. History, according to Febvre, thus “created”, “recreated”, “constructed” or “fabricated” its object as a function of present questions, problems, hypotheses and theories.²⁰²

¹⁹⁷ Berr associated with *histoire historisante*, for example, the overemphasis on individuals: “Comme les individus sont ce qu’il y a de plus tangible en histoire, que les faits sont tous ou produits par eux, ou relatifs à eux, les chroniqueurs naïfs et, à leur suite, les historiens historisants leur ont attribué tout naturellement le rôle capital.” (Berr 1911, 70–71) See also Berr’s “Discussion avec un historien ‘historisant’ (Louis Halphen)” (Berr 1921, 17–31).

¹⁹⁸ For example, as Berr, Febvre charged medievalist Louis Halphen (1880–1950) with *histoire historisante* and insisted on the necessity of theories and hypotheses (closely connected, for Febvre, to problems) for “fabricating” facts (Febvre [1948] 2021).

¹⁹⁹ “Le glissement de la synthèse vers l’histoire-problème que marque Febvre tout en soulignant la distance qui les sépare annonce l’élaboration d’une nouvelle matrice conceptuelle qui, au lieu de soumettre l’histoire à une ‘idée-force’ totalisante comme la synthèse, s’efforce au contraire de démultiplier les possibilités de thématiser l’expérience humaine.” (Müller 2003, 401)

²⁰⁰ “Ils élevaient leurs disciples dans l’horreur sacrée de l’hypothèse, considérée (par des hommes qui d’ailleurs ne cessaient d’avoir à la bouche les grands mots de méthode et de vérité scientifique) comme le pire des péchés contre ce qu’ils nommaient *Science*. Au fronton de leur histoire, ils affichaient en lettres flamboyantes un *Hypotheses non Fingo* péremptoire.” (Febvre [1933] 2021, 25)

²⁰¹ Febvre directly attacked Ranke as one of the sources of this “naively realistic” conception of “fact”: “Bannissons une bonne fois ce naïf réalisme d’un Ranke s’imaginant pouvoir connaître les faits en eux-mêmes, ‘comme ils se sont passés’. C’est à travers les formes de notre esprit que nous apercevons aussi bien la ‘réalité historique’ que la réalité physique. Et à la vieille distinction, au schéma traditionnel du travail historique: établir les faits, puis les mettre en oeuvre – essayons d’en substituer un autre, qui tient compte à la fois, et de la technique d’aujourd’hui et de la pratique de demain telle que déjà elle s’annonce.” (Febvre [1936] 2021, 97)

²⁰² “Mais toute histoire est choix. [Paragraph] [...] Elle l’est du fait, surtout, que l’historien crée ses matériaux ou, si l’on veut, les recrée: l’historien, qui ne va pas rôdant au hasard à travers le passé, comme un chiffonnier en quête de trouvailles, mais part avec, en tête, un dessein précis, un problème à résoudre, une hypothèse de travail à vérifier.” (Febvre [1933] 2021, 24)

Importantly, Febvre did not think that this was peculiar to scientific research in history. It concerned modern science in general.²⁰³ What he objected to “positivist” historians was precisely that their conception of the scientificity of history was inadequate to how modern science actually operated – it was simply “anachronistic” (Febvre [1949] 2021, 622).²⁰⁴ Febvre referred here repeatedly to the conception of chemistry promoted by French chemist, historian and philosopher of science Marcellin Berthelot (1827-1907)²⁰⁵. According to Berthelot, chemistry “fabricated its object”.²⁰⁶ For Febvre, this was true for all of science – and thus also for history.²⁰⁷ Accordingly, he decried his fellow historians’ “fétichisme du fait” (Febvre [1949] 2021, 622).

To illustrate this, Febvre’s favourite example was the work of the histologist looking through a microscope on a sample of tissue (e.g. Febvre [1933] 2021, 24–25; [1941] 2021b, 46; [1948] 2021, 180–81; [1949] 2021, 622) – an experience he himself had apparently made (Febvre [1949] 2021, 622). What the histologist was seeing in this situation were not ready-made “facts”. Without them knowing what they were looking for, without them having laboriously prepared their sample, without them having a hypothesis in mind, which, in turn, was part of a larger body of theory, without them interpreting what they were seeing according to their prior knowledge, there was no such thing as a “fact” to be seen through the microscope.²⁰⁸

²⁰³ For Febvre’s relationship with modern physics and especially Albert Einstein’s (1879-1955) theory of relativity, see Febvre 1955b; recently republished as 2023b; Brian 2020.

²⁰⁴ “Dire: ‘ce [starting from problems and hypotheses, MS] n’est point attitude scientifique’, n’est-ce pas montrer, simplement, que de la science, de ses conditions et de ses méthodes, on ne sait pas grand-chose? L’histologiste mettant l’œil à l’oculaire de son microscope, saisirait-il donc d’une prise immédiate des faits bruts? L’essentiel de son travail consiste à créer, pour ainsi dire, les objets de son observation, à l’aide de techniques souvent fort compliquées. Et puis, ces objets acquis, à ‘lire’ ses coupes et ses préparations. Tâche singulièrement ardue; car décrire ce qu’on voit, passe encore; voir ce qu’il faut décrire, voilà le difficile.” (Febvre [1933] 2021, 24–25)

²⁰⁵ As Febvre, Berthelot had supervised a large encyclopedic project, *La Grande Encyclopédie*, published in 31 volumes between 1886 and 1902. I thank Éric Brian for having drawn my attention to Berthelot’s impact on Febvre.

²⁰⁶ See Berthelot 1860, 2:811–12. Berthelot introduced this statement in order to make a distinction between the experimental sciences (*sciences expérimentales*, such as chemistry) and the observational sciences (*sciences de l’observation*). The latter – he included here the natural and the historical sciences – operated by inductions starting from given facts. The former proceeded – in analogy with mathematics – by deduction, i.e. by deducing artificial phenomena as consequences from natural laws; but in contrast to mathematics, the chemists (or experimental scientists) started from real data (*données réelle*) and looked for real conclusions (*conclusions réelles*). They hence had to verify the connection between both (*vérification effective*). By extending Berthelot’s characterization of chemistry to all sciences, Febvre thus made history into an experimental science proceeding by a sort of “hypothetico-deductive method”.

²⁰⁷ “Car enfin, les faits... Qu’appellez-vous les faits? Que mettez-vous derrière ce petit mot, ‘fait’? Les faits, pensez-vous qu’ils sont donnés à l’histoire comme des réalités substantielles, que le temps a enfouies plus ou moins profondément, et qu’il s’agit simplement de déterrer, de nettoyer, de présenter en belle lumière à vos contemporains? Ou bien reprenez-vous à votre compte le mot de Berthelot, exaltant la chimie au lendemain de ses premiers triomphes – la chimie, *sa* chimie, la seule science entre toutes, disait-il orgueilleusement, qui *fabrique son objet*. En quoi Berthelot se trompait. Car toutes les sciences fabriquent leur objet.” (Febvre [1948] 2021, 180)

²⁰⁸ One version of the story goes as follows: “En ce temps-là, les historiens vivaient dans un respect puéril et dévotieux du ‘fait’. Ils avaient la conviction, naïve et touchante, que le savant était un homme qui, mettant l’œil à son microscope, appréhendait aussitôt une brassée de faits. De faits à lui donnés, de faits pour lui fabriqués

Conversely, all these elements were obviously necessary conditions for ascertaining a scientific fact. For Febvre, this meant that science “constructs its object” (Febvre [1941] 2021b, 58) – and the same should apply to history. Only if historians integrated this notion, common in the natural sciences, of “constructed” facts (Febvre also used the metaphors of “creation”, “recreation” or “fabrication”), only if – connected with this notion – they assumed the essential role of problems and hypotheses in research, only then could emerge something like a truly scientific history.²⁰⁹

Now, how did Febvre put these general views about problems in history into practice? Although several of Febvre’s works bear the mark of the focus on problems, the most paradigmatic one is certainly his seminal 1942 study entitled *Le problème de l’incroyance au XVI^e siècle. La religion de Rabelais* (Febvre [1942] 2003). In this book, Febvre undertook a reassessment of the “problem” whether French writer and humanist François Rabelais (1483 or 1494-1553) – with his works such as *Pantagruel* (1532) and *Gargantua* (1534) – was an “atheist” or a “non-believer”. Even more, starting from Rabelais, Febvre wanted to solve the larger “problem” of disbelief in the 16th century in France. What did his *histoire-problème* approach involve here?

The first remarkable fact about Febvre’s book is that about two thirds of it (the first part and the first book of the second part) are dedicated to a critique of prior interpretations of Rabelais’s relationship with religion.²¹⁰ This procedure is closely connected with Febvre’s emphatic critique of what he called “anachronism”. According to Febvre, most of the prior literature on Rabelais and the question of religion – especially historian of French literature Abel Lefranc’s

par une Providence complaisante, de faits qu’il n’avait plus qu’à enregistrer. Il aurait suffi à l’un quelconque de ces docteurs en méthode de mettre, si peu que ce soit, son œil à l’oculaire d’un microscope et de regarder une préparation d’histologie, pour s’apercevoir aussitôt qu’il ne s’agissait pas pour l’histologiste d’*observer*, mais d’*interpréter* ce qu’il faut bien nommer une abstraction. Cinq minutes, et il eût mesuré, dans la prise de possession par le savant de ce qu’il a d’abord longuement, difficilement préparé – en vertu d’une idée préconçue – toute la part personnelle de l’homme, du chercheur qui n’agit que parce qu’il s’est posé un problème et formulé une hypothèse.” (Febvre [1941] 2021b, 46)

²⁰⁹ Besides, proceeding by hypothesis wasn’t even peculiar, in Febvre’s view, to science or theoretical activities in general. It was also an essential part of practical, ordinary life. In this respect, Febvre said provocatively that most historians were even behind “the last of our peasants”: “Et de même, si l’historien ne se pose pas de problèmes, ou si, s’étant posé des problèmes, il ne formule pas d’hypothèses pour les résoudre – en fait de métier, de technique, d’effort scientifique, je suis fondé à dire qu’il est un peu en retard sur le dernier de nos paysans: car ils savent, eux, qu’il ne convient pas de lancer leurs bêtes, pêle-mêle, dans le premier champ venu pour qu’elles y pâturent au petit bonheur: ils les parquent, ils les attachent au piquet, ils les font brouter ici plutôt que là. Et ils savent pourquoi.” (Febvre [1941] 2021b, 47)

²¹⁰ Febvre admitted this peculiar structure and insisted on it as an expression of his research procedure: “Et maintenant, ai-je bien fait de laisser subsister, dans les pages qui vont suivre, les traces de mes démarches? J’aurais pu jeter à bas mon premier échafaudage, le rabelaisien, renoncer à la discussion des textes produits par mes devanciers, ne laisser subsister que la seconde partie – voire la troisième, seule [referring apparently to the second book of the second part, MS]. Mais ne serait-elle point devenue toute arbitraire, flottante et sans réalité? Ce livre, ce livre aux parties inégales et qui viennent se ranger par masses décroissantes: la plus matérielle en bas, dans sa pesanteur critique; la seconde, plus légère déjà, au centre; la troisième coiffant les deux autres – ce livre qui, par sa structure même, montre ce que fut la démarche d’un esprit – il me plaît qu’il atteste, aux yeux du lecteur, qu’il n’est pas né d’une vue théorique, d’une de ces convictions *a priori* qui font tant de mal à nos études.” (Febvre [1942] 2003, 19)

(1863-1952) interpretation of Rabelais as a an “atheist” (Febvre [1942] 2003, 13; see also Davis 1990, 2–3, 7–8) – had committed this “sin of all sins” (Febvre [1942] 2003, 15). By speaking, for example, of “rationalism”, “free thought” or “science”, they had projected present-day concerns and present-day categories of thought (distinctions, concepts, states of differentiation, etc.) onto a man of the 16th century where neither existed.²¹¹ This resulted in irresolvable contradictions in the literature – some, as historian of philosophy Étienne Gilson (1884-1978), presenting Rabelais as a “Christian” (Davis 1990, 10), others, as Lefranc, as an “atheist”. The present-day projections were the source of the confusion about Rabelais’s relationship with religion.²¹² They presented an “ill-posed problem” (*problème mal posé*) in the form of the disjunctive question whether Rabelais was religious or irreligious. For Febvre, the critique of this ill-posed problem was the very condition for formulating a “better-posed problem” (*problème mieux posé*).²¹³

A decisive step towards “better posing the problem” consisted for Febvre in passing from questions of fact – was Rabelais religious or non-religious? – to questions of possibility: was it possible for Rabelais to be an atheist?²¹⁴ To answer this latter question, we have to know what was possible and impossible – to think, to belief, to feel, to do – for a Frenchman of the 16th century.²¹⁵ Rabelais’s relationship with religion thus became the broader issue of religion in the

²¹¹ For the example of “rationalism” and “free thought”: “Parler de rationalisme et de libre pensée, s’agissant d’une époque où, contre une religion aux prises universelles, les hommes les plus intelligents, les plus savants et les plus audacieux étaient incapables vraiment de trouver un appui soit dans la philosophie, soit dans la science: c’est parler d’une chimère. Plus exactement, sous le couvert de mots sonores et [325] de vocables impressionnants, c’est commettre de tous les anachronismes le plus grave et le plus ridicule; c’est, dans le domaine des idées, munir Diogène d’un parapluie et Mars d’une mitrailleuse. Si l’on préfère, c’est introduire Offenbach et sa *Belle Hélène* dans l’histoire des idées religieuses et philosophiques. Où, peut-être, il n’a que faire.” (Febvre [1942] 2003, 324–25) For the example of “science”: “La Science: ce singulier nous vient à la bouche, en 1941, sans effort. Ou plutôt, s’il nous faut faire effort, c’est pour nous empêcher de l’employer en parlant du temps de Rabelais – parce qu’à lui tout seul, il fait anachronisme. La Science, gardons-nous de projeter cette conception moderne sur le savoir de nos anciens – le recouvrement est impossible. Pendant 2000 ans, les vieilles sciences limitées et traditionnelles ont été cultivées uniquement dans les plates-bandes d’une philosophie qui les abritait: la philosophie du Concept. Et la Révolution commence à peine, au XVI^e siècle, qui s’opérera en plusieurs temps, dans les divers compartiments du savoir – et ne se fera réellement qu’au XIX^e siècle.” (Febvre [1942] 2003, 389–90)

²¹² “Serait-ce que ces problèmes d’opinions, par nous volontiers proclamés insolubles – nous, et nous seuls, nous les ferions naître? Ne substituerions-nous pas à leur pensée la nôtre et derrière les mots qu’ils emploient, ne mettrions-nous pas des sens qu’ils n’y mettent point?” (Febvre [1942] 2003, 23)

²¹³ “Le problème mal posé peut devenir ainsi un problème mieux posé.” (Febvre [1942] 2003, 23)

²¹⁴ “Est-il vrai que Rabelais, dans le silence révolté de sa conscience, ait nourri dès 1532 le dessein conscience, et périlleux, de combattre à fond le christianisme, en tant que religion révélée? [...] ‘Est-il vrai que’ – la formule sent son juge d’instruction. Il s’agit donc d’instruire un procès, de peser des témoignages [...]. Ce procès, nous allons le reprendre. Mais, refait l’instruction, trancher par oui ou non? L’examen critique des faits ne peut-il nous conduire à substituer, à la formule du magistrat: ‘est-il vrai que’ – celle de l’historien: ‘comment s’expliquer que?’ – Formule humaine; formule de celui qui sait qu’à chaque moment de son développement, les croyances de l’humanité sont ce qu’elles peuvent être.” (Febvre [1942] 2003, 28–29) Febvre alluded here to a statement by philosopher Frédéric Rauh (1861-1909) quoted earlier saying that “les croyances morales de l’humanité ont été, à chaque moment, tout ce qu’elles pouvaient être” (Febvre [1942] 2003, 16).

²¹⁵ Febvre’s shift towards questions concerning historical “possibility structures” was inspired by French geographer Paul Vidal de La Blache’s (1845-1918) “possibilism” (Berr 1922, XIV; Febvre 1922, 25; Massicotte 1981,

16th century. Criticizing his predecessors, Febvre insisted on a specifically historical reasoning in terms of possibilities or, perhaps more precisely, various “possibility structures”. Only this would lead to history’s ultimate goal which was, according to Febvre, “understanding” (*comprendre*).²¹⁶

Febvre considered different such possibility structures that had an impact on Rabelais’s relationship with religion. He asked, for example, about the role of Christianity in the life of 16th century intellectuals, but also about the place of philosophy, the sciences and occultism (Febvre [1942] 2003, 327–418) – dismantling in each case the anachronisms of the existing literature. Perhaps most importantly, he analysed among these possibility structures what he called the “*outillage mental*” (Febvre [1942] 2003, 141–42, 328–41) of 16th century men, i.e. their “mental tools”.²¹⁷ Febvre’s idea was that every civilization had such a specific mental equipment.²¹⁸ These tools – facts of “collective” or “historical psychology” (Berr [1942] 2003; Febvre [1942] 2003, 100) – defined what was possible or impossible to think, believe, feel, say or do at a certain moment in time. One of the most important elements of *outillage mental* was language.²¹⁹ According to Febvre, 16th century intellectuals simply didn’t have the words to think as 20th century men did.²²⁰ Given their language, what was possible for them to think vis-à-vis

53) – opposed to German geographer Friedrich Ratzel’s (1844–1904) “determinism” – rather than by Kant’s transcendental questions concerning the conditions of the possibility of knowledge. In other words, the enquiry into “historical conditions of possibility” “relève chez Febvre d’une enquête strictement historique et non d’un agenda philosophique” (Brian 2023, 284, n. 2).

²¹⁶ “En deux mots, dans la pratique de l’histoire religieuse, la méthode du *Est-il vrai que* ne mènerait-elle point à une impasse? Mais celle du *Est-il possible que* ne conduirait-elle pas, au contraire, l’historien à cette fin dernière de toute histoire: non point *Savoir*, en dépit des étymologies, mais *Comprendre*? Tel est l’esprit dans lequel nous allons reprendre la question, et d’abord examiner témoignages et témoins.” (Febvre [1942] 2003, 29) What Febvre had in mind here must not be confounded with debates in the German-speaking historical, social and cultural sciences on comprehension (*Verstehen*) in opposition to explanation (*Erklären*) (for some elements on this debate, see Feest 2010) – although there might possibly be some convergences between Febvre and Max Weber’s “hypothetical” conception of *Verstehen*. For Febvre, to understand in history meant first of all to complicate: “Comprendre? On peut comprendre en saisissant d’une prise directe, dans des livres, les idées politiques des réformateurs, en les comparant, en notant leurs combinaisons possibles, leurs contradictions inaperçues, leurs conséquences probables. Mais ce n’est pas là ce qu’un historien appelle comprendre. Pour lui, comprendre, ce n’est pas clarifier, simplifier, réduire à un schéma logiquement parfaitement net: tracer une épure élégante et abstraite. Comprendre, c’est compliquer. C’est enrichir en profondeur. C’est élargir de proche en proche. C’est mêler à la vie.” (Febvre [1927] 2021, 123–24)

²¹⁷ Febvre used the term “*outillage mental*” also for the first volume of the *Encyclopédie française*, entitled “L’*outillage mental*. Pensée. Langage. Mathématique” (Rey et al. 1937).

²¹⁸ “A chaque civilisation son outillage mental; bien plus, à chaque époque d’une même civilisation, à chaque progrès, soit des techniques soit des sciences, qui la caractérise – un outillage renouvelé, un peu plus développé pour de certains emplois, un peu moins pour d’autres. Un outillage mental que cette civilisation, que cette époque n’est point assurée de pouvoir transmettre, intégralement, aux civilisations, aux époques qui vont lui succéder; il pourra connaître des mutilations, des retours en arrière, des déformations d’importance. Ou des progrès au contraire, des enrichissements, des complications nouvelles. Il vaut pour la civilisation qui l’a su forger; il vaut pour l’époque qui l’utilise; il ne vaut pas pour l’éternité, ni pour l’humanité: pas même pour le cours restreint d’une évolution interne de civilisation...” (Febvre [1942] 2003, 141–42)

²¹⁹ For the importance of language for Febvre, see Massicotte 1981, 84–85.

²²⁰ “Donc commençons par nous poser quelques questions de milieu, de conditions et de possibilités. Et pour aller à l’essentiel, formulons un problème en apparence simple mais dont, s’agissant du XVI^e siècle, personne ne s’est soucié de réunir les données: le problème de savoir quelle netteté, quelle pénétration, finalement quelle

religion? For Febvre, speaking of Rabelais's "atheism" amounted to attributing to him something impossible, i.e. something that was unthinkable with the linguistic and conceptual tools of the epoch. While the question of belief or unbelief was perhaps 19th and 20th century men's problem, it certainly could not be Rabelais's.

Incidentally, instead of "*outillage mental*" Febvre also used the notion of "*mentalité*" to describe 16th century men's possibilities. He referred here (Febvre [1942] 2003, 404, 409) primarily to the works of philosopher and Durkheimian sociologist Lucien Lévy-Bruhl (1857-1939) on "primitive mentality" (especially Lévy-Bruhl 1910; [1922] 2010). In this sense, he spoke, for example, of the "*mentalité artisanale*" of 16th century scholars (Febvre [1942] 2003, 388-90). However, while Febvre's study on Rabelais was later – especially in the third generation of the *Annales* movement (e.g. Duby 1961; Le Goff 1974) – described as a major example of a "history of mentalities" (e.g. Massicotte 1981, chap. 4), Febvre himself employed the term only twice in his book – in passing and without putting much emphasis on it.²²¹ In any case, whether speaking of "*outillage mental*" or "*mentalité*", in both cases Febvre reasoned in terms of what kind of relationship with religion was possible for a 16th century intellectual such as Rabelais.

In sum, analysing in terms of a *histoire-problème* the "problem of unbelief" in the 16th century implied for Febvre: to start from the work of his predecessors and the "problem" it had created (the insoluble question whether Rabelais was an "atheist" or not); to engage in a critique of their work, identifying ways in which they had projected their concerns and categories on Rabelais ("anachronism"); to enquire – against these projections – into what was at the time actually possible for historical agents to think, to believe, to feel and to do, i.e. what could be their own "problems"; and to reconstruct the mental toolbox (*outillage mental* or mentality), including its socio-economic conditions, that made these problems possible, and others impossible (notably those projected on them in hindsight by historians). Following this procedure, Febvre dissolved rather than solved the initial problem of Rabelais's "atheism" as an "ill-posed problem".²²²

efficacité (à notre estime, s'entend) pouvait avoir la pensée d'hommes, de Français qui, pour spéculer, ne disposaient encore dans leur langue d'aucun de ces mots usuels qui reviennent d'eux-mêmes sous nos plumes dès lors que nous commençons à philosopher – et dont l'absence n'implique pas seulement gêne, mais vraiment déficience ou lacune de pensée." (Febvre [1942] 2003, 328) Febvre cited as examples of absent words "absolute", "relative", "abstract", "concrete", "confused", "complex", "natural", "supernatural", but also "transcendental" or "rationalism" (Febvre [1942] 2003, 328-29).

²²¹ The other standard reference for such a "history of mentalities" in Febvre is Febvre [1941] 2021a.

²²² In Massicotte's words: "Rabelais n'était pas incroyant parce que pour lui le problème en se posait pas, ne pouvait pas se poser dans ces termes." (Massicotte 1981, 88)

Importantly, Febvre didn't pretend to stand with his new interpretation of Rabelais outside history, as it were.²²³ His "problem" was – just as his predecessors' problems – historically conditioned: both by the larger socio-political events of the time and by the internal evolution of scholarship on Rabelais (especially Lefranc's 1922 edition of *Pantagruel*).²²⁴ Nevertheless, for Febvre this general "law of human knowledge"²²⁵ didn't lead to "relativism" in the sense of granting equal validity to all possible, historically conditioned interpretations. Progress in our understanding of Rabelais was possible²²⁶ – although Febvre preferred to speak, in the case of history, of "adaptation to time"²²⁷. The advance was brought about precisely through a rigorous critique of prior interpretations and through the attempt to corroborate – in confrontation with available historical materials – the hypotheses that the problems of the time suggested to us. In this movement, the initial "ill-posed problem" was transformed into a "better-posed problem" (Febvre [1942] 2003, 23). From demonstrably inappropriate descriptions and explanations of Rabelais we could thus pass to less inappropriate ones.

We can now try to put some order into Febvre's scattered remarks on "problems" and his historical practice by formulating them into several distinct principles. Problem history in the Febvrian sense might be characterized by the following basic assumptions:²²⁸

²²³ Febvre didn't except himself when he said: "[C]haque époque se fabrique mentalement sa représentation du passé historique." (Febvre [1942] 2003, 12)

²²⁴ Febvre alluded to both levels in the introduction: "Et mon Rabelais fut longtemps le Rabelais de Gebhart. Cependant, de 1900 à 1941, que de tragédies et d'effondrements! [...] [S]i je ne m'en étais pas rendu quelque compte personnel, la lecture en 1922 de la grande introduction mise par Abel Lefranc en tête du *Pantagruel*, dans l'édition critique des *Œuvres*, m'en eût averti. Elle me donna un choc – d'où ce livre, ce livre qui voudrait poser, par réaction, les difficiles problèmes de l'incroyance." (Febvre [1942] 2003, 13) Massicotte insists on this aspect as an essential part of Febvre's *histoire-problème*: "Comme on le voit, conformément aux exigences de l'histoire-problème, il [Febvre, MS] est soucieux de rattacher son projet aussi bien à l'historiographie qu'à la vie générale de l'époque. Dans tout le reste de son étude, il multipliera d'ailleurs les liens avec les conditions historiographiques et proprement historiques dans lesquelles son œuvre s'enracine. Une nouvelle question se pose parce que la connaissance que l'on a d'une chose n'est plus satisfaisante." (Massicotte 1981, 86)

²²⁵ Febvre described how, based on historical materials but, above all, ever-changing interests an epoch fabricated its own past. He conceived this interest-dependence to be true of all human knowledge: "Comment [i.e. how does an epoch fabricate its past, MS]? Avec les matériaux dont elle dispose – et par là, un élément de progrès peut se glisser dans le travail d'histoire. [...] Mais il n'y a pas que les matériaux. Il y a les dons aussi, et qui varient, les qualités d'esprit et les méthodes intellectuelles; il y a, surtout, les curiosités et les motifs d'intérêt, si prompts à se transformer et qui projettent l'attention des hommes d'une époque sur tels aspects du passé, longtemps laissés dans l'ombre, et que demain les ténèbres de nouveau recouvriront. Ne disons pas que c'est humain, mais bien, que c'est la loi du savoir humain." (Febvre [1942] 2003, 12) Febvre's depiction here comes close to Max Weber's account of the evolution of *Kulturprobleme*.

²²⁶ Massicotte discusses this whole issue under the heading of "objectivity" in problem history (Massicotte 1981, 37–41).

²²⁷ "Histoire, fille du temps. Je ne le dis certes pas pour la diminuer. Philosophie, fille du temps. Physique même, fille de son temps: celle de Langevin n'est plus celle de Galilée, qui n'est plus celle d'Aristote. Progrès de l'une à l'autre? je veux bien. Historiens, parlons surtout d'adaptation au temps. Chaque époque se fabrique mentalement son univers. Elle ne le fabrique pas seulement avec tous les matériaux dont elle dispose, tous les faits (vrais ou faux) dont elle a hérité ou qu'elle vient d'acquérir. Elle le fabrique avec ses dons à elle, son ingéniosité spécifique, ses qualités, ses dons et ses curiosités, tout ce qui la distingue des époques précédentes." (Febvre [1942] 2003, 12)

²²⁸ The following "rational reconstruction" draws partly on Massicotte 1981.

- (1) “Problem”: The starting point, the object and the goal of history are “problems”, i.e. questions about the understanding of the past that surge at a peculiar historical present (e.g. Febvre [1941] 2021b, 45).
- (2) “Construction”: Historical facts are “constructions” of the historical record by historians starting from present problems, hypotheses or theories. There is no such thing as problem-hypothesis-or-theory-independent scientific (historical) facts (e.g. Febvre [1948] 2021, 180).
- (3) “Hypothesis”: In answer to “problems”, historians must formulate explicit “hypotheses” about the historical record and construct the “facts” accordingly to corroborate these hypotheses (e.g. Febvre [1941] 2021b, 46, 47). From “having a problem” – as a consequence of their socio-historical position – they must move on to explicitly “posing a problem”, i.e. proposing specific, testable hypotheses.
- (4) “Anachronism”: Historians’ problem constructions are not necessarily in accordance with historical agents’ actual problems. Construction involves the risk of “anachronism”, “presentism”, “pre-constructions” and other forms of projecting present-day concerns and categories onto the past (e.g. Febvre [1942] 2003, 15).
- (5) “Critique”: The historian’s problem construction needs to start with a critique of prior problem constructions (e.g. Febvre [1942] 2003, first part and second part, first book).
- (6) “Possibility structures”: The critique of prior interpretations is based on reasoning in terms of “possibility structures”: what was possible or impossible for the historical agents themselves to conceive, feel, think, imagine, do – in other words: to have as a “problem”? (e.g. Febvre [1942] 2003, 28–29) Possibility structures involve various sorts of conditions: social and economic, collective-psychological (mentalities, sensibilities, “*outillages mentaux*”), socio-intellectual (languages, vocabularies), intellectual, scientific, etc.
- (7) “Progressive adaptation”: The emphasis on the historical construction of historical facts does not imply relativism in the sense of an equivalence between different constructions (nor a “self-refutation” of Febvre’s reasoning). It is through the critique of inadequate constructions that we arrive at more adequate constructions. “Adequateness” means here something like “adaptation” between historical agents’ possibility structures defined by the conditions of the past and historians’ own possibility structures defined by the conditions of his present (e.g. Febvre [1942] 2003, 12). In this respect, some “relative progress” is possible: from ill-posed problems to better-posed problems.

This conception of *histoire-problème* by Febvre was certainly not the only one in the longer history of the *Annales* movement. I have not even mentioned here, for example, the opposition of *histoire-problème* and *histoire-récit*. Besides, there are also statements on “problems” in Bloch that would deserve attention.²²⁹ We might suspect, such as in the case of the use of “*mentalité*” (e.g. Burguière 1983; Hulak 2008), some significant differences between the two founders of the *Annales*. Yet, we cannot go into further detail. Febvre was certainly the one who insisted most on the idea of a *histoire-problème* – even against Bloch (Febvre 1940, 43). His statements might thus suffice here as the main reference for the French tradition of *histoire-problème*.²³⁰

Comparisons and contacts between the two traditions

So far, we have considered the two traditions of problem history in isolation. We can now reconsider our initial questions. How do these two traditions relate to each other? How do they compare in terms of similarities and differences? And were there any concrete historical contacts between them? As said earlier, I cannot engage here in a full-blown history of problem history that would answer these questions satisfactorily. Yet, it will be useful for the further development of a specifically sociological problem history to highlight – at least as a sketch – some features in both traditions.

Let us start with the aspects where the two traditions of problem history tend to differ:²³¹

(1) The domain of application of problem history: Perhaps the most obvious discrepancy between German and French problem history is the domain to which this historiographical method was applied: on the one hand, the history of philosophy (German tradition), on the other, history in general (French tradition), with examples ranging from the history of religion (Febvre [1928] 2008; [1942] 2003) to human geography²³². This difference has, arguably, also

²²⁹ See, for example, some of the statements cited in Oexle 2001b, such as the following one, stemming from a methodological critique of a thesis in human geography: “L’unité de lieu n’est que désordre. Seul l’unité de problème fait centre.” (Bloch 1934, 81)

²³⁰ Was there a distinct tradition of problem history in French philosophy? Geldsetzer (Geldsetzer et al. [1989] 2017, col. 1411) referred in this sense to Paul Janet (1823-1899) and Gabriel Séailles’s (1852-1922) 1887 *Histoire de la philosophie. Les problèmes et les écoles* (Janet and Séailles 1887). This work, however, doesn’t seem to use “problem” in a very elaborate or terminological sense. Practically, the organisation of the history of philosophy into problems refers simply to “la synthèse de l’histoire des doctrines sur les questions fondamentales” (Janet and Séailles 1887, II). For more elements on the French branch of problem history in philosophy, see Bianco 2018.

²³¹ It must be clear that I am speaking in this comparison of tendencies. Differences and similarities between both traditions can be inflated or deflated depending on which representatives of the respective traditions we compare to each other. There were, of course, important internal differences within each national tradition (e.g. between Marburg and South-West neo-Kantians).

²³² Febvre’s history of the Rhine (Febvre [1935] 1997) – initially entitled *Le Rhin. Problèmes d’histoire et d’économie* (Febvre and Demangeon 1935) – is a case in point (for Febvre’s method in this work, see Schöttler 1997). Febvre gave an evocative description of his procedure and called it a “regressive method”: “Histoire du Rhin,

contributed to the fact that the two traditions have rarely been connected. There are, however, arguable exceptions to this tendency, most prominently (if we believe Oexle) Max Weber's neo-Kantian-informed version of problem history, conceived as a general method in the social, human and cultural sciences.

(2) Observers' vs. agents' problems: Whose problems are we talking about? Does "problem" refer primarily to the historical observers (historians or other) or to the historical agents? Does "problem history" mean a "history of problems" – problems that are thought to be somehow "there", i.e. that are historical agents' problems – or "history by problems" – problems that the historian constructs more or less independently of historical agents? Or does it mean both? The two traditions tended to answer these questions differently. The German tradition focused rather on problems that were thought to be "given" with certain invariable basic structures of the human mind; the French tradition insisted more on the historians' method in constructing his research according to problems. Exceptions to this tendency are coming from the Marburg school's version of *Problemgeschichte* with its emphasis on the inevitable constructive work involved on the part of the historian of philosophy. Conversely, Febvre was arguably also interested in retracing historical agents' actual problems against those projected on them by historians.

(3) The historicity of problems: The two traditions diverged on the question whether the problems concerned are universal, unchanging and eternal or historically variable. This opposition could be applied to both levels of observers and historical agents, with different strategies for connecting them. Windelband or Hartmann clearly tended towards the view that problems in philosophy were somehow eternal, even if the degree to which they were actually expressed or discussed could vary historically – one of the major points of attack for critics of problem

j'imagine. Vous l'écrivez de bonne foi, partant de cette illusion que vous descendez le fil des événements alors qu'en fait vous avez commencé par le remonter. Vous partez de ce qu'est le Rhin pour nous, – un Rhin chargé de haines nationales, un Rhin frontière, enjeu sanglant de politiques bellicistes. Et de proche en proche, vous parvenez jusqu'au texte fameux des *Commentaires* qui vaticine: 'Le Rhin, séparation de la Gaule et de la Germanie...' Après quoi, vous redescendez. Innocemment, c'est entendu. Librement, d'accord. Mais dans votre main, tout au long du voyage, vous serrez fiévreusement les deux bouts de la chaîne. Le présent brûlant, vous l'avez projeté, malgré vous, dans les siècles refroidis. Vous l'y retrouvez, tel que vous l'avez mis. Méthode régressive, sans que vous vous en doutiez." (Febvre [1933] 2021, 27) Febvre's image also reminds of Durkheimian sociologist Maurice Halbwachs (1877-1945) – a colleague of Febvre's at the University of Strasbourg and contributor to the *Annales* – and his metaphor for what he called the "frames of memory" (*cadres de la mémoire*): "Ils [the frames of memory, MS] ressemblent à ces trains de bois qui descendent le long des cours d'eau, si lentement qu'on peut passer sur eux d'un bord à l'autre; et cependant ils marchent, et ne sont pas immobiles. Il en est ainsi des cadres de la mémoire: on peut, en les suivant, passer aussi bien d'une notion à une autre, toutes deux générales et intemporelles, par une série de réflexions et de raisonnements, que descendre ou remonter le cours du temps, d'un souvenir à l'autre. Plus exactement, suivant le sens qu'on choisit pour les parcourir, qu'on remonte le courant, ou qu'on passe d'une rive à l'autre, les mêmes représentations nous sembleront être tantôt des souvenirs, et tantôt des notions ou des idées générales." (Halbwachs [1925] 1994, 289; see also Brian 2008, 142–44)

history such as Gadamer who associated problem history with a sort of *philosophia perennis* view. For Febvre, on the other hand, problems varied historically with *outillage mental* or *mentalité* and its socio-economic conditions – both for historical agents and for historical observers. He converged here again with Max Weber’s conception of the changing historical conditions (*Kulturprobleme, Kulturwertideen*) of historical work.

(4) Epistemological stances: Depending on the positions regarding (1)–(3), different epistemological positions were associated with problem history (as presuppositions or consequences). They concerned issues such as the objectivity of historical knowledge, historicism, relativism or the possibility of progress. Both traditions had indeed anti-historicist and anti-relativist intentions. However, they arrived there on different paths. The German tradition tended to repudiate historicism and secure objectivity by insisting on the transhistorical character of problems, which even a historicist historian would have to presuppose in his research. The French tradition, on the other hand, embraced the historicity of problems on the levels of both agents and observers; it maintained nevertheless notions of objectivity and progress by integrating in its procedure the detailed critique of prior constructions and the explication of its own historical conditions.

What about the similarities between both traditions? Despite the differences, there are, it seems, some relatively stable parallels between the German and the French tradition of problem history:

(1) Present-day problems as starting points of history: Both traditions seem to have accepted the idea that history is necessarily written from a present-day perspective defined by problems. They mostly opposed the notion of an observer-independent “objective past” as it was promoted by historicists (in the sense of “historical positivism”)²³³, mostly in the continuity of Ranke. For

²³³ “Historicism” (*Historismus* or *Historizismus*, *historisme* or *historicisme*) is, of course, a highly elusive and problematic ism (for the general problems of isms, see Höpfl 1983; Boschetti 2014a; Cuttica 2015) – “[à] éviter, comme la plupart des termes de ce genre, qui engendrent facilement des discussions verbales” (Lalande [1902–1923] 2010b, 417), as notes the *Vocabulaire* of André Lalande (1867–1963). There have been numerous attempts to disentangle the different meanings of the term in various disciplines (e.g. Scholtz [1974] 2017; Oexle [1986] 1996). I follow here the useful distinction introduced by Schnädelbach between at least three different meanings of the word (Schnädelbach 1983, 51–54): (1) “historicism” as “historical positivism”, i.e. a research practice in history focusing on the “objective” establishment and collection of facts, (2) “historicism” as “historical relativism”, i.e. a philosophical position claiming the historical relativity and equality of all cultural phenomena and validity claims; (3) “historicism” as “historical culturalism”, i.e. a dualist epistemological-philosophical position claiming that all cultural phenomena are intrinsically historical – in opposition to natural – and have to be explained as such (resulting in oppositions such as between *Geisteswissenschaften* and *Naturwissenschaften*). All three meanings were involved in one way or the other in the debates surrounding problem history. A recurring difficulty with the term “historicism” is that the first two meanings – “historical positivism” and “historical relativism” – seem to contradict each other (if objective knowledge of the past is possible, then relativism is false; if relativism is true, then objective knowledge of the past is impossible). This makes the term particularly elusive. See the further discussion below.

problem historians, there was no such thing as a historical “view from nowhere”²³⁴. At the same time, they rejected versions of “presentism” where present-day starting points were projected onto the past in an uncontrolled fashion. They introduced different and contradicting strategies for assuming and controlling problems as contemporary starting points of history. Solutions ranged from connecting historical research with a specific philosophical “system” that was taken to be valid or true in itself (Cohen); assuming that the problems informing history were themselves ahistorical, eternal or universal (Windelband, Hartmann); or criticizing earlier histories in their socio-historical conditions in order to go beyond them (Febvre).

(2) Hypotheses as presuppositions of (historical) facts: Both traditions – at least in some versions – connected the notion of a problem-oriented approach with the use of hypotheses in history (differing, though, on the question where these hypotheses came from). Again, this was directed against the isolated-facts approach of “historicism”. Problem historians of both traditions insisted that problems and hypotheses were the very preconditions – some using the Kantian phrase of “conditions of possibility” – of facts. Against the idea of historical “brute facts”, they emphasized – again, with different strategies – the constructive activity of the historian in establishing historical facts. Facts were, in one way or the other, “constructed” – not arbitrarily, but via problems and hypotheses. The resulting methodological-epistemological conception of history was opposed to both “deductivist” (represented at the time by various philosophies of history) and “inductivist” (represented by historical “positivists”) pictures. It might be suitably characterized as “hypothetico-deductive”²³⁵: history starts from problems, it formulates them into explicit hypotheses and confronts them with experience in the form of the

²³⁴ The expression goes back to American philosopher Thomas Nagel (1937-) (Nagel 1986).

²³⁵ In discussions on scientific method, “hypothetico-deductive” is sometimes equated with “deductive” and the opposition between “inductivism” and “deductivism” led back to the debate between British philosophers John Stuart Mill (1806–1873) and William Whewell (1794–1866) (Hepburn and Andersen 2021). The main issue in the distinction between “deductive” and “hypothetico-deductive” seems to be the question of the origin and justification of the general statements serving as the basis of deduction. I understand “hypothetico-deductive” here with reference to problem history less as a practice of justification than as a practice of discovery and research. I take also inspiration from the way in which French Kantian-spiritualist philosopher Émile Boutroux (1845-1921) described Berr’s insistence on the combination of the methods of “analysis” and “synthesis” – a project that informed Febvre’s vision of history (e.g. Berr and Febvre 1923; see also Massicotte 1981, 32–34): “Loin de s’en tenir d’abord à l’observation, pour n’aborder qu’ensuite la recherche des lois en allant exclusivement du particulier au général, elles [the physical sciences, MS] ont procédé de l’universel et du général au particulier, des grandes lois aux lois de détail, en ayant soin seulement de n’admettre jamais le général qu’à titre d’hypothèse. C’est en suivant de plus en plus consciemment cette méthode hypothético-déductive, que la science a pris définitivement son essor.” (Boutroux 1900a, 10) And: “Et ainsi l’histoire proprement dite, sans parler de la sociologie naissante et de la philosophie de l’histoire qui attend encore l’établissement de ses titres de légitimité, ne peut se passer de ce qu’on appelle, improprement d’ailleurs, la synthèse, jointe à l’analyse.” (Boutroux 1900a, 12) Synthesis, in this sense, is akin to what American mathematician and philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914) called “abduction”: “A hypothesis [...] has to be adopted, which is likely in itself, and renders the facts likely. This step of adopting a hypothesis as being suggested by the facts, is what I call *abduction*. I reckon it as a form of inference, however problematical the hypothesis may be held. [...] [A] hypothesis adopted by abduction could only be adopted on probation, and must be tested.” (Peirce [1901] 1998, 95)

historical record (constructed through hypotheses); this results in confirmation or refutation and leads to modifications of the initial hypothesis; from there, the process can start again and progress towards a better understanding of the past. Problem historians of both traditions (especially the Marburgers, Weber or Febvre)²³⁶ thought that by doing so they followed the very same method as other sciences. With it came, of course, also the tentativeness of all scientific accounts. Problem histories were inevitably provisional.

(3) Reasoning in terms of possibilities: Both traditions of problem history engaged – at least in part and, again, in different ways – in reasoning in terms of historical possibilities and “conditions of possibility”. The German tradition was here clearly indebted to the Kantian transcendental method of asking for the “conditions of the possibility” of knowledge and the Kantian sense of “problem” and “problematic” as concerning the mere possibility of a statement or object (e.g. Cohen, Natorp or Hartmann). In this sense, problem histories were only possible histories. The French tradition, on the other hand, had its sources rather in geographical conceptions of the relationship between the structural conditions provided by a geographical environment and actual human activity and history – what Berr called Febvre’s “possibilism” inspired by Vidal de La Blache (Berr 1922, XIV; see also Febvre 1922, 25; Massicotte 1981, 53). In this sense, problem history was about the structural conditions defining what was possible and impossible at a certain time and in a certain place. Nevertheless, these markedly different backgrounds seem to have produced converging ideas. Most striking is perhaps the similarity between Cassirer’s history of the problem of knowledge that enquired into the “historical *a priori*” making each epoch’s conception of knowledge possible and emphasized at the same time the relativity of its own standpoint that, in turn, made writing the history of this problem possible²³⁷; and Febvre’s study of the historical possibilities and impossibilities of 16th century men such as Rabelais that insisted on the difference with the possibilities of 19th and

²³⁶ For Windelband, on the other hand, problem history was specific to the history of philosophy, which was thought to differ radically from the history of other scientific disciplines (Windelband [1892] 1908, 7).

²³⁷ For example: “Jede Epoche besitzt ein Grundsystem letzter allgemeiner Begriffe und Voraussetzungen, kraft deren sie die Mannigfaltigkeit des Stoffes, den ihr Erfahrung und Beobachtung bieten, meistert und zur Einheit zusammenfügt.” (Cassirer [1906/1922, reprint of 3rd edition] 1995, V; see also Luft 2015a, 192–202) And on the relativity of Cassirer’s own viewpoint: “Solange die Vernunft in sich selbst noch nicht ihre Festigkeit und ihre Selbstgewißheit gefunden hat, bleibt ihr auch die Geschichte nur ein wirres und widerspruchsvolles Chaos. Es bedarf bestimmter sachlicher Prinzipien der Beurteilung, es bedarf fester Gesichtspunkte der Auswahl und Formung, damit die historischen Erscheinungen, die für sich allein stumm sind, zu einer lebendigen und sinnvollen Einheit werden. Wenn irgendwo, so wird es in der Geistesgeschichte deutlich, daß ihr Inhalt und Zusammenhang nicht gegeben, sondern von uns auf Grund der Einzeltatsachen erst zu erschaffen ist: sie *ist* nur das, was wir kraft gedanklicher Synthese aus ihr *machen*. Worin aber sollten wir den inhaltlichen Grund dieser Synthesen selbst suchen, wenn wir uns des Halts an der Wissenschaft und an ihrem *gegenwärtigen* Bestand begeben müßten? Daß wir in ihr immer nur einen *relativen* Stützpunkt finden, daß wir somit die *Kategorien*, unter denen wir den geschichtlichen Prozeß betrachten, selbst veränderlich und wandlungsfähig erhalten müssen, ist freilich richtig; aber diese Art der Relativität bezeichnet nicht die Schranke, sondern das eigentliche Leben der Erkenntnis.” (Cassirer [1906/1922, reprint of 3rd edition] 1995, 15–16)

20th century historians writing on Rabelais. Again, reasoning in terms of historically changing (conditions of) possibilities concerned historical observers as well as historical agents.

(4) Reflexivity: As a consequence of (1)-(3), problem history in both traditions tended to come with a heightened sense of what we would call today “reflexivity” (see above): a sense for those parts in our knowledge of history that go back not to the historical object as such, but to historians’ active “subjective” contributions – and an attempt to control these subjective elements.²³⁸ Again, strategies for mastering historians’ subjectivity differed. Febvre’s reflexivity, for example, involved refuting projections of contemporary historians’ possibility structures (with their mental tools and language, including terms such as “atheism”) on historical agents’ possibility structures (that lacked these tools). “Problems” might well be a “Trojan horse” introducing historians’ (inevitable) “subjectivity”.²³⁹ But this was counterbalanced by a reflexive critique of “subjective” elements. This critique should clear the way for a better grasp of the object – increased “objectivity”, as it were, but in a new, more perspectivist sense, closer to “adaptation”. In the German tradition, we find similar ideas in the sociological lineage of Max Weber and, later on, especially in Mannheim (see below). But also, parts of philosophical *Problemgeschichte* (e.g. Cohen, Cassirer) were remarkably reflexive, at least in the sense that they insisted on the historian’s contribution to the construction of his object and sought ways of accounting rationally for this contribution.

How should we understand these differences and similarities between the two traditions of problem history? I cannot even begin here to seek historical explanations for them. However, we should briefly consider the issue of concrete historical contacts between the two traditions. This is, of course, a pressing question once we insist on the convergences and discard the idea of a simple homonymy between *Problemgeschichte* and *histoire-problème*. I can only indicate here some leads that would have to be explored further:

(1) Encounters in the “Berr galaxy”²⁴⁰: A first plausible point of contact between the two lineages is the intellectual environment built by Henri Berr with ventures such as the *Revue de Synthèse historique* (1900), the Centre international de Synthèse (1925) or the *Semaines*

²³⁸ In a very Kantian sense of “reflexion”: “Die Überlegung (reflexio) hat es nicht mit den Gegenständen selbst zu tun, um geradezu von ihnen Begriffe zu bekommen, sondern ist der Zustand des Gemüts, in welchem wir uns zuerst dazu anschicken, um die subjektiven Bedingungen ausfindig zu machen, unter denen wir zu Begriffen gelangen können. Sie ist das Bewußtsein des Verhältnisses gegebener Vorstellungen zu unseren verschiedenen Erkenntnisquellen, durch welches allein ihr Verhältnis unter einander richtig bestimmt werden kann.” (Kant [1781/1787] 1974, 285, A260/B316)

²³⁹ As Febvre said in his polemics against “positivist” conceptions of history: “Car poser des problèmes, ou formuler des hypothèses, c’était tout simplement trahir. Faire pénétrer dans la cité de l’objectivité le cheval de Troie de la subjectivité.” (Febvre [1941] 2021b, 46)

²⁴⁰ For this expression, referring to the complex intellectual infrastructure and networks built by Berr over several decades, see e.g. Bourel 1996, 16; Schöttler 2015b, 216.

internationales de Synthèse (1929). In these contexts, representatives of the French variety of problem history could encounter representatives of the German variety – or, at least, come into touch with the German-speaking debates in which *Problemgeschichte* was situated.²⁴¹ For example, the *Revue de Synthèse historique* contained numerous articles on German-speaking historiographical debates and the different versions of *Methodenstreit* in German social and human sciences, with controversial historian Karl Lamprecht (1856-1915) contributing already the very first issue (Lamprecht 1900). Even more directly, it also published articles by major German protagonists of *Problemgeschichte* such as Windelband (Windelband 1904), Rickert (Rickert 1901; for the reception of Rickert in France, see Leblanc 2023) or Cassirer (Cassirer 1937) – the latter being also a member of the “Section de Synthèse historique” of the Centre international de Synthèse (Centre international de Synthèse 1926b). It was precisely in this environment that Febvre – the main representative of French *histoire-problème* – forged his intellectual instruments, in close contact with Berr’s intellectual project of “synthesis” (Müller 1996). If there were concrete contacts between the two traditions, it seems that they must have passed through the channel of Berr’s enterprises where – quite exceptionally – philosophers and historians, both French-speaking and German-speaking, could meet.

(2) The *Annales* and Germany: Another possible area of contact between German *Problemgeschichte* and French *histoire-problème* could be the environment of the *Annales* movement itself, including the peculiar context of the University of Strasbourg where the *Annales* journal was launched in 1929. It is well-known that the engagement with German-speaking publications and debates occupied an important place in Febvre and Bloch’s work (Schöttler 2015a). This has provoked an extensive literature on alleged – sometimes mythical – connections between the *Annales* and German human and social sciences. Is it possible to identify in this context concrete links between French *histoire-problème* and German *Problemgeschichte*? I admit that, given that Febvre’s notion of *histoire-problème* seems to have already been well under way in the early 1920s and that philosophy did not occupy much place in the *Annales* journal, this lead might not be very promising.

(3) Febvre on Cassirer: Finally, there is at least one documented high-profile contact between a French and a German proponent of problem history. In 1938 (Febvre [1938] 2021a), Febvre reviewed indeed Cassirer’s book *Mensch und Kosmos in der Philosophie der Renaissance* (Cassirer [1927] 2002) on Renaissance philosophy. The topic hit close to home since Febvre himself was working at the time on his *Rabelais*, which contained an important chapter on the

²⁴¹ For Berr’s relationship with Germany and the presence of German-speaking debates in the “Berr galaxy”, see Schöttler 1996.

philosophy of the Renaissance (Febvre [1942] 2003, 342). Yet, Febvre had been consistently critical of the history of philosophy. He considered it almost as the prototype of a sort of “anti-historical” or “ahistorical history” (Febvre [1938] 2021, 406), as a genre that mostly didn’t deserve the attribute “history”.²⁴² In this polemical context, Febvre nevertheless covered Cassirer’s work with praise: “Il n’y a pas, pour un historien, de tentative plus sympathique et plus digne d’intérêt que celle de ce maître des études philosophiques [Cassirer, MS].” (Febvre [1938] 2021a, 404) Febvre insisted especially on Cassirer’s capacity – obviously close to Febvre’s own procedure in his *Rabelais* – to “montrer comment leurs [Renaissance philosophers, MS] conditions d’existence les amenaient à concevoir ‘un nouvel univers de la pensée’, – comment, dans cet univers spirituel, toute leur vie se reflétait à la fois et se rendait manifeste” (Febvre [1938] 2021a, 404). Even if Febvre emphasized that the perspectives of philosophers and historians remained irreconcilable, works like Cassirer’s could establish a fruitful dialogue between the two groups²⁴³ and thus close an important gap – “une grosse lacune de notre outillage intellectuel” (Febvre [1938] 2021, 412). This concrete contact between Febvre and Cassirer might suggest something of a convergence between the two traditions of problem history. Of course, the chronology makes it implausible to think of any sort of “influence” of Cassirer on Febvre – or the other way round, for that matter.²⁴⁴ If anything, there was a convergence starting from markedly different initial conditions.

Since we cannot push the enquiry here further, we will have to content ourselves with the persisting puzzle of two seemingly independent, both similar and dissimilar traditions of problem history.

The present-day interest of problem history

We must now leave behind strictly historical considerations. For I have indeed announced the present enquiry into the sociologization of the *a priori* as a specimen of problem history. This

²⁴² “De tous les travailleurs qui retiennent, précisé ou non par quelque épithète, le qualificatif générique d’historiens, il n’en est point qui ne le justifient à nos yeux par quelque côté – sauf, assez souvent, ceux qui, s’appliquant à repenser pour leur compte des systèmes parfois vieux de plusieurs siècles, sans le moindre souci d’en marquer le rapport avec les autres manifestations de l’époque qui les vit naître – se trouvent ainsi faire, très exactement, le contraire de ce que réclame une méthode d’historiens. Et qui, devant ces engendremens de concepts issus d’intelligences désincarnées – puis vivant de leur vie propre en dehors du temps et de l’espace, nouent d’étranges chaînes, aux anneaux à la fois irrésels et fermés...” (Febvre [1938] 2021a, 404–5)

²⁴³ “Mais voici le livre de Cassirer. C’est bien le livre d’un philosophe, et qui, nous l’avons vu, se défend d’être historien, de façon expresse. Or, lorsque, après avoir consacré à Nicolas de Cues, à sa théorie de la connaissance, à son rôle comme propagateur des idées platoniciennes, à ses idées sur la religion universelle, la vision en Dieu, les rapports de Dieu et du monde, etc., des pages substantielles [...] – qui ne trouvera pas là des aliments substantiels pour ses constructions propres?” (Febvre [1938] 2021a, 411) Accordingly, Febvre cited Cassirer’s work in the bibliography of his book on *Rabelais*.

²⁴⁴ A search in Cassirer’s digitalized collected published works (Becker 2009) and in the register of Cassirer’s posthumous works (Möckel 2022, 860) shows that he apparently referred nowhere to Febvre.

implies, first, the idea that there is something about the traditions of problem history to be taken up, revived and continued – today. But what might these traditions that go back some 80 to 150 years might tell us in 2025? Why should they still be relevant? I cannot offer here an elaborate rationale for reviving problem history but only indicate a strategy that might work.

Basically, I suggest making an argument from analogy. If problem history can be interesting for us today (at least in some respects), there must be some relevant analogies (or “homologies”, in Bourdieusian terminology) between the historical situations in which problem history first came forward – the historical problems which problem history tried to solve, as it were – and the present-day situation. Establishing analogies between historical situations as different as German philosophy at the turn of the 20th century, French history in the interwar period and the history and sociology of the social and human sciences today is, of course, a risky enterprise. Normally, it would call for a careful construction of the respective contexts. I can only formulate here a hypothesis, though. I think that – given the similarities in the traditions of problem history that we considered above – the following line of reasoning is at least plausible.

Arguably, both the German and the French tradition of problem history emerged in response to the opposition between forms of “presentism” and forms of “historicism”.²⁴⁵ In this situation, they sought a kind of third way: a solution that would, on the one hand, avoid various versions of projecting the present onto the past; and, on the other hand, eschew the idea of a given, observer-independent objective historical past. Problem historians of both traditions attempted to integrate the fact that any reconstruction of the historical past depended on an ever-changing historical present – but without ending up in some form of historical relativism or arbitrariness about the past. Starting from this similarity, the argument for the present-day interest of problem history would then consist in showing that we are today in some areas in an analogous deadlock between presentist and historicist tendencies; and that problem history might offer us here a way out.

To give this argument at least some plausibility, we must quickly sketch the three historical situations concerned: (1) debates in the social and human sciences in Germany between the 1880s and the 1930s; (2) in France between the 1900s and the 1950s; and (3) the international debate on the history and sociology of the social and human sciences since the 1960s:

²⁴⁵ For the complex term “historicism”, see the note above. “Presentism” is, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, no older than 1916 (*Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. “Presentism”). I use “presentism” here primarily following German-American historian of anthropology George Stocking’s (1928-2013) important article on “presentism” and “historicism” in the history of the social and behavioural sciences (Stocking 1965) (see below). In his understanding of “presentism”, Stocking took up British historian Herbert Butterfield’s (1900-1979) definition of “Whig history”, i.e. “studying the past for the sake of the present” (Butterfield [1931] 1965, 16). Of course, the projection of the presentism-historicism opposition onto the situation of problem histories in Germany and France remains, well, problematic – in the sense of a testable problem-historical hypothesis.

(1) Germany, 1880s-1930s: The three-term alternative between forms of presentism, historicism and some third way was present in the German debates on Historismus²⁴⁶ at least since classical philologist and philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche's (1844-1900) 1874 *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen* with its part "Vom Nutzen und Nachtheil der Historie für das Leben" (Nietzsche [1874] 1999).²⁴⁷ Nietzsche distinguished there – without using the term "Historismus", though (Oexle [1986] 1996, 53, 56) – three types of history (Nietzsche [1874] 1999, 258): (1) "monumental history", (2) "antiquarian history" and (3) "critical history". "Monumental history" – corresponding to presentism – writes history with an interest in present-day imitation of past "greatness" (however defined, e.g. forms of classicism); yet, by doing so, the past itself "suffers damage", it becomes a "mythical fiction" (Nietzsche [1874] 1999, 262). "Antiquarian history" – corresponding to historicism – invests history as such, in all its details, without distinguishing between "the great" and "the small"; still, just as monumental history, it misses the past in that everything now appears as equally important (Nietzsche [1874] 1999, 267). "Critical history", finally, is thought to surmount or correct the first two. It assumes explicitly its present-day interests and needs. On this basis, it "judges and convicts" the past (Nietzsche [1874] 1999, 269) for the sake of a (partial) "liberation" (Nietzsche [1874] 1999, 258) of the present from the past. One of the originalities of Nietzsche's argument was his insistence that all three forms of history – also apparently uninterested forms of historicism – served present interests (or "life", as Nietzsche called it). Those promoting *Problemgeschichte* in Germany clearly didn't buy into Nietzsche's underlying metaphysics of "life" and his concrete conception of "critical history" (for an example of many neo-Kantians scathing critique of Nietzsche, see H. Cohen [1896] 1914, 9–10).²⁴⁸ Nevertheless, they started in several cases (e.g. Cohen [1871] 1987;

²⁴⁶ I rely here basically on Oexle [1986] 1996.

²⁴⁷ I am grateful to Elisabeth Nemeth for having drawn my attention to this text at a time when I wouldn't have thought of it.

²⁴⁸ For Nietzsche, history should under all circumstances "serve life", "jene dunkle, treibende, unersättlich sich selbst begehrende Macht" (Nietzsche [1874] 1999, 269). Life itself was for Nietzsche "unhistorical" (Nietzsche [1874] 1999, 258). For the association between "life" and "the present", see Nietzsche's conclusion on the three forms of history: "Dies sind die Dienste, welche die Historie dem Leben zu leisten vermag; jeder Mensch und jedes Volk braucht je nach seinen Zielen, Kräften und Nöthen eine gewisse Kenntniss der Vergangenheit, bald als monumentalische, bald als antiquarische, bald als kritische Historie: aber nicht wie eine Schaar von reinen, dem Leben nur zusehenden Denkern, nicht wie wissensgierige, durch Wissen allein zu befriedigende Einzelne, denen Vermehrung der Erkenntniss das Ziel selbst ist, sondern immer nur zum Zweck des Lebens und also auch unter der Herrschaft und obersten Führung dieses Zweckes. Dass dies die natürliche Beziehung einer Zeit, einer Cultur, eines Volkes zur Historie ist – hervorgerufen durch Hunger, regulirt durch den Grad des Bedürfnisses, in Schranken gehalten durch die innewohnende plastische Kraft – dass die Kenntniss der Vergangenheit zu allen Zeiten nur im Dienste der Zukunft und Gegenwart begehrt ist, nicht zur Schwächung der Gegenwart, nicht zur Entwurzelung einer lebenskräftigen Zukunft: das Alles ist einfach, wie die Wahrheit einfach ist, und überzeugt sofort auch den, der dafür nicht erst den historischen Beweis sich führen lässt." (Nietzsche [1874] 1999, 271) For Oexle, Nietzsche inspired with his critique of historical "objectivity" a whole camp in historiography that was opposed both to Rankean historicists and to problem history (Oexle [1986] 1996, 53–57; 2001b, 15–17). This camp – with protagonists such as German lawyer and philosopher Carl

[1896] 1914, 7–11) from the same dilemma between forms of presentism and historicism and sought a way out that assumed critically the present-day conditions of the writing of history.²⁴⁹

(2) France, 1900s-1950s: The presentism-historicism opposition was arguably also present in France around 1900 and motivated *histoire-problème* there. It informed already Henri Berr's life-long project of "synthesis" (for its clearest statement, see Berr [1911] 1953), which was an attempt to go beyond this opposition. On the one hand, Berr's "synthesis" was directed against the "École méthodique", which epitomized the historicist pole (*histoire historisante*), being directly informed by German historiography, especially, a Rankean objectivist conception of history. On the other hand, Berr agreed with the "methodical" historians in their fierce critique of all sorts of philosophies of histories (referring both to German idealism and to contemporary varieties such as Comtean positivism or evolutionism) – the presentist pole, as it were. In Berr's project, historical "analysis" and "synthesis" were thought to be inextricably intertwined.²⁵⁰ Now, demonstrably, Berr's strategy had an important impact on Febvre's conception of *histoire-problème* (Müller 1996). Similarly, Febvre's historiography was directed both against the historicist conception of "fact" promoted by the "École méthodique"; and, on the other hand, against the uncontrolled projection of present-day concerns and categories on the past – "anachronism" or presentism.

(3) The history of the social and human sciences since the 1960s: As in the first two cases, the opposition between presentism and historicism has also been vital, ever since the 1960s, in the history of the social and human sciences – the area in which I suggest to apply problem history today.²⁵¹ The initial input here came undoubtedly from more general debates in the historiography of science, especially the controversies provoked by Thomas Kuhn's 1962 *Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Kuhn [1962] 1996) which took issue with a historiography of science applying present-day standards to measure past science's "progress".²⁵² The repercussions were soon to be felt in English-speaking history of the social and human sciences

Schmitt (1888-1985) or Austrian historian Otto Brunner (1898-1982) and their conceptions of *Begriffsgeschichte* – was later involved in National Socialism (Oexle 2009; Kortüm 2021).

²⁴⁹ In this sense, Gadamer's characterization of *Problemgeschichte* as a "bastard of historicism" (Gadamer [1960] 1986, 382) finally seems quite appropriate – on the condition that we remove its polemical intention and the underlying strategy of delegitimizing problem history.

²⁵⁰ Again, for further details and references on Berr's project, see Chapter 5.

²⁵¹ For this whole topic, see Heilbron 2017b; 2022, 18–31. My understanding of the present-day situation in the history and sociology of the social and human sciences has been heavily influenced by Johan Heilbron.

²⁵² Kuhn himself spoke explicitly of "a historiographic revolution in the study of science" (Kuhn [1962] 1996, 3). He described a transition leading from some form of presentism to some form of historicism: "Rather than seeking the permanent contributions of an older science to our present vantage, they [historians of science, MS] attempt to display the historical integrity of that science in its own time." (Kuhn [1962] 1996, 3) As an example for this turn, Kuhn cited Russian-French historian of science Alexandre Koyré (1892-1964). For a typology of forms of presentism in the history of science and the "critical presentism" in the French tradition of historical epistemology, see Loison 2016.

where critiques of presentism, advocacy of historicism and debates on their balance emerged (e.g. Stocking 1965; Merton [1967] 1968). How should we conceive the relationship between the social and human sciences and their history? How should this history be written – for the sake of the present or for the sake of the past – or somehow both? Debates on these questions – further informed by new, historicist trends in intellectual history (e.g. Skinner 1969) – continued in the English-speaking literature throughout the 1970s and 1980s, producing around the middle of the 1980s a genuine “historicist controversy” in the history of sociology (e.g. Jones 1974; 1977; 1981; Camic 1979; 1981; Seidman 1985; Jones 1985; Turner 1985; Warner 1985). They also spread internationally and were taken up, for example, by French scholars (e.g. Winkin 1986).²⁵³ In this latter context, the debate has continued up to this day – some advocating a “*historicisme engagé*” or a “*présentisme raisonné*” (Blondiaux and Richard 1999), others pleading for a “*historicisme réflexif*” (Topalov 2001; see also 2015, 11–47) or “*historicisme*” *tout court* (Feuerhahn 2016), and still others proposing a “*présentisme réflexif*” (Heilbron 2022, 31, n. 43; Heilbron and Zerilli 2022).²⁵⁴ The opposition between presentism and historicism thus still seems alive and well in today’s history of the social and human sciences – although, as the above formulas indicate, there has been no lack in proposals for surmounting the dichotomy or finding an equilibrium between both orientations.²⁵⁵

The argument from analogy I announced is simple. If problem history has proved a viable strategy for going beyond presentism and historicism in the two prior contexts in which it emerged, then there is reason to believe that it could be a fruitful option to explore in today’s history of the social and human sciences where this same dichotomy applies. I do not claim that problem history is the only way to surmount the presentism-historicism opposition – since the 1960s there have been several interesting proposals on offer.²⁵⁶ But it could be one promising approach to explore – especially when it comes to understanding intellectual objects (ideas,

²⁵³ Other traces lead also into the German-speaking literature on the history of sociology (see several contributions in Lepenies 1981b; Dayé and Moebius 2015b).

²⁵⁴ A recent instance of debates on issues of historicism and presentism in the history of the social and human sciences is the exchange on a methodological article by Wolf Feuerhahn proposing a “historicist” or even “radically historicist” research programme (Feuerhahn 2020a; Fleury and Walter 2020; Devoto 2020; König-Pralong 2020; Lamy 2020; Zékian 2020; Feuerhahn 2021a). I thank Wolf Feuerhahn for having drawn my attention to this debate. For reasons of time and space, I am not able to take here a position in this discussion.

²⁵⁵ What about the social substrate of the symbolic distinction between presentism and historicism? The presentism-historicism opposition seems indeed to be well-anchored in the “social morphology” (to use a Durkheimian label, see e.g. Mauss 1927, 129–30) of the different groups interested in the history of the social and human sciences: on the one hand, practitioners of the disciplines concerned (tending towards presentism), on the other hand, intellectual historians or historians of science turning to the social and human sciences (tending towards historicism) (see also Heilbron 2022, 20–23). Of course, “*le travail qui consiste à historiciser ce mouvement historiciste*” – and, I should add, the whole historicism-presentism opposition – “*reste à faire*” (see also Heilbron 2022, 20) – starting perhaps with a transnational social history of the labels involved (Feuerhahn 2021a, 243).

²⁵⁶ Already Stocking in the 1960s had advocated a form of “enlightened presentism” (Stocking 1965, 215).

arguments, topics, intellectual lineages, etc.) such as the problem of sociologizing the *a priori*.²⁵⁷

Sociologizing problem history

So far, I have mainly considered historical varieties of problem history in the domains of philosophy and general history and shown that there might be some reason for further exploring and reviving this tradition today. But what could a contemporary version of problem history look like concretely? We certainly do not want to get involved with some of the controversial assumptions of historical versions of problem history, such as the notions of “perennial problems” or “mentalities”. What could then be the principles of a today viable version of problem history, i.e. the one I think can be convincingly applied to the sociologization of the *a priori*?

The strategy I suggest for reviving problem history consists in “sociologizing” it, i.e. in integrating it into wider sociological theory, theory of social action and the sociology of science and knowledge. This operation helps us to better spell out and generalize the problem-historical approach. In particular, it enables us to connect this method with the general Bourdieusian framework I have outlined above for the study of the sociologization of the *a priori* – and thus to answer the question how we can conceive “problems” within this approach.

One might be tempted to ask what the prospects are of sociologizing an approach that has primarily been developed by philosophers and historians. Yet, we have already encountered several historical connections between problem history and sociology. In the German-speaking tradition, we saw possible links leading to Max Weber’s conception of *Kulturwissenschaften* and sociology. In the French tradition, we observed that Febvre’s conception of *histoire-problème* drew on the notion of “*mentalité*” as it was popularized by Durkheimian philosopher and sociologist Lévy-Bruhl – not to speak of other profound contacts and exchanges between the *Annales* and Durkheimian sociology (e.g. Burguière 1979, 1351–52). But we can go even further and explore the possibility of sociologizing problem history by drawing on two sociologists who have themselves continued the problem-historical tradition or who, at least, have provided resources for doing so. These two historical models for a sociological problem history are, on the one hand, already mentioned Hungarian-German-British philosopher and sociologist Karl Mannheim, and, on the other hand, Pierre Bourdieu.²⁵⁸

²⁵⁷ I admit willingly that the analogy sketched here relies on interpretations of the three situations concerned that remain controversial – both individually and regarding their comparison. As said, this is barely more than a sketch of a possible strategy for showing the present-day interest of a problem-historical approach.

²⁵⁸ A third model for a problem-oriented sociology would be provided by the work of Robert K. Merton. I cannot go into this case here (but see further indications in the considerations on “strategic research sites” below). Merton both analysed the evolution of science sociologically in terms of “problems” or “foci of scientific interest” conditioned by wider non-scientific context (e.g. Merton [1938] 1970, 54); and conceived sociology

From Problemgeschichte to Mannheim's sociology of knowledge

In Germany in the 1920s, Mannheim arguably continued the tradition of *Problemgeschichte* in sociology and developed it further into a specific version of the sociology of knowledge.²⁵⁹ He drew here visibly on Cassirer, on South-West neo-Kantianism and on Weber. By his education and his intellectual trajectory, Mannheim had been in contact with neo-Kantian *Problemgeschichte*, both in its Marburg and South-West variety. For example, one of his first publications in Hungarian (Mannheim [1917] 2004) was a review of Cassirer's wartime writing on German culture, *Freiheit und Form* (Cassirer [1916] 1918). Mannheim read this work precisely as the history of a problem (the problem of freedom, form and their relation), asked for the criteria of its identity over time and accused Cassirer finally of constructing the unity of the problem by playing with the endless ambiguities of the concepts involved.²⁶⁰ The terms and topics "problems" and "problem history" then recurred frequently in Mannheim's work: from his 1918 Hungarian thesis on the structure of theories of knowledge (Mannheim [1922] 1964a) through his German work in sociology and the sociology of knowledge (e.g. Mannheim [1922] 2003; [1922] 1964b; [1924–1925] 2003; [1925] 1964; [1928] 1964a; [1929] 1982) up to his writings in his second exile in Great Britain (Mannheim [1946] 1971).²⁶¹

In his 1918 Hungarian thesis – published in German in 1922 in the journal *Kant-Studien*, one of the main forums of neo-Kantianism (Mannheim [1922] 1964a) – Mannheim subscribed indeed to a vision of problem history that seems to have been directly inspired by South-West neo-Kantianism. As in Windelband, *Problemgeschichte* is presented as the most appropriate, in fact, the *only* appropriate way of writing the history of philosophy – in contrast to the history

as proceeding by "problem-finding" and "problem-solving", with sociological problems having, in turn, their "social determinants" (e.g. Merton [1959] 1965; 1987). This aspect was connected with a wider conception of the interrelations between empirical and theoretical work in sociology and the use of "middle-range theories" (Merton [1945] 1968a; [1948] 1968; [1949] 1968a).

²⁵⁹ With the exception of works by German historian Reinhard Laube (1967-) (Laube 2001; 2004), this seems to be a relatively little-known aspect of Mannheim's work.

²⁶⁰ "Wiederholt muß man fragen, ob es möglich ist, eine Frage zu finden, die in jeder Epoche des geistigen Lebens lebendig und formulierbar ist, und ob es möglich ist, das Problem so zu konzipieren, daß es sich mit der Zeit dynamisch verändert, entwickelt und dennoch in bestimmter Hinsicht gleich bleibt. Ist es möglich, solch ein durchgehendes Problem zu finden, das einen Querschnitt in zwei Richtungen durch das geistige Leben ermöglicht: einerseits in Richtung der verschiedenen Kulturobjektivationen und andererseits in Richtung der verschiedenen Zeiten?" (Mannheim [1917] 2004, 564) And: "Das Geheimnis, daß beide Begriffe auf den verschiedenen Gebieten des geistigen Lebens dennoch anwendbar sind, liegt darin verborgen, daß der Verfasser sämtliche Äquivokationen von Freiheit und Form ausschöpft und sie, wenn doch nötig, wieder als identisch betrachtet." (Mannheim [1917] 2004, 565) Mannheim showed in the same review that he knew and understood Cassirer's *Substanzbegriff und Funktionsbegriff* (Cassirer [1910] 2000).

²⁶¹ See also the respective entries in the index of the edition of Mannheim's articles by his former student, German-American sociologist Kurt H. Wolff (1912-2003) (Mannheim 1964, 741). I admit that there are also many non-terminological uses of "problem" in Mannheim's writings.

of the sciences or of art.²⁶² The sciences may ask “questions”, but only philosophy deals with “problems”.²⁶³ In this perspective, Mannheim tried to offer a “structural analysis” and typology of various epistemologies that he conceived as different solutions to one and the same “problem” – a problem that Mannheim called, just as Cassirer, the “problem of knowledge” (*Erkenntnisproblem*) (Mannheim [1922] 1964a, 203). This problem, he thought, had its roots in larger wholes dubbed “systematizations” (Mannheim [1922] 1964a, 191). He tried to trace the latter back again to one fundamental “logical structure” consisting of a three-part relation between a knowing subject (*Erkennender, Subjekt*), the object-to-be-known (*das Zu-Erkennende, Objekt*) and the known or knowledge (*das Erkannte, Erkenntnis*) (Mannheim [1922] 1964a, 226). Whatever the merits of Mannheim’s analysis, he operated in his thesis clearly within the framework of a neo-Kantian problem history in the lineage of the South-West school.

Things, however, changed rapidly, it seems, after Mannheim’s emigration from Hungary to Germany and his turn to sociology. His article on the “problem” of the sociology of knowledge (Mannheim [1925] 1964) is perhaps the best example of how he transformed his initial problem-historical orientation into a sociology of knowledge. He asked there in a highly reflexive way for the socio-historical conditions that had made the recent emergence of the “problem of a sociology of knowledge” possible – offering a sort of sociology of knowledge of the sociology of knowledge.²⁶⁴ He used “problem” here explicitly in the sense of problem history and insisted that *Problemgeschichte* was the appropriate approach to understand the history of the *Geisteswissenschaften* (again, in contrast to the natural sciences).²⁶⁵ However, Mannheim went

²⁶² “Die Geschichte der Philosophie dagegen läßt sich [...] am adäquatesten in Form einer Problemgeschichte darstellen, in der die Kontinuität des Gedankens (des Problems) zwar eine überzeitliche Einheit konstituiert, die einzelnen Lösungsversuche aber sich gegenseitig – wenn auch hier im Prinzip nur *eine* Wahrheit möglich ist – keineswegs ganz im selben Sinne vertilgen, wie dies in der Wissenschaftsgeschichte geschieht, – jedoch auch nicht im selben Sinne sich gegenseitig dulden, wie es in der Kunstgeschichte der Fall ist. Die problemgeschichtliche Darstellung ist eigentlich nur der Philosophie adäquat” (Mannheim [1922] 1964a, 174). Also the distinction Mannheim made between individual thinker, historical epoch and the inner dynamic of the problem (Mannheim [1922] 1964a, 195) echoes directly Windelband’s distinction between individual, cultural-historical and pragmatic factor (Windelband 1892, 10). Indeed, in a later writing Mannheim identified *Problemgeschichte* explicitly with Windelband’s version in his 1892 textbook (Mannheim [1926] 1964, 403).

²⁶³ “Ein anderes Moment, das dem Betrachter der geschichtlichen Entfaltung der Philosophie unbedingt auffallen muß, ist die Rolle, die dem logischen Gebilde *Problem* in diesem Gebiete zufällt. Es ist doch schon zunächst auffallend, welch ein Eigenwert dre bloßen richtigen Aufstellung eines Problems stets zugesprochen wird, sollte auch die ihr angefügte Lösung irrig oder falsch sein. [Paragraph] Die wirkliche Heimat der Probleme ist eigentlich die Philosophie. [...] Es ließe sich vielleicht zeigen, daß bei den Einzelwissenschaften in ihren wirklich auf den jeweiligen Stoff gerichteten Teilen, also in ihren ursprünglichen Arbeitsgebieten nur *Fragen*, mitunter auf sehr komplizierten Wegen nur beantwortbare Frage, aber keine ‘Probleme’ vorkommen. [...] Es wäre eine der interessantesten logischen Aufgaben, einmal die logische Struktur des Problems und ihren Unterschied von der der Frage zu untersuchen. Die Struktur des Problems wird letzten Endes nur aus der Struktur der ganzen Systematisierung verstanden werden können” (Mannheim [1922] 1964a, 193–94).

²⁶⁴ Later, he also spoke explicitly of the issue of the “social genesis of the sociology of knowledge”, “die soziale Genesis der Wissenssoziologie” (Mannheim [1931] 1995, 242).

²⁶⁵ “Wir erfassen den Geist in der Form einer Problemgeschichte und die Problematik der ‘Konstellation’ erwächst aus unserer Überzeugung, daß der jeweilige Stand der Probleme in den verschiedenen Gebieten, aber auch die Konstellation der außertheoretischen Faktoren den möglichen nächsten Schritt im Erkennen mitbestimmt und

this time further and insisted now that the dynamics of problems could only be understood by going beyond an internal analysis of problems and relating them to the “problematics of life” (*Problematik des Lebens*).²⁶⁶ The question hence became for Mannheim which tendencies in “life” had made the problem of the sociology of knowledge possible. As in his thesis, Mannheim envisioned a “structural analysis of possible problem-formulations” – but this time in connection with the concrete social relations of the historical epoch (Mannheim [1925] 1964, 311). To enquire into the *social* “conditions of possibility for a sociology of thought” (Mannheim [1925] 1964, 317) was for Mannheim not only possible, but a duty given the “increased reflexivity” (*gesteigerte Reflexivität*) of the age (Mannheim [1925] 1964, 310).²⁶⁷ While we cannot go into the details of Mannheim’s analysis,²⁶⁸ it is clear that he gravitated towards a sociological reinterpretation of problem history.

Mannheim’s transition from problem history towards the sociology of knowledge seems to have been accomplished little time later. In his 1926 article on different forms of interpretation of mental formations (*geistige Gebilde*) (Mannheim [1926] 1964), *Problemgeschichte* is presented as one type of interpretation among others – an internal interpretation in terms of the genesis of ideas (*ideengeschichtlich-genetische Interpretation*) (Mannheim [1926] 1964, 403, 406). It is opposed to the “sociological interpretation” which Mannheim now pursues. Mannheim conceded that problem history – he referred explicitly to Windelband – followed the factual historical development of problems.²⁶⁹ But he also insisted that the choice of problems in such problem histories was always based on the problems of the interpreter.²⁷⁰ Remarkably, he retrospectively qualified his own thesis not as a history of problems, but as an internal

dadurch zugleich ein Auspizium für die Lösbarkeit gewisser Fragen enthält. Ganz besonders sind wir aber in den Geisteswissenschaften der Überzeugung, daß eine Frage nicht in jeder geschichtlichen Situation gestellt, geschweige denn gelöst werden kann, daß das Aufsteigen und Untergehen von Problemen in einem eigentümlichen erforschbaren Rhythmus erfolgt.” (Mannheim [1925] 1964, 309) (309)

²⁶⁶ See the motto taken from Mannheim at the beginning of this chapter (Mannheim [1925] 1964, 310). The reference to life (*Leben*) bore the marks of contemporary German *Lebensphilosophie*, inspired by Wilhelm Dilthey – a crucial reference for Mannheim. For Mannheim’s relationship with *Lebensphilosophie*, see Šuber 2010, 284–88.

²⁶⁷ The deliberate use of “Reflexivität” by Mannheim indicates that present histories of the word and concept “reflexivity” (Fringant 2023; 2024) should be extended to include the German debate on *Wissenssoziologie*.

²⁶⁸ It is true that in his concrete analysis of the conditions of the problem of a sociology of knowledge, Mannheim barely went beyond large-scale intellectual history (e.g. Mannheim [1925] 1964, 320–21).

²⁶⁹ “Die problemgeschichtliche Interpretation ist von der sinngenetischen Interpretation dadurch unterschieden, daß, während jene gegenüber der faktisch-historischen Genesis völlig indifferent ist, die ideengeschichtliche Interpretation sich weitgehend an die positiv geschichtliche Entfaltung hält und die einzelnen Bestandteile des zu interpretierenden Systems dadurch zu erläutern versucht, daß sie diese aus ihrem einmaligen systematischen Zusammenhang, in dem sie dieselben in das interpretierende System eingebettet findet, herausreißt und auf eine durch den Geschichtsverlauf gehende Problementfaltung bezieht.” (Mannheim [1926] 1964, 403)

²⁷⁰ “Auf welche Probleme eine solche Problemgeschichte die Entwicklung abstellt, hängt selbstverständlich mit der eigenen Problematik des aus der Problemgeschichte heraus interpretierenden Autors zusammen. Diese Interpretation ist also auch eine genetische, aber noch immer in einer Innenbetrachtung vorgenommene.” (Mannheim [1926] 1964, 403)

“sense-genetic” (*sinn genetische*) interpretation which was only interested in a typology of epistemologies and – contrary to problem history – not in real historical evolutions (Mannheim [1926] 1964, 402). In any case, Mannheim now clearly turned to “sociological interpretation”. He understood this as a method that connected mental formations with external factors, but without abandoning the level of “sense”, insisting in a Diltheyan and South-West neo-Kantian vein on the opposition between “interpretation” and “explanation” (Mannheim [1926] 1964, 396). Sociological interpretation, according to Mannheim, conceived mental formations as a function – Mannheim also spoke of “functionalizing” (*Funktionalisieren*) – of an external social context of meaning (*Sinnzusammenhang*).²⁷¹

We cannot go here further into the details of Mannheim’s sociology of knowledge and the role problems played in it – although this would probably be a fruitful exercise. Problems and their socio-historical conditions remained an important topic of Mannheim’s sociology of knowledge.²⁷² But they were now joined by other objects such as “concepts”, “categories”, “stages of abstraction” or “ontologies” (e.g. Mannheim [1931] 1995, 234–39). What interested us here is that Mannheim offers a case where German *Problemgeschichte* was transformed into a sociological approach. With his questions about the socio-historical conditions making problems possible in the first place, he inclined towards a historical-sociological conception of problem history close to Febvre’s version of *histoire-problème*. For our purposes, it is also noteworthy that Mannheim applied this approach reflexively to the history of the social and human sciences and even to the sociology of knowledge itself. He thus came close to a sociological problem history – a sociological “structural analysis of possible problem-formulations”

²⁷¹ “Demgegenüber gilt es zu betonen, daß nicht eine jede genetische ‘Ableitung’ sinnfremd ist, weshalb es auch *genetische Deutungen* und nicht nur *genetische Erklärungen* gibt und ferner, daß nicht eine jede Außenbetrachtung der Sinngehalte, die diese auf das jeweilige Sein hin funktionalisiert, sinnfremd und als solche eine ‘bloße’ Kausalerklärung ist. Nur wenn man diese Differenzen zugibt, wird man nicht übersehen, daß z. B. die soziologische Funktionalisierung eines Bedeutungszusammenhangs zwar keine immanente Erfassung, aber auch keine sinnfremde Kausalerklärung, sondern ganz im Gegenteil eine spezifisch neuartige, vom Sein her gegebene Sinndeutung ist. [Paragraph] Eine jede soziologische ‘Erklärung’ z. B., indem sie geistige Gebilde einer historischen Gemeinschaft auf das dahinter stehende ‘soziale Sein’ hin funktionalisiert, setzt dieses soziale Sein als einen umfassenderen, wenn auch anders gelagerten *Sinnzusammenhang*, aus dem heraus eigentlich der letzte Sinn des besonderen Gebildes erst verstanden werden soll.” (Mannheim [1926] 1964, 396–97) As an example of such a sociological interpretation, Mannheim took Marxist historian Franz Mehring’s (1846-1919) ideological interpretation of Kant’s categorical imperative as “der ideologische Ausdruck der ökonomischen Tatsache, daß die Bourgeoisie, um ein für ihre Zwecke taugliches Ausbeutungsobjekt zu erlangen, die Arbeiterklasse nicht bloß als Mittel, sondern auch als Zweck setzen, d. h. sie im Namen der Menschenfreiheit und Menschenwürde von den feudalen Fesseln der Erbuntertänigkeit und Leibeigenschaft befreien mußte” (Mehring 1922, 81). For more on such “profonating” interpretations of Kant, see Chapter 4.

²⁷² For example, in his 1931 account of the sociology of knowledge for German sociologist Alfred Vierkant’s (1867-1953) *Handwörterbuch der Soziologie* (Mannheim 1931) Mannheim spoke again of the socio-historical and “vital” (*lebendig*) conditions of possibility of “problems”. With the departure from an internalist or “immanent” history of ideas (*Geistesgeschichte*), it became clear, according to Mannheim, that “bei der Problemstellung ein der Formulierung vorangehender, problematischemachender Lebensakt das Problem erst ermöglicht” and that “bei dem Ductus (bei der Problemführung) lebendige Kräfte im Spiele sind” (Mannheim [1931] 1995, 230–31).

(Mannheim [1925] 1964, 311) – of the problem I set out as the topic of the present work: the social conditions of possibility for conceptions of a sociologized *a priori*.

Bourdieuian problem history

Even more important than the tendencies in Mannheim, however, are for us the resources that we can find in Bourdieu's sociology for formulating a viable contemporary version of a sociological problem history. Considering the status of "problems" in Bourdieu's work will also enable us to integrate our focus on one specific socio-historical problem into the Bourdieusian framework outlined above.

We have to acknowledge first, however, that Bourdieu does not explicitly theorize the term "problem". It is not part of his technical terminology, such as "*habitus*", "*champ*", "*espace des possibles*", etc.²⁷³ Nevertheless, talk of "problems" and "problematics" (*problématiques*) occurs regularly in Bourdieu's sociology of science, of literature, of art and of culture in general as well as in his epistemology of the social sciences. It is out of these contexts that we can (re-)construct something like a Bourdieusian conception of problems and their history and sociology. We shall see that grasping problems and ensembles of problems is in Bourdieu's framework indeed a crucial element for understanding intellectual and cultural production.

To begin with, how can we insert Bourdieu into the traditions of problem history we encountered so far? Did he entertain any relevant relationship with these currents? While, to the best of my knowledge, Bourdieu did not refer anywhere explicitly to "problem history" or "*histoire-problème*", there are at least three traces that indicate connections:

(1) The most obvious starting point, of course, is Bourdieu's relationship with the French tradition of *histoire-problème* in the *Annales* tradition. This involves, as a structural precondition, the long conflictual history between history and sociology in France since the 19th century (e.g. Leroux 1998; [1998] 2018; for Bourdieu's relationship with history in general, see Charle 2020). We find traces of this history in Bourdieu's statements on Febvre. Febvre – for which Bourdieu did not display much sympathies – somehow epitomized for Bourdieu what went wrong in French academic history, especially a specific "aristocratic" writing style and a distaste for concepts and theory.²⁷⁴ Nevertheless, Bourdieu – who didn't conceal his dislike for

²⁷³ In the *Dictionnaire international Bourdieu* (Sapiro 2020c) – an exhaustive collective work that might, among other things, serve as an indicator concerning Bourdieu's terminology – there is no entry on "*problème*" or "*problématique*". In Bourdieu's own works, "*problématique*" appears sometimes in the indexes: it refers further to the notion "*espace des possibles*" (e.g. Bourdieu [1992] 1998, 567; [1994] 2014, 244). We shall quickly understand why.

²⁷⁴ "La disposition un peu soumise et docile que suppose et renforce ce rapport aux données (et au donné...) va de pair avec le culte du bien écrire (le style précieux et imprécis de Lucien Febvre est l'antithèse parfaite de l'écriture austère et rigoureuse – pas 'chic' du tout – de Durkheim)." (Bourdieu and Raphael 1995, 110) And

Febvre's methodological writings on history – also acknowledged a convergence with Febvre. It concerned the consideration of possibilities, conditions of possibility or “possibility structures”, as we called it, in Febvre's work on Rabelais. For Bourdieu, Febvre's approach here was translatable into his own conception of a “space of possibles” (*espace des possibles*) and, more broadly, into his conception of a “science des œuvres” (Bourdieu [1986] 1994).²⁷⁵

(2) More important for Bourdieu's use of “problems” and “problematics” seems, however, another branch of problem history that we could barely touch upon so far: the tradition of “historical epistemology” or “French epistemology”²⁷⁶ epitomized by the works of philosophers of science Gaston Bachelard (1884-1962) and Georges Canguilhem (1904-1995), Bourdieu's one-time doctoral supervisor. Parallel to *histoire-problème* at around the same time,²⁷⁷ Bachelard had insisted on the importance of problems in science generally as well as in the philosophical-historical understanding of science.²⁷⁸ This was an expression of his broader emphasis on the priority of the rational element in any kind of knowledge: the “epistemological vector” went from “the rational” to “the real”, not the other way around.²⁷⁹ This basic attitude was directly taken up by Bourdieu.²⁸⁰ In the epistemological introduction to *Le métier de sociologue* (1968),

Bourdieu continued, quite polemically: “L'historien français, en bon aristocrate [...], se méfie du concept, pas seulement parce qu'il est souvent un peu laid et toujours peu littéraire, mais aussi sans doute parce qu'il a quelque chose de roturier, dans la mesure où il est fait pour que tout le monde comprenne et que tout le monde puisse vérifier, au lieu de laisser les choses dans l'ordre de l'ineffable et de l'indicible.” (Bourdieu and Raphael 1995, 110–11)

²⁷⁵ “Même Lucien Febvre, dont je n'aime pas beaucoup les formulations conceptuelles, ‘outillage mental’, ‘mentalité’, etc., ni les textes méthodologiques sur l'histoire, a bien montré, dans son *Rabelais*, qu'on ne peut comprendre un auteur qu'à condition de reconstituer l'espace des possibles à l'intérieur duquel s'est constituée sa pensée, l'univers des déterminations sociales qui rendent possible une création singulière en même temps qu'elles la bornent.” (Bourdieu and Raphael 1995, 113)

²⁷⁶ On the complex history of the labels “historical epistemology” and “French epistemology”, see Gingras 2010 and my remarks in Chapter 1.

²⁷⁷ Which relations existed between Febvre's *histoire-problème* and Bachelard's historical epistemology? I cannot go into this question here. Just note that there is another possible encounter in the “galaxy” of Henri Berr: both Febvre and Bachelard participated in several of Berr's activities (see Chapter 5). Moreover, Febvre wrote a very favourable review (Febvre 1939) of Bachelard's *Psychanalyse du feu* (Bachelard [1938] 1985) – a book in which Bachelard drew on theories of “primitive mentality” (see also Chimisso 2001a, chap. 6) that also interested Febvre.

²⁷⁸ See the telling motto by Bachelard at the beginning of this chapter (Bachelard [1938] 2011, 16). Already in his 1927 secondary thesis, Bachelard had chosen to study the evolution of one specific scientific “problem”: the physical problem of heat transfer in solids (Bachelard [1927] 1973). Bachelard's connections with what has sometimes been called “French neo-Kantianism” are rather obvious: he dedicated the thesis to one of his supervisors, rationalist philosopher Léon Brunschvicg (1869-1944) – his second supervisor being historian and philosopher of science Abel Rey (1873-1940).

²⁷⁹ In the introduction to *Le nouvel esprit scientifique* (1934), Bachelard had qualified “rationalism” and “realism” as two fundamental metaphysics. In philosophy, they are often opposed to each other; in science and scientific practice, however, they are used together: “Quel que soit le point de départ de l'activité scientifique, cette activité ne peut pleinement convaincre qu'en quittant le domaine de base: *si elle expérimente, il faut raisonner; si elle raisonne, il faut expérimenter.*” (Bachelard [1934] 2017, 7) However, scientific reasoning had, according to Bachelard, a direction, or an “epistemological vector”: “Toutefois, le sens du *vecteur* épistémologique nous paraît bien net. Il va sûrement du rationnel au réel et non point, à l'inverse, de la réalité au général comme le professaient tous les philosophes depuis Aristote jusqu'à Bacon.” (Bachelard [1934] 2017, 8)

²⁸⁰ For Bourdieu's use of Bachelard within the space of various “bachelardismes” and “anti-bachelardismes” in France at the time, see Fabry and Roux 2025.

the authors accorded an epistemological primacy to “construction”.²⁸¹ “Construction”, in turn, meant precisely to relate observable reality to a “theoretical problematics”, i.e. to an ensemble of hypotheses: “the real” can only answer when interrogated through questions defined by a problematics and hypotheses.²⁸² For Bourdieu and his co-authors, a problematics was involved as early as the stage of data collection.²⁸³ They acknowledged also that these problematics were “historically and socially constituted”²⁸⁴. This implied the risk of “false problematics” as they were suggested, for example, by ordinary language or the social position of the observer.²⁸⁵ Defining a truly scientific problematics thus involved a reflexive critique of such false questions via what Bourdieu called at the time “epistemological vigilance” and a “sociology of sociology”.²⁸⁶ In sum, “problem” and “problematics” were connected – via Bachelard – to the crucial operation that Bourdieu called the “construction of the (scientific) object”²⁸⁷. We can identify here several convergences with important tenets of problem history (the emphasis on construction, hypotheses, reflexive critique, etc.).

(3) Finally, when it comes to the logic of the process of “object construction”, we touch upon another point of – at least indirect – contact between Bourdieu and the tradition of problem history, this time in its German variety. In fact, “object construction” and the confirmation of its hypotheses through data involve a peculiar form of circular reasoning: data are constructed

²⁸¹ In the “epistemological hierarchy” of scientific practice “construction” precedes proof (and is itself preceded by a breach with “prenotions”): “la hiérarchie épistémologique des actes scientifiques [...] subordonne le constat à la construction et la construction à la rupture” (Bourdieu et al. [1968] 2005, 24). Bachelard himself, in the above quote on the centrality of problems for the “scientific mind”, had emphasized “construction”: “S’il n’y a pas eu de question, il ne peut y avoir connaissance scientifique. Rien ne va de soi. Rien n’est donné. Tout est construit.” (Bachelard [1938] 2011, 16)

²⁸² “Un objet de recherche, si partiel et si parcellaire soit-il, ne peut être défini et construit qu’en fonction d’une *problématique théorique* permettant de soumettre à une interrogation systématique les aspects de la réalité mis en relations par la question qui leur est posée. [...] [I]l n’est pas d’observation ou d’expérimentation qui n’engage des hypothèses. [...] [L]e réel n’a jamais l’initiative puisqu’il ne peut répondre que si on l’interroge.” (Bourdieu et al. [1968] 2005, 54) Bourdieu and his co-authors cited here explicitly Bachelard’s statement on the “epistemological vector” leading from the rational to the real.

²⁸³ “Il suffit d’avoir une fois tenté de soumettre à l’analyse secondaire un matériel recueilli en fonction d’une autre problématique, si neutre soit-elle en apparence, pour savoir que les *data* les plus riches ne sauraient jamais répondre complètement et adéquatement à des questions pour lesquelles et par lesquelles ils n’ont pas été construits.” (Bourdieu et al. [1968] 2005, 55)

²⁸⁴ In the presentation of a text by Marx, introducing the section “La construction de l’objet”, the authors of *Le métier* say that the scientific “travail de l’abstraction [...] engage toujours une problématique historiquement et socialement constituée” (Bourdieu et al. [1968] 2005, 193). This was, again, directed against a form of naïve empiricism.

²⁸⁵ Introducing a text by French philosopher Maxime Chastaing (1913-1997) on Wittgenstein, the authors wrote: “[I]l faut analyser la logique du langage ordinaire qui, parce qu’ordinaire, passe inaperçue. Pareille critique peut seule porter au jour les fausses problématiques et les catégories fallacieuses que véhicule le langage et qui menacent toujours de se réintroduire sous les travestis savants de la langue la plus formaliste.” (Bourdieu et al. [1968] 2005, 174)

²⁸⁶ “Ainsi, la sociologie de la connaissance dont on s’est souvent autorisé pour relativiser la validité du savoir et, plus précisément, la sociologie de la sociologie, où l’on a voulu voir seulement la réfutation par l’absurde des prétentions absurdes du sociologisme, constituent des instruments particulièrement efficaces du contrôle épistémologique de la pratique sociologique.” (Bourdieu et al. [1968] 2005, 102)

²⁸⁷ For this notion and examples of such “constructions”, see Poupeau 2020; Pinto 2020.

as a function of hypotheses and hypotheses are confirmed by data constructed through these same hypotheses.²⁸⁸ This “methodological circle” was expressed most clearly by Bourdieu in his confrontation with art historians Erwin Panofsky and Edgar Wind (1900-1971) (e.g. Bourdieu 1967a; Wind [1936] 2005). Both had been, as colleagues or students, in direct relation with Cassirer, who himself had employed a similarly circular procedure in his history of the problem of knowledge.²⁸⁹ What is more, in the background of Panofsky’s circular method lurked also Mannheim who had exchanged with Panofsky on the problem of the interpretation of cultural products.²⁹⁰ In any case, Bourdieu himself clearly established a connection between his Bachelardian views concerning “construction” and Panofsky and Wind’s conception of the *circulus methodicus* (Lucas 2020). Bourdieu defended this form of circular reasoning as an essential characteristics of any sort of “structural interpretation” and opposed it to both “positivism” and “intuitionism” (Bourdieu 1967a, 144)²⁹¹ – an “epistemological couple” that is arguably “homologous” to the dichotomy between historicism and presentism that various versions of problem history had sought to surmount. At the very least, then, we can say that Bourdieu, in his conception of a structural (or relational) sociological interpretation of social

²⁸⁸ In *Le métier de sociologue*, the authors described this process – with reference both to Kant and to French physicist, historian and philosopher of science Pierre Duhem (1861-1916) – as the “systematic verification” of a “system of propositions” by a sort of “proof by coherence” (Bourdieu et al. [1968] 2005, 88–92): “S’il est vrai qu’en leur forme la plus achevée, les propositions scientifiques sont conquises contre les apparences phénoménales et qu’elles présupposent l’acte théorique qui a pour fonction, selon l’expression de Kant, ‘d’épeler les phénomènes pour pouvoir les lire comme expériences’, il s’ensuit qu’elles ne peuvent plus trouver leur preuve que dans la cohérence entière du système complet des faits créés par – et non pour – les hypothèses théoriques qu’il s’agit de valider.” (Bourdieu et al. [1968] 2005, 90) Bourdieu cited as an example the way Panofsky used the “*inter se disputando*” in the *Album* of Villard de Honnecourt (ca. 1200-1250) as an “element of proof” for the relationship between Gothic architecture and scholastic philosophy. The authors of *Le métier* also identified this kind of circularity in the ordinary practices of sociologists: “C’est le même mouvement circulaire qu’opère le sociologue soucieux de ne pas imposer au donné ses propres présupposés lorsque, dans le dépouillement d’une enquête, il déchiffre à partir de l’ensemble des réponses au questionnaire le sens de chacune des questions par lesquelles il a suscité et construit ces réponses, tout en reformulant le sens de l’ensemble en fonction de ce qu’il apprend de chacune d’entre elles.” (Bourdieu et al. [1968] 2005, 91)

²⁸⁹ See the quote above (Cassirer [1906/1922, reprint of 3rd edition] 1995, 15–16). Cassirer insisted that the “unity of history” was to be conceived as a “postulate” that was both informed and confirmed by particular historical phenomena: “Auch hier ist uns somit kein anderer Weg gelassen, als das Problem der Einheit der Geschichte – nach einem Goetheschen Wort – ‘in ein Postulat zu verwandeln’. Je mehr sich dieses Postulat in der Erschließung und Sichtung der besonderen Erscheinungen bewährt, um so mehr hat es sein Recht und seine ‘Wahrheit’ erwiesen.” (Cassirer [1906/1922, reprint of 3rd edition] 1995, 18)

²⁹⁰ For the exchange between Mannheim and Panofsky, see Hart 1993. Bourdieu edited Panofsky’s 1932 article (Panofsky 1932) referring to Mannheim (Mannheim [1921–1922] 1964) in a volume by Panofsky in his book series “Le sens commun” (Panofsky [1932] 1975). Therefore, Bourdieu must have been aware to some extent of this historical lineage.

²⁹¹ Unfortunately, recent accounts of the relationship between Bourdieu and Panofsky (Pasquali 2023; Anheim and Pasquali 2025) have mostly missed this point. They have preferred to continue the long-standing focus on Panofsky as a source of Bourdieu’s concept of *habitus*. However, if we do not take into account the methodological dimension of Bourdieu’s interest in Panofsky – a topic that is also in quantitative terms much more present in Bourdieu’s “Postface” as well as in his correspondence with Panofsky (Bourdieu and Panofsky [1966–1967] 2025) than the notion of *habitus* – we can barely understand why Bourdieu saw in Panofsky’s study on Gothic architecture and scholastic philosophy “une contribution capitale à la théorie générale des sciences de l’homme” (Bourdieu and Panofsky [1966–1967] 2025, 250).

and cultural phenomena, drew on argumentative resources developed in the context of German *Problemgeschichte*.

But historical considerations aside, what is the status of “problems” within Bourdieu’s framework? We can distinguish here again – as we have done in the comparison of the German and French tradition – between two levels: “problems” on the level of social and historical agents; and “problems” on the level of the sociological or historical observers of these agents. We shall see that Bourdieu – not unlike Febvre, but in a much more explicit and systematic way – finally unifies these two points of view and conceives “reflexivity” as an instrument for controlling observers’ perspectives.

Let us begin from the agents’ point of view. “Problems” and “problematics”²⁹² are – even if he barely used these terms terminologically – a crucial dimension of Bourdieu’s “theory of practice” (Bourdieu [1972] 2000a; 1980b) as applied to cultural and especially scientific activity. They are directly connected to the application of Bourdieu’s central concept of *habitus* and his *habitus*-field theory of social action in this area.²⁹³ In a nutshell, agents’ problems and problematics are the result of the encounter between a field and a *habitus*, i.e. between an objective structure of distribution of various forms of capital (economic, cultural, social, symbolic, specific) and an agent who perceives this objective distribution through the lense of a specific set of acquired, more or less adapted dispositions of perception, evaluation and action (*habitus*). This means, first, that problems are neither purely “objective” – somehow “out there” or “given” through the universal structure of the human mind – nor purely “subjective” – simply “constructed” or “invented” from scratch by agents. Problems only emerge from the encounter between two structures – one “objective” (the field), the other “subjective” or “incorporated (the *habitus*).

We can further spell out this idea with Bourdieu’s distinction between a “space of positions” (*espace des positions*), a “space of stances” (*espace des prises de position*) and a “space of possibles” (*espace des possibles*). Problems and problematics are in Bourdieu clearly situated on the level of the “space of possibles” – a concept that he used much more often and more

²⁹² “*Problématique*” is used by Bourdieu more terminologically than “*problème*”. For instance, Bourdieu often italicized the word in his writings and made it feature in the indexes of his books (e.g. Bourdieu 2001b, 21, 119). “Problematics” seems to refer to a – more or less explicit – interconnected set of problems which is perceived by an agent in a given state of the field and which defines their intellectual, scientific or other strategy. The word seems sometimes almost coextensive with “space of possibles” (e.g. Bourdieu [1992] 1998, 381–82).

²⁹³ For example: “Réintroduire l’idée d’*habitus*, c’est mettre au principe des pratiques scientifiques, non pas une conscience connaissante agissant conformément aux normes explicites de la logique et de la méthode expérimentale, mais un ‘*métier*’, c’est-à-dire un sens pratique des problèmes à traiter, des manières adaptées de les traiter, etc.” (Bourdieu 2001b, 78) It is possible that Bourdieu – who used the expression “sens des problèmes” several times – thought here of Bachelard (Bachelard [1938] 2011, 16).

systematically than the notion of “problems” and to which he constantly related the latter. When agents enter a particular field of cultural production, say a scientific discipline, they are confronted with a “space of positions”, i.e. with a distribution of different kinds of capital over a group of agents and institutions. On the other hand, the agents in a field also “take position”; they have peculiar stances, formulated in intellectual, scientific terms, and thus form a “space of stances”. Now, when an agent equipped with a more or less adapted set of dispositions acquired through socialization perceives these spaces of positions and of stances,²⁹⁴ he forms what Bourdieu calls a “space of possibles”²⁹⁵: a sense of what is relevant, important, legitimate, what there is “to do”, hence a specifically practical sense of a possible future of the field.²⁹⁶ This is where agents’ problems and problematics are located.²⁹⁷ Problems are, as it were, the result of a projection of agents’ dispositions (*habitus*) onto a space of positions and stances (field) in which they have (partially) acquired these dispositions. Bourdieu’s “space of possibles” is, at least in part, a space of problems.²⁹⁸

²⁹⁴ From the point of view of the agents, the space of social positions and intellectual stances coincide. Agents have a “syncretic” perception of social space where intellectual positions and social positions, down to cultural preferences and bodily properties are associated (Bourdieu [1975] 1988, 63). In other words, the distinction between a space of social positions and a space of intellectual stances is an observers’ distinction.

²⁹⁵ One of Bourdieu’s definitions of “*espace des possibles*” goes as follows: “L’espace des possibles est cet ensemble de potentialités objectives demandant en quelque sorte à être réalisées qui sont inscrites dans la structure même de la relation entre les prises de position scientifiques réellement efficaces, parce que défendues par les occupants des différentes positions existantes: cet univers des problèmes et des objets légitimes, questions à résoudre, théories à réfuter ou à dépasser, expériences à vérifier ou à invalider, s’impose avec insistance à l’attention de tous ceux qui prétendent affirmer leur existence dans le champ et qui ont la compétence spécifique nécessaire pour connaître et reconnaître ces virtualités insistantes.” (Bourdieu [1991] 2022, 285)

²⁹⁶ Bourdieu’s conception of the *espace des possibles*, and thus also of problems, is based on a complex theory of temporality in social action or “practice”. Since his works in Algeria, Bourdieu had distinguished between an abstract, explicitly posed future of objective possibilities (*futur*) and a practical future of “possibles” implicit in the present (*avenir*) (Bourdieu [1972] 2000b; see also [1997] 2003, chap. 6). Bourdieu used here as a reference Husserl’s analysis of temporal consciousness with its insistence on the practical presence of the past in the present via “protention” (*Protention*) (e.g. Bourdieu [1994] 2014, 155; [1997] 2003, 300; see also Hauchecorne 2020a). Bourdieu referred especially (Bourdieu [1985] 1987, XX) to a passage in Husserl’s 1913 *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie* (Husserl 1913, 144–47). For Bourdieu’s relationship with phenomenology in general, see Perreau 2019.

²⁹⁷ For some time, Bourdieu also spoke of “creative projects” formulated against the background of a “cultural unconscious” that included “problems”, “themes”, etc. (Bourdieu 1966). He replaced this expression later by “strategy” (Sapiro 2020f, 687).

²⁹⁸ In early writings on Algeria, Bourdieu seemed to make a terminological difference between a practical-subjective *champ des possibles* and a theoretical-objective *champ des possibilités effectives*. The basic idea was that objective possibilities (chances, probabilities) connected to a certain socio-economic condition of existence determined subjective possibles as perceived by agents through their dispositions and enacted in their practices: “Tout se passe comme si les conditions matérielles d’existence exerçaient leur influence sur les attitudes, et particulièrement sur l’attitude à l’égard du temps, c’est-à-dire sur l’attitude économique, par la médiation de la perception qu’en ont les sujets. En effet, parce qu’il est circonscrit par la nécessité économique et sociale, le champ des possibles varie comme le champ des possibilités effectives. L’attitude économique de chaque sujet dépend de ses conditions matérielles d’existence par la médiation de l’*avenir objectif* du groupe dont il fait partie ou, plus précisément, par la médiation de la conscience, implicite ou explicite, qu’il prend de cet avenir objectif.” (Bourdieu [1963] 2021, 177–78; see also 1977a; [1977] 2000, chap. 3) Yet, Bourdieu’s terminology has not always been consistent and clear. For example, he also used “*champ des possibles*” to refer to an abstract representation of future (Bourdieu 1977a, 19). Later, he called practical “possibles” also “*potentialités objectives*” – which suggested, of course, quite the contrary of what it was intended to mean, namely

Importantly, it is only by passing through such a (relatively independent) space of problems that the space of social positions determines the space of cultural, intellectual or scientific stances.²⁹⁹ The causation of intellectual stances by social positions is only probabilistic, not deterministic. The interposition of the *habitus* with its practical sense and its “strategies” – a “sense of the game” (*sens du jeu*) which, in scientific practice, becomes a “sens pratique des problèmes” (Bourdieu 2001b, 78) – introduces a relatively “independent causal series” that is irreducible to the space of positions.³⁰⁰ The relation between positions and stances is hence only a relation of “homology”, not of direct “reflection”, as vulgar-Marxist theories of “ideology” would have it.³⁰¹

What does this conception of “problems” from the agents’ perspective imply for “problems” from the observers’ perspective? First, it means that if, in a historical perspective, as historians or sociologists, we want to retrospectively understand agents’ cultural or intellectual production, we have to conceive their stances as an answer to their problematics. This, in turn, necessitates to reconstruct the structure of the field in which agents operated (the space of positions) and the dispositions they had acquired through their social trajectory (*habitus*). This, roughly, is the method Bourdieu himself had applied to Heidegger, Flaubert or Manet (Bourdieu [1975] 1988; [1992] 1998; [1998–2000] 2013).

scientifically established objective probabilities specific to a certain position in society (Bourdieu 1980b, 89–90; see also a certain confusion in Hauchecorne 2020a).

²⁹⁹ “La relation entre l’espace des positions et l’espace des prises de position n’est pas une relation de reflet mécanique: l’espace des positions n’agit en quelque sorte sur les prises de position que par l’intermédiaire des *habitus* des agents qui appréhendent cet espace, leur position dans cet espace et la perception que les autres agents engagés dans cet espace ont de tout ou partie de cet espace. L’espace des positions, lorsqu’il est perçu par un *habitus* adapté (compétent, doté du sens du jeu), fonctionne comme un *espace des possibles*, des manières possibles de faire la science, entre lesquelles il y a lieu de choisir; chacun des agents engagés dans le champ, a une perception pratique des différentes réalisations de la science, qui fonctionne comme une *problématique*. Cette perception, cette vision, varie selon les dispositions des agents, et elle est plus ou moins complète, plus ou moins large; elle peut laisser de côté, dédaigner comme sans intérêt ou sans importance, certains secteurs (les révolutions scientifiques ayant souvent pour effet de transformer la hiérarchie des importances).” (Bourdieu 2001b, 119)

³⁰⁰ Bourdieu frequently cited this definition of chance (*hasard*) by French mathematician, economist and philosopher Antoine-Augustin Cournot (1801–1877) as the encounter of two independent causal series (e.g. Cournot 1851, 49–57; for Cournot’s reinterpretation of Kant, see Braverman 2020, 251–315). Bourdieu used it in his conception of crises and “historical events” such as the crisis of May 1968 (Bourdieu 1984b, 227). But he also understood action in general as such an encounter between independent causal series on the part of the *habitus* and the field: “Tout acte de parole et, plus généralement, toute action, est une conjoncture, une rencontre de séries causales indépendantes: d’un côté les dispositions, socialement façonnées, de l’*habitus* linguistique, qui impliquent une certaine propension à parler et à dire des choses déterminées (intérêt expressif) et une certaine capacité de parler définie inséparablement comme capacité linguistique d’engendrement infini de discours grammaticalement conformes et comme capacité sociale permettant d’utiliser adéquatement cette compétence dans une situation déterminée; de l’autre, les structures du marché linguistique, qui s’imposent comme un système de sanctions et de censures spécifiques.” (Bourdieu 1982, 14)

³⁰¹ For Bourdieu’s use of “homology”, see Roueff 2020. The perhaps most advanced discussion of the logic of reasoning in homologies was given by Bourdieu and his co-authors in *Le métier de sociologue* under the heading of “analogical models” (Bourdieu et al. [1968] 2005, 71–80). For reasoning in “structural homologies”, a main reference for Bourdieu was again Panofsky’s study on Gothic architecture and scholastic philosophy (Bourdieu et al. [1968] 2005, 78–79).

But the issue becomes more complex and pressing if we conceive, as Bourdieu did, observers as just another type of agents and their theories of agents' practices as one peculiar "practice of theory" (e.g. Bourdieu [1972] 2000a, 221). Historians and sociologists – and *a fortiori* historians and sociologist of the social and human sciences – then function just in the same way as their agents. They produce their accounts of agents' intellectual production starting from their own problems, defined by a specific state of their field and their dispositions. But how do observers' problems then relate to agents' problems? What tells us that the way observers construct agents' problems starting from observers' problems is appropriate? That the problems observers reconstruct as agents' problems were really agents' problems and not simply a projection of observers' problems? If construction is a necessary feature of scientific knowledge, if social scientists, in particular, offer second-order constructions of agents' first-order constructions (Schuetz 1953, 3; Bourdieu 2001b, 172), what makes the difference between a good and a bad construction?³⁰²

The answers Bourdieu has to offer to these questions revolve again around his conception of "reflexivity" (see the discussion above). The fact that historians and sociologists construct their socio-historical objects starting from "problematics" that are historically and socially determined implies indeed the risk of "false problematics" (*fausses problématiques*) (Bourdieu et al. [1968] 2005, 174). There are various ways in which observers can falsely project their problems, notions, attitudes, categories, and so forth, onto the agents and objects they study: besides "anachronism", there are various forms of "ethnocentrism" (of class, culture, gender, etc.) connected to observers' social position. What is more, there is – perhaps most insidiously – the specific "scholasticism" related to observers' very status as outside observers, i.e. as non-practitioners – what Bourdieu called with British philosopher of language John Langshaw Austin (1911-1960) their peculiar "scholastic view" (see especially Bourdieu [1997] 2003, chaps 1–2).

However, according to Bourdieu, these various "biases" can be brought under control through a continuous effort of "reflexivity", i.e. through an "objectification of the objectifying subject" on at least three levels: regarding observers' position in the wider social space

³⁰² The issue of "scientific problems" as defining a proper "structure of relevances", distinct from agents' relevances, was perhaps most forcefully formulated by Schütz – whose work Bourdieu knew well: "It is henceforth the scientific problem once established which determines alone what is and what is not relevant to its solution, therewith what has to be investigated and what can be taken for granted as a 'datum', and, finally, the level of research in the broadest sense, that is, the abstractions, generalizations, formalizations, idealizations, briefly: the constructs required and admissible for considering the problem as being solved. In other words, the scientific problem is the 'locus' of all possible constructs relevant to its solution, and each construct carries along – to borrow a mathematical term – a subscript referring to the problem for the sake of which it has been established." (Schuetz 1953, 29–30)

(including their social origin and trajectory), their position in their specific scientific or intellectual field, and regarding their position as “scholastic” outside observers (e.g. Bourdieu 2001b, 183–84). If we get to know and to control these various conditions of observers’ problems, then, we might argue with Bourdieu, we increase the chances that our (re-)constructions of agents’ problems are actually adequate to agents’ problems. If historians and sociologists as observers combine their problem-oriented constructions of the observable social-historical world with a reflexive history and sociology of their own problems (including the underlying categories, methods, etc.), then they have, following Bourdieu’s line of reasoning, an actual chance of progress in the knowledge of the social world.

Can we thus extract from Bourdieu’s work a version of a sociological problem history? There might still be doubts concerning the “objectivity” of problems from the observers’ perspective. We said that, in Bourdieu, problems emerge from the encounter between a *habitus* and a field. Without the dispositions of agents to perceive, evaluate and act in the face of a space of social and intellectual positions, there is no such thing as a problem. But if problems have these “subjective” conditions in agents’ dispositions, can we ever talk “objectively” about them, as a history or sociology of problems would require? If they are based on an irreducibly practical logic with its specific temporality – a practical sense of the imminent *avenir* of a field – how can we ever talk about problems from an observer’s perspective? How can we “objectify” them without committing a scholastic fallacy? In particular, how can we ascertain that we are actually speaking about one and the same problem? What makes up the identity or unity of a problem across individuals? Which are the conditions for attributing to agents “the same problem” over time and space? I would argue that we can indeed answer these questions within Bourdieu’s framework and that we can thus, as observers, speak under certain conditions of relatively stable problems.

To begin with, the acquired dispositions conditioning agents’ problem perceptions are never wholly individual. They are themselves collective, i.e. shared with other agents. The dispositions of the *habitus* might be unique in their combination, their relative weight and the temporal order of their acquisition. But they are nevertheless part of larger “class *habitus*”: they lead back to the objective chances – depending on social position – to make certain experiences, to experience certain objective regularities and to form certain subjective expectations.³⁰³ The sharedness of these dispositions can be extended beyond social class defined in strictly socio-

³⁰³ Bourdieu defines the “*habitus de classe*” as “forme incorporée de la condition de classe et des conditionnements qu’elle impose”; it implies to “construire la *classe objective*, comme ensemble d’agents qui sont placés dans des conditions d’existence homogènes, imposant des conditionnements homogènes et produisant des systèmes de dispositions homogènes, propres à engendrer des pratiques semblables” (Bourdieu 1979b, 112).

economic terms; it might concern also age cohorts or “generations”, national membership, disciplinary affiliation and other groupings. Along all these dimensions dispositions can be shared – and thus problems, if the dispositions involved encounter similar or “homologous” field structures.

In this respect, we can indeed conceive problems that might persist beyond particular *habitus* and particular fields in a particular place and at a particular point in time – without falling back into the assumption of “perennial problems” and without simply projecting present-day problems onto the past. The requirement for speaking of such enduring problems, however, would be some continuity or stability in the structural conditions involved, i.e. both on the side of field structures and on the side of the corporal-mental structures (dispositions, schemes, categories, etc.) of the *habitus*. Only if we could convincingly show that “subjective” and “objective” conditions of problems are markedly similar (or “homologous”), would it make sense to speak of “the same problem” across contexts. This would be – besides reflexivity – an important requirement for a history of problems in a Bourdieusian perspective, it seems.

Can the specific problem of the sociologization of the *a priori* meet this condition? Is it plausible, in Bourdieu’s perspective, to imagine something like a problem that could endure over some 250 years across various national contexts and scientific disciplines? I would contend that there are indeed some large-scale structural continuities that justify at least exploring this hypothesis.³⁰⁴ On the level of field structures, there is reason to believe that there is some remarkable institutional continuity between the emergence of a proper field of professional academic philosophy in Germany around 1800 and today concerning the relationship that philosophy entertained with other scientific disciplines.³⁰⁵ This corresponds, on the level of agents’ dispositions, to a relatively stable social-intellectual identity of professional philosophers with a set of enduring schemes of thought owed to the peculiar “transcendental style” of philosophy going back to Kant.³⁰⁶ Under these structural conditions, there have been recurring conflicts, at least since the 1830s, between philosophy and the emergent social sciences, especially “sociology”, which pretended to the status of a general science of society that would cover domains previously occupied by philosophy. This is not to say that there have not been important variations in structural conditions. Of course, both the form of the problem of sociologizing the *a priori* and the ways in which it was discussed changed over time as well as along national and

³⁰⁴ For this argument, see especially Chapter 4 on the historical emergence of the problem.

³⁰⁵ I am referring here especially to the work of American sociologist Randall Collins (1941-) on the historical sociology of philosophy (Collins 1998a, chap. 12; 1998b). Collins stated bluntly: “The period from 1765 to the present is institutionally all of a piece.” (Collins 1998a, 618)

³⁰⁶ American philosopher Richard Rorty (1931-2007), for instance, has described (and criticized) this “transcendental turn” and its consequences (Rorty 1979, 162).

disciplinary contexts. But this is no in-principle objection against trying to follow this problem through time and space and reconstruct its evolution as a function of its evolving structural conditions.

In sum, I would thus argue that Bourdieu offers us resources for what I have called a “sociological problem history” or, alternatively, a “historical sociology of problems”³⁰⁷. Bourdieu’s sociology is not only compatible in several respects with the German and French traditions of problem history. It actually helps us to spell out, render more precise and generalize most of these traditions’ intentions within a comprehensive sociological theory. Conversely, it seems also possible to integrate the focus on a specific intellectual problem (including its socio-historical conditions) into the Bourdieusian framework outlined above. There is no fundamental objection against studying the long-term, transnational and interdisciplinary problem of the sociologization of the *a priori* within this approach. On the contrary, Bourdieu’s perspective enables us to conceive this problem in a reflexive and controlled way.

Principles of a sociological problem history

On this basis, we might now try to summarize the principles of a contemporary version of sociological problem history. We synthesize here tentatively elements from German *Problemgeschichte*, Febvrian *histoire-problème* and the sociologized versions of problem history we encountered in Mannheim and especially Bourdieu:

- (1) “Problems are practical”: Problems – however complex, abstract and theoretical – are from the agents’ perspective intrinsically practical. They are “things to do”, “tasks to solve”, “questions to answer”. They have a specifically practical temporality: they link the past (via “retention”) and the future (via “protention”) in a particular present. Problems are thus necessarily connected to a particular starting point in the present and, more generally, to a peculiar socio-historical position. Problems are “calls to act” in particular situations. The modality of the statements expressed in problems is not simply logical possibility (as the traditional logical sense of “problem” outlined above had it); in practice, it is closer to the hortative – “let’s do it”, “let’s assume that”, “let’s solve this” – or, under certain conditions, the imperative (to use linguistic categories). Accordingly, agents’ responses to problems, i.e. their “solutions”, “theorems”, “theories”, “ideas”, “concepts”, “propositions”, etc., must be conceived as actions, as “doing

³⁰⁷ For the complicated label “historical sociology”, see again the literature and the definition cited above.

things” in reaction to problems. Theorems and problems, answers and questions, ideas and contexts are logically inseparable.³⁰⁸

- (2) “Problems have structural conditions of possibility”: Problems – “having a problem”, “stating a problem”, “solving a problem” – have specific structural conditions or “conditions of possibility”: on the level of agents having the problem (3); and on the level of the socio-historical situation or context in which the agent has the problem (4). Both these conditions are necessary for there being a problem. The prerequisite for speaking, as an observer, of “the same problem”, for claiming the identity and unity of a problem across agents, resides in the permanency or, at least, comparability of these structural conditions.
- (3) “Problems presuppose construction by agents”: There being a problem presupposes a peculiar act of “construction” on the part of agents. Problems presuppose that agents construct the empirical phenomena they face through a number of acquired mental and corporal dispositions: language, theories, concepts, categories, schemes, mental and bodily habits, systems of relevances, and other forms of knowledge and competence.³⁰⁹ Only through agents’ constructive activity emerges the perception of a situation as a problem – and a consequent behavioural reaction³¹⁰ in response to the thus perceived problem.³¹¹
- (4) “Problems presuppose socio-historical contexts”: Agents’ problem-constructions presuppose socio-historical contexts in two senses: first, there must be a given situation they construct as a problem-situation, to which they apply their dispositions and to

³⁰⁸ There is a convergence here with Skinner’s contextualism and its insistence – inspired by Austin’s theory of speech acts (Austin [1955] 1975) – that to understand a statement is to understand what it *does* in a specific historical-linguistic context (e.g. Skinner 1969, 45–46). The “internal relation” or “correlativity” between questions and answers has been forcefully stated by British philosopher and historian R. G. Collingwood (1889–1943): “a body of knowledge consists not of ‘propositions’, ‘statements’, ‘judgements’, or whatever name logicians use in order to designate assertive acts of thought [...], but of these together with the questions they are meant to answer” (Collingwood [1939] 2002, 30; see also Stocking 1965, 213–14).

³⁰⁹ The knowledge-component of problems has also been emphasized in other traditions, for example, by Austrian-British philosopher Karl R. Popper (1902–1994) who said that problems emerged from a tension between knowledge and ignorance: “Kein Problem ohne Wissen – kein Problem ohne Nichtwissen.” (Popper [1961–1962] 1969, 104) For there to be a “problem”, we need some knowledge, and we need some ignorance. It is at the intersection of both that problems emerge.

³¹⁰ The psychological theory underlying these Bourdieusian ideas can be found in the works of French phenomenological philosopher and psychologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908–1961) – Bourdieu had assisted to Merleau-Ponty’s Sorbonne lectures on child psychology (published in Merleau-Ponty [1949–1952] 1988) and cited frequently Merleau-Ponty’s *La structure du comportement* (Merleau-Ponty [1942] 2013) as a crucial reference (e.g. Bourdieu and Sapiro 2004, 84–85) – and Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget (1896–1980) with his conception of “schemes” (e.g. Piaget and Inhelder [1966] 2012, 16, n. 1; see also Gingras 2020a; Sapiro 2020g). Piaget, for example, insisted against behaviorism that between stimuli and responses intervened a structured organism with its – both conditioned and conditioning – “organizing activity” (Piaget and Inhelder [1966] 2012, 13).

³¹¹ For the detailed analysis of a “problem” in 18th century mathematical analysis and the “mental habits” involved in solving it, see Brian 1994, 61–66.

which they respond; second, they must have acquired their dispositions in prior socio-historical contexts. The structures of agents' dispositions and of the socio-historical situation in which they apply them do not necessarily coincide (simple "reproduction" is, indeed, only a limiting case), leading to all sorts of maladjustment (misunderstandings, appropriations, false problems, false solutions, etc.).

- (5) "Observers' problems are a specific kind of agents' problems": Principles (1)-(4) apply to agents' problems in general and, by implication, also to observers' problems, i.e. to the case when agents happen to act as observers of other agents' problems. The specific difference of observers is that, insofar as they engage in scientific activity (i.e. a relatively autonomous domain of social activity with its peculiar history, institutions, practices, norms, expectations, etc.), they seek to make their problems, their problematics, their hypotheses explicit, to control them intersubjectively and corroborate them empirically.
- (6) "Problem history involves the risk of false constructions": When we seek to understand and explain agents' problems in a socio-historical perspective, i.e. when we engage in a history or sociology of problems, we risk to construct agents' problems in a way that does not correspond to their actual problem-constructions. This implies the danger of all possible forms of ethnocentrism, from anachronism to scholastic bias. This risk stems from the discrepancies in mental-corporal structures (dispositions, categories, schemes, concepts, language, etc.) and in socio-historical contexts between agents and observers.
- (7) "Problem history necessitates reflexivity": In order to control the risk of false constructions, problem history requires a supplementary stage in problem construction: a second-order observation of observers' problems and their structural conditions – an "objectivation of the subject of objectivation" (Bourdieu 2003b, 282). This reflexive operation seeks to control the differences between observers' and agents' problems and identify the conditions under which observers might speak of "the same problem". This is not an extra, but an essential part, an inevitable obligation for any socio-historical approach in terms of problems. Also, reflexivity does not lead into self-refutation or an infinite regress. It remains conditioned by what the reflexive observation of observers' problems can yield for a better understanding of agents' problems. In this sense, the reflexivity concerned is "reformist", "realist" or "scientific": it is oriented

towards a more appropriate scientific construction of problems.³¹² We can best imagine this reflexivity as a permanent collective task realized through mutual criticism.

These basic assumptions provide at least a sketch of the type of sociological problem history I would like to develop and put to work here. There is no doubt that further work will be needed to establish this approach as a credible contender in domains such as intellectual history, the history and sociology of science or, more specifically, the history and sociology of the social and human sciences. Nevertheless, from what we have said so far, we can already indicate some strengths as well as limits of this perspective.

Methodological advantages and limitations

To conclude, sociological problem history has, in my view, several advantages, both in general methodological and epistemological terms, and specifically regarding the object of the sociologization of the *a priori*. I can barely do more here than name and sketch these aspects. First, the general methodological advantages:

(1) “Reflexive presentism” beyond presentism and historicism: As I have said above, it seems that versions of problem history have emerged as a “third way” in order to go beyond the dilemma between forms of “presentism” and “historicism”. Sociological problem history as developed here enables us, I would argue, to replicate this movement today in various branches of intellectual history and history of science. Principles (1)-(7), especially (5)-(7), show together how this approach might provide an antidote against both extremes. Sociological problem history fully embraces the historical present-day starting point of its historical enquiries and the inevitably constructed character of scientific and historical knowledge. It thus opposes “historicism” in the sense of “historical positivism” as well as “presentism” in the sense of an

³¹² Conceived in this way, we have at least a pragmatic criterion for stopping the potential infinite regress or, at least, hierarchizing and prioritizing acts of reflexive enquiry (the argument of self-refutation has been rejected above on other grounds): for all its importance, reflexivity is an operation with a tendency of decreasing scientific return. That means that the first reflexive turn (objectivating observers’ constructions of objects, problems, etc. in relation to an empirical object “to-be-known”) has a high epistemic return with regard to our knowledge of objects; this return, however, decreases in the second, third, fourth, etc. reflexive turn. To take up the example of Aron who stated the problem quite clearly (Aron [1935] 2007, 137–38): If we are studying, as Durkheim did, the social organization of Australian tribes, the first turn – turning to the history and sociology of ethnology in order to control the categories we use, such as “totemism”, “animism”, “primitive”, etc. – has potentially a strong epistemic effect on our conception and understanding of Australian tribes. The return for engaging in reflexivity, however, decreases sensibly already with the second turn – a “sociology of the history of ethnology” (Aron [1935] 2007, 138). Such an enterprise might, of course, be “interesting” in itself. But its relevance and utility for understanding the initial object – the social organization of Australian tribes – is much smaller (I don’t say it is null) than the effects of the first turn. By the way, Aron, in his discussion, visibly took up a statement by his teacher, Kantian-rationalist philosopher Léon Brunschvicg that was much ridiculed in Aron’s generation, by authors such as Paul Nizan (1905-1940) or Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980): the idea that the history of ancient Egypt was first and foremost the history of egyptology – or in Brunschvicg’s words: “L’histoire de l’Egypte ancienne est en premier lieu l’histoire des historiens de l’Egypte.” (Brunschvicg 1920, 326; see also 1922, 520)

uncontrolled universalization of a peculiar present-day starting points resulting in “anachronism” and other forms of ethnocentrism. Problem history insists on the need for controlling its present-day starting point, both through a reflexive investigation into its socio-historical conditions and through an experimental confrontation with the historical record (as constructed through hypotheses). Against “historicism” in the sense of “historical relativism” it thus insists on the possibility of progressing in our knowledge of historical objects. In sum, the position of sociological problem history in this area might be qualified as one form of “reflexive presentism” (Heilbron 2022, 31, n. 43; Heilbron and Zerilli 2022).

(2) “Relative autonomy” beyond internalism and externalism: Principles (2)-(4) in particular indicate that sociological problem history enables us to go beyond the long-standing internal-external distinction as discussed above. Problems, as they appear to agents, are meaningful “calls to action”; we must understand how agents understood problems to understand their reactions to them, i.e. the intellectual positions they take. This implies taking to some extent an “internal” point of view and mastering agents’ own language and competences (in some domains, such as the sociology of mathematics, this might be particularly costly for observers). On the other hand, agents’ problem-perceptions as well as problem-solutions have structural conditions that make them possible. Only if we consider also these “external” conditions – both on the side of the agents’ acquired dispositions and on the side of the social space in which they act – will we understand why they understood, constructed and solved problems the way they did.³¹³ “Problems” thus appear as a suitable interface for connecting internal and external perspectives and, finally, for transcending this very dichotomy. They oblige us to consider the “relative autonomy” of intellectual activity: problems emerge according to the “inner logic” of a field of cultural production – we wouldn’t understand them without mastering this logic to at least some degree; but at the same time they also presuppose conditions external to this relatively independent universe – we wouldn’t understand them without having a grasp of these socio-historical conditions. “Problems” seem better-suited for going beyond the internal-external distinction than many traditional objects of intellectual history and the history and sociology of science such as “ideas”, “statements”, “propositions”, “contents”, “beliefs”, “knowledge”, etc. These latter notions tend to artificially separate agents’ statements and positions from the practical social-intellectual context in which they emerge.³¹⁴ They tend to hypostatize them into

³¹³ This line of reasoning might also be spelt out in terms of Bourdieu’s “three modes of theoretical knowledge” – “phenomenological”, “objectivist” and “praxeological” (Bourdieu [1972] 2000a, 234–55).

³¹⁴ The situation is particularly tricky in the sociology of science since the 1970s. As we have seen, much of the “new sociology of science” has insisted on relating scientific “contents” or “knowledge” to their social contexts and thus dismantling the internal-external boundary. However, the very notion of “scientific content” or “knowledge” seems to rely on what British mathematician and philosopher Alfred North Whitehead (1861–1947) has called the “fallacy of misplaced concreteness”, i.e. “the error of mistaking the abstract for the

some static, timeless entities whereas the focus on problems and their solutions insists on the dynamic, processual, intrinsically practical and temporal dimensions of intellectual production.

(3) “Realist rationalism” beyond realism and constructivism: Principles (3)-(5) and (7) enable us to go beyond the tenacious methodological-epistemological opposition between “realism” and “constructivism” that besets, in different forms, several social and human science disciplines. Sociologized problem history has a clear “constructivist” trait: there is no such thing as a non-constructed reality or scientific fact. On the other hand, it also has a strong “realist” intention: there is no such thing as a non-realistic construction in science or a scientific fact without some intended reference to “reality” (albeit “constructed reality”). Sociological problem history thus places itself beyond the “epistemological couple” – which functions indeed as an “epistemological obstacle” – of realism and constructivism. Its epistemological position can be spelt out – as Bourdieu has tried to do – in terms of a “realist rationalism” (e.g. Bourdieu 2001b, 151)³¹⁵, heavily inspired by Bachelard’s “applied rationalism” (Bachelard [1949] 1966)³¹⁶ and, ultimately, akin to a form of “sociologized Kantianism”. In history, especially, a sociologically updated form of problem history might allow us to go beyond the opposition between an outdated “realist” or “objectivist” historiography going back to the 19th century and, since the 1970s, a “postmodern” constructivist historiography that conceives history in terms

concrete” (Whitehead [1925] 1948, 52). It seems that in distinguishing “content” from “context” the “new sociology of science” presupposed precisely the Reichenbachian distinction between “context of justification” and “context of discovery” (Reichenbach 1938, 6–7) that it sought to surmount. Having abstracted and opposed the “contents of science” to their socio-historical contexts, it tended to reestablish their connection by force (through various forms of “short-circuit”) in order to overcome the internal-external distinction. The problem, however, is that combining two abstractions doesn’t amount to rejoining the concrete. What “social studies of science” have called “scientific content” or “knowledge” remains largely extraneous to scientific practice in the sense that practicing scientists would barely be interested in or have any use for these isolated statements (the case is particularly blatant when toy examples are used such as “2+2=4” – the only context in which this statement has some use is elementary schooling). In a way, “social studies of science” sometimes seem to have burnt in advance the bridges that would have allowed to make the transition between “internal” and “external” factors and to understand their fundamental identity. In contrast, problem-oriented history and sociology of science seems closer to scientific practice. Merton’s emphasis on “foci of interest” and “problem choice” in science or Bourdieu’s insistence on the “space of possibles” seem more appropriate as a starting point for understanding science as a social practice. Here, “contents” and “knowledge” are not conceived abstractly, but in their concrete connection with social-intellectual problem-situations, i.e. as practical answers to questions or “solutions” of “problems”.

³¹⁵ For a taste of Bourdieu’s line of reasoning: “[I]l faut dépasser l’alternative du constructionisme idéaliste et du positivisme réaliste vers un *rationalisme réaliste* qui tient que la construction scientifique est la condition de l’accès à l’avènement du ‘réel’ que l’on appelle découverte” (Bourdieu 2001b, 151). And, applied to the social sciences: “On a vu que la lutte scientifique est arbitrée par la référence au ‘réel’ construit. Dans le cas des sciences sociales, le ‘réel’ est bien extérieur et indépendant de la connaissance, mais il est lui-même une construction sociale, un produit des luttes antérieures qui, au moins à ce titre, reste un enjeu de luttes présentes. [...] Il faut donc associer une vision constructiviste de la science et une vision constructiviste de l’objet scientifique: les faits sociaux sont socialement construits et tout agent social, comme le savant, construit tant bien que mal, et vise à imposer, avec plus ou moins de force, sa vision singulière de la réalité, son ‘point de vue’. C’est ce qui fait que la sociologie [...] est partie prenante des luttes qu’elle décrit.” (Bourdieu 2001b, 172)

³¹⁶ Remember Bachelard’s insistence on the need of both “realism” and “rationalism” in “scientific activity”: “*si elle* [scientific activity, MS] *expérimente, il faut raisonner; si elle raisonne, il faut expérimenter*” (Bachelard [1934] 2017, 7).

of rhetorics or poetics (e.g. White [1973] 1979). What is more, problem history presents – as we have seen above – with its “hypothetico-deductive” model a “third way” beyond “deductivist” and “inductivist” methodologies and epistemologies of history.³¹⁷

(4) “Reformist reflexivity” beyond self-refutation and exceptionalism: Principles (5)-(7) indicate that sociological problem history comes with a specific “reformist” conception of “reflexivity” that avoids both horns of the dilemma between self-refutation and exceptionalism. As said, problem history insists on the inevitably perspectival construction of problems and historical facts. But this does not automatically relativize or refute the knowledge produced by problem histories. On the contrary, investigating the socio-historical conditions of problem constructions is an essential part of this approach. It is precisely through the reflexive critique of “ill-posed problems” that we arrive at “better-posed problems”, as Febvre said (Febvre [1942] 2003, 23). Knowing the socio-historical conditions of the scientific subject becomes the very condition for progressing in the knowledge of the scientific object (Bourdieu [1993] 2022, 59). This means also that sociological problem history does not claim some sort of exceptionality for its constructions in terms of their “objectivity”. If the constructions of problem history are indeed more appropriate than others as historical-sociological accounts, it is not by virtue of some assumed privileged standpoint. It is by virtue of the work of reflexive critique – an operation that we should conceive as an open-ended and collective process of continually reforming scientific constructions. Problem history thus offers a reasoned account of its own inevitably historical starting point and turns it into an advantage, a lever for progress in our historical knowledge.³¹⁸

Besides these advantages in several general methodological-epistemological debates, sociological problem history seems also particularly appropriate for the study of the specific problem of the sociologization of the *a priori*. Let us summarize quickly its main strengths:

(1) Coherence with the five dimensions of the problem: Sociological problem history is coherent with the five main dimensions of the problem of sociologizing the *a priori* outlined and discussed above: its interdisciplinary, transnational and long-term character as well as the necessity to conceive the problem in its “relative autonomy” (i.e. beyond the internal-external

³¹⁷ A similar opposition existed, of course, also in 19th century economics between the “German historical school” led by Gustav von Schmoller (1838-1917) and the later “Austrian school” led by Carl Menger (1840-1921) (see especially Menger [1883] 1933; Schmoller 1883; Menger 1884; for an overview of the Schmoller-Menger controversy, see Bostaph 1978). In the context of this debate on the status of theoretical terms in the social sciences, Max Weber’s conception of ideal types emerged as an attempt to go beyond the opposition between deductivism and inductivism (e.g. Weber [1904] 1988, 185–90).

³¹⁸ The emphasis on reflexive critique connects sociological problem history with forms of “critical hermeneutics” in the study of ancient and modern literature as proposed by Greek scholar Jean Bollack (1923-2012) and literary scholar Peter Szondi (1929-1971).

distinction) and to account for its inherent reflexivity. As for the two latter aspects (which concern general formal properties of the enquiry rather than characteristics of the object), I have just indicated that problem history can convincingly satisfy these conditions. What about the three remaining characteristics of the object?

I do not claim that sociological problem history is intrinsically and necessarily interdisciplinary, transnational and transtemporal in terms of its objects³¹⁹ – nothing speaks against applying the above principles to one specific problem in one discipline, in one national context, at one specific point in time. Yet, I would argue that it can indeed be used in these different perspectives – one, two or all three of them at a time. As said above, the requirement for doing so resides in the structural conditions of problems both on the side of agents' dispositions and the social spaces in which they actualize them. Are these conditions sufficiently stable, continuous, homogeneous, comparable, analogous or “homologous”? If so, it is plausible to speak of “the same problem”, i.e. explore the fruitfulness of constructing the historical record in the light of this problem. But the question concerning the relative stability and comparability of structural problem-conditions can only be explored and answered empirically.

For the case of the sociologization of the *a priori*, I have argued above that there is reason to conceive this problem in a long-term perspective within the Bourdieusian framework. This implied already a similar rationale for both the interdisciplinary and the transnational dimension. In fact, the three characteristics are interconnected: we can only understand the sociologization of the *a priori* in a long-term perspective if we place it in the context of nationally different systems of disciplines. I would contend that there is sufficient stability or comparability in structural conditions on the level of disciplines and national contexts to make the exploration of “the same problem” plausible. This line of reasoning could go as follows.

Due to the eminent position of philosophy in the educational systems both in France and in German-speaking countries, many of those who became active in the social and human sciences during the long period considered had received some form of philosophical training. This means that they had been exposed to certain authors, concepts, problems, arguments, oppositions, styles of reasoning, etc. They thus had the occasion to acquire certain philosophical dispositions

³¹⁹ This contradicts, for instance, Oexle's conception of *Problemgeschichte* as intrinsically “multidisciplinary” (Oexle 1996, 9–10). Oexle referred here in particular to Wolf Lepenies's interpretation of Bachelard and the French tradition of “historical epistemology” in terms of such a history of problems. Lepenies had insisted on “die Einsicht, daß Problemlagen eine stabilere Identität aufweisen als Disziplinen. Damit ist gemeint, daß bestimmte Kernprobleme auch über längere Zeiträume hin vergleichbar bleiben, während es beispielsweise wenig sinnvoll ist, die ‘Biologie’ Buffons derjenigen Darwins, geschweige der Molekulargenetik gegenüberzustellen. [Paragraph] Damit tritt aber nicht einfach eine Geschichte der Probleme an die Stelle eine [sic] Geschichte der Disziplinen. Entscheidend wird vielmehr die Einsicht, daß verschiedene Disziplinen in einem überschaubaren Zeitraum sich mehr ähneln können, als die unterschiedlichen Ausformungen ein- und derselben Disziplin über eine längere Zeitstrecke hinweg.” (Lepenies 1978, 444)

and schemes of thought. At the same time, these disciplinary *habitus* were permeated with specifically national schemes or “national categories of thought” (Bourdieu [1990] 2002, 7), acquired through the exposition to a specific national system of education. Nevertheless, depending on the social context of their application, these “mental habits” could result in comparable “spaces of possibles” and hence in comparable problems.

Arguably, at least since the 1870s, and despite all national differences, the major philosophical options in Germany and in France converged. Confronted with the flourishing natural sciences and the emerging social sciences, academic philosophy had entered since the 1830s an enduring “identity crisis” (Schnädelbach 1983, 17). The repertoire of strategies for managing this crisis was limited. There were – very roughly – three possibilities regarding science: identification (e.g. “empiricism”, “realism”, “positivism”, “materialism”), compromise (e.g. “criticism”, “neo-Kantianism”, “transcendentalism”, “scientific philosophy”) or opposition (e.g. “idealism”, “spiritualism”, “metaphysics”). These three strategies could combine quite freely and create a plethora of further intermediate positions. Also, they all had their respective philosophical patrons (with controversies, of course, on which canonical author legitimized which position). All in all, in France and German-speaking countries the position of philosophy within the academic and educational system, the authors of reference for the various philosophical options, the practical schemes of thought employed and the conflicts between philosophy and the emerging social sciences were sufficiently similar to allow for comparisons, i.e. the reasoned exploration of both differences and similarities. As a result of these structural similarities, for some agents in both contexts the option of sociologizing the Kantian *a priori* appeared in their “space of possibles” – with different problem-interpretations and solutions, of course.

Given these considerations, it is at least plausible to construct the problem of the sociologization of the *a priori* as a *tertium comparationis* and explore it not only in a long-term, but also in an interdisciplinary and transnational perspective. The problem-historical approach thus seems able to cover all five dimensions of the object under study.

(2) Unification and integration of perspectives: But sociological problem history is not only coherent with the five dimensions of the object outlined above. It adds something essential: it integrates these dimensions and makes them operative. It allows us to construct – in a controlled way – *one* object and follow it through its diverse contexts: different disciplines, different national contexts and different historical points in time. The sociologization of the *a priori* conceived as a “problem” functions as a focal point – a sort of Kantian *focus imaginarius* – that enables us to identify both similarities and differences between these contexts. Its role is perhaps not dissimilar to the function of the developer in photography. It permits us to produce

some new knowledge using the three principles of variation along disciplines, national contexts and time.

This points once again³²⁰ to the main function of applying the notion “sociologization of the *a priori*”. In the way I use this expression as indicating a “problem” in accordance with the principles of a sociological problem history, it is not about making an existential statement of the type “there is (was) this problem”. It is rather about saying: “we can construct the historical record in a fruitful and useful way in the light of this problem”.³²¹ Speaking of this problem then has to be considered as a “hypothesis” that comes with advantages in understanding past and present, but that remains “problematic” (in the logical sense of “possible”) and tentative. To imitate a line of reasoning used by Max Weber in explaining the function of “ideal types” (Weber [1904] 1988, 193), we might say that this problem construction (from our, i.e. the ober-server’s point of view) is a “means” or an instrument of knowledge, not the “goal” or knowledge itself.³²² The latter resides in the application of the instrument to the historical record, i.e. in its coherent construction and “systematic verification” (Bourdieu et al. [1968] 2005, 88–92).

To conclude, however, we must also address some limitations or, perhaps more precisely, some “limiting conditions” of sociological problem history. Naturally, I have focused so far on making my case for this approach as strong as possible. Yet, the intention was not to claim that sociological problem history would be the single most productive approach to intellectual history and, more specifically, to the history and sociology of the social and human sciences. It must be clear that problem history can be but one method in this area. There are things it allows to see as there are others it doubtlessly obscures. The most important point here is that problem history must operate in concert with other approaches which are both more “internalist” and more “externalist” in perspective.

The reason for this is that sociological problem history relies essentially on the work of other approaches. To see why, we must remember that the above principles already indicated several

³²⁰ See already the discussion at the end of Chapter 1.

³²¹ I have used here words such as “useful” and “fruitful”. The “purposiveness” of hypotheses, their “teleological” dimension seems to me indeed an important dimension of problem history. Without being able to go into details, I would argue that it can be accounted for in terms of Kant’s “hypothetical use of reason” (see above) where, via problematic hypotheses as *foci imaginarii*, unity is projected into our empirical knowledge of particulars with the specific purpose of attaining systematic and general knowledge.

³²² Incidentally, Weber made in the context of this particular use and status of concepts in the cultural sciences an explicit reference to Kant’s epistemology: “Wer den Grundgedanken der auf Kant zurückgehenden modernen Erkenntnislehre, daß die Begriffe vielmehr gedankliche Mittel zum Zweck der geistigen Beherrschung des empirisch Gegebenen sind und allein sein können, zu Ende denkt, dem wird der Umstand, daß scharfe genetische Begriffe notwendig Idealtypen sind, nicht gegen die Bildung von solchen sprechen können. Ihm kehrt sich das Verhältnis von Begriff und historischer Arbeit um: jenes Endziel erscheint ihm logisch unmöglich, die Begriffe [sind] nicht *Ziel*, sondern *Mittel* zum Zweck der Erkenntnis der unter individuellen Gesichtspunkten bedeutsamen Zusammenhänge: gerade *weil* die Inhalte der historischen Begriffe notwendig wandelbar sind, müssen sie jeweils notwendig scharf formuliert werden.” (Weber [1904] 1988, 208–9) Whether this statement suffices to call Weber a “Kantian” is a matter of controversy (e.g. Henrich 1952, 90).

distinct competences that are necessary for constructing problem histories. We can clearly spell out at least three of them. In practice, the boundaries between these competences might blur:

- (1) Specific competence (regarding especially products): Problem historians have to master agents' specific competences, i.e. their language, vocabulary, techniques, methods, practices, etc., in order to understand the problems agents encounter in their respective symbolic universes. This necessitates that observers possess or acquire – at least to some extent – agents' specific competences: mathematical skills if agents are mathematicians, philosophical skills if they are philosophers, sociological skills if they are sociologists, etc. The primary sources here are agents' own products and the sources necessary for understanding them (dictionaries, conceptual histories, histories of techniques, etc.). Only under this condition can historians reconstruct the practical logic and symbolism of agents' problems and solutions, i.e. the positions agents take in the space of intellectual stances (*prises de position*).³²³
- (2) Sociological competence (regarding especially the space of production): Second, problem historians have to reconstruct the space of social and intellectual positions (or “field”) in which agents act to understand the “objective” social conditions – the “opportunity structure”, as it were³²⁴ – of agents' problem-constructions and solutions. This requires expertise in both the intellectual history and the sociology of the disciplines concerned. Sources for this knowledge are, on the one hand, “internalist” accounts focusing on ideas, theories, paradigms, methods, etc.; and, on the other hand, “externalist” accounts focusing on various institutions, systems of education, universities, schools, chairs, relations between disciplines, between national contexts, financial funding schemes, etc. Out of resources as diverse as disciplinary histories, histories of ideas or historical sociologies of science, the problem historian must try to build a comprehensive picture of the main positions in the social space in which agents intervene – positions defined by social as well as intellectual attributes.

³²³ If this condition is not met – as, for example, in an already cited recent study on the relationship between Panofsky and Bourdieu (Anheim and Pasquali 2025) – agents' behaviour will remain opaque: why did Bourdieu promote Panofsky? what was the problem Bourdieu responded to? how did he think that he could solve this problem by using Panofsky?

³²⁴ For the history and sociology of the concept of “opportunity structure”, see Merton [1994] 2019. In 1995, Merton – who had himself contributed to this theory with his “anomie theory” (Merton [1938] 1968b) and who later studied the “opportunity structure of science” (e.g. Merton [1968] 1973, 443) – sent a reprint of this article to Bourdieu on the latter's request. The copy was donated to the library of the Paris Maison des Sciences de l'Homme and can today be found in the Humathèque at Campus Condorcet, Paris-Aubervilliers, under the code “D MERTON 24”. Otherwise, field structures have rarely been interpreted as opportunity structures (but see Ancelovici 2009), although connecting them might prove fruitful.

- (3) Historical competence (regarding especially producers)³²⁵: Third and finally, problem historians need an idea of the social characteristics and dispositions that agents have acquired through their biographical trajectory in social space. Hence, for each agent a set of socio-biographical information is necessary. These data are usually provided by biographies, biographical dictionaries, prosopographies or collective biographies, but also by unpublished sources such as correspondences or institutional archival records. By retracing agents' trajectories, disposition-forming experiences or structural conditions and their resulting social-psychological make-up, the problem historian can get a grasp of the "subjective" social conditions of agents' problem perceptions and solution strategies.

From these three required competences it is clear that sociological problem history must cooperate with several other approaches, often coming from different disciplines and from sometimes opposed methodological orientations. In this specific sense, sociological problem history might be said to be methodologically "interdisciplinary" – even when the problems it studies are not themselves "interdisciplinary", i.e. do not engage two or more disciplines. Problem history draws on the results of other historiographical approaches and suggests on this basis integrative hypotheses – hypotheses which might need for their testing again the help of other methods.

I cannot discuss here in detail problem history's relations with various other approaches. Let us consider just one important example. Sociological problem history will entertain close connections with various forms of conceptual history (*Begriffsgeschichte*, *sémantique historique*, sociological semantics, etc.). This is a consequence of the simple fact that, in order to perceive and state a problem, we need language or some other form of symbolic system. Problems presuppose words, terms, concepts, labels, categories, classifications, etc., that somehow enter, from the point of view of the agents involved, in conflict or tension with each other. At the same time, however, specific words and concepts often emerge and are used only in response to specific larger problems, both scientific and mundane – we only have to think of Comte's replacement of "*physique sociale*" by "*sociologie*" in reaction to Belgian statistician Adolphe Quetelet's (1796-1874) use of the former term (Comte [1839–1842] 1975, 88) or of the history of various isms in intellectual and cultural history (Boschetti 2014a).³²⁶ The history of concepts

³²⁵ In fact, it would be more precise to speak in the case of both (2) and (3) of a "socio-historical competence", only applied to different objects: fields in the case of (2) and agents in the case of (3).

³²⁶ Accordingly, Chapter 4 will insist on the problems in the classification of sciences and knowledge from which arise the two terms that seem to conflict in the expression "sociologization of the *a priori*".

can thus appear as merely one – necessary – part of the larger history of problems.³²⁷ At least, there is no contradiction between the two methods. Problem history must draw on conceptual history and it is limited by the findings of the latter. And the same can be said of conceptual history with regard to problem history. For the time being, we might then settle on the view that problem history is complementary with regard to the other approaches it presupposes.

In any case, in its tendency to collect and integrate the results of other methodological orientations, sociological problem history appears as an essentially synthetic enterprise. It resembles almost a sort of “meta-method” that organizes and connects in a systematic fashion information engendered and provided by various other methods. Problem history seeks to achieve *today*, in our current state of knowledge, a synthesis on a specific problem that is – in one way or the other – “of interest” or “importance” to us. Its general point is to hold together the study of cognitive or cultural products (“contents”) with the analysis of the various social conditions of these contents (“context”), and to do so in a way that integrates the fact that problems not only necessitate active social agents, but are always (re-)constructions from the vantage point of a peculiar historical present.

Of course, there will be doubts concerning the justification, feasibility and interest of such a synthesis. Do we have enough information? Aren’t there always still more interesting details to know? More interesting perspectives to adopt? Do we really have what it needs to achieve synthesis? Doesn’t problem history suggest us a forbidden shortcut? We might answer these queries by coming back to one of the historical starting points of the French tradition of *histoire-problème*, namely Berr’s idea of “historical synthesis”. In a way, it truly is “always too early for synthesis”³²⁸. Proposing such a synthesis is inevitably risky. For instance, given the scope of the problem construction I propose here – covering a long time period as well as several

³²⁷ In this sense, Oexle has argued that “Begriffsgeschichte als ein Element in einem größeren Zusammenhang steht, den man nur als einen *problemgeschichtlichen* Zusammenhang wirklich begreifen kann” (Oexle 2011, 19). For further elements on the historical relationship between *Begriffsgeschichte* and *Problemgeschichte*, see E. Müller and Schmieder 2016, 84–93.

³²⁸ Swiss historian Jean Rudolf von Salis (1901–1996), a disciple of Henri Berr at the Centre international de Synthèse in the 1920s, stated this idea clearly: “Es ist immer zu früh für eine Synthese, doch sie entspricht einem tiefen Bedürfnis des Geistes, und sie soll und kann in jeder Situation des Standes der Forschung entworfen werden, mag sie auch tags darauf korrigiert und übermorgen umgestoßen werden” (Salis 1978, 356). While I couldn’t identify an equally explicit statement in Berr’s own works, we find a convergent line of reasoning in his 1911 *La Synthèse en histoire* (Berr [1911] 1953, 18–21). Berr replied to those who thought that “il est trop tôt” (Berr [1911] 1953, 18) for the sort of “scientific synthesis” he envisioned: “Et s’il était nécessaire, mais qu’il ne fût possible, de tout savoir, s’il y a des lacunes par force majeure, faudrait-il donc renoncer définitivement à dépasser le degré de l’érudition? [Paragraph] Au surplus, peut-on nier l’existence, la survivance obstinée d’un besoin de synthèse complète?” (Berr [1911] 1953, 18–19) Sources of the idea that it might be “too early for synthesis” can be found in the works of French historians Ernest Renan (1823–1892) and Numa Denis Fustel de Coulanges (1830–1889) (see e.g. Boutroux 1900a, 9; Berr [1911] 1953, 19–20). The latter – by the way, an important teacher of Durkheim at the École normale supérieure in the 1880s (Lukes [1973] 1985, 58–65) – famously stated: “Pour un jour de synthèse il faut des années d’analyse.” (Fustel de Coulanges 1875, 4)

disciplines and national contexts – objections and counterexamples will flourish. Also, it is barely possible to exhaustively demonstrate the continuity in the problem of the sociologization of the *a priori* in a single monograph. And still, not only do we seem to need some synthesis to relate the past to the present (e.g. the problem construction “sociologization of the *a priori*” to the present-day “socio-transcendental reasoning” outlined in Chapter 1). As long as we endorse the tentativeness and heuristic character of our hypotheses, there is actually no reason for abandoning synthesis altogether.

Even more, abandoning synthesis would be deleterious. For if it is not us who – as scientific subjects – construct this synthesis explicitly, it will introduce itself surreptitiously in our research (at least if we assume, like Berr, that “analysis” and “synthesis” are logically inseparable operations). Various “preconstructions” and “prenotions” suggested by ordinary language and ordinary social experience will take over and provide us with the necessary synthesis, albeit a “false” or, at least, non-scientific one (e.g. Bourdieu et al. [1968] 2005, 52, 61–71). If synthesis and construction are unavoidable for (scientific) knowledge, then it is preferable to at least achieve them in a controlled way – rather than just “let them happen” while we indulge in the scholastic illusion of a historical or sociological “view from nowhere”.³²⁹ The promise of sociological problem history is that we might reflexively master the constructions that enable us to understand and connect past and present. At least until these constructions have fulfilled their purpose, i.e. until they have become obsolete through better constructions.³³⁰

4. Operationalizing problem history for the sociologization of the *a priori*

I have tried so far to establish sociological problem history as an interesting and convincing historiographical option by providing historical and general methodological arguments. But what about operationalizing this approach? How can we put it to work concretely for understanding the problem of sociologizing of the *a priori*? To complete our outline of sociological

³²⁹ “[T]oute pratique scientifique, même et surtout lorsqu’elle se réclame aveuglement de l’empirisme le plus aveugle, engage des présupposés théoriques et que le sociologue n’a le choix qu’entre des interrogations inconscientes, donc incontrôlées et incohérentes, et un corps d’hypothèses méthodiquement construites en vue de l’épreuve expérimentale” (Bourdieu et al. [1968] 2005, 58).

³³⁰ We encounter here perhaps a last important convergence between German and French traditions of problem history: “Das ist das Schicksal, ja: das ist der *Sinn* der Arbeit der Wissenschaft, dem sie, in ganz spezifischem Sinne gegenüber allen anderen Kulturelementen, für die es sonst noch gilt, unterworfen und hingegeben ist: jede wissenschaftliche ‘Erfüllung’ bedeutet neue ‘Fragen’ und *will* ‘überboten’ werden und veralten. Damit hat sich jeder abzufinden, der der Wissenschaft dienen will. Wissenschaftliche Arbeiten können gewiß dauernd, als ‘Genußmittel’ ihrer künstlerischen Qualität wegen, oder als Mittel der Schulung zur Arbeit, wichtig bleiben. Wissenschaftlich aber überholt zu werden, ist – es sei wiederholt – nicht nur unser aller Schicksal, sondern unser aller Zweck. Wir können nicht arbeiten, ohne zu hoffen, daß andere weiter kommen werden als wir. Prinzipiell geht dieser Fortschritt in das Unendliche.” (Weber [1917/1919] 1988, 592–93)

problem history, we have to offer at least some considerations on how to operationalize the general methodological precepts discussed above.³³¹

Strategic research sites

The challenge of a sociological problem history of the sociologization of the *a priori* is to account for both historical agents' problem perceptions, their solutions and the social conditions and effects of these perceptions and solutions – and to do so in a *longue durée* perspective covering several generations of scholars in various disciplines and national contexts. Thus stated, we seem to face an infinity of possible objects, authors, texts, contexts, sources, etc. We must select and prioritize within these possibilities depending on our overall strategic goal.

It seems to me that the most promising tactics – or, at least, the one I have followed here because it turned out most feasible – is to engage in a series of case studies. Only in the framework of such localized case studies did it seem possible to me to satisfy most of the precepts of sociological problem history: to go into the details of agents' problem perceptions and solutions as well as reconstruct their social conditions; to acquire the necessary competences for doing so; to connect various micro and macro levels of analysis; and to engage into critical reflexivity concerning the categories and narratives that have been applied in existing research to these (groups of) agents. Also, only in the framework of such limited case studies did it seem possible to me to cover the long-term, interdisciplinary and transnational dimensions of the sociologization of the *a priori*. By serializing such case studies³³² – introducing variation along the axes of time, place and disciplinary context – we can try to construct a long-term, interdisciplinary and transnational history of the problem in which we are interested.

Of course, cases must be “cases of” or “cases for” something: a hypothesis, a regularity, a pattern, a more general issue, a problem, etc. In our context, they must be of strategic significance for reconstructing the history of the problem of the sociologization of the *a priori* in its various dimensions. To use a notion coined by Merton, these cases must be “strategic research materials” (Merton 1987, 10–23), i.e. “strategic research sites, objects, or events that exhibit the phenomena to be explained or interpreted to such advantage and in such accessible form that they enable the fruitful investigation of previously stubborn problems and the discovery of new problems for further inquiry” (Merton 1987, 1–2). Accordingly, I shall engage in case studies that are “strategic” in the sense that they pick out important historical episodes where

³³¹ I cannot discuss here the operationalization of sociological problem history in general, but only specifically in relation to the object of the sociologization of the *a priori*. The latter has, of course, implications for the former.

³³² We can integrate here Armitage's notion of “serial contextualism” (Armitage 2012, 498) for long-term intellectual history into the approach of sociological problem history.

historical agents engage in a concrete socio-historical setting in a discussion on the problem of the sociologization of the *a priori* – or on matters that are directly or indirectly relevant for this problem.³³³

While I cannot offer here a discussion of the far-ranging methodological and epistemological literature on case studies in the social and human sciences (e.g. Ragin and Becker 1992; Forrester 1996; Orum 2015; Yin 2015; Gerring [2007] 2017), we should note that using such cases for the history of our problem involves a particular circular logic (the above mentioned “methodological circle” characteristic of structural interpretations). This logic is coherent with the general methodological and epistemological orientation of sociological problem history. Indeed, cases and the general statements to which they are related as “cases of” or “cases for” inform each other. The selection, presentation and analysis of cases is guided by the hypotheses to be explored. Inversely, the hypotheses to be established are specified and corroborated by the hypothesis-driven exploration of cases. In Bachelardian-Bourdieuian terms, a reality-driven “construction” is confronted with a hypothesis-driven “constructed reality”.³³⁴ Between them, there is a constant back-and-forth.³³⁵ The objective of this in principle open-ended process is to approximate as far as possible two systems of relations: the system of hypotheses and the system of hypothesis-constructed facts. The type of “proof” or “confirmation” we can expect then from using cases in the study of the sociologization of the *a priori* will be a proof by “coherence” (Bourdieu et al. [1968] 2005, 91), i.e. coherence between our general problem construction and the cases thought to exhibit it.

Despite appearances, this peculiar logic of using cases in studying our problem is far from mysterious – nor idiosyncratic to French epistemology, for that matter. It fits well, for instance, with Merton’s problem-driven and hypothesis-oriented methodology and epistemology of the

³³³ From the beginning of the work on the present project, I had sought to translate the “big question” of the sociologization of the *a priori* (and, initially, of the relationship between neo-Kantianism and sociology) into concrete historical case studies. I was initially inspired here by a general orientation expressed at several occasions by Bourdieu (e.g. Bourdieu [1985] 1987, 30): the attempt to transpose general philosophical questions (in our case, the question of the nature and role of the *a priori* or, in other words, the non-empirical elements of experience) into concrete empirical investigations (in our case, socio-historical investigations about how this problem emerged and was discussed in the social sciences). This approach finally turned out to converge with Merton’s conception of “strategic research sites”.

³³⁴ Without assuming a somehow resisting reality – at least in the sense of a Kantian “regulative idea” – construction wouldn’t be possible. It would lack its materials, as it were. The notion of a “pure construction” is on a par with Kant’s ill-advised dove: “Die leichte Taube, indem sie im freien Fluge die Luft teilt, deren Widerstand sie fühlt, könnte die Vorstellung fassen, daß es ihr im luftleeren Raum noch viel besser gelingen werde.” (Kant [1781/1787] 1974, 51, A5/B8-9) It is air resistance, of course, which enables the dove to fly in the first place.

³³⁵ The authors of *Le métier de sociologue* spoke conveniently of “le va-et-vient incessant entre l’hypothèse et la vérification” (Bourdieu et al. [1968] 2005, 98). This is, in retrospect, an apt description of how the preparation of the present work evolved.

social sciences.³³⁶ The latter is indeed implicit in the very conception of “strategic research materials”. For the strategic relevance of these materials is conditioned precisely by their relation to scientific “problems”. These problems emerge, according to Merton, both “internally” from specific “theoretical orientations” or “paradigms”³³⁷ (Merton 1987, 8) and “externally” from the broader social context via some Weberian *Wertbeziehung* (Merton 1987, 18–19). The operations of “establishing the phenomenon”, “specifying ignorance” and identifying “strategic research materials” are interconnected and unified through their relation to problems. Merton’s emphasis on problems and their empirical exploration through “strategic research sites” is part of his wider conception of the relationship between theoretical and empirical work in sociology, including the stress on “theories of the middle range” (Merton [1945] 1968a; [1948] 1968; [1949] 1968a). In this sense, our use of strategic case studies for reconstructing the history of the sociologization of the *a priori* is only an example of a widespread and relatively uncontroversial aspect of scientific practice.

The concrete strategic significance of “research sites” must be demonstrated individually, of course – just as the specific sources and methods used in analysing them.³³⁸ What they all share, however, are formal properties connected to the problem-historical approach outlined above. These case studies should enable us to reveal agents’ problem perceptions and problem solutions; their underlying categories and practical schemes, including the history of these “mental habits”; their socially acquired dispositions; and the specific location and structure of the field in which agents act. Most importantly, they should permit us to relate these different dimensions to each other while practicing a sort of “reformist reflexivity” concerning observers’ analytical categories. Given these criteria, there are two types of objects that seem particularly apt to satisfy them: scientific and scholarly controversies and conflicts; and processes of circulation of ideas, agents, texts, concepts, etc.

Controversies

The study of controversies has been a stable component of studies in the history and sociology of science at least since the 1970s (for overviews, see Pinch 2015; Jasanoff 2019; Gingras [2013] 2020, 114–20). Controversies have appeared to many as a convenient type of object for studying the intermingling of social and scientific “factors” (in fact, their identity) and for demonstrating the “constructed”, “conventional” or “contingent” nature of scientific

³³⁶ Unfortunately, I cannot provide here a satisfying reconstruction of Merton’s methodology nor of its usefulness for a sociological problem history.

³³⁷ “Paradigm” must be taken here in Merton’s, not Kuhn’s sense. On the difference and the history of both uses, see e.g. Merton [1949] 1968a, 69, n. 52; [1977] 1979, 71–109; 2004, 266–69.

³³⁸ I shall do so at the beginning of each chapter.

knowledge. In that sense, controversies have seemed a particularly appropriate material for establishing some of the “constructivist” tenets of the various currents of the “new sociology of science”.³³⁹ Indeed, “social studies of science” have produced several paradigmatic studies of controversies (e.g. Latour and Woolgar [1979] 1986; Latour [1984] 2011; Shapin and Schaffer [1985] 2011; Collins [1985] 1992; 2004).³⁴⁰ In terms of materials, the study of controversies has mostly been applied to the natural sciences – in accordance with the general tendency of the history and sociology of science. Yet, there are also some notable counterexamples where authors have sought to adapt the study of controversies to the social and human sciences (e.g. Kusch 1995; Shinn and Ragouet 2005; Kneer and Moebius 2010; Gingras 2014; Keuth 2015; Raynaud [2003] 2018).

In the present perspective of a sociological problem history, the study of scientific controversies should rather be conceived as one specific part of the larger sociology of conflict, i.e. the sociological study of antagonistic social interaction in general.³⁴¹ Contrary to the narrative promoted by the “new sociology of science”, Merton had applied such a conflict perspective to scientific controversies at least since the late 1950s – focusing first on the “strategic research site” of priority controversies and multiple discoveries to better understand the norms of science, its reward system and the various “ambivalences” it creates (Merton 1973, 281–412; especially [1957] 1973; [1963] 1973a). Importantly, he had even applied this model to sociology itself and, in particular, to conflicts on styles of sociological work (Merton 1961; [1961] 1973b), such as the polarization between “theory” and “empirical social research” in the debate

³³⁹ For a succinct summary of the main arguments advanced in the area of “science and technology studies” in favour of studies of controversies: “[T]he study of controversies enables us to recognise the conventional status of beliefs and practices that, after the closure of the controversy, appear to be self-evident; it allows us to study ‘science in the making’; it is called for by the very nature of science and technology as a continuation of war by the same and other means; it offers us a methodological advantage in that it reveals the interpretative flexibility of scientific data; it allows one to identify social interests and the internal and external dynamics of science; and it enables one to pass beyond the sterile opposition of internal and external factors.” (Kusch 1995, 23–24) We also find some of these arguments in Shapin and Schaffer’s paradigmatic study on the controversy between Robert Boyle (1627-1691) and Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679): “Historical instances of controversy over natural phenomena or intellectual practices have two advantages, from our point of view. One is that they often involve disagreements over the reality of entities or propriety of practices whose existence or value are subsequently taken to be unproblematic or settled. [...] Another advantage afforded by studying controversy is that historical actors frequently play a role analogous to that of our pretend-stranger: in the course of controversy they attempt to deconstruct the taken-for-granted quality of their antagonists’ preferred beliefs and practices, and they do this by trying to display the artifactual and conventional status of those beliefs and practices. Since this is the case, participants in controversy offer the historian resources for playing stranger.” (Shapin and Schaffer [1985] 2011, 6–7)

³⁴⁰ However, scientific controversies have also been studied from the opposite perspective, i.e. not as pointing to the “constructivism” but as exhibiting the fundamentally rational character of science (e.g. Raynaud [2003] 2018, 11–15).

³⁴¹ This area of sociology reaches back at least to the work of German philosopher-sociologist Georg Simmel (1858-1918) (Simmel [1908] 1992a; see also 1904a; 1904b; 1904c). Simmel’s ideas were integrated into a broadly “functionalist” sociological framework by German-American sociologist Lewis A. Coser (1913-2003) (Coser [1956] 2001). Notably, already mentioned Randall Collins developed the sociology of conflict further and applied it to the history and sociology of mathematics (Collins 1975; Collins and Restivo 1983).

on “middle range theories” (Merton [1949] 1968a, 53).³⁴² Likewise, Bourdieu – against a markedly different background, of course – had insisted since the mid-1970s (e.g. Bourdieu 1975d; 1976) on the essentially conflictual dimension of the “scientific field”. Importantly, he conceived scientific conflict as a special case within the broader framework of the theory of relatively autonomous fields and the competition and struggles among agents for the specific capital (legitimate authority and recognition) in these fields.

The crucial questions here – clearly identified by French historian and sociologist of science Dominique Raynaud (1961-) (Raynaud [2003] 2018, 25) – are whether scientific controversies are kinds of social conflicts, whether they are specific and, if so, how to understand their specificity. There are again two extreme positions here. On the one hand, “internalists” – we might think here of philosophers such as Popper (e.g. Popper 1970) or Lakatos (e.g. Lakatos 1970b), but also of sociologists such as Raynaud – will insist on the specificity of scientific controversies and their genuinely rational and truth-directed nature. “Externalists”, on the other hand – we can think here, despite all differences, of many proponents of the various versions of the “new sociology of science” – will emphasize that scientific controversies are “nothing but” social conflict, on a par with political or economic struggles.³⁴³ On the one hand, there are the “differentiationists” highlighting the specificity of science; on the other hand, the “anti-differentiationists” highlighting the continuity of science with other social activities (Ragouet 2002; Shinn and Ragouet 2005).³⁴⁴ In this dispute, Bourdieu’s conception of the “relative autonomy”

³⁴² Merton conceived scientific controversy (here applied to sociology) as a process of polarization: “This controversy follows the classically identified course of social conflict. Attack is followed by counter-attack, with progressive alienation between the parties to the conflict. In due course, since the conflict is public, it becomes a status-battle more than a search for truth. Attitudes become polarized, and then each group of sociologists begins to respond largely to stereotyped versions of what the other is saying.” (Merton [1949] 1968a, 53; see also [1961] 1973b, 56)

³⁴³ Consider, for instance, Bloor’s account of the conflict between 17th century corpuscular philosophy and religious sectarians (Bloor 1982, 284–91). The “interests” by which Bloor explained Boyle’s support for corpuscular philosophy are finally simply monetary interests: “The Hon. Robert Boyle and the future leaders of the Royal Society had other social goals in mind and possessed very different interests from the sectaries. Their personal fortunes were deeply involved in the quest for stable social forms.” (Bloor 1982, 286) Bloor imagined indeed a direct equivalence – a sort of “reflection”, as the Marxist tradition sometimes put it – between scientific and social terms: “The dictionary that will tell us which things stand for which words in the great volume of nature is therefore simple and short. For inert matter read ‘people’; for active principle and force read ‘Anglican Church’; for natural hierarchy of matter and spirit read ‘social hierarchy’. To deny that matter can move and organize itself is to deny that (certain) men can organize themselves.” (Bloor 1982, 288)

³⁴⁴ The basic opposition is, in my view, better put in terms of “specificity” versus “homogeneity”. Cassirer used this distinction – which originates in Kant – for the analysis of the opposed views of myth in the first half of the 20th century: “In an important chapter of his *Critique of Pure Reason* Kant deals with a fundamental opposition in the method of scientific interpretation. According to him there are two groups of scholars and scientists. The one is following the principle of ‘homogeneity’; the other the principle of ‘specification’. The first endeavors to reduce the most disparate phenomena to a common denominator whereas the other refuses to accept this pretended unity or similarity. Instead of emphasizing the common feature it is always looking for the differences. According to the principles of the Kantian philosophy itself both attitudes are not really in conflict with each other. [...] Human knowledge can only attain its end by following both ways and by satisfying both interests. It must act according to two diverse ‘regulative principles’ – the principles of similarity and

of the scientific field (discussed above) enables us again to take an intermediate position. Accordingly, controversies must be conceived as “relatively autonomous” social conflicts, i.e. specific conflicts following and using the internal rules – at least in part and officially – of a relatively autonomous field.³⁴⁵

The term “controversy” remains, of course, ambiguous. Against the tendency to call any minor disagreement a “controversy”, some authors have sought to provide a clear definition.³⁴⁶ For my present purposes, however, I assume that I use “controversy” in a relatively broad sense. I take “controversy” to mean basically a social conflict in a relatively autonomous field that involves two or more agents and turns, at least in part (or in an official, rationalized form), around the legitimate competence (capital) specific to this field.

More important than a precise definition of “controversy” is, however, another aspect: the functions that the study of such broadly conceived “controversies” can fulfil for sociological problem history. The main functions are the following:

- (1) Relating intellectual positions: Controversies exhibit the relation of (groups of) social agents to each other in a concrete context. For understanding their conflict, observers must reconstruct the respective intellectual positions (*prises de position*) taken by agents and the argumentative opposition between these positions. Controversies are a first step towards constructing a space of relations between intellectual positions.
- (2) Relating social positions: The (groups of) agents involved possess concrete social characteristics. Controversies incite observers to study the social positions and

dissimilarity, of homogeneity and heterogeneity. For the functioning of human reason both maxims are equally indispensable. The logical principle of genera which postulates identity is balanced by another principle, namely, that of species, which requires manifoldness and diversity in things and which prescribes to the understanding that it should pay no less attention to the one than to the other. [...] What Kant says here about the study of natural phenomena holds just as much for the study of cultural phenomena. If we trace the various interpretations of mythical thought given by the scholars of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries we find striking examples of both attitudes.” (Cassirer 1946, 6–7) Kant calls the principle integrating both specificity and homogeneity “continuity” (Kant [1781/1787] 1974, 574, A657-658/B685-686). Instead of a “transversalist” (Shinn and Ragouet 2005), we could then speak of a “continuist” sociology of science: science is continuous with other social activities, i.e. in relation to them both partly homogeneous and partly specific. This is, of course, just another expression for the “relative autonomy” of science that we can find in Bourdieu, but arguably also already in Merton and Barber.

³⁴⁵ See also Bourdieu’s rejection of both externalist and internalist interpretations of scientific conflicts: “Une analyse qui essayerait d’isoler une dimension purement ‘politique’ dans les conflits pour la domination du champ scientifique serait aussi radicalement fautive que le parti-pris inverse, plus fréquent, de ne retenir que les déterminations ‘pures’ et purement intellectuelles des conflits scientifiques.” (Bourdieu 1976, 90)

³⁴⁶ Raynaud provides the following definition: “Une controverse scientifique se caractérise par la division persistante et publique de plusieurs membres d’une communauté scientifique, coalisés ou non, qui soutiennent des arguments contradictoires dans l’interprétation d’un phénomène donné.” (Raynaud [2003] 2018, 40) Although useful, this definition appears too restrictive for my purposes. The conflicts I have studied are not always public; they don’t necessarily concern members of the same “scientific community”; they are not only about “contradictory arguments”, but involve also other, sometimes quite mundane dimensions; and the “given phenomenon” to be interpreted is often difficult to pinpoint, being itself part of what is at stake in the controversy.

trajectories of adversaries – within their specific discipline, the larger academic field, the national context, the wider society, etc. They are hence a first step towards constructing a broader space of social positions.

- (3) Relating relations between intellectual positions to relations between social positions: Controversies enable us to establish relations between the intellectual positions and the social positions of the (groups of) agents engaged in conflict. Since controversies are limited in time and space, they allow us to do so in a feasible, traceable and documented way. Relating two (or more) agents to each other, each exhibiting a certain relation between social and intellectual variables, invites observers to construct systematically the broader relations between the system of social position and the system of intellectual positions. According to Bourdieu, we should assume the hypothesis that these are relations of “homology” (according to the analogical scheme “*a* relates to *b* as *c* relates to *d*” or “*a* : *b* :: *c* : *d*”) (e.g. Bourdieu [1963] 1980; 1980b, 147).
- (4) Reconstructing spaces of possibilities: Controversies enable us to engage in detailed studies of agents’ different “spaces of possibles” and “problematics” as they emerge from the encounter of their dispositions and schemes with a particular state of a field. Controversies indicate not only different intellectual strategies and solutions; they reveal conflicts in the practical perception of the structure of the scientific field (with differing judgments on what is relevant, important, worthwhile, but also on what are viable solution strategies and proofs). By inciting us to relate social positions to intellectual positions, controversies also push us towards studying the “interface”, i.e. agents’ acquired dispositions, schemes and *habitus* and the way they condition their specific problem perceptions and solutions. In other words, controversies oblige us to construe agents’ effectively taken stances as a particular case of possible stances – to conceive, in other words, “the real as a particular case of the possible” (Bachelard [1934] 2017, 62; see also Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 204).
- (5) Revealing practical schemes: Controversies exhibit the terminology, concepts, categories and practical schemes involved in agents’ conflicts. These elements condition their problem perceptions and solutions and thus their conflict. Studying a controversy enables us to work backwards from intellectual conflict on solutions to problem perceptions, from problem perceptions to underlying practical schemes and from these schemes to the social conditions of the acquisition and application of these schemes. This “revelatory function” of controversies is especially important when it comes to transnational or interdisciplinary conflicts (see below).

- (6) Retracing observers' categories: Controversies and conflicts often result in polarization, stereotypes (Merton [1949] 1968a, 53; [1961] 1973b, 56) and "blackboxing" (e.g. Latour 1987, 1–17) in the case of "closure" of the controversy in favour of one of the parties involved. What was "controversial" in the controversy and open to conflicting interpretations becomes a self-evidence after the controversy is closed. It is not only important to understand how, by means of which strategies and under which conditions a view becomes taken-for-granted. Through the production of self-evidence, controversies also have an important impact on observers' categories. In conflicts in the natural sciences, for instance, the analyst will often start from collective representations according to which one of the parties involved got it right while the other got it wrong – from the point of view of the scientific present, of course, which is itself in part a result of the controversy. In this respect, controversies incite observers to engage in critical reflexivity regarding observers' categories. They often lead us back to the historical or imagined origin of present-day analytical categories, representations, narratives or beliefs. Controversies are thus fruitful research sites for retracing the socio-historical conditions of observers' categories – in the hope of gaining better control of them.

In virtue of these functions, controversies are an important means for accessing the various types of intellectual and socio-historical information necessary for constructing a sociological problem history. In general, they can help us to engage – starting from a limited and manageable case – in a "relational" conception of intellectual activity and combine "internal" and "external" analyses. In this sense, controversies are valuable "strategic research materials" for reconstructing the history of the sociologization of the *a priori*.

Transfers, receptions, circulations

The second type of cases studied here is closely connected to the functions of controversies. I am referring to processes of transfer, translation, reception and circulation of ideas, texts, agents, etc. between contexts. There are two sorts of "contexts" I consider here: national contexts and disciplinary contexts. These two levels are, of course, distinct. But, as I have argued above, they can be treated homogeneously within the Bourdieusian framework. In practice, the phenomena of circulation I study will often connect national and disciplinary dimensions.

In the above discussion of the transnational dimension of the sociologization of the *a priori* we already had the occasion to point to the importance of studying processes of circulation. We have explained how, within the general Bourdieusian framework, we might combine the focus

on localized transfers with a comparative perspective regarding the overall structure of the fields involved. In the present context, we only have to spell out why this type of study is particularly fruitful or “strategically relevant” for a sociological problem history. I suggest that we should conceive cases of transfer, reception and circulation in analogy with controversies. That is, in terms of their heuristic functions, the former fulfil a role similar to the latter. However, they specify these functions further with respect to the national and disciplinary dimension. Given the above discussion, a short consideration of the specific usefulness of studying phenomena of circulation for a sociological problem history of the sociologization of the *a priori* should suffice.

As controversies, processes of circulation necessarily involve at least two (groups of) agents: one in the context of origin, the other in the context of arrival or destination. Often the situation includes more agents with different interests because mediators between the two contexts come to play a major role. Circulation between national and disciplinary contexts thus facilitates the same work as controversies: establishing relations between intellectual and social positions with regard to several agents; reconstructing “spaces of possibles”; revealing practical schemes; enquiring into the origin of observers’ categories, etc. To better understand this connection between the functions of controversies and circulations, we only have to consider that using (introducing, commenting, referring to, rejecting, etc.) a foreign source is always a “move in the game”, i.e. a strategy and *prise de position* in the context of arrival. In this sense, many processes of circulation do indeed involve controversy or conflict.³⁴⁷

The difference with controversies is that the latter mostly take place between agents that share markedly similar schemes of thought and participate in the same field. By contrast, processes of circulation introduce variation on these levels. By connecting at least two (groups of) agents in different national or disciplinary fields, they incite observers to reconstruct the position of agents within these fields and ask for structural similarities and dissimilarities between the fields involved. They thus not only oblige observers to acquire material knowledge of the main agents, groups, institutions and mechanisms in a given field. They also raise the question of structural “homologies” between national or disciplinary fields – with the ensuing possibilities of structural alliances or oppositions.

The main added value of cases of circulation compared to controversies for our present purposes is that they reveal the specifically national and disciplinary schemes which underlie

³⁴⁷ See, for instance, the exemplary sociological study by Austrian-French sociologist Michael Pollak (1948-1992) on the reception of Max Weber in France (Pollak 1986; 1988). A prime example in this context is Aron’s use of Weber – but also of Dilthey and of South-West neo-Kantianism – as an antidote against Durkheimian sociology (Aron [1935] 2007; [1938] 2018).

agents' problems. This becomes apparent, for instance, in situations of misunderstandings or misappropriations, i.e. when a work or an author is appropriated in a way that contradicts the author's explicit or implicit intentions. These cases often expose "structural misunderstandings" (Bourdieu [1990] 2002, 4), i.e. misunderstandings that are rooted in specifically national (or disciplinary) schemes that go back, in turn, to the structure and the history of the respective contexts. Starting from a limited case of transfer, reception or circulation, observers can thus work backwards and try to identify nationally specific structural conditions enabling the perceptions, evaluations and uses of certain authors, works or ideas. The same is true for cases of non-reception of an author or work or for cases of divergent problem perceptions and evaluations, i.e. when the same issue is regarded as a (relevant) problem in one context but not in another.

For a problem history of the sociologization of the *a priori*, cases of circulation thus fulfil important additional functions not necessarily covered by controversies. They show clearly that problems, problem perceptions and solutions depend on national and disciplinary structural conditions. Studying such cases enables us to focus on the crucial national and disciplinary dimension of the sociologization of the *a priori*. And since transfers, receptions and circulations are concrete phenomena, limited in time and space, they allow us to explore the dependency between our problem and national and disciplinary conditions in an empirically manageable way.

In sum, both controversies and circulations are situations in which things that usually remain implicit become explicit and where the relationship between intellectual positions and their social context becomes more transparent for observers. They reveal intellectual arguments, positions and oppositions at a specific point in space and time and enable, at the same time, a detailed investigation into how these positions and arguments were connected to social structural conditions of different sorts (social positions, trajectories, vocabularies, national and disciplinary schemes, etc.). Combined, these two types of objects seem to me particularly fruitful for studying the sociologization of the *a priori* in the perspective of a sociological problem history.

The critique of memorial obstacles

Having presented two types of "strategic research materials", I would like to highlight two other central features of implementing the problem-historical approach: the critique of what we might call "memorial obstacles"; and the enquiry into the historical origin of the "grammar" of the problem.

It has become clear that reflexive work on observers' categories is an essential part of sociological problem history. This is the eminently "critical" dimension of problem history in a sense close to Nietzsche's.³⁴⁸ Indeed, the starting point and the condition of any problem-historical approach is to enquire into historians' as well as other agents' representations of agents' problems. This involves reconstructing the origin of these representations, the mechanisms of their diffusion as well as the different functions they served for different (groups of) agents in different contexts. We must seek to understand in this way how the problem that we set out to study was handed down to us. But importantly, it also means to evaluate the adequacy of these representations as representations of the past.

Frequently, in fact, common representations of a historical episode become at some point what we might call – merging considerations by Bachelard, Halbwachs, Febvre and Bourdieu (e.g. Halbwachs [1925] 1994; [1941] 2008; Bachelard [1938] 2011, 15–26; Febvre [1942] 2003, 31–142; Bourdieu et al. [1968] 2005, 24–25) – “memorial obstacles”: collective representations of the past that impede its adequate historical representation. These shared pictures of the past might still serve the present interests of various agents and groups of agents – from national and disciplinary communities to groups and sub-groups of specialists on a specific subject –, but they have become inappropriate as accounts of the past.³⁴⁹ A more appropriate historical account will have to surmount these symbolic “memorial obstacles” – among other, more material obstacles, of course (for instance, the availability and accessibility of sources).³⁵⁰ Problem history thus necessarily involves a reflexive “anamnesis” of routinized representations, narratives and other accounts of the past – with the goal of posing the problem in historically more adequate terms.³⁵¹ This critique, in other words, is an essential aspect of the “conquest” (Bourdieu et al. [1968] 2005, 27–49) of problem history's object.

In the course of the history of sociologizing the *a priori*, we frequently encounter such memorial obstacles. Accordingly, we will consistently engage in critical efforts to dismantle them. In terms of their contents, the obstacles are as diverse as the historical cases studied. They concern, among other things, the very research topic “neo-Kantianism and sociology” (Chapter 3); various representations of Kant's life and work (Chapter 4); the notion of a “French neo-

³⁴⁸ See the quote above from Nietzsche [1874] 1999, 271. Again, I am not subscribing to Nietzsche's metaphysics of “life”.

³⁴⁹ It should be clear that “adequacy” and “appropriateness” must be understood here in terms of the principle of relative “progressive adaptation” (one of the tenets of Febvre's problem history outlined above).

³⁵⁰ For more on the notion of “memorial obstacles”, see Chapter 3.

³⁵¹ I use here, of course, Bourdieu's notion of “anamnesis” as opposed to “amnesia” (Duval 2020). For example: “Seule l'anamnèse que permet le travail historique peut délivrer de l'amnésie de la genèse qu'implique, presque inévitablement, le rapport routinier à l'héritage, converti, pour l'essentiel, en *doxa* disciplinaire” (Bourdieu 1995, 3).

Kantianism”; accounts of the ephemeral cooperation and controversy between Simmel and Durkheim; narratives about the emergence of the sociology of knowledge; or the marginalization of Merton’s sociology of science in the 1970s (for these various cases, see Chapter 6). We will find here that collective representations of the past often serve some definite purposes in a historical present. They have specific functions for the (groups of) agents involved and agents, in turn, have specific interests in introducing, maintaining or modifying them.

In all these cases, it is by working through these obstacles – these “ill-posed problems”, as Febvre said – that we shall try to arrive at “better-posed problems” or, in other words, a representation of the past that seems more appropriate.³⁵² In this sense, the critique of memorial obstacles is indeed an indispensable part of problem history: without the “ill-posed problems” and their critique, we cannot advance towards better-posed problems. Also, this dynamic is probably not peculiar to problem history. It appears indeed only as a particular case of the more general mechanism of mutual critique by which science advances from “construction” to “construction”, combining innovation and cumulativeness (e.g. Bourdieu et al. [1968] 2005, 43). This implies, of course, that also the purportedly “better-posed problems” proposed here against specific memorial obstacles might turn out as “ill-posed” from a more advanced vantage point.

Investigating the emergence of the problem

When we dismantle memorial obstacles, what account should we replace these representations with? I come here back to a proposition made earlier (see Chapter 1). An essential part of understanding the sociologization of the *a priori* is to reconstruct the structure of the problem – its relatively stable “grammar”, as it were – and to retrace how this structure emerged and transformed historically.³⁵³ Even if we assume, as suggested, that problems are socially and historically variable and that they involve the constructive activity of a historically situated observer, we can try to pinpoint the origin and evolution of a problem. Indeed, this seems to me another indispensable element of any sociological problem history. We must answer questions such as: Which components and conditions had to be in place for a problem to become possible and be perceived as a problem? How did these conditions evolve over the course of time? Which was the impact on the problem and the solutions formulated in response to it?

³⁵² The whole operation is well expressed in a phrase by French historian of science Pierre Brunet (1893-1950): “[L]’historien a un double rôle: prendre conscience des *a priori* actuels pour les rejeter afin de pouvoir comprendre en pleine clarté les *a priori* périmés d’autrefois” (Brunet in Mieli and Centre international de Synthèse 1936, 78). On the context of this statement, see Chapter 5 on discussions on “*a priori*” at the Centre international de Synthèse.

³⁵³ For my account of the structure of the problem, see the four conditions of the problem outlined in Chapter 1.

The historical circumstances under which a problem arises seem particularly important from a heuristic point of view. It is in this situation that the basic structure of the problem appears for the first time – even if it might later evolve. It is here that we can study *in vivo*, as it were, the basic intellectual and social conditions that had to be fulfilled for the formulation of the problem to become possible in the first place. This involves first of all, as Febvre already pointed out, certain words, concepts, categories and other intellectual, symbolic or mental tools (*outillage mental*). These elements, in turn, are embedded in larger symbolic wholes – languages, terminologies with their conceptual oppositions, systems of thought, symbolic systems or systems of representations – which, again, respond to certain states of the natural and the social-historical world.³⁵⁴ The situation in which a problem emerges enables us to study the concrete interlocking of social and intellectual components and to exhibit the properly “sociological” character of problems. In this sense, these moments of inception will be of utmost strategic significance for any sociological problem history. Perhaps most importantly, as Mannheim suggested (in the citation used as an epigraph to the present chapter), investigating the genesis of a problem might allow conclusions as to its solution or solvability.

For the specific case of the sociologization of the *a priori*, the enquiry into the historical emergence of the structure of the problem will lead us back, as already announced, to the conflict between Kant’s and Comte’s classifications of science and knowledge and their respective socio-historical contexts (see Chapter 4). This will be our first historical case study – and arguably a central one. In order to connect the intellectual and social components of the problem, we will engage in what I call a “historical sociology of classifications of knowledge and science”. I will seek, in short, to understand the emergence of the problem of sociologizing the *a priori* out of the dynamic relationship between the division of intellectual labour and the vision of this division by those proposing classifications of knowledge and science. This approach is, in my view, compatible with a sociological problem history. It will simply help us to be more precise about the specific nature of the problem of sociologizing the *a priori*.

Once the historical origins of the problem established, we will be able to construct later sociological accounts of categories, concepts of space and time, concepts, etc. as solutions to this same problem. It should then also become possible to connect the most important transformations in the structure of the problem to changing socio-historical conditions. Couched in structuralist terms, the theories identified here as “solutions” will be construed as a “group of transformations” (e.g. Lévi-Strauss [1960] 1996b, 28) of the same basic structure that any solution to the problem of sociologizing the *a priori* must satisfy.

³⁵⁴ The latter point, at least, is an assumption of sociological problem history via the principles (2)-(4) (see above).

Limited case studies and specified ignorance

I have proposed to serialize case studies on “strategic research sites” to retrace the deployment and transformation of the basic grammar of the problem of sociologizing the *a priori*. But just how many case studies will it need to do so? On which research sites? We touch here upon the concrete, pragmatic limitations of the history of the sociologization of the *a priori* I can offer here. Given the need (outlined above) to combine various disciplinary competences – historical, sociological and specific to the area in which the problem arises – problem-historical case studies are time-consuming (not to speak of the practical difficulty of presenting them in a readable way within limited space). This puts restrictions on the number of cases I can analyse and present here. This limitation is partly intrinsic – one could hardly tell in a single monograph the long history of the problem of the sociologization of the *a priori* on the level of “high resolution” offered by individual case studies. Partly it is contingent upon the time limit set to the present project.

In any case, I can offer only a limited number of case studies on the development of the problem of sociologizing the *a priori*. Basically, they will focus on three moments that – if we reason in terms of priorities – appear most important for a history of this problem: its emergence in the period between the 1780s and 1830s; its culmination in several explicit sociological accounts of the *a priori* around 1900; and its provisional endpoint in the 1960s-2020s period which informed the present problem construction.

Still, even if the series of case studies presented here is only a fraction of what an exhaustive account of the problem would require, I would like to insist on another virtue of the problem-historical perspective. In fact, this approach produces – even when it cannot be systematically applied – what Merton has called “specified ignorance”, i.e. “the express recognition of what is not yet known but needs to be known in order to lay the foundation for still more knowledge” (Merton 1987, 1; see already 1971, 191). Contrary to unspecific or “dysfunctional” ignorance (Rumsfeldian “unknown unknowns”, as it were), “specified ignorance” identifies – in different degrees – what should be known given a certain problem or a certain set of hypotheses: “The specification of ignorance amounts to problem-finding as a prelude to problem-solving.” (Merton 1987, 10) Thus, “specified ignorance” in fact “advances scientific knowledge” (Merton 1987, 6).

In this sense, the problem construction “sociologization of the *a priori*” provides us with a reading grid that enables us to interrogate the historical record with a questionnaire in mind. Even if, due to more or less contingent limitations in time and space, we cannot apply the questionnaire to all the relevant parts of this record and thus fully execute the programme of a long-term, transnational and interdisciplinary history of this problem, our framing allows us to

identify further strategic research sites and, within these sites, specific questions to be investigated. Our construction of the problem can thus serve as a starting point for further case studies, including the analysis of “deviant cases” (Molnar 1967)³⁵⁵ – with potential modifications in the construction of the problem as a consequence, of course. I will seek to indicate these areas for further investigations throughout and resume them in the conclusion. I would thus hope that, even in its limited form, the present problem history can specify our ignorance to such an extent that it becomes “a first step toward supplanting that ignorance with knowledge” (Merton 1987, 7).

5. Conclusion: From construction to confirmation

At the close of this chapter, several things should be clear. The phenomenon of the sociologization of the *a priori* that I have circumscribed in the first chapter starting from present-day instances of quasi-transcendental reasoning in the social and human sciences is to be conceived as a “problem” in a specific sense. It can be studied in the framework of what I have characterized as “sociological problem history”. This approach – informed by the German and French traditions of problem history and reformulated in terms of several principles – enables us to integrate the five main dimensions of the problem (interdisciplinarity, transnationality, transtemporality, relative autonomy, reflexivity) within a broadly Bourdieusian account. It incites us to engage in concrete empirical-historical case studies on “strategic research materials”. By serializing such case studies, we can arrive at – or at least credibly aim at – a long-term history of the problem of sociologizing the *a priori*.

Where does that leave us? As already said at the end of Chapter 1, Bourdieu and his co-authors insisted in *Le métier de sociologue*, in the framework of their Bachelardian epistemology of the social sciences, that scientific facts are “conquered”, “constructed” and “ascertained” – “le fait est conquis, construit et constaté” (Bourdieu et al. [1968] 2005, 81–82).³⁵⁶ These three “epistemological acts” are thought to be inseparable: the “conquest” of a fact implies to construct and confirm it; its “construction” implies to conquer it against phenomenal appearances and “prenotions” and confirm it through constructed facts; its “confirmation”, “establishment” or “ascertainment”³⁵⁷ presupposes its prior conquest against “pre-constructions” and its explicit

³⁵⁵ For example, I consider the absence of explicit discussions on sociologizing the *a priori* in Merton’s early work on the sociology of knowledge and of science as such a “deviant case”. Such deviant cases are fruitful for better understanding the social and intellectual conditions of problems.

³⁵⁶ According to the official English translation “the social fact is won, constructed, and confirmed” (Bourdieu et al. [1968] 1991, 57).

³⁵⁷ The terminology to be used for describing this third operation is particularly tricky. “Confirmation” can be used as long as we keep in mind that it is meant in the peculiar circular or holistic sense sketched above. This sense is opposed by the authors of *Le Métier* to “an analytic definition of verification” as promoted in

construction. But while these three operations might be logically and epistemologically connected, they are also thought to exhibit a hierarchical order of “implication”: confirmation presupposes construction and construction presupposes conquest.³⁵⁸ In a (conventional) written piece of work, the three operations have to be somehow squeezed into a linear, i.e. successive, chronological (in terms of the reader’s time) order. In this sense, we can say now that the first chapter had concentrated on the “conquest” of our object of study while the present second chapter sought its explicit “construction” – as a problem in the framework of a “sociological problem history”.³⁵⁹ What remains then is “confirmation”. This, in short, is what most of the remaining work – especially the case studies offered – will be devoted to.

The reflexive nature of sociological problem history, however, imposes a final caveat regarding the “official methodology” I presented here. Sincerity – in fact, the imperative of a sort of Weberian *intellektuelle Rechtschaffenheit* (e.g. Weber [1917/1919] 1988, 601, 612–13) – must guard us against over-rationalizing with regard to talk of “methodology”. As Merton has repeatedly pointed out (e.g. Merton [1967] 1968, 3–8; 2004, 269–78) – referring back to statements by Francis Bacon (1561-1626), Leibniz, Mach and others –, one of the difficulties with the presentation of scientific results is that they tend to follow a logical pattern rather than disclosing how, historically, the investigation has proceeded. The resulting “public record” of a scientific work thus rather conceals than reveals how it actually came about.³⁶⁰ Besides a

“positivism” (Bourdieu et al. [1968] 1991, 91) – apparently both “Logical Positivism” and “positivism” in empirical social research –, i.e. where single theory-independent observational statements are thought to confirm or refute, verify or falsify the general statements and hypotheses of a theory.

³⁵⁸ Bourdieu and his co-authors insisted on “la hiérarchie épistémologique des actes scientifiques qui subordonne le constat à la construction et la construction à la rupture: s’agissant d’une science expérimentale, le simple rappel à la preuve expérimentale n’est que tautologie tant qu’il ne s’accompagne pas d’une explication des présupposés théoriques qui fondent une expérimentation véritable, et cette explication reste elle-même dépourvue de vertu heuristique tant qu’elle ne s’accompagne pas de l’explicitation des obstacles épistémologiques qui se présentent sous une forme spécifique en chaque pratique scientifique” (Bourdieu et al. [1968] 2005, 24–25). They also spoke of “l’ordre dans lequel s’impliquent les actes épistémologiques, rupture, construction, constat: l’expérimentation vaut ce que vaut la construction qu’elle met à l’épreuve et la valeur heuristique et probatoire d’une construction est fonction du degré auquel elle a permis de rompre avec les apparences et, par là, de connaître les apparences en les connaissant comme apparences” (Bourdieu et al. [1968] 2005, 82).

³⁵⁹ Given the inseparability of the three epistemological operations, Chapters 1 and 2 also involved other aspects, of course. The many references to chapters and case studies to come, for instance, connected “conquest” and “construction” naturally with “confirmation”.

³⁶⁰ Merton spoke of “the rock-bound difference between the finished versions of scientific work as they appear in print and the actual course of inquiry followed by the inquirer. The difference is a little like that between textbooks of ‘scientific method’ and the ways in which scientists actually think, feel and go about their work. The books on method present ideal patterns: how scientists *ought* to think, feel and act, but these tidy normative patterns, as everyone who has engaged in inquiry knows, do not reproduce the typically untidy, opportunistic adaptations that scientists make in the course of their inquiries. Typically, the scientific paper or monograph presents an immaculate appearance which reproduces little or nothing of the intuitive leaps, false starts, mistakes, loose ends, and happy accidents that actually cluttered up the inquiry.” (Merton [1967] 1968, 4; see also [1938] 1970, 220–21; [1985] 1993, xxi–xxii) This insight into the rhetorical fabric of scientific texts, then, is *not* – as has sometimes been claimed – an innovation of the “new sociology of science”.

conventional and official “normative methodology” we would need – following a simple imperative of transparency – a sort of “descriptive methodology”, i.e. a description of how the investigation with its results has come about, given the factual maxims it has followed. This, of course, I cannot offer here. But we should keep the difference in mind. In this sense, what I have presented here as “methodology” should be conceived as the best way I can think of in which what I have actually done (including what I wanted to do and what I could not do) can be rationalized. Clearly, if we were to draw a line picturing the actual course the present work took, it would – rather than a straight line leading from point A (methodology) to point B (application) – resemble some of those arabesque-like “Shandean lines” (Sterne [1759–1767] 2009, 379–81) that Merton used to illustrate his own procedure in *On the Shoulders of Giants* (1965) – and, more generally, the actual dynamics of research (Merton [1985] 1993, xix–xxiii).³⁶¹

The next steps follow – “of course”, we are tempted to say for the “public record” – from our announcements in operationalizing problem history. We must engage in criticizing memorial obstacles and in investigating the historical emergence of the problem. As for the first task, one of the main obstacles for a history of sociologizing the *a priori* – or, at least, the one I was most acutely confronted with – are established narratives on the purported relationship between “neo-Kantianism” and “sociology”. This was the factual starting point of the present enquiry. In order to put the latter in dialogue with existing research, a reflexive critique of the literature on the research topic “neo-Kantianism and sociology” seemed necessary (Chapter 3). Its function is analogous to Febvre’s account of existing opinions on Rabelais’s atheism. Once we will have worked through this obstacle – thus completing provisionally our work on “conquering” the phenomenon to be studied –, we will finally be able to turn to the historical origins of the problem in the conflict between Kant’s and Comte’s classifications of science and knowledge (Chapter 4).

For better or worse, methodological argument must stop somewhere. To prove the point of “sociological problem history”, we have to put it into action – as convincingly as possible. “Le seul moyen de prouver le mouvement, c’est de marcher”, as Durkheim said (Durkheim 1888, 24). Or, for those with more Marxist sensibilities: “The proof of the pudding is in the eating.” (Engels [1892] 1963, 296)

³⁶¹ “As I now reconstruct its origins, I adopted the non-linear, advancing-by-doubling back Shandean Method of composition at the same time I was reflecting that this open form resembles the course taken by history in general, by the history of ideas in particular, and, in a way, by the course taken in scientific inquiry as well.” (Merton [1985] 1993, xix)

CHAPTER 3. NEO-KANTIANISM AND SOCIOLOGY: AN ANAMNESIS OF MEMORIAL OBSTACLES

L'ordre chronologique des époques n'est point l'ordre philosophique. Au lieu de dire: le passé, le présent et l'avenir, il faut dire: le passé, l'avenir, et le présent. Ce n'est, en effet, que lorsque, par le passé, on a conçu l'avenir, qu'on peut revenir utilement sur le présent, qui n'est qu'un point, de façon à saisir son véritable caractère. (Comte [1822] 1854, 99–10)

[L]e passé, en réalité, ne reparait pas tel quel, [...] il ne se conserve pas, mais [...] on le reconstruit en partant du présent (Halbwachs [1925] 1994, VIII).

“Who controls the past”, ran the Party slogan, “controls the future: who controls the present controls the past.” (Orwell [1949] 1989, 37)

[L]'historien a un double rôle: prendre conscience des *a priori* actuels pour les rejeter afin de pouvoir comprendre en pleine clarté les *a priori* périmés d'autrefois (Brunet in Mieli and Centre international de Synthèse 1936, 78).

1. Introduction: Reconsidering a research topic

From sociologizing the a priori to neo-Kantianism and sociology

Up to now, we have defined the problem to be studied – we called it the “sociologization of the *a priori*” (Chapter 1) – and we have explained the methodological perspective in which it should be studied – what we called a “sociological problem history” (Chapter 2).¹ But, of course, I am not the first person to address this issue. Which is then the relationship between the account I

¹ This chapter goes back to oral presentations at the congress of the Association française de sociologie in July 2021 at the University of Lille (in the research council 49 “Histoire de la sociologie”) and at the congress of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Soziologie in September 2022 at the University of Bielefeld (in the research council “Soziologiegeschichte”). It grew out of an attempt to write a literature review on the existing research on the relationship between neo-Kantianism and sociology in both the German-speaking world and France. I am – once more – grateful to Éric Brian who sensitized me for the issue of “collective memories” and their application to the history of science (e.g. Brian 2008; 2013). I also thank Wolf Feuerhahn who encouraged me at an early stage to enquire into the history of the research topic “neo-Kantianism and sociology” and of the labels involved (e.g. Feuerhahn 2014; 2020c). What seemed to me at first interesting but optional, turned out, as I advanced, to be a necessary step in research. Thanks also to Tangi Audinet and Aube Richebourg for feedback on an early draft. – As I was finishing this chapter, I learned about the passing of Éric Brian (1958–2025). I dedicate this text, bearing so many of his marks, to his memory.

propose and already existing research on the subject? The present chapter seeks to answer this question by critically examining the research area that has been most important to our problem.

In the existing literature, the issue of sociologizing the *a priori* has mostly been associated with the question of the relationship between the philosophical movement called “neo-Kantianism” and early academic sociology around 1900. This relationship – especially in German-speaking countries and in France – has been a recurring topic of research in both the history of sociology and the history of neo-Kantianism since at least the 1970s. The connection of the two topics is not surprising: The term “*a priori*” remains strongly associated with the philosophy of Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) and the tradition he inaugurated. Also, at the same time when numerous authors around 1900 explicitly proposed to account sociologically for the *a priori*, various “neo-Kantian” groups dominated academic philosophy in Germany and in France. This coincidence suggested that sociologizing the *a priori* must have been one aspect of the broader relationship between neo-Kantianism and sociology.

However, in the literature no consensus has been reached on precisely what this relationship consisted in and how to characterize it. We are confronted with diverging, even contradicting accounts. On the one hand, there are descriptions that present neo-Kantianism as the common background of European sociology (e.g. Lepenies 1983, 44; 1984, 167), attribute to early sociology in Europe a “neo-Kantian paradigm” (e.g. Rose [1981] 2009, chap. 1), or speak even of the “genesis of sociology out of the philosophy of neo-Kantianism” (e.g. Merz-Benz 2014, 317). On the other hand, there are narratives that claim, on the contrary, that sociology has established itself precisely *against* neo-Kantianism (e.g. Kilminster 1998; Joly 2017), that it is the break with neo-Kantian philosophy and philosophy *tout court* that lies at the foundation of sociology as an autonomous intellectual endeavour.

Unfortunately, the ambiguities on neo-Kantianism and sociology have negative consequences for understanding the problem in which we are interested. Depending on the narrative adopted regarding this connection, the sociologization of the *a priori* appears in a different, often incongruous light. For example, it can be interpreted as a sign of continuity with neo-Kantian academic philosophy (in the sense of an “evolution” or “transformation”) or, on the contrary, as a sign of radical discontinuity (in the sense of a “revolution” and “rupture”). The contradicting views on neo-Kantianism and sociology function, I shall argue, as “memorial obstacles”² for the problem of the sociologization of the *a priori*. They are collective representations that can obstruct an appropriate socio-historical account of the issue.

² For this notion, see Chapter 2 and below.

It follows that only if we clarify the issue of neo-Kantianism and sociology as it has been discussed in the existing literature, can we dispel misleading interpretations and clear the way for a better understanding of the sociologization of the *a priori*. For this, however, we must consider narratives on the topic of neo-Kantianism and sociology themselves as socio-historical phenomena. We must understand not only what they consist in and which evidence they are based on, but also where they come from and which purposes they served and continue to serve. In other words, we need a critical, socio-historical “anamnesis” (Bourdieu 1995, 3; [1997] 2003, 166–71; 2001b, 167–220; see also Duval 2020) of these memorial obstacles in order to surmount them – an operation which can be conceived in analogy to French historian Lucien Febvre’s (1878-1956) critique of “testimonies” on Rabelais’s “atheism” (Febvre [1942] 2003, 31–142; see Chapter 2). This is what the present chapter seeks to achieve.

The plan

In order to better understand existing accounts of neo-Kantianism and sociology, we must first engage in more general considerations regarding the functions, uses and peculiarities of disciplinary histories. I will dwell here on the importance of what I call “disciplinary reconstructions” and “narratives”. We can fruitfully construe these phenomena with the help of French Durkheimian sociologist Maurice Halbwachs’s (1877-1945) sociology of memory. In this perspective, reconstructions of the past of a discipline always depend on the present interests of particular groups. Through the production of such accounts a specific “disciplinary memory” is constantly maintained and “reworked” (*remaniement*). Under specific circumstances, disciplinary narratives can also become “memorial obstacles”, i.e. enter in conflict with historians’ or sociologists’ interests for an adequate representation of the past.

In this Halbwachsian perspective, the third section then presents a tentative typology of the narratives on neo-Kantianism and sociology as they have been circulating in German, French and English-speaking literature. Referring to the way the relationship is interpreted, I distinguish five of them: “positive”, “negative”, “indifferent”, “ideological” and “sociological” narratives. I not only seek to describe these narratives with their respective proponents. I also consider them in a socio-historical perspective by outlining their respective historical sources, the situations in which they emerged and the various interests (scientific, disciplinary, ideological, political, etc.) they served. By historicizing and sociologizing these narratives, we will thus see that they are rarely neutral but result from specific historical controversies. I shall thus map, as it were, a space of possible interpretations of neo-Kantianism and sociology.

But why is there such a polyphony of interpretations about neo-Kantianism and sociology in the first place? Why should it be so difficult to establish their precise relationship? What can

we do to clarify the issue? The fourth section considers the reasons for the persisting disagreement on the topic. A crucial problem here is that the labels “neo-Kantianism” and “sociology” are highly ambiguous, both as historiographical categories and as agents’ categories. I shall analyse this issue with the help of recent literature on scholarly classifications and categories, labels, isms and names of groups and disciplines (e.g. Höpfl 1983; Boschetti 2014a; Cuttica 2013; 2015; Merton and Barber 2004; Dayé 2015; 2017; Mosbah-Natanson 2017; Feuerhahn 2014; 2020c). I will seek to clarify here the different meanings of “neo-Kantianism” and “sociology” as historiographical categories and their concrete socio-historical manifestations in different contexts, including the different modalities of their relation.

Against the background of this analysis, I shall offer some propositions for reconfiguring studies on neo-Kantianism and sociology. I argue that we should indeed abandon the generic issue of “neo-Kantianism and sociology” (including vague suggestions going in this direction). There is no such thing as *the* relationship between “neo-Kantianism” and “sociology” (at least not in any historically meaningful sense); rather there are specific relations in the plural. This does not imply, however, that the whole topic should be abandoned. The issue can be reformulated in a historically more promising way. We should investigate how the relationship between “(neo-)Kantianism” and “sociology” was in fact perceived, presented and used by the historical agents involved under determinate conditions. The task then becomes to identify and analyse the various uses and functions of references to Kant and Kantian philosophy (not only what is taken to be “neo-Kantianism”) in the social sciences, especially in sociology. While it is possible to imagine a complete analysis of these different uses and functions, I will not engage in this enterprise, however. Instead, my strategy is to focus on one sub-group of uses: those concerning the specific problem of the *a priori*. This means to study a problem which is, compared to existing research on neo-Kantianism and sociology, both more specific and more general. It necessitates to go beyond the chronological and geographical limits usually set to studies on neo-Kantianism and sociology.

In sum, the present chapter offers a critical discussion of the literature on neo-Kantianism and sociology in the specific sense of a problem-historical critique of prior historiographical constructions. Instead of proposing yet another account of the subject, I take a step back and reconsider this research topic as a whole in a socio-historical perspective. By doing so, I specify how the present project relates to existing research and seeks to go beyond it.

2. Disciplinary history, collective memory and memorial obstacles

The illocutionary force of disciplinary histories

Accounts of the relationship between neo-Kantianism and sociology are mostly produced within historical accounts of the disciplines involved, i.e. in the context of either the history of sociology or the history of philosophy. Descriptions of this topic thus contribute to writing the history of the disciplines involved and – since the topic concerns two disciplines – of their relationship. Since about the 1970s, we have not only a better understanding of the history of scientific and scholarly disciplines – how they emerge, how they function, how they relate to each other.³ We also have started to realize the functions and uses proper to the writing of the history of these disciplines (Graham et al. 1983). For instance, such “disciplinary histories”⁴ can build and maintain group identities, do “boundary work” (Gieryn 1983), promote certain approaches at the expense of others and, in general, intervene in the struggles on the legitimate definition of the discipline. Since accounts of neo-Kantianism and sociology contribute to disciplinary histories, we can expect them to share some of the latter’s general properties – and problems. In order to better understand these accounts, we thus have to consider them in the context of the typical functions and uses of disciplinary histories.

The first thing to note here is that disciplinary histories go beyond a simple description of a past state of affairs. They have – to use the terminology of British philosopher of language John L. Austin (1911-1960) – a “performative” or “illocutionary” dimension: “the issuing of the utterance is the performing of an action” (Austin [1955] 1975, 6). In other words, disciplinary histories help to bring about a present or future situation instead of just describing a past one. They can initiate, construct, maintain, modify or reshape specific representations of a certain area of scholarly activity and of its past – within and without the discipline. This has sometimes far-reaching practical effects: from the formation of groups with a peculiar collective identity to the creation of chairs and the allocation of financial and other resources. The consequence is that, in treating or using such narratives as observers of a discipline’s history, we should not take them at face value. We should not take them for simple “constatives” with an exclusively descriptive intention. They are not a purely informative meta-discourse, but an integral part of the activities that constitute a discipline. We must consider them as full-blown interventions within the discipline that reply – as other contributions to the discipline – to a specific problem situation with its respective socio-historical conditions.

³ For a discussion of the literature on disciplines and their relations, see Chapter 2.

⁴ For this use of the term “disciplinary history”, see e.g. Lepenies 1978; 1981; Graham et al. 1983.

Consider, as an example, the history of sociology – the starting point of the present observations on disciplinary history.⁵ Many of the attempts since the 19th century to inaugurate “sociology” as an autonomous intellectual enterprise have been accompanied by foundational discourses that staged a more or less radical change in the organization of scientific disciplines – often through specific breaks with certain disciplines such as philosophy, psychology, history or political economy. These discourses were frequently expressed through the production of narratives on the past, present and future of the sociological discipline. Struggles over the delimitation of disciplines and their respective competences were often fought in a certain genre of texts dealing with the history of the discipline. They bore titles – to name only some – such as “La sociologie en France au XIX^e siècle” (Durkheim 1900b), “Tendencies in German life and thought since 1870” (Simmel 1902; [1902] 2008), “Die Gegenwartsaufgaben der Soziologie” (Mannheim 1932), “Bilan de la sociologie française contemporaine” (Bouglé 1935) or simply “La sociologie” (Fauconnet and Mauss 1901; Durkheim 1915). These texts produced a certain image of the discipline’s past that was not limited to a simple description. Crucially, they contained a particular vision of the present and future of the discipline. They thus helped to “do things”: impose a certain conception of the discipline, position the author in relation to his past and contemporary competitors and legitimize his position and vision. In fact, such disciplinary narratives have been omnipresent in the history of sociology, right from the start.

Some examples

Before providing a more general sociological framing of disciplinary histories, let me give a few examples from different periods of the history of sociology. The already existing studies on which I draw here show also that I am – of course – not the first to realize the crucial functions of these accounts of the past of the discipline.

(1) Comte’s “Appréciation sommaire”: The first example comes from Auguste Comte’s (1798-1857) *Cours de philosophie positive* (1830-1842), and thus from the very beginning of what has been called the properly “disciplinary history” of sociology (Heilbron [1990] 1995, 2–4). In the 48th lesson of the *Cours* (Comte [1839–1842] 1975, 100–154), written in 1839, Comte elaborated the “positive method” in what he called “sociology”. This, however, was immediately preceded in the 47th lesson by what Comte called an “Appréciation sommaire des principales tentatives philosophiques entreprises jusqu’ici pour constituer la science sociale”

⁵ What I say in the following about “disciplinary reconstructions” applies to the history of philosophy mostly in the same way as to the history of sociology. If anything, the relationship between reconstructions of the past and present stances is even closer in philosophy than in sociology – or other disciplines where there is a clearer distinction between current and past practice.

(Comte [1839–1842] 1975, 80–99). Tellingly, it was in the context of this account of the history of the conceptions of “social science” that Comte introduced for the first time the term “*sociologie*” (Comte [1839–1842] 1975, 88). So far, Comte had used the term “*physique sociale*”. The latter, however, had in the meanwhile been taken over by Belgian statistician Adolphe Quetelet (1796–1874), who had promoted a mathematized, statistical conception of social science which Comte fiercely opposed (Comte [1839–1842] 1975, 15, 88; see also Heilbron [1990] 1995, 172–73).⁶

In this 47th lesson, Comte discussed previous attempts to define “social science”, their respective merits and errors. In particular, he went through the works of Aristotle (384–322 BC), Montesquieu (1689–1755), and Condorcet (1743–1794), but addressed also broader movements in political economy (Comte [1839–1842] 1975, 92–97) and in historical studies, for example the so-called “German historical school of jurisprudence” (Comte [1839–1842] 1975, 97–98). Interestingly, Comte insisted that the social, intellectual and political conditions for the development of an adequate conception of a science of society were not provided until Comte’s own lifetime.⁷ Together with rebuffing the arguments of his predecessors, he thus also provided, as it were, a sociological “theory of error”: a theory that should explain sociologically why his

⁶ The relevant passage for the introduction of “*sociologie*” is: “Depuis Montesquieu, le seul pas important qu’ait fait jusqu’ici la conception fondamentale de la *sociologie* est dû à l’illustre et malheureux Condorcet” (Comte [1839–1842] 1975, 88). Comte inserted a footnote on the word “*sociologie*” explaining the introduction of this word as equivalent to “*physique sociale*”: “Je crois devoir hasarder, dès à présent, ce terme nouveau, exactement équivalent à mon expression, déjà introduite, de *physique sociale*, afin de pouvoir désigner par un nom unique cette partie complémentaire de la philosophie naturelle qui se rapporte à l’étude positive de l’ensemble des lois fondamentales propres aux phénomènes sociaux. La nécessité d’une telle dénomination, pour correspondre à la destination spéciale de ce volume, fera, j’espère, excuser ici ce dernier exercice d’un droit légitime, dont je crois avoir toujours usé avec toute la circonspection convenable, et sans cesser d’éprouver une profonde répugnance pour toute habitude de néologisme systématique.” (Comte [1839–1842] 1975, 88, n.) The motive for this change of words is indicated in an earlier footnote where Comte criticized Quetelet’s appropriation of “*physique sociale*” which had, according to Comte, “spoiled” the term: “Cette expression [*physique sociale*, MS], et celle, non moins indispensable, de *philosophie positive*, ont été construites, il y a dix-sept ans, dans mes premiers travaux de philosophie politique. Quoique aussi récents, ces deux termes essentiels ont déjà été en quelque sorte gâtés par les vicieuses tentatives d’appropriation de divers écrivains, qui n’en avaient nullement compris la vraie destination, malgré que j’en eusse, dès l’origine, par un usage scrupuleusement invariable, soigneusement caractérisé l’acception fondamentale. Je dois surtout signaler cet abus, à l’égard de la première dénomination, chez un savant belge qui l’a adoptée, dans ces dernières années, comme titre d’un ouvrage où il s’agit tout au plus de simple statistique.” (Comte [1839–1842] 1975, 15, n.) Comte referred obviously to Quetelet’s 1835 *Sur l’homme et le développement de ses facultés, ou Essai de physique sociale* (Quetelet 1835).

⁷ “[L]a science sociale n’a commencé à devenir possible qu’en s’appuyant précisément sur l’analyse rationnelle de l’ensemble du développement accompli jusqu’à nos jours dans l’élite de l’espèce humaine, tout passé moins étendu devant être insuffisant. C’est ainsi que les conditions relatives à la succession même des phénomènes coïncideront, d’une manière aussi rigoureuse que spontanée, avec celles déjà assez établies, par l’ensemble des trois volumes précédents, quant à la préparation de l’observateur d’après l’élaboration préalable des branches moins compliquées de la philosophie positive, pour assigner, sans aucune grave incertitude, le siècle actuel comme l’époque nécessaire de la formation définitive de la science sociale, jusque alors essentiellement impossible.” (Comte [1839–1842] 1975, 81) Besides the intellectual conditions concerning the advancement of the other sciences, Comte also thought of concrete political conditions such as the French Revolution.

precursor's attempts were "necessarily" mistaken.⁸ This was doubtlessly a particularly effective strategy for legitimizing Comte's own vision of the discipline and positioning himself as the true "founder" of the discipline.

Moreover, we can see in Comte's account the importance of the things that are left out, that are *not* said in disciplinary histories. Thus, Comte completely ignored in his account of fore-runners his former master Henri de Saint-Simon (1760-1825). Comte had fallen out with Saint-Simon in 1824 in the context of the publication of his "Plan des travaux scientifiques nécessaires pour réorganiser la société" (Comte [1822] 1854; [1822] 2020) – what he later called his "opuscule fondamental" (e.g. Comte 1854, 543). Comte believed that Saint-Simon had unduly published this "Plan" without his name and, from this point on, sought to present himself as radically independent of and opposed to Saint-Simon (Pickering 1993, 231–44). Thus, Comte's undoubtedly most important predecessor – the one he had closely collaborated with and who had sensitized the young mathematician for society and its scientific appraisal – disappeared from the genealogy of "sociology". By presenting earlier accounts as "necessarily" erroneous and by invisibilizing Saint-Simon, Comte's "Appréciation sommaire" underlined his claim to originality. It was hence an integral part of the justification and legitimization of his own foundation of "sociology".⁹

(2) Durkheim's accounts of the state of sociology: A second example is the series of three "states of the discipline" by French sociologist Émile Durkheim (1858-1917) in 1895, 1900 and 1915 (Durkheim 1895; [1895] 1975; 1900b; 1915; [1915] 1975). These accounts – written at different points in time and in different contexts – contributed to legitimizing Durkheim's conception of sociology and to keeping his competitors at bay – as French sociologist Philippe Besnard (1942-2003) has pointed out (Besnard 1981, 311–13).

As well as criticizing competitors, notably French criminologist, sociologist and philosopher Gabriel Tarde (1843-1904), the most effective strategy here was once again silence. For example, Durkheim did not discuss sociologist René Worms (1869-1926), mentioning his work only once in the 1900 text. Worms, however, was with his various attempts to institutionalize sociology – the foundation of the *Revue internationale de sociologie* (1893), the Institut international de sociologie (1894) with its regular congresses and its *Annales*, the book series "Bibliothèque sociologique internationale" (1894), etc. – arguably Durkheim's most direct competitor at the time (Heilbron 2015, 67, 70–73). Anthropologist and social psychologist

⁸ "En même temps, l'analyse générale des principaux efforts nous a expliqué leur avortement nécessaire, et nous a fait comprendre qu'une telle entreprise, désormais suffisamment préparée, reste néanmoins tout entière à concevoir de façon à comporter une réalisation définitive." (Comte [1839–1842] 1975, 98)

⁹ For another account of Comte's "positivist narrative", see Levine 1995, 13–16.

Gustave Le Bon (1841-1932) was not mentioned either. Frédéric Le Play (1806-1882) and his school – engaging with a social-reformist intention in fieldwork on workers or family life – were simply disqualified as being “outside” of scientific sociology (Durkheim [1915] 1975). In general, the authors cited were older than Durkheim – such as early French sociologists Alfred Espinas (1844-1922), Alfred Fouillée (1838-1912) or anthropologist Charles Letourneau (1831-1902) – or relatively distant, such as promoter of racist “*anthroposociologie*” Georges Vacher de Lapouge (1854-1936).¹⁰

Thus, Durkheim “rewrote” in a way the past of sociology and, starting from this account of the past, developed a vision of the future of the discipline. Both past and future finally legitimized Durkheim’s own conception of sociology in the present. The strategy proved effective. Durkheimian sociology succeeded in becoming hegemonic and marginalized alternative programmes – to the point where the group around Durkheim’s *L’Année sociologique* (1898-) was simply perceived as the “École française de sociologie”.¹¹ This success of the Durkheimian vision of the history of the discipline has doubtlessly contributed the “Durkheimocentrism” in the historiography of French sociology that has been frequently criticized (see recently Mosbah-Natanson 2017, 23–56).

(3) Lazarsfeld’s UNESCO report: A third example is Austrian-American sociologist and mathematician Paul F. Lazarsfeld’s (1901-1976) contribution to a large volume published in 1970 by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) on *Main trends of research in the social and human sciences* (UNESCO 1970). Lazarsfeld’s lengthy contribution (Lazarsfeld 1970) was simply entitled “Sociology” and contained an account of past, present and future of the discipline. In this overview, Lazarsfeld’s own brand of empirical social research played a leading role.

In his sociological analysis of the international success of Lazarsfeld’s empiricist conception of sociology, Austrian-French sociologist Michael Pollak (1948-1992) described Lazarsfeld’s text as a “rewriting of the history of the discipline” (Pollak 1979, 57).¹² Lazarsfeld, by the space he allotted to different authors, modified the hierarchy of the discipline’s exemplary works. He

¹⁰ “En somme, Durkheim ne paraît accorder d’importance qu’à des auteurs isolés ou à des démarches qui n’ont aucune espèce de rapport avec celle qu’il entend promouvoir. [...] Sur ces auteurs et ces groupes, qui pouvaient être considérés comme leurs concurrents les plus immédiats, Durkheim et ses collaborateurs ont préféré, d’une manière générale, faire silence (à l’exception de Tarde).” (Besnard 1981, 312)

¹¹ “Cette stratégie qui pouvait s’appuyer sur les vertus propres du groupe durkheimien a été d’une indéniable efficacité. ‘L’école française de sociologie’ a su très vite se placer dans une position centrale et hégémonique dans le champ de la sociologie naissante et marginaliser les tentatives parallèles de créer une science de la société.” (Besnard 1981, 312)

¹² Pollak wrote from a viewpoint heavily influenced by Bourdieu – the supervisor of his dissertation (Pollak 1975) – and the latter’s resistance to the hegemony of American “scientific” models of social science (Bourdieu et al. [1968] 2005; see also Bourdieu 2004, 94–98).

presented sociology – at least in its most recent stage – as an essentially “American science”. This narrative helped to delegitimize autochthonous national traditions and to disseminate his own conception of empirical research in sociology at a global scale. According to Pollak, it basically served a form of “intellectual imperialism” (Pollak 1979, 58).¹³

We might add that already one of Lazarsfeld’s earliest and best-known works in sociology – the famous 1933 survey on the effects of unemployment on the Austrian village of Marienthal written together with Austrian social psychologists and sociologists Marie Jahoda (1907-2001) and Hans Zeisel (1905-1992) (Jahoda et al. [1933] 1975) – was accompanied by a “Geschichte der Soziographie” written by Zeisel (Zeisel [1933] 1975). In a similar way, Zeisel legitimized here the peculiar “sociographic” approach of the survey by inserting it in a narrative of the disciplines past, present and future.¹⁴ In a later preface to the study, Lazarsfeld explained that he and his collaborators conceived themselves at the time not as sociologists, but as social psychologists (Lazarsfeld [1960] 1975, 14–15). The reason was that they opposed the kind of social philosophy that was then practiced under the label “sociology” at the University of Vienna – primarily by the two politically opposed philosopher-sociologists Othmar Spann (1878-1950) and Max Adler (1873-1937). According to Lazarsfeld’s vision of the discipline, he and his collaborators had thus anticipated what would later be understood by “sociology”.

¹³ Pollak’s analysis of Lazarfeld’s article in full: “L’imposition de cette conception de la sociologie dans des contextes déjà investis par d’autres traditions intellectuelles avait pour condition une réécriture de l’histoire de la discipline visant à délégitimer les traditions concurrentes et à fonder l’exclusive légitimité scientifique de son empirisme. [Paragraphe] Un article de Lazarsfeld publié dans une encyclopédie des sciences sociales et humaines éditée par l’UNESCO (P.F. Lazarsfeld, Sociology, in: UNESCO, *Main Trends of Research in the Social and Human Sciences*, Paris, Mouton, 1970, vol. 1, pp. 61-165) permet de reconstruire l’image qu’il s’est faite du champ mondial de la sociologie. La sociologie est présentée comme une ‘science américaine’; les travaux d’origine non-américaine n’occupent que peu de place. La rareté des références aux auteurs communément considérés comme les fondateurs de la discipline (Durkheim, Weber, Simmel, Marx, etc.) souligne l’ambition de ce texte qui est de prendre le contrepied des courants dominant l’histoire de la discipline afin de redécouvrir et de réhabiliter la tradition empiriste (ou plutôt sociographique) prédurkheimienne. [...] De façon générale, il reclasse les travaux recensés selon la place qu’ils occupent dans ‘sa’ propre hiérarchie de la scientificité qui va des sondages et des travaux méthodologiques, de l’étude des concepts et des variables, de l’analyse mathématique des processus et des contextes sociaux (pp. 64-74), aux travaux ‘macro’ sociologiques toujours exposés à ‘retomber dans l’obscurantisme’ (recherches comparatives, processus sociaux dans une perspective historique) (pp. 76-90) et enfin aux différents essais de construction théorique parmi lesquels sa préférence va aux ‘théories de portée moyenne’ (pp. 90-120).” (Pollak 1979, 57–58) I cannot engage here in an evaluation of Pollak’s sometimes excessively polemical article.

¹⁴ At the time, “*Soziographie*” and “*soziographisch*” had been used prominently by Dutch sociologist Sebald Rudolph Steinmetz (1862-1940) and German sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies (1855-1936) (e.g. Tönnies 1929; for a French translation, see [1929] 2011; Zimmermann 2011). In a text reflecting on the methodology of the Marienthal study, Lazarsfeld defined the term as follows: “Im folgenden sollen unter Soziographie alle Versuche zusammengefaßt werden, die dahin gehen, soziale Tatbestände zu erheben. Von einer exakten Abgrenzung des Gebietes der Soziographie wird abgesehen. Vielmehr soll jeder Soziologe, Psychologe oder Historiker, der versucht, ein bestimmtes Erkenntnisgebiet umfassend zu beschreiben, damit als Soziograph betrachtet werden. [...] Das Einzige, was von einer Soziographie vorausgesetzt werden soll, ist ihr Bestreben, den untersuchten Gegenstand möglichst vollständig darzustellen.” (Lazarsfeld [1934] 2007, 264)

(4) The creation of the “Chicago school”: A final example is the emergence of the notion of a “Chicago school” of sociology. This example has been analysed by American sociologist Andrew Abbott (1948-) (Abbott 1999) and taken up by sociologists Scott Frickel and Neil Gross (1971-) in their “general theory of scientific-intellectual movements” (Frickel and Gross 2005). These authors spoke of the “Chicago school of sociology” – a movement sometimes traced back as far as the late 19th century – as an “invention” of the 1960s. It was created by newcomers in the field who sought to legitimize their own approach – captured sometimes under the term “symbolic interactionism” coined by American sociologist Herbert Blumer (1900-1987) (Blumer 1969) – and to distinguish themselves from competitors in the discipline (especially at Harvard and Columbia University).¹⁵ Against the dominant narrative created by Harvard sociologist Talcott Parsons (1902-1979) according to which sociology was basically built on the work of Durkheim and Max Weber (1864-1920), they introduced alternative sources, such as George Herbert Mead (1863-1931), to justify an alternative practice of sociology.

This last example also indicates that historical narratives of a discipline’s past are also a concern in relatively recent sociological work on intellectual movements. In their theory of scientific and intellectual movements, Frickel and Gross thus explicitly addressed the production of historical narratives as an integral part of such movements. They highlighted their crucial role in “framing” the collective identity of an intellectual movement – i.e. establishing, maintaining and asserting it in a specific environment.¹⁶

These few examples show that disciplinary histories run through the history of sociology. They could fulfil several eminent functions. Most frequently, they legitimized the author’s position in the field by imposing a certain vision of the discipline that comprised its past, present and future.

Applying Halbwachs’s sociology of memory

Now, how can we understand this kind of historiographical production on a more general, sociological level? There are doubtlessly several possibilities. We have already touched upon the

¹⁵ “In the 1960s, however, a new generation of Chicago sociologists – what Gary Fine (1995) has called a ‘second Chicago school’ – many working under the influence of symbolic interactionism as it was then being elaborated by Herbert Blumer, came to the fore. Working to secure intellectual prestige in a field crowded with competitors, it became important for Chicago sociologists to develop a ‘cohesive ideology’ (Abbott 1999:10). This they did by situating themselves in an intellectual tradition they helped to invent called ‘the Chicago school of sociology’.” (Frickel and Gross 2005, 224)

¹⁶ “Another and related dimension of framing recognises that participants in a SIM [scientific and intellectual movement, MS] must construct historical narratives of it. Who are the legitimate founders of the movement? Who were their intellectual ancestors and predecessors? For what reasons did the movement arise? And through what processes? Historical narratives that answer such questions are routinely invoked across the sciences and humanities to legitimate work done under the banner of some particular SIM.” (Frickel and Gross 2005, 223)

Bourdieuian perspective (via Pollak's account of Lazarsfeld) which would conceive these texts as weapons in the struggle over the legitimate definition of the discipline. But we also encountered these histories in the context of Frickel and Gross's more recent theory of intellectual-scientific movements. Without necessarily ruling out these other options, I propose to conceive, in a first step, disciplinary histories within the framework of Maurice Halbwachs's sociology of collective memory. This approach is coherent, as we shall see, with the general problem-historical perspective adopted.

For applying Halbwachs's theory, we can draw on several earlier works (Mucchielli 1995; Müller 1997; Brian 2008; 2013; 2021a) which have considered collective memories specific to scholarly disciplines – in short: “disciplinary memories”. In this perspective, we can construe disciplinary histories and narratives in the following terms:¹⁷

(1) “Disciplinary reconstructions”: Halbwachs's sociology of memory enables us, first, to reframe accounts of a discipline's past in a specific sense as “disciplinary reconstructions”. I suggest to use “reconstruction” here in the precise sense that Halbwachs gave to the term in the context of the use of the past in present recollection.¹⁸ According to a fundamental principle of the “sociological theory of memory” (Halbwachs [1925] 1994, VIII), in recollection, the past is not simply “reproduced”, but it is “reconstructed”. In a chapter of his 1925 *Les Cadres sociaux de la mémoire* entitled “La reconstruction du passé” (Halbwachs [1925] 1994, 81-113), Halbwachs insisted on the difference between “reproduction” and “reconstruction”. “Reproduction” of the past in a present recollection meant actually nothing but “reconstruction”: “[R]eproduire n'est pas retrouver: c'est, bien plutôt, reconstruire” (Halbwachs [1925] 1994, 92).

Essential for this “reconstruction” is a relation of dependency regarding the present in which recollection takes place: “[L]e passé, en réalité, ne reparaît pas tel quel, [...] il ne se conserve pas, mais [...] on le reconstruit en partant du présent” (Halbwachs [1925] 1994, VIII).¹⁹ In this sense, Halbwachs also spoke in passing of a proper “travail de reconstruction” (Halbwachs

¹⁷ My reading of Halbwachs is heavily indebted to Éric Brian (e.g. Brian 2008; 2013; 2021a).

¹⁸ I am not aware of an explicit definition of “reconstruction” or “reconstruct” in Halbwachs. However, the term is omnipresent in his work on memory, especially in *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire* (Halbwachs [1925] 1994). For the changing views of Halbwachs on “reconstruction” and the relationship between the past and the present, see Jaisson 1999.

¹⁹ Insights into the dependency of the past on the present have, of course, a long history. They go back as far as Augustine of Hippo's (354-430) analysis of time which emphasized already that past, present and future exist for us only as “the present of the past”, “the present of the present” and “the present of the future” (Augustinus [397-400] 1987, 641–43). In the 20th century, such insights have been important in the phenomenological tradition, for instance: “Das historisch ‘an sich Erste’ ist *unsere Gegenwart*, als lebendig durchlebte Zeit.” (Husserl [1936] 1939, 222) More importantly, as we have seen (Chapter 2), the acknowledgment of the dependency of the past on the present as well as of the historicity of the present, is also an essential part of a problem-historical approach and clearly stated by historians like Febvre.

[1925] 1994, 106). Importantly, the work of “reconstruction” involves “social frames of memory” (*cadres sociaux de la mémoire*). These frames are specific to social groups (families, religions, classes, disciplines, etc.). They function as instruments that enable us to recollect past events as a function of present interests: “instruments dont la mémoire collective se sert pour recomposer une image du passé qui s’accorde à chaque époque avec les pensées dominantes de la société” (Halbwachs [1925] 1994, VIII). In fact, the reconstruction of the past through the social frameworks of memory is essential to what Halbwachs calls “collective memory”: “la mémoire collective est essentiellement une reconstruction du passé” (Halbwachs [1941] 2008, 7).

We can apply Halbwachs’s view of recollection to disciplinary histories. In accounts of a discipline’s past, the past is not simply “reproduced”, but “reconstructed” as a function of present preoccupations, needs and interests. Collective frames of memory serve to relate the past to this ever-changing present. In short, disciplinary histories are “reconstructions” of a discipline’s past – they are “disciplinary reconstructions”.

(2) “Disciplinary memory”: Collective memories are, according to Halbwachs, specific to social groups or what he called sometimes “societies” (*sociétés*) within larger society – families, religious groups, social classes and states, professions, etc. These memories – more precisely, the frameworks of memory – are an essential part of the sense of identity of these groups.²⁰ Similarly, disciplinary histories depend on the specialized collective memory of a certain group, i.e. the group of members of a discipline (sociologists, philosophers, historians, etc.). We might call their specific memory a “disciplinary memory”.²¹ We can reason here in analogy with other specialized collective memories addressed by Halbwachs: for example, the “memory of musicians” (Halbwachs [1939] 1997) or the “memory of geometers” (see Brian 2008, 141; 2021a, 14).²² Disciplinary reconstructions rely on the “frames” or “frameworks” (*cadres*) of the collective memory of the members of a discipline. They are a crucial part of the sense of identity of this discipline.

But what are these “frames of memory” exactly and how do they relate to recollection, on the one hand, and to collective memory, on the other? Importantly, Halbwachs argued that these frames of memory were not essentially different from particular recollections (Halbwachs [1925] 1994, 98). The relationship between particular recollections and the frames of memory

²⁰ In analogy with individual identity: “De chaque époque de notre vie, nous gardons quelques souvenirs, sans cesse reproduits, et à travers lesquels se perpétue, comme par l’effet d’une filiation continue, le sentiment de notre identité.” (Halbwachs [1925] 1994, 89)

²¹ Charles Crothers has used in a similar sense the phrase “disciplinary collective memories” (Crothers 2015, 492; see also below).

²² Similarly, Éric Brian has spoken of a “memory of historians” (Brian 2008, 141).

must not be understood on the model of the relationship between a painting's canvas and its frame or between a river and its riverbed. Recollections and their social frames are not heterogeneous. On the contrary, they have the same basic nature. Frames, according to Halbwachs, are also "made of recollections" ("faits de souvenirs") (Halbwachs [1925] 1994, 98). The difference is that the frameworks are recollections that have greater stability than particular recollections. For this reason, they can serve as "instruments" for "reconstructing" other recollections. In other words, the relationship between the frame and the content is defined by the relative stability of these representations.²³

For illustrating this relation of relative stability, Halbwachs used – against the image of the river in his river bed – the picture of rafts of timber slowly floating down a river (see Brian 2008, 142–44). They move at a speed that is both slower than the flow of water and faster than the immobile riverside. As they pass only slowly, we can move between them, either to cross from one side of the river to the other, or to go upriver or downriver. For Halbwachs, this corresponded to two distinct ways of using the frameworks of memory: for connecting general, atemporal concepts (passing on the rafts from one side to the other) or for connecting particular memories (moving on them upriver or downriver).²⁴ The image illustrated that the frames of memory were in movement and under transformation just as particular recollections. The difference lay only in the relative velocity of change, as it were. It also indicated that, for Halbwachs, thought itself – i.e. the use of concepts and general ideas – was not only intrinsically social, but also intrinsically historical. As he said in the last sentence of the *Cadres*: "la pensée sociale est essentiellement une mémoire, et [...] tout son contenu n'est fait que de souvenirs collectifs, mais [...] ceux-là seuls parmi eux et cela seul de chacun d'eux subsiste qu'à toute

²³ For this whole line of reasoning, see the following passage: "Arrêtons-nous un peu, maintenant, pour expliquer en quel sens la disparition ou la transformation des cadres de la mémoire entraîne la disparition ou la transformation de nos souvenirs. On peut faire en effet deux hypothèses. Ou bien, entre le cadre et les événements qui s'y déroulent il n'y aurait qu'un rapport de contact, mais l'un et l'autre ne seraient pas faits de la même substance, de même que le cadre d'un tableau, et la toile qui y prend place. On pensera au lit d'un fleuve, dont les rives voient passer le flot sans y projeter rien d'autre qu'un reflet superficiel. Ou bien, entre le cadre et les événements il y aurait identité de nature: les événements sont des souvenirs, mais le cadre aussi est fait de souvenirs. Entre les uns et les autres il y aurait cette différence que ceux-ci sont plus stables, qu'il dépend de nous à chaque instant de les apercevoir, et que nous nous en servons pour retrouver et reconstruire ceux-là. C'est à cette seconde hypothèse que nous nous rallions." (Halbwachs [1925] 1994, 98) Halbwachs attributed the first hypothesis to his former teacher philosopher Henri Bergson (1859-1941) – one of the main foils of his sociological theory of memory (e.g. the critique of Bergson in Halbwachs [1950] 1997a).

²⁴ "Ils [the frames of memory, MS] ressemblent à ces trains de bois qui descendent le long des cours d'eau, si lentement qu'on peut passer sur eux d'un bord à l'autre; et cependant ils marchent, et ne sont pas immobiles. Il en est ainsi des cadres de la mémoire: on peut, en les suivant, passer aussi bien d'une notion à une autre, toutes deux générales et intemporelles, par une série de réflexions et de raisonnements, que descendre ou remonter le cours du temps, d'un souvenir à l'autre. Plus exactement, suivant le sens qu'on choisit pour les parcourir, qu'on remonte le courant, ou qu'on passe d'une rive à l'autre, les mêmes représentations nous sembleront être tantôt des souvenirs, et tantôt des notions ou des idées générales." (Halbwachs [1925] 1994, 289; see also Brian 2008, 142–44)

époque la société, travaillant sur ses cadres actuels, peut reconstruire” (Halbwachs [1925] 1994, 296).²⁵

For disciplinary reconstructions, this means that there is no difference in principle between the particular representations they contain and the overall frameworks of disciplinary memory which they express and to which they contribute at the same time. Stories of a discipline’s past depend on relatively stable frameworks, but they are – under certain circumstances – also able to modify these frameworks.

(3) “Reworking (*remanier*) disciplinary memory”: If there is no categorical difference between the social frameworks of collective memory and particular recollections, recollections can modify and reshape the frameworks of collective memory. With respect to such modifications, Halbwachs used frequently the terms “*remanier*” and “*remaniement*” (Brian 2008, 125–30) – perhaps best translated as “reworking” or “reshuffling”. These *remaniements* referred in Halbwachs to changes on several levels: the reshaping of material places that support memories, of the social structure of the group, of individual memory, and of the frames of collective memory.²⁶ We can restrict ourselves here to the latter.

Halbwachs explained that changes in the social frames of memory replied to society’s basic “need for social unity” (Halbwachs [1925] 1994, 290): when society’s present changes (for one reason or the other), the frames of memory tend to adapt to secure social unity among its members.²⁷ *Remaniements* come about basically because the groups involved change and because, in response, the past is reconstructed in terms of a new present, defined by new needs and interests. Importantly, these *remaniements* are iterated over time. That means that when we take reconstructions of the past as an object and ask, for instance, for their origin, we face instantly several layers of *remaniements*.²⁸ In fact, since the past itself is irretrievably lost and thus cannot

²⁵ Here, Halbwachs diverged from Durkheim’s notion of *cadre* in the latter’s *Formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse* (Durkheim [1912] 2013). According to Durkheim, the “categories of the understanding” are such *cadres* and they are specific to whole societies: “Il existe, à la racine de nos jugements, un certain nombre de notions essentielles qui dominent toute notre vie intellectuelle; ce sont celles que les philosophes, depuis Aristote, appellent les catégories de l’entendement: notions de temps, d’espace, de genre, de nombre, de cause, de substance, de personnalité, etc. Elles correspondent aux propriétés les plus universelles des choses. Elles sont comme les cadres solides qui enserment la pensée; celle-ci ne paraît pas pouvoir s’en affranchir sans se détruire, car il ne semble pas que nous puissions penser des objets qui ne soient pas dans le temps ou dans l’espace, qui ne soient pas nombrables, etc.” (Durkheim [1912] 2013, 12–13) For Halbwachs, on the contrary, there are various frames within the same society and they evolve historically through the dynamics between the social groups that compose society. For Halbwachs’s relationship with Durkheim’s sociology of religion, see especially Halbwachs 1925; Hirsch 2012.

²⁶ For a list of passages using “*remanier*” and cognates, see Brian 2008, 125, n. 1.

²⁷ “C’est pourquoi la société tend à écarter de sa mémoire tout ce qui pourrait séparer les individus, éloigner les groupes les uns des autres, et qu’à chaque époque elle remanie ses souvenirs de manière à les mettre en accord avec les conditions variables de son équilibre.” (Halbwachs [1925] 1994, 290)

²⁸ “[L]e souvenir est dans une très large mesure une reconstruction du passé à l’aide de données empruntées au présent, et préparée d’ailleurs par d’autres reconstructions faites à des époques antérieures et d’où l’image d’autrefois est sortie déjà bien altérée” (Halbwachs [1950] 1997b, 118–19). Halbwachs studied such multiple

serve as a standard for measuring the adequacy of later reconstructions and their *remaniements*, we might as well leave the question of origins aside – this changes nothing about the reality of the tradition of successive reconstructions.²⁹

Applied to disciplinary histories, the “reworking” of disciplinary memory means a modification or transformation of collective representations concerning the past of a certain field of knowledge. Disciplinary reconstructions can establish, maintain, consolidate or, on the contrary, question, revisit and overturn the frameworks of a discipline’s memory. In fact, disciplinary reconstructions are always – although in varying degrees – such *remaniements*. That implies also that when we investigate disciplinary reconstructions as socio-historical objects, we necessarily deal with several layers of *remaniements* – each specific to a certain moment in time.

With these basic notions of Halbwachs’s approach in mind, we can now add some further elements. First, this conception of disciplinary histories as part of disciplinary collective memories is less idiosyncratic than it might perhaps seem. In fact, similar issues regarding the history of disciplines have been raised by other, more recent authors, sometimes without any reference to Halbwachs. Thus, German sociologist Friedrich Tenbruck (1919-1994), for example, insisted on the fact that all science, sociology included, relied on its own memory (Tenbruck [1992] 2015, 27). The discipline’s memory was continually written and rewritten – not only in official accounts on a discipline’s history, but even on the most basic level of referring simply to previous work.³⁰ Similarly, other German-speaking historians of sociology have summoned the idea of a “cultural memory” (*kulturelles Gedächtnis*)³¹ of members of a discipline or a “discipline-specific memory” (*fachspezifisches Gedächtnis*) (Dayé and Moebius 2015a, 8, 12).

We can find comparable suggestions also in English-speaking sociology. Swedish sociologist Richard Swedberg (1948-), for instance, has argued for the relevance of the history of sociology for all sociologists by conceiving this history as a “working memory” of the discipline (Swedberg 2012). He emphasized – drawing on cognitive science rather than Halbwachs – that “memory is not so much about the past as about the present” and that “each time we call

layers of various collective memories in detail in his case study on *La topographie légendaire des évangiles en Terre sainte* (Halbwachs [1941] 2008).

²⁹ “Si, comme nous le croyons, la mémoire collective est essentiellement une reconstruction du passé, si elle adapte l’image des faits anciens aux croyances et aux besoins spirituels du présent, la connaissance de ce qui était à l’origine est secondaire, sinon tout à fait inutile, puisque la réalité du passé n’est plus là, comme un modèle immuable auquel il faudrait se conformer.” (Halbwachs [1941] 2008, 7)

³⁰ In a similar way, Tenbruck framed his review of the 1980s revival of interest in neo-Kantianism – after a long period of oblivion – in terms of a “Gedächtnis der Kultur” (Tenbruck 1988, 1) and its relevance for the present.

³¹ For a critique of this term – which was not used by Halbwachs and which was introduced in German-speaking history and cultural sciences primarily by Egyptologists Jan Assmann (1938-2024) and Aleida Assmann (1947-) – see Brian 2008, 123–25.

upon our memory, we transform it” (Swedberg 2012, 11). In this sense, the history of sociology as a “working memory” should be relevant not only for specialists in the history of sociology, but for all sociologists in their everyday practices such as choosing a research topic, a theory or a method. Also, the “discipline-building” force of disciplinary histories has been linked to the idea of a group-specific collective memory. Thus, New Zealand sociologist Charles Crothers (1948-2023) has highlighted that accounts of a discipline’s past – drawing on various biographical, autobiographical and other sources – help to build the group-specific collective memory of a discipline (Crothers 2015, 492). Finally, Halbwachs’s theory has also been used to understand the role of “founders”, “classics” and “canons” within “sociology’s collective memory” (Baehr [2002] 2016, 2).

But certainly the most remarkable congenial attempt towards understanding disciplinary histories was made by American sociologist Donald N. Levine (1931-2015) in his 1995 *Visions of the Sociological Tradition* (Levine 1995). Levine – referring explicitly to Halbwachs’s theory of collective memory and the importance of memory for identity (Levine 1995, 5, 10) – emphasized the crucial role of “narratives” for disciplines. These stories established “coherence” (Levine 1995, 7–12) by providing at once a view of the past, a projection into the future and an account of the present. Levine conceived these disciplinary narratives – in analogy with individual self-narratives and autobiographies – as “collective autobiographies” (Levine 1995, 12). They were “not a luxury”, but, on the contrary, an “essential condition” for a discipline and its identity (Levine 1995, 10).³² These narratives were selective and commemorative in character, served purposes such as legitimation and demarcation and changed constantly as a function of the present situation. As such, they differed radically from the accounts provided by an outside historian (Levine 1995, 11).³³ But as one might write the life of a person in terms of the different accounts this person gave over their lifetime, “so the history of a discipline can be traced by recalling the succession of disciplinary histories produced by their practitioners” (Levine 1995, 12; see also 1995, 92). Accordingly, Levine went on to present a typology of narratives in the history of sociology. He distinguished six different narratives: the “positivist”, the “pluralist”,

³² “In this perspective history is not a luxury, but an essential condition of an optimally functioning personality. By extension, the same can be said of human collectivities.” (Levine 1995, 10)

³³ “Like all human communities, those organized to cultivate intellectual disciplines depend on some view of their past. Such views give their disciplines identity and direction, important for functioning effectively in the present. These accounts differ from those provided by professional historians. The latter proceed from an outside perspective, chronicling events in the framework of some externally supplied interpretive scheme. The former take the form of collective autobiographies. The selective process at work in these stories is geared more to commemorating and to forgetting than to mere chronicling. Such tales, like the tales any group tells of itself, often assist the process of educating and inducting new members into those disciplines.” (Levine 1995, 11)

the “synthetic”, the “humanist”, the “contextual” and his own, the “dialogical” narrative (for an overview, see Levine 1995, 83–102).

I cannot go further into the details of Levine’s proposal – nor into his connected account of national traditions in sociology and their interrelations. We should note, however, that what Levine calls “narratives” can be interpreted as corresponding basically to what Halbwachs called “frameworks of memory”. Both “narratives” and “frames of memory” concern the relatively stable form through which the past is put into order and remembered. Both are relatively steady compared to the changing content of what is remembered (e.g. ideas, works, authors). But both can and do change under suitable circumstances in a discipline’s present situation. They are thus the relatively stable components on which disciplinary histories rely and which they contribute to transform (*remanier*). When I speak in what follows of “narratives” of neo-Kantianism and sociology, I will use this term thus in a sense that combines aspects of Halbwachs’s and Levine’s approach.

I should like to add some further clarifications on applying Halbwachs’s perspective to disciplinary histories. First, when we talk about “disciplinary reconstructions” or “reconstructions of a discipline’s past”, we should rather think of a type of activity than a type of text. In fact, the shaping and reshaping of disciplinary memory does not exclusively take place in texts that take as their explicit object the history of the discipline (i.e. texts with titles such as “Sociology in 19th century France”, see Durkheim 1900). The reproduction, maintenance, transformation or reshuffling of collective memory also occurs in a discipline’s day-to-day routine, for example, through the use of certain references at the expense of others or the introduction of concrete empirical investigations by “mythical or practical genealogies” (Tenbruck [1992] 2015, 27–28). It could be useful to distinguish here between disciplinary reconstructions in the narrow and in the broad sense. In the narrow sense, the term designates a certain genre of texts devoted explicitly to a discipline’s history (with fuzzy boundaries, I admit). In the broader sense, it means a certain type of activity that we can observe in a wide variety of contexts, not explicitly concerned with the discipline’s past.³⁴ From this it also follows that the collective memory of a discipline is neither in the hands of the specialists in the history of a discipline (e.g. historians of sociology or of philosophy), nor in the hands of those members of a discipline who utilize the past primarily for present-day purposes. If anything, it is a conflictual co-production of several groups of agents with different interests.

³⁴ To give further sociological depth to this quasi-universal activity of reconstructing the discipline’s past, we could perhaps also use the ethnomethodological concept of “accounts” (Garfinkel [1967] 1984b) – under the condition, however, that we take into consideration the institutional conditions under which accounts are produced and succeed.

When we extend in this way the notion of “disciplinary reconstructions”, we must add at the same time that not all reconstructions are equivalent. The social conditions under which disciplinary reconstructions are produced and disseminated differ considerably. Accordingly, they have different chances to “succeed”, i.e. to spread and become a relatively steady part of a discipline’s collective memory. We can image here tentatively a scale according to the chances of an account to circulate, be repeated, stabilize and have an impact on disciplinary memory. This scale could range from a “weak” end – simple citation or non-citation of certain authors and works, occasional “mythical genealogies” as a preamble to empirical work, specialized contributions to the history of a discipline – to a “strong” one – entries on the topic in major encyclopaedias, important theoretical works redefining the presently relevant parts of a discipline’s past, widely distributed textbooks for new students of the discipline, etc.³⁵ Thus, even if disciplinary reconstruction can be conceived as an almost universal activity within scientific disciplines, this activity takes place within a certain hierarchical structure which is not itself created by these narratives. Each narrative might contribute to maintaining or modifying the disciplinary memory, but it is a pre-existing hierarchy that determines their chances of imposing themselves as legitimate visions of the discipline’s past. Also, the chances of success of a narrative seem independent of whether it is produced in a disciplinary reconstruction in the narrow or the broad sense. Thus, a historical narrative in a work of theory can be more influential than one in a specialized work on the discipline’s past.³⁶

Finally, among disciplinary reconstructions – especially those in the narrow sense – there is a remarkable sub-genre that leads us back to the question of national traditions. These are disciplinary reconstructions that take as their object national traditions different from the one the author and/or the audience are part of. As a prototype, we might think of French philosopher and sociologist Raymond Aron’s (1905-1983) 1935 *La sociologie allemande contemporaine* (Aron [1935] 2007). These “transnational disciplinary reconstructions”, as we might call them, can play an important role in the perception and formation of national disciplinary memories and traditions – for example, via mechanisms of exoticization and self-exoticization. In these cases, the question of the construction of disciplinary identities and boundaries combines with

³⁵ Some histories of sociology, especially those written for pedagogical purposes, are hugely popular (e.g. Kruse [2008] 2018 for the German-speaking world). Authors of these books have good chances of imposing their (or a certain) vision of the discipline’s past, present and future.

³⁶ Parsons’s *The Structure of Social Action* (Parsons [1937] 1968) is a case in point. It presented itself as “a study in social *theory*, not *theories*” (Parsons [1937] 1968, xxi), but “with special reference to a group of recent European writers”, as the title said. The influence of its “synthetic narrative” (Levine 1995, 35–58) on the collective memory of sociology was, at least for some time and at least in the United States, immense: “If ever one needed evidence to support the claim that disciplinary narratives function to provide collective identity and practical orientation, *Structure* may serve as a case in point.” (Levine 1995, 35)

the dynamics of transfer and the logic of the “international circulation of ideas” (Bourdieu [1990] 2002). Thus, in the case of Aron, his reconstruction of German sociology sometimes revealed more about Aron’s own position in the field of French sociology and philosophy than about the foreign tradition presented.

To be sure, the national dimension is not proper to these transnational disciplinary histories. Even when the official purpose of reconstructions is not to perform a transfer, they often contribute to the establishment and maintenance of a national disciplinary memory. For instance, Durkheim’s text “Sociologie” – one of the examples mentioned above – was part of a volume entitled *La science française*, published to coincide with the 1915 International Exposition in San Francisco (Durkheim 1915). It was in this text that Durkheim described sociology as “une science essentiellement française” (Durkheim [1915] 1975, 109).

Memorial obstacles and their anamnesis

Finally, how can we conceive what I have called “memorial obstacles” in the Halbwachsian perspective I have sketched? The notion emerged from the problem-historical approach, especially from Febvre’s critique of previous accounts of Rabelais’s “atheism” (Chapter 2). I said that this concept synthesized aspects of the work of Febvre, Halbwachs, Gaston Bachelard (1884-1962) and Bourdieu. So far, I have defined “memorial obstacles” primarily as collective representations of the past that, at some point, begin to inhibit a more accurate historical representation of that past. I now want to suggest that reconstructions of a discipline’s past, when they become part of the frameworks of a discipline’s collective memory, can sometimes function as such memorial obstacles.

Of course, we do not need to go as far as histories of scientific disciplines to encounter the basic issue involved in memorial obstacles. It is a recurring and well-known problem that official or otherwise “interested” representations of the past (e.g. national or nationalist histories) can enter in conflict with scientific representations (e.g. socio-economically or globally oriented histories).³⁷ In these cases, it seems clear that we observe a conflict between different groups (say, nationalist politicians or journalists against social historians) with different interests – even if historians’ interest may consist in a “disinterested”, scientific representation of the past.³⁸ More generally, the past is an essential part of the “public interpretation of reality”³⁹ and,

³⁷ A recent example is the public polemics on French historian Patrick Boucheron’s (1965-) *Histoire mondiale de la France* (Boucheron 2017).

³⁸ I am alluding here, of course, to the institutional imperative of “disinterestedness” – one of the elements of the “scientific ethos” or the “normative structure of science” according to American sociologist of science Robert K. Merton (1910-2003) (Merton [1938] 1973; [1942] 1973).

³⁹ The phrase “public interpretation of reality” (*öffentliche Auslegung des Seins*) was used by Hungarian-German-British sociologist of knowledge Karl Mannheim (1893-1947) (e.g. Mannheim [1928] 1964b, 573), drawing

as such, a major stake in the struggles between groups – whether they are interested in a scientific account of the past or not. In any case, memorial obstacles seem to appear frequently in the conflict between extra-scientific groups interested in the use of the past for present purposes and scientific groups interested in an accurate representation of the past independently from present-day concerns. The “official” representation hinders in these situations accurate knowledge of the past.

However, memorial obstacles also seem to emerge within scientific activity itself. How should we conceive the conflict in the present case of disciplinary histories, when both parties are arguably engaged in scientific activity? Or within historical research itself, when one interpretation of the past opposes another? What should enable us here to say that one representation would be an “obstacle” while the other one would be “more appropriate”?

To answer these questions, it is worth reconsidering the initial notion of “epistemological obstacles” in Bachelard. In his 1938 *La formation de l'esprit scientifique* (Bachelard [1938] 2011), Bachelard understood these obstacles not as “external” to knowledge, but as resulting from the process of cognition and knowledge itself.⁴⁰ In the very act of knowing emerge zones of the unknown: “La connaissance du réel est une lumière qui projette toujours quelque part des ombres.” (Bachelard [1938] 2011, 15)⁴¹ When these areas of shadow solidify, they become obstacles for further knowledge. To know then means to surmount previous knowledge with its corresponding unknowns or “errors”: “on connaît *contre* une connaissance antérieure, en détruisant des connaissances mal faites, en surmontant ce qui, dans l'esprit même, fait obstacle à la spiritualisation” (Bachelard [1938] 2011, 15–16). This is what Bachelard also called “le caractère polémique de la connaissance” (Bachelard [1934] 2017, 16). Knowledge is, in this perspective, always knowledge *against*, i.e. knowledge against prior knowledge-error doublets. But this also means that “epistemological obstacles” are never obstacles for knowledge *tout*

on German philosopher Martin Heidegger's (1889-1976) analysis of what he called the *Man* (usually translated into English as “the anyone”, see especially Heidegger [1927] 2001, 113–30). Heidegger himself had rather used the phrase “öffentliche Ausgelegtheit des Daseins” (Heidegger [1927] 2001, 383). Mannheim acknowledged already that the public interpretation of reality was the stake of struggles between groups in society: “[V]om Standpunkte der Gesellschaftswissenschaft ist jedes historische, weltanschauliche, soziologische Wissen [...] eingebettet und getragen vom Macht- und Geltungstrieb bestimmter konkreter Gruppen, die ihre Weltauslegung zur öffentlichen Weltauslegung machen wollen” (Mannheim [1928] 1964b, 573). The phrase and the idea were later taken up by Merton and by Bourdieu.

⁴⁰ “Et il ne s'agit pas de considérer des obstacles externes, comme la complexité et la fugacité des phénomènes, ni d'incriminer la faiblesse des sens et de l'esprit humain: c'est dans l'acte même de connaître, intimement, qu'apparaissent, par une sorte de nécessité fonctionnelle, des lenteurs et des troubles. C'est là que nous montrerons des causes de stagnation et même de régression, c'est là que nous décèlerons des causes d'inertie que nous appellerons des obstacles épistémologiques.” (Bachelard [1938] 2011, 15)

⁴¹ There is a remarkable convergence here with what Merton called the “(Kenneth) Burke theorem” (Merton 1987, 24) on “seeing as a way of not seeing” (see Chapter 2).

court, but obstacles for *better* knowledge. In other words, what is knowledge at one point can become an obstacle of knowledge at another point.

I think that we can, without doing too much violence to Bachelard's notion, translate these ideas into Halbwachs's sociological conception of the functioning of collective memory. What Bachelard calls "epistemological obstacles" might thus be reformulated in terms of the "frameworks" of collective memory: these frameworks enable members of a group to remember the past, but, at the same time, also obscure (aspects of) the past. Thus, the very way in which a past object is remembered can become an obstacle for remembering it differently and, in some cases, more accurately. We could freely transpose here Bachelard's above statement on the polemical character of knowledge into Halbwachs's terms by saying: "we remember *against* prior memories, by destroying badly formed memories, by overcoming that which, in memory itself, stands in the way of remembrance".

How does it come that memories can become an obstacle for remembering? In the above translation, instead of "memory", we might also have employed the term "reconstructions of the past". These reconstructions, according to Halbwachs, always adapt the past to a specific present. However, when the present to which reconstructions adapt the past changes, then these reconstructions become at some point obsolete. As the present moves on, former reconstructions reveal themselves as being bound to bygone interests, standpoints, concerns, struggles, etc. The established social frames of memory appear no longer adjusted to what we can know or recollect in the present. The need emerges for readapting the past to the present and for "reworking" (*remaniement*) earlier reconstructions of the past accordingly. When earlier reconstructions persist, they become obstacles for reconstructions of the past adapted to the new present.

The specific case we are interested in here is when memorial obstacles function as properly epistemological obstacles, i.e. when they are obstacles to – in some way – *better* knowledge of the past. This presupposes, of course, that there exists a peculiar scientific activity oriented towards objective knowledge of the past (not only using it for the sake of the present): what is commonly called "history" or "historical research". The latter is itself, to be sure, a particular historical and social phenomenon.⁴² In history, prior reconstructions of the past had already the intention to know that past, they were scientific historical reconstructions – prior "knowledge" in Bachelard's sense. But this does not exclude that they might become obstacles for *better*

⁴² Halbwachs said that history normally starts when tradition, i.e. a live collective memory, ends: "C'est qu'en général l'histoire ne commence qu'au point où finit la tradition, au moment où s'éteint ou se décompose la mémoire sociale." (Halbwachs [1950] 1997b, 130) For Halbwachs's conception of the relationship between collective memories and history, see especially Halbwachs [1950] 1997a, 130–42; as well as Brian 2008, 140–42.

knowledge of that past at a later point. We should not forget here that memorial obstacles are more than simply false historical accounts. They are part of a group's collective frameworks of memory. They are essentially collective and relatively stable. That means that they must be widely accepted, repeated, routinized, expressed in reference works, teaching, etc. It seems that it is precisely through becoming automatized that they develop into obstacles of better historical knowledge.⁴³ Within historical research itself, memorial obstacles can thus be understood as frameworks of the specific collective "memory of historians" (Brian 2008, 140–42)⁴⁴ that have become dysfunctional given a new present – with its peculiar interests and perspectives, but also its specific material and technical possibilities.

In sum, we can thus adapt Bachelard's vision of "epistemological obstacles" to the particular case of historical knowledge. In fact, memorial obstacles appear as the specific form that epistemological obstacles take in history or, more broadly, in historical research.⁴⁵ Memorial obstacles – at least the ones that interest me here – are specifically memorial *epistemological* obstacles, i.e. they oppose knowledge and its extension in the specific area of historical work.

Now, how can we get beyond memorial obstacles? Bachelard had suggested a sort of "psychoanalysis of objective knowledge" (*psychanalyse de la connaissance*), "of reason" (*raison*) or "of the scientific spirit" (*l'esprit scientifique*) (Bachelard [1938] 2011, 13, 22, 299–230) to analyse and overcome epistemological obstacles. But he also referred to the properly social dimension of obstacles, arguing that it was because of the polemics within the *cité savante* that epistemological obstacles appeared in couples.⁴⁶ Bourdieu, reinterpreting Bachelard for an

⁴³ Bachelard argued in this sense: "Une connaissance acquise par un effort scientifique peut elle-même décliner. La question abstraite et franche s'use: la réponse concrète reste. Dès lors, l'activité spirituelle s'invertit et se bloque. Un obstacle épistémologique s'incruste sur la connaissance non questionnée. Des habitudes intellectuelles qui furent utiles et saines peuvent, à la longue, entraver la recherche." (Bachelard [1938] 2011, 16–17)

⁴⁴ Brian distinguished as follows between "historical memory" and "memory of historians": "Il a déjà été question plus haut de la *mémoire historique*, celle des protagonistes d'événements anciens pris en considération. Voici maintenant la *mémoire des historiens* (au sens où Halbwachs parle de la mémoire des musiciens ou de la mémoire des géomètres): c'est-à-dire la mémoire de ce que les historiens appellent leur métier, ou encore s'il s'agit de la synthétiser dans l'écriture, l'historiographie." (Brian 2008, 141) Halbwachs himself spoke of the *cadres* of history: "Il ne s'agit plus de les [events, MS] revivre dans leur réalité, mais de les replacer dans les cadres dans lesquels l'histoire dispose les événements, cadres qui restent extérieurs aux groupes eux-mêmes" (Halbwachs [1950] 1997b, 137).

⁴⁵ Bourdieu and the co-authors of *Le métier de sociologue* thus said that "obstacles épistémologiques [...] se présentent sous une forme spécifique en chaque pratique scientifique" (Bourdieu et al. [1968] 2005, 25).

⁴⁶ "Il est d'ailleurs très remarquable que, d'une manière générale, les obstacles à la culture scientifique se présentent toujours par paires. C'est au point qu'on pourrait parler d'une loi psychologique de la bipolarité des erreurs. Dès qu'une difficulté se révèle importante, on peut être sûr qu'en la tournant, on butera sur un obstacle opposé. Une telle régularité dans la dialectique des erreurs ne peut venir naturellement du monde objectif. A notre avis, elle provient de l'attitude polémique de la pensée scientifique devant la cité savante. Comme dans une activité scientifique, nous devons inventer, nous devons prendre le phénomène d'un nouveau point de vue. Mais il nous faut légitimer notre invention: nous pensons alors notre phénomène en critiquant le phénomène des autres. Peu à peu, nous sommes amenés à réaliser nos objections en objets, à transformer nos critiques en lois. Nous nous acharnons à varier le phénomène dans le sens de notre opposition au savoir d'autrui. C'est naturellement surtout dans une science jeune qu'on pourra reconnaître cette originalité de mauvais aloi qui ne fait que renforcer les obstacles contraires." (Bachelard [1938] 2011, 23–24)

epistemology of the social sciences, recommended rather the “sociology of knowledge”, especially the “sociology of sociological knowledge” or the “sociology of sociology” (Bourdieu et al. [1968] 2005, 14, 95, 102), later a “social history of the social sciences” (Bourdieu 1995; [1997] 2022) as a means for dismantling the simultaneously epistemological and social obstacles in the social and human sciences. Towards the end of his career, though, Bourdieu used increasingly the term “anamnesis” (for an overview, see Duval 2020) for the operation of recalling and studying the historical and social conditions of the instruments (conceptual, theoretical, material, technical) we employ in scientific activity.

This “anamnesis” – a medical term just as Bachelard’s “*psychanalyse*” – was directed against the “amnesia” involved in routinized constructions of scientific objects and in what Bourdieu called “l’héritage scientifique collectif (problèmes, concepts, méthodes ou techniques)” (Bourdieu 1995, 3). “Anamnesis” was to play a pivotal role in Bourdieu’s reflexive-reformist conception of the history of the social sciences (see Chapter 2). It was through this operation that specific “obstacles to the progress of consciousness and of knowledge” could be surmounted.⁴⁷ By dismantling these hindrances, the social history of the social sciences could “contribute to the progress of the social sciences”.⁴⁸ The anamnestic function of the history of the social sciences was the reason why Bourdieu thought that this history was not a luxury, but an indispensable part of scientific activity in the social sciences (see also Bourdieu 2001b, 167–84).

Translated into Halbwachsian terms, an “anamnesis of memorial obstacles” would then mean to retrace the “unseen” in routinized prior reconstructions of the past: to seek to comprehend the socio-historical conditions under which these accounts emerged and how they were stabilized as frameworks of collective memory. The task would be to understand in which sense these frameworks have become effective obstacles for *better* understanding the past and to see how they can be dismantled and replaced by more accurate reconstructions. If successful, this would amount to what Bourdieu described as a “liberating anamnesis” (Bourdieu 2003b, 292; 2003a, 56): a liberation from the “unconscious”⁴⁹ – in its various forms: historical, social,

⁴⁷ “La science sociale [...] peut donc se servir de la conscience, et de la connaissance qu’elle possède de ses fonctions et de son fonctionnement, pour tenter de lever certains des obstacles au progrès de la conscience et de la connaissance.” (Bourdieu 1995, 3)

⁴⁸ “Seule l’anamnèse que permet le travail historique peut délivrer de l’amnésie de la genèse qu’implique, presque inévitablement, le rapport routinier à l’héritage, converti, pour l’essentiel, en *doxa* disciplinaire; seule, elle est en mesure de fournir à chaque chercheur les moyens de comprendre ses partis théoriques les plus fondamentaux, comme l’adhésion, le plus souvent tacite, aux thèses anthropologiques rarement énoncées qui fondent ses grands choix théoriques et méthodologiques (en matière de philosophie de l’action notamment), ou ses sympathies et ses antipathies épistémologiques pour des auteurs, des modes de pensée et des formes d’expression. Elle est l’instrument le plus indispensable, et le plus impitoyable, d’une critique des passions et des intérêts qui peuvent se cacher sous les dehors irréprochables de la méthodologie la plus rigoureuse.” (Bourdieu 1995, 3)

⁴⁹ For the use of the term “inconscient” in Bourdieu, see Muel-Dreyfus 2020.

disciplinary, national, academic, etc. – involved in our prior or present ways of reconstructing the past.

Yet, Halbwachs cautions us. Proposing an alternative to the hindering frameworks of memory cannot mean to “step out” of collective memory. Since this alternative is itself a reconstruction of the past, relying on other frameworks, it only means to change collective memory. In Halbwachs’s perspective, there is indeed no alternative memory without society. We should not imagine that we can go “beyond society”: “on n’échappe à une société qu’à condition de lui en opposer une autre” (Halbwachs [1925] 1994, 109). The alternative reconstruction opposed to the representations I called “memorial obstacles” will thus have an alternative group as its basis. But which are the groups involved in the case of the disciplinary histories we consider here?

One way of answering this question is to distinguish between practicing members of a discipline and historians or sociologists studying a discipline’s history. Practicing members have interests in reconstructing the past of the discipline that differ from those of historian or sociologists. Practitioners are interested in using the past of the discipline for present purposes – we might think here again of the paradigmatic example of Parsons’s narrative in *The Structure of Social Action*. Their concerns are mostly practical: “what can we do with the discipline’s past today?” Historians of the discipline, on the other hand, are interested in reconstructing this past for its own sake, independently of present concerns. Their concerns are mostly theoretical – “what do we know about the discipline’s past?” This division is the social basis, as we saw earlier (Chapter 2), for the opposition between “presentism” and “historicism” in the history of the social and human sciences (Stocking 1965).

The different interests of these two groups create conflicts. Practitioners’ interested reconstructions of the past can enter into contradiction with historians’ narratives. Given a certain degree of diffusion, institutionalization and stabilization, the former can become genuine memorial obstacles for an appropriate historical understanding of the discipline’s past.⁵⁰ This tension between practitioners’ and historians’ representations can then be conceived as a conflict between the practitioners’ collective memory and what we called the “historians’ memory”. The practitioners’ memory is one collective memory within the multiplicity of collective memories, reconstructing the past for the sake of the present. The historians’ memory,

⁵⁰ We might think here again of Parsons and take as an example his widely repeated “two-Durkheim narrative”, i.e. the idea that there was an early “positivist” Durkheim and a late “idealist” Durkheim (e.g. Parsons [1937] 1968, 304–7). This interpretation allowed Parsons to establish – according to his “synthetic narrative” – a convergence between the late Durkheim and Max Weber and to incorporate both into his own theory of social action (Levine 1995, 89). From the historical point of view, Parsons’s narrative seems inappropriate as Durkheim – early or late – consistently considered and presented himself as a “rationalist” (e.g. Durkheim [1894] 2007, VII; [1912] 2013, 26; [1913] 1955, 27, 29).

by contrast, is oriented towards a unique, coherent and group-independent vision of the past – at least according to Halbwachs.⁵¹ When we criticize memorial obstacles in disciplinary histories, we therefore oppose the historians’ memory to the collective memory of the members of a discipline.

The problem is, of course, that in the practice of the social and human sciences, the two roles of the practitioner and the historian often coincide in the same agents. This is a situation particular to these sciences, it seems. In the natural sciences, for instance, the division of labour between practitioners and historians of science is today better established. In any case, the confluence in the same individuals does not provide an argument for *not* distinguishing the two orientations. As Halbwachs pointed out, each individual participates at the same time in multiple collective memories (family, class, religion, profession, discipline, etc.). Moreover, much of the impression that the history of the social sciences is an “artless merger” or a “poorly thought-out hybrid” (Merton [1967] 1968, 1–2) between history and theory has arguably to do with *not* clearly separating the two perspectives. We seem well-advised to insist on the difference, at least in a first step.⁵² While I argue for overcoming certain memorial obstacles, I would not claim that historians’ memory is under all circumstances “superior” to the practitioners’ memory – a comparison in these terms makes little sense in Halbwachs’s term. But the historians’ memory definitely tends to be more accurate – under the condition that we *want* a factually appropriate account of the discipline’s past. As Bourdieu suggested, the historians’ perspective might be at some point even indispensable to make advances in the contemporary practice of a discipline.

It should then be clear why we must attend to how the history of the relationship between neo-Kantianism and sociology has been written. The interest in this peculiar research topic, produced within disciplinary reconstructions of sociology’s and philosophy’s past, is not a matter of pure erudition as an end in itself. We are not getting lost here in sterile reflexivity by turning to some esoteric sociology of the history of sociology (or philosophy). Disciplinary histories are, as we have seen, not a “luxury” (Levine 1995, 10). They are an essential part of a

⁵¹ “L’histoire est une et l’on peut dire qu’il n’y a qu’une histoire. [...] Or, un tel genre d’appréciation résulte de ce qu’il [the historian, MS] ne se place au point de vue d’aucun des groupes réels et vivants qui existent, ou même qui ont existé [...]. Tout est donc sur le même plan. Le monde historique est comme un océan où affluent toutes les histoires partielles. Il n’est pas étonnant qu’à l’origine de l’histoire, et même à toutes les époques, on ait songé à écrire tant d’histoires universelles. Telle est l’orientation naturelle de l’esprit historique.” (Halbwachs [1950] 1997b, 135–36)

⁵² I follow here Merton’s argument that an initial separation of the two tasks of history and “systematics” is the precondition for both an authentic history (a “sociological history of sociological theory”) and an authentic sociological theory (Merton [1967] 1968, 2) – which does not exclude, but facilitate later dialogue between both orientations: “The history and systematics of scientific theory can be related precisely because they are first recognized to be distinct.” (Merton [1967] 1968, 3)

discipline's identity. Accordingly, attending to the ways in which these histories have been written, is not an "extra" either. It not only gives us access to some of the discipline's core concerns at various moments in time. It also enables us to engage in an "anamnesis" of the memorial obstacles produced in these reconstructions of the past – obstacles which today hinder a better, more accurate picture of that past. In the problem-historical approach I have outlined (Chapter 2), the critique of "ill-posed problems" turned out a crucial and indispensable step for arriving at "better-posed problems". In the same sense, we must work through the obstacles presented by narratives on neo-Kantianism and sociology to get a better grasp of the problem we ultimately seek to understand: the sociologization of the *a priori*.⁵³

3. Narratives on neo-Kantianism and sociology

Towards a typology of narratives

As said, the relationship between neo-Kantianism and early European sociology – especially in Germany and France – has been discussed frequently in histories of sociology and of philosophy since at least the 1970s. To this day, the topic is present in various contexts (most recently, e.g. Wagner and Härpfer 2015; Schluchter 2015; Joly 2017; Schick, Schmidt, and Zillinger 2022). However, no coherent picture emerges from the literature on the purported relationship. Was this "influence" positive or negative? Was it relevant at all? Which were its social basis and its functions? The available narratives give us contradicting answers to these questions. They thus operate as "memorial obstacles" for a satisfying historical account of neo-Kantianism and sociology: both individually – each of them focuses on some aspects at the expense of others – and collectively – taken together, they create an incoherent overall picture. Consequently, they also obstruct a better understanding of the problem of sociologizing the *a priori*. Sociological accounts of the *a priori* appear alternatively as inspired by neo-Kantian philosophy and as directed against it.

⁵³ Besides Halbwachs and Bourdieu, the critique of "memorial obstacles" I have sketched here took also inspiration from the "critical hermeneutics" developed by French-Swiss Greek scholar Jean Bollack (1923-2012) and Hungarian-German literary scholar Peter Szondi (1929-1971). As Bourdieu described the work of his friend Bollack: "Darum ist in diesem Fall [the philosophy of the Pre-Socratics, MS], wie Jean Bollack vorschlägt, eine radikale Kritik der schlechten Interpretationen ebenso wie der Texte, die aus ihnen hervorgingen und deren Produkt wiederum sie sind, die unerläßliche Voraussetzung einer jeden Hermeneutik. J. Bollack, *Empédocle*, I, Introduction à l'ancienne physique, Paris 1965, p. 107 f." (Bourdieu 1970, 12, n. 3) Indeed, Bollack insisted against a form of naïve hermeneutics on the necessity of a historical "critique of interpretations". For example, his study on Empedocles (ca. 494-434 BC) was preceded by a study on Aristotle's (384-322 BC) interpretation of Empedocles – Aristotle's writings being the main source of our knowledge of Empedocles. This enabled Bollack then to criticize the "false problem" raised by "modern interpretations" of Empedocles (Bollack 1965, 95–124). This procedure is analogous to the one developed here.

In this situation, a first step towards clarifying the issue is to map the space of possible interpretations. Yet, when we attempt to put some tentative order into the literature on neo-Kantianism and sociology, we face several difficulties:

(1) Two disciplinary memories: First, two disciplines – sociology and philosophy – with their respective collective memories are involved in writing the history of neo-Kantianism and sociology. There is both literature written from the point of view of philosophy, by philosophers and largely for philosophers; and literature written from the point of view of sociology, by sociologists and for sociologists. These two perspectives imply different disciplinary orientations, interests, expectations and styles. Also, the object itself concerns the relationship between two disciplines. The question thus becomes: What is the place of neo-Kantianism in the collective memory of sociologists? And conversely, which is the place of sociology in the collective philosophical memory of neo-Kantianism? These two questions cannot be entirely separated from each other. In fact, it seems that different processes in philosophical and sociological memories interacted and formed a complex pattern. On the one hand, for example, there was the large-scale oblivion of neo-Kantianism in philosophy starting in the 1920s and 1930s (e.g. de Warren and Staiti 2015, 3–6) – a tendency that was only slowly reversed starting in the late 1970s. On the other hand, there was the relative neglect of socio-historical perspectives on sociology until the 1970s which accompanied a legitimatory use of references to neo-Kantianism to define positions within the sociological fields of the 1960s and 1970s. In sum, we have to navigate various disciplinary biases expressed in the literature on the topic.

(2) Two national memories: Second, the issue of neo-Kantianism and sociology involves at least two different national contexts with their respective traditions and memories. The relationship has been explored in the literature primarily for the cases of Germany and France – contexts in which observers could identify both strong neo-Kantian and strong sociological movements. But although the literature has repeatedly hinted at a parallel between Germany and France, very few works have actually explored this dimension. When we consider the issue itself and the literature that has been written on it in a transnational perspective, things immediately become more complex. We are forced to ask questions that would otherwise remain implicit. For example: Who counts as a “neo-Kantian” or as a “sociologist”? What do these labels actually mean in different national contexts and in different times? Which are the social and intellectual realities they are thought to refer to? Which relations could exist between them in these national contexts? And is it possible to generalize from these cases? These both historical and historiographical issues become more pressing in a transnational perspective – such as the one adopted here.

(3) Local vs. global narratives: Finally, accounts of neo-Kantianism and sociology have differed in the scope of their claims. There are what we might call “global” and “local” versions. Global versions concern the relationship between neo-Kantianism and sociology in general. Local versions, on the contrary, focus on the specific relationship between one or more sociologists and one or more neo-Kantian philosophers. Local versions have doubtlessly been more frequent in the literature – probably also because studies of this type are easier to conduct. Thus, much research has focused on the relationship of particular sociologists with particular neo-Kantians.

Given this complex situation, I shall tentatively distinguish five types of narratives on neo-Kantianism and sociology. I characterize them as “positive”, “negative”, “indifferent”, “ideological” and “sociological”. We encounter them today in German-speaking, French-speaking and English-speaking literature. They have arguably become part of the disciplinary memories in sociology and philosophy. As frameworks of the memory of specific groups, they have served to recollect past events in a way that made some things visible while it invisibilized others. Working through them will allow us to identify their blind spots and go eventually beyond them.

Some aspects of this typological approach still deserve attention:

(1) Narrative types: For each narrative, I provide a general characterization and give some examples from the literature. We must keep in mind, however, that the five narratives are “types”. They pick out abstract properties of accounts of neo-Kantianism and sociology. On the one hand, these properties are not mutually exclusive. This means that concrete examples can sometimes be subsumed under more than one type (e.g. the positive and the ideological narrative in the case of Rose [1981] 2009). On the other hand, my analysis will remain relatively formal. That is, I will not be able to go much into the contents of the purported relationship between sociology and neo-Kantianism – questions concerning, for instance, the definition of the domain of sociology, the transformation of the Kantian *a priori*, morals, education, politics, etc.

(2) A relational space of narratives: The five narratives I isolate are related to each other. In part, they define themselves against each other (e.g. the negative against the positive or the sociological against the ideological one). Together, they form a sort of “space of possible interpretations” of the relationship between neo-Kantianism and sociology.

(3) Historicizing narratives: In each case, I try to trace these narratives back to their historical sources, to the context of their emergence and the functions they fulfilled in this context. Significantly, in many cases, they go back to the interwar period which saw the demise of neo-Kantianism as dominant academic philosophy and the increased institutionalization of

sociology at universities in Germany and France.⁵⁴ In this way, I will seek to historicize these types of narratives – at least to some extent. We will see that they involve different sorts of memories, clearly distinguished by Halbwachs (see Brian 2008): the “collective memories” of the groups of agents (sociologists and philosophers in Germany and France) involved around 1900 in the relations between neo-Kantianism and sociology; the “historical memory” of the contemporaries who witnessed this relation; the wider “social memory” of the national societies at the time; and the “memory of historians” (of sociology and of philosophy) who – on the basis and in partial dependence of the former memories – reconstructed the relations between neo-Kantianism and sociology.⁵⁵

(4) An explanation sketch: The following analysis of reconstructions of the relationship between neo-Kantianism and sociology will basically remain an “explanation sketch” (Hempel 1942, 42) that will need further “filling out”. An arguably crucial part of what Halbwachs’s approach would suggest will be lacking, namely the investigation of what the Durkheimians called “social morphology”, i.e. the material “form” or structure of groups (their number, divisions, composition, social characteristics, etc.). With the analysis of narratives on neo-Kantianism and sociology I will basically remain on the level of what they called the “physiology of representations”.⁵⁶ I will not be able to go far in the analysis of the relation between these representations and the more general evolution of the sociological and philosophical profession. Nevertheless, given the function of this anamnestic study in the overall work, a typology might still be useful.

(1) The positive narrative

As the name already indicates, the positive narrative claims a positive relationship between neo-Kantian philosophies and early sociologies in Europe. This relation is often cashed out in various of metaphors of “influence”, “impact”, “inspiration”, “debt”, “legacy”, “heritage”,

⁵⁴ For a similar observation on the emergence of narratives on neo-Kantianism in general, see Köhnke 1986, 11.

⁵⁵ Brian carved out these different notions as follows. “Collective memories” are specific to groups at a certain time: “[I]l faudrait toujours qualifier le groupe dont il s’agit quand on emploie l’expression mémoire collective, voire même la période de temps pendant laquelle cette mémoire s’est formée, et donc écrire ‘la mémoire collective des [musiciens] (sous entendu: formée parmi eux depuis [la création des œuvres de Wagner] et jusque [vers 1939])’” (Brian 2008, 119–20). “Historical memory” designates “la mémoire des contemporains [...] la mémoire sociale aux moments des événements” (Brian 2008, 121). For “social memory”: “Halbwachs associe au mot mémoire l’adjectif social en songeant le plus souvent à la société en général et l’adjectif collectif dès qu’il s’agit d’un groupe particulier, à la manière de Durkheim lui-même.” (Brian 2008, 118) It thus means “la mémoire collective la plus vaste et la moins façonnée par l’action collective antérieure d’un groupe homogène” (Brian 2008, 119). “Historical memory” must thus be distinguished, finally, from the “memory of historians” – the collective memory of the particular group of historians: “la mémoire de ce que les historiens appellent leur métier, ou encore s’il s’agit de la synthétiser dans l’écriture, l’historiographie” (Brian 2008, 141).

⁵⁶ For this distinction, see especially Durkheim [1894] 2007, 12; Mauss 1927, 129–30; see also Brian 2012, 61–63.

“kinship”, “lineage”, etc. In quantitative terms, this positive narrative is certainly dominant⁵⁷. There is little doubt that it is the most well-known account. When the topic of neo-Kantianism and sociology comes up, the idea is usually that there was a positive unidirectional “influence” leading from neo-Kantianism to sociology (the reverse relation is rarely considered). As a result, articles today sometimes start by addressing an “evident” positive relationship between neo-Kantianism and sociology (or specific authors).⁵⁸ Thus, at least for some authors in the history of sociology and philosophy, such a relationship seems to have become a matter of course. Today, there are indeed “textbook versions” of this positive relationship that are widely diffused (e.g. Beck 1967, 473; Calhoun 2002; Schluchter 2015; Kruse [2008] 2018, 143–47).⁵⁹

As other narratives, the positive one comes in global and local varieties (see above). As prominent examples of *global* positive narratives, I already mentioned three authors:

(1) First, British Hegelian-Marxist philosopher and social theorist Gillian Rose (1947-1995) argued in her 1981 book *Hegel Contra Sociology* (Rose [1981] 2009) that what she took to be the two “founding fathers of sociology” – Weber and Durkheim – were, in spite of all their differences, actually part of the same “neo-Kantian paradigm”.⁶⁰ While she thus emphasized a

⁵⁷ This estimation relies on anecdotal evidence. I cannot provide here serious quantitative indicators. It would be possible, though, to imagine a bibliometrical study on the topic.

⁵⁸ For example: “The legacy of the Southwest German School of Neo-Kantianism seems evident.” (Wagner and Härpfer 2015, 171) Or: “Weber, as cannot be ignored, drew heavily upon conceptualizations and theoretical models which were submitted by Rickert. It is not necessary to retell this story in detail, since it belongs to the stock knowledge of sociological theory.” (Šuber 2010, 276) By contrast, Swiss sociologist Peter-Ulrich Merz-Benz (1953-) problematized already in 1990 such false evidence in the case of Weber and Rickert and argued for closer historical investigation (Merz 1990, 35–39, 51).

⁵⁹ German sociologist Wolfgang Schluchter (1938-) – an authority on the work of Max Weber – organized his *Grundlegungen der Soziologie* – a “Theoriegeschichte in systematischer Absicht” – around the opposition between Émile Durkheim – to which he attributed a “sociological Kantianism” (*soziologischer Kantianismus*) – and Max Weber – whose position he dubbed “Kantianizing sociology” (*kantianisierende Soziologie*). He emphasized the Kantian background of both authors, but especially in the area of practical philosophy: “Beide besitzen nämlich, wie zu zeigen sein wird, eine starke Beziehung zur Philosophie Kants, insbesondere zu seiner praktischen Philosophie, aber sie stellen sich zu ihr in unterschiedlicher Weise: Max Weber will sie durch eine empirische Handlungs- und Ordnungstheorie ergänzen und auch erweitern, Émile Durkheim aber durch eine empirische Moral- und Rechtssoziologie ersetzen. In ihrem Rückbezug auf Kants praktische Philosophie konvergieren die beiden Ansätze bis zu einem gewissen Grade, in der Art und Weise, wie sie Kants praktische Philosophie fortsetzen, aber divergieren sie. Ich spreche deshalb im ersten Fall von kantianisierender Soziologie, im zweiten Fall jedoch von soziologischem Kantianismus, einem Kantianismus freilich, der mit Comteschen Elementen durchmischt ist. Der große Konkurrent zu beiden aber ist der soziologische Hegelianismus.” (Schluchter 2015, 16)

⁶⁰ “Yet, the thought of Durkheim and Weber, in spite of the divergences, rests on an identical framework: ‘the neo-Kantian paradigm’. [...] The neo-Kantian paradigm is the source of both the strengths and weaknesses of Durkheim’s and of Weber’s sociology.” (Rose [1981] 2009, 1) However, Rose’s definition of the “neo-Kantian paradigm” – focussing exclusively on the issue of values and validity and the legacy of German philosopher Hermann Lotze (1817-1881) – seems too strict: “In Germany Lotze’s notions of ‘validity’ and ‘values’ became the foundation of the Marburg and Heidelberg schools of neo-Kantianism and of their sociological offspring. The ‘neo-Kantian paradigm’ refers to those who attempted a new answer to the Kantian question of validity within the framework of validity and values first developed by Lotze. Within this framework the question of validity may be given priority over the question of values, or, the question of values may be given priority over the question of validity. Hence reconsideration of Lotze is essential for comprehending the transition from Kantian epistemology to neo-Kantian sociology.” (Rose [1981] 2009, 6)

global neo-Kantian background of emerging sociology, her intention was not to subscribe to or pursue this tradition. On the contrary, she sought to retrieve a social theory inspired by German idealist philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831) precisely by surmounting the “intellectual and historical barriers” (Rose [1981] 2009, 1) put into place by the “neo-Kantian paradigm”.

(2) The second case, from the work of German sociologist Wolf Lepenies (1941-), is different. Lepenies did not so much pursue his own theoretical agenda, but rather explored the history of sociology in a transnational and interdisciplinary perspective (Lepenies 1981b; [1985] 2006c; on Lepenies’s context, see Feuerhahn 2020c, 20–21). In this perspective, it seemed to him that the “hidden unity and coherence” of emerging sociology in Germany lay in the common reference to Kant and a distinctive “transcendental orientation” (Lepenies 1983, 44; 1984, 166–67). Kant – not Hegel – appeared as the “founding father” of German sociology. In a further step, Lepenies extended this hypothesis to France by considering the links of Durkheim with French “neo-Kantians” such as Charles Renouvier (1815-1903) and Léon Brunschvicg (1869-1944). He thus arrived at the idea that Kant might have been “the founding father of European sociology in general” (Lepenies 1983, 44; 1984, 167) and that it might be Kant’s influence that distinguished European from American traditions in sociology.⁶¹

(3) Finally, already mentioned Swiss sociologist Peter-Ulrich Merz-Benz (1953-) proposed some years ago, in the context of a volume on the history of neo-Kantianism, something like a research programme on neo-Kantianism and sociology (Merz-Benz 2014).⁶² He started from specific authors, citing especially Weber – whose case he had studied in detail (Merz 1990)⁶³ – , but also Mannheim, German-British sociologist Norbert Elias (1897-1990), Austrian philosopher and sociologist Alfred Schütz (1899-1959), Durkheim, Bourdieu or Austrian Marxist philosopher and sociologist Max Adler (1873-1937) – together with their “philosophical counterparts” such as German philosophers Heinrich Rickert (1863-1936), Emil Lask (1875-1915),

⁶¹ For this whole line of reasoning: “Once we put sociology and philosophy in a common context, however, an astonishing picture begins to emerge. It becomes obvious that there is a specific epistemological perspective that gives German sociological thought a hidden unity and coherence. At the turn of the century this unity expressed itself above all in a common interest in Kantian philosophy which would, many suggested, provide a sound basis for the social sciences. In this respect, Kant and not Hegel appears as the ‘founding father’ of German sociology. (Yet another question is whether Kant, influencing Durkheim through Renouvier and Brunschvicg [sic], for example, has not been the founding father of European sociology in general. His profound and enduring influence may distinguish the European from the American tradition in the social sciences.)” (Lepenies 1984, 166–67; see also 1983, 44)

⁶² Merz-Benz drew a quite pessimistic picture of existing research: “Die Untersuchung des Verhältnisses von Soziologie und Neukantianismus als Desideratum der philosophischen Forschung zu bezeichnen ist fast noch untertrieben. In der Sache wurden bisher kaum Anstrengungen unternommen” (Merz-Benz 2014, 317).

⁶³ For a taste of Merz-Benz’s view of the Weber-Rickert relationship: “Die Werte, näherhin die Kulturwerte, sind die Möglichkeitsbedingung der Konstitution der sozialen und kulturellen Wirklichkeit, und die Werte sind auch die Möglichkeitsbedingung wirklichkeitswissenschaftlicher Begriffsbildung. Das ist der Rickertsche Kritizismus – im Gewand soziologischer Erkenntnis.” (Merz-Benz 2014, 325)

Ernst Cassirer (1874-1945) and Richard Höningwald (1875-1947), but also French philosopher Émile Boutroux (1845-1921). On this basis, he suggested an investigation into the “genesis of sociology from the philosophy of neo-Kantianism” (Merz-Benz 2014, 317).

It is noteworthy that most of the global positive narratives seem to summon the parallel between the German and the French case (e.g. already Bastide 1940) – at least in the form of a purported resemblance regarding the philosophical contexts of the two most canonical “founding fathers” of each national tradition: Weber and Durkheim. On this basis, they paint the picture of a sort of shared philosophical neo-Kantian background of emerging European sociology around 1900. In many cases, however, neither the status of the comparison nor the precise nature of the “background” are clear – not to mention the persisting “Durkheim/Weber unawareness puzzle” (Tiryakian 1966; Seidman 1977).

These global accounts are based on almost countless *local* positive narratives. The latter are presented in specific studies, articles, even books on the relationship between individual authors. Let us just name the most important cases:

(1) Quantitatively dominant in the production of positive local case studies is certainly Max Weber’s association with Rickert. Indeed, there is good evidence of both personal and intellectual links between the two authors.⁶⁴ The relation has been a topic in the literature since at least the 1970s (e.g. Bruun [1972] 2007; 2001; 2010; Burger 1976; Willey 1978, 156–70; Howe 1978; Barker 1980; Wagner and Zipprian 1985; Wagner 1987; Oakes 1988; Merz 1990; Ringer 1997, chap. 2; Massimilla 2012; Wagner and Härpfer 2015; in a critical perspective Feuerhahn 2023b, 154–62; Adair-Toteff 2023). Weber’s links to other “neo-Kantian” authors, especially in the tradition of the so-called “Marburg school”, such as Friedrich Albert Lange (1828-1875) or Rudolf Stammler (1856-1938), have remained relatively marginal (Jacobsen 1999; Adair-Toteff 2014; Härpfer and Kaden 2017).

(2) Second comes probably, in the French context, Durkheim’s relationship with French, purportedly “neo-Kantian” philosophers such as Charles Renouvier, Émile Boutroux and – Durkheim’s colleague and close personal friend – Octave Hamelin (1856-1907).⁶⁵ These

⁶⁴ Weber and Rickert – born in 1864 and 1863 respectively – attended the same *Gymnasium* in Berlin and already their parents had been in contact (Kaesler 2014, 166–69). Later, they met again in 1895 when they both started their academic careers at the University of Freiburg. There, they became close friends – together with their wives Sophie Rickert (1864-1951) and Marianne Weber (1870-1954) – the latter attending as only woman Heinrich Rickert’s philosophy lectures (Kaesler 2014, 405). Weber and Rickert exchanged on Rickert’s work on his *Grenzen der naturwissenschaftlichen Begriffsbildung*, which appeared for the first time between 1896 and 1902 (Rickert 1902a). Weber made notes on the 1902 edition (Weber [1902] 2018) and acknowledged its usefulness in postcards to his wife (Weber 2015, 822, 825–26). In the following years, he made frequent references to Rickert in his methodological writings, which he started to publish in 1903 (Weber [1922] 1988a). Later, between 1915 and 1920, the Webers and Rickerts were again in close contact in Heidelberg. For a recent account of the relationship between Weber and Rickert, see Feuerhahn 2023, 154–62.

⁶⁵ On the problematic notion of such a “French neo-Kantianism”, see below and Strauss [forthcoming] 2024.

connections are present in the literature since the early 1970s, especially since British sociologist Steven Lukes's (1941-) first serious biography of Durkheim (Lukes [1973] 1985, 54–58). At around the same time, American intellectual historian Dominick LaCapra (1939-) emphasized that Durkheim's position was best described as a sort of "Cartesianized and socialized neo-Kantianism" (LaCapra [1972] 2001, 6) – though his notion of "neo-Kantianism" remained vague. Since then, Durkheim's purportedly positive relationship with "neo-Kantian" philosophers in France has been a recurring topic in the literature (e.g. Giddens 1976; König [1976] 2013; Godlove 1986; 1989; 1996; Stedman Jones 1980; 2001; 2012; Némedi 1991; Némedi and Pickering 1995; Paoletti 2000; 2012; Schmaus 2004; Turner 2017; 2021; Garlitz 2020; Müller 2019; Schick et al. 2022).

(3) Third in positive local narratives on neo-Kantianism and sociology comes probably German philosopher and sociologist Georg Simmel (1858-1918). Simmel entertained both a relatively independent dialogue with Kant's philosophy (e.g. Simmel [1881–1901] 1999; [1896] 1992; 1897; [1899] 1992; [1904] 1997) and various relations with forms of neo-Kantianism in his time, especially with the so-called "Southwest school" of Wilhelm Windelband (1848-1915), Rickert and Lask – though he apparently also knew and appreciated works on Kant by Hermann Cohen (1842-1918), the leader of the Marburg school.⁶⁶ These links have come to the fore with the "rediscovery" of Simmel as a "classic" of sociology since about the 1980s (e.g. Simmel 1989–2016) and continue to be discussed in the literature (e.g. Orth 1991; Köhnke 1996; Vandenberghe 1996; Kim 2002; Glauser 2009; Šuber 2010; Podoksik 2016; Thouard 2017; Luft 2021; Garlitz 2021).

(4) After Simmel, a host of case studies – or at least hints at the possibility of such studies – concern a variety of sociologists, social scientists, theorists and philosophers in the German-speaking tradition. Thus, we find scattered ideas about a positive relationship with neo-Kantianism for authors such as Austrian-German lawyer and philosopher of law Georg Jellinek (1851–1911) (Spadafora 2017), Max Adler (Mozetič 1987; Pabst 1992; Möckel 1993; Bammé 2022), Hungarian Marxist philosopher Georg Lukács (1885-1971) (Rose [1981] 2009, 29–34; Karádi and Vezér [1980] 1985; Kavoulakos 2018), Karl Mannheim (Šuber 2010; Merz-Benz 2014; Barboza 2017), Norbert Elias (Maso 1992; 1995; Jitschin 2021), Alfred Schütz (Parsons and Schutz 1978; Srubar 1988; Merz-Benz 2014), authors in the tradition of "Critical Theory" such as philosophers and sociologists Max Horkheimer (1895-1973), Theodor W. Adorno

⁶⁶ It was Simmel who, in his lectures in Berlin, pointed Cassirer – at the time one of his students – to the works of Cohen (Gawronsky 1949, 5–6).

(1903-1969) or Alfred Sohn-Rethel (1899-1990) (Rose [1981] 2009, 26–39; Voller 2022, 175–95, 315–51), up to Jürgen Habermas (1929-) (Pabst 1992).

(5) Finally, there are also local observations concerning social scientists in the French tradition and their relations with “French neo-Kantianism” or, at least, the French reception of Kant. Considered were here in the first place authors belonging to the Durkheimian group: sociologists Marcel Mauss (1872-1950) (Carrithers et al. 1985; Allen 2000; Turner 2021; Schick et al. 2022; Pina-Cabral 2021) and Maurice Halbwachs (Jaisson 1999; Marcel 2007; 2020; Hirsch 2012; 2015) or philosopher and ethnologist Lucien Lévy-Bruhl (1857-1939) (Gurvitch 1939; Bastide 1940; Keck 2008; 2010), but also the lesser-known apostate Durkheimian sociologist Gaston Richard (1860-1945) (Rol 2015; Joly 2017, 76–106; Papilloud and Rol 2019).

Rather than going into the details of these individual cases, I would like to give an idea of the historical sources of these positive narratives. Where do they actually come from? These later “reconstructions” – in Halbwachs’s sense – have their origins in discussions among the historical agents themselves. The topic of the connection between neo-Kantianism and sociology was already part of the “historical memory” of contemporaries. Let us only consider the two most prominent and canonical cases used as illustrations for a positive relationship: Max Weber and Émile Durkheim.

(1) In the case of Weber, there was already genuine controversy among his contemporaries whether he should count as a philosopher, and more particularly a neo-Kantian philosopher, or not (partially retraced in Merz 1990; Adair-Totef 2002; Joly 2017, 187–95). Weber’s colleague and friend, Protestant theologian and historian of religion Ernst Troeltsch (1865-1923) called Weber in 1921 – shortly after the latter’s untimely death – “the third main protagonist” of Southwest neo-Kantianism (Troeltsch 1921, 415).⁶⁷ Yet, Rickert himself contested this description in 1921 in the third and fourth edition of his *Grenzen der naturwissenschaftlichen Begriffsbildung*, which he dedicated to the memory of Weber. He argued – against Troeltsch – that Weber was not a philosopher – at least not in a professional sense – and certainly not the “third leader” of Southwest neo-Kantianism.⁶⁸ At the same time, Rickert seized the opportunity

⁶⁷ The original passage in Troeltsch went as follows: “Die dritte Hauptfigur der Schule ist *Max Weber*, einer der mächtigsten deutschen Menschen und der umfassendsten, zugleich methodisch strengsten Gelehrten des Zeitalters. [...] Diese [his philosophical foundations, MS] gewann er in einem engen Anschluß an den Neukantianismus und vor allem an die Rickertsche Geschichtslogik, womit der Marxistische Zwang des Materialismus beseitigt und die ‘materialistische’ Methode rein zu dem Problem des Verhältnisses zwischen dem dominierenden ökonomisch-soziologischen und den übrigen Elementen der Kultur wurde. (Troeltsch 1921, 415) At the same time, Troeltsch emphasized that Weber had gone in several respects beyond Rickert’s position.

⁶⁸ “Man sollte Weber nicht einen Philosophen nennen, falls man ihn wissenschaftlich charakterisieren will. Das Wort paßt auf ihn nur in sehr vagem Sinne. Er selbst hat wissenschaftlich philosophisch arbeiten nicht gewollt, wie er oft hervorhob. Vollends wird man der Bedeutung des einzigen Mannes nicht gerecht, wo man ihn, wie selbst Troeltsch es tut, zu den ‘Neukantianern’ zählt, oder gar neben Windelband und mir als ‘die dritte

to place Weber in a certain dependence of his own philosophy, emphasizing that, over time, he had convinced Weber of his methodological views on history (Rickert [1921] 2007, XXIII–XXVI). Against this, German philosopher and psychologist Karl Jaspers (1883–1969) again reclaimed Weber as a “philosopher” (Jaspers 1921; 1932; 1958), and even as an “existential philosopher” (Jaspers 1989, 9).⁶⁹

Finally, Rickert’s student Alexander von Schelting (1894–1963) published, based on his 1922 dissertation, a widely read account of Weber’s methodological writings where he emphasized again the proximity with Rickert (Schelting 1922; 1934). Schelting’s account then had a traceable impact on Parsons’s later canonical interpretation of Weber and beyond (e.g. Parsons [1927] 2019; 1936; Stark 1958, ix–x, 104–5; for a critique, see Adair-Totef 2023, 137–38). What is more, Weber’s positive relationship with Southwest neo-Kantianism appeared around the same time in a canonical form in an influential reference work on the history of 19th century German philosophy (Oesterreich [1916] 1923b, 463; see also Feuerhahn 2023b, 65).

Thus, the debate whether Weber was a “neo-Kantian” or “influenced by neo-Kantianism” – and in which sense – was part of the immediate vivid debates on Weber’s heritage in Germany in the 1920s (e.g. Schlossberger 2010). We should therefore take precautions when we continue narratives on this topic and avoid reproducing an unchecked “dogma” (Adair-Totef 2023; similarly Feuerhahn 2005, 20; see also 2023b, 14–18 for later symbolic struggles on Weber’s methodological writings).

(2) The case of Durkheim is a little different but leads also back to the aftermath of his death in 1917. The first framings of Durkheim as a “Kantian” go back to obituaries and texts written in homage to Durkheim in the wake of the First World War.⁷⁰ One of the first to emphasize Durkheim’s debt to Renouvier, Boutroux and Hamelin was Durkheimian philosopher and sociologist Georges Davy (1883–1976) in a 1919 presentation of Durkheim’s life and work (Davy 1919, 186).⁷¹ In 1930, in texts dedicated to Durkheim’s memory in the revue *Europe* (Bouglé

Hauptfigur’ der südwestdeutschen ‘Schule’ bezeichnet. Wir könnten stolz darauf sein, wenn das richtig wäre, aber Weber gehörte wissenschaftlich, um mit Goethe zu reden, zu keiner Innung.” (Rickert [1921] 2007, XXIII–XXVI)

⁶⁹ The Rickert-Jaspers controversy is reconstructed – though omitting Troeltsch – by Adair-Totef 2002.

⁷⁰ There is especially one important instance of Durkheim himself acknowledging publicly his debt to Renouvier. In the controversy with the Belgian neo-Thomist priest and politician Simon Deploige (1868–1927), Durkheim defended himself against (partly anti-Semitic) suspicions of being an imitator of German social sciences by emphasizing the influence of Comte, Renouvier and other Frenchmen. In 1913, he thus wrote in *L’Année sociologique*: “Et l’influence comtiste avait été précédée d’ailleurs par celle du néo-criticisme: c’est de Renouvier que nous est venu l’axiome: un tout n’est pas égal à la somme de ses parties, et c’est cet axiome qui est à la base de ce que M. Deploige appelle notre réalisme social.” (Durkheim 1975b, 405) This quotation, however, turns out to be a false attribution to Renouvier (Fedi 2018, 279–80).

⁷¹ “Renouvier [...] qu’il lut pour la première fois dans le même temps [between 1879 and 1882 at École Normale Supérieure, MS], enthousiasma Durkheim et le marqua d’une empreinte qui ne devait jamais s’effacer. Son Renouvierisme fut d’ailleurs entretenu plus tard et accentué encore quand il connut à Bordeaux cet autre

et al. 1930), Durkheimian sociologist Célestin Bouglé (1870-1940) and Marxist philosopher René Maublanc (1891-1960) went in a similar direction (Bouglé 1930; Maublanc 1930). Bouglé suggested that “le Durkheimianisme, c’est encore du Kantisme, revu et complété par du Comtisme” (Bouglé 1930, 283).⁷² And Maublanc remembered an encounter with Durkheim in which the latter described how Renouvier had served in his youth as his “educator”.⁷³

Significantly, these positive accounts were mostly produced by a specific sub-group of Durkheimians, namely the “university teachers” who remained relatively close to academic philosophy – including Bouglé, Paul Lapie (1869-1927), Dominique Parodi (1870-1955) and later Davy. They were opposed to the Durkheimian “research scholars” – including Mauss, Halbwachs, François Simiand (1873-1935) or Marcel Granet (1884-1940) – who, apparently, were much less interested in defining Durkheim’s philosophical creed (for this opposition, see Heilbron 1985, 213; 2015, 100).⁷⁴ As in the case of Weber, we observe in this period symbolic struggles on categorizing Durkheim. Was he, philosophically speaking, a “positivist”, a “materialist”, an “empiricist”, a “spiritualist” (perhaps even a “hyper-spiritualist”), a “rationalist”, a “Kantian”, a “Renouvierist”, or still something else? (e.g. Bouglé [1924] 2010; 1925) The social context of these struggles was the decline of Durkheimianism in the inter-war period after the drastic weakening of the Durkheimian group through the First World War and the increasing

Renouvieriste, Hamelin, qui devait être pour lui un si grand ami. [...] Renouvier et Comte également positifs, furent beaucoup plus que Kant dont il se défiait, les maîtres de la pensée de Durkheim.” (Davy 1919, 186)

⁷² Actually, Bouglé did not fully subscribe to this view. His full statement went as follows: “Quand nous envisageons ensemble les résultats de l’entreprise, j’étais frappé de la place que réservait Durkheim aux préoccupations morales. Ne dit-il pas quelque part que la sociologie ne vaudrait pas une heure de peine si elle ne contribuait pas à rendre l’équilibre à nos sociétés? On a risqué ce mot: le Durkheimianisme, c’est encore du Kantisme, revu et complété par du Comtisme. Il y a une part de vérité dans cette plaisanterie. Durkheim ne refuse nullement, comme Kant, de chercher les ‘racines de la noble tige’ qu’est le devoir. Il la cherche, en disciple de Comte souvent plus fidèle que le maître à l’esprit positif, dans les faits sociaux. Mais il ne lui vient pas à la pensée qu’après cette explication génétique on puisse considérer le devoir comme une apparence, un fantôme, un épiphénomène. Lui qui ne pouvait – déclarait-il un jour à l’un de nos collègues – s’accorder un plaisir sans une sorte de remords, l’obligation est toujours présente à son âme comme elle est inscrite dans l’institution sociale. Et il ne conçoit pas plus la société sans la conscience que la conscience sans la société.” (Bouglé 1930, 283–84) Of this, Lukes retained only the passage on Durkheimianism as a form of Kantianism revised with Comtism (Lukes [1973] 1985, 54, n. 48) – making Bouglé’s statement arguably stronger than it was initially intended.

⁷³ “Ce n’est pas, malgré les apparences, à Comte que s’apparente le plus Durkheim, mais à l’autre grand philosophe français du XIX^e siècle, à Renouvier. [Paragraph] La première fois que je vis Durkheim en privé, il me dit: ‘Si vous voulez mûrir votre pensée, attachez-vous à l’étude scrupuleuse d’un grand maître, démontez un système dans ses rouages les plus secrets. C’est ce que j’ai fait, et mon éducateur fut Renouvier.’” (Maublanc 1930, 299) In another context, Maublanc said that Durkheim “fit son éducation philosophique en étudiant à fond le néo-criticisme de Renouvier” (Maublanc [1934] 2011, 35, n. 90). And: “C’est qu’on ne saurait trop marquer combien DURKHEIM reste sous l’influence de KANT: influence tantôt directe, comme on le voit dans sa morale, tantôt indirecte, par l’intermédiaire de RENOUVIER.” (Maublanc [1934] 2011, 35) On the context of Maublanc’s 1934 lecture on Durkheim and Marx, see Gouarné 2011a; 2011b.

⁷⁴ The “research scholars” were more interested in pursuing Durkheim’s work – even the parts closest to philosophy, such as Durkheim’s sociological account of the categories of thought – in an empirical direction. See, for example, Mauss’s attempt to find a place for this type of studies within the general organization of sociology (Mauss 1927, 106–7, 120–24).

polarization between “university teachers” and “researchers”. But it involved also the Marxist critiques of Durkheimian sociology that emerged at the time in the writings of a new generation of intellectuals (see Sirinelli 1988) coming of age after the First World War (e.g. Nizan [1932] 2012, see below). In any case, it was the accounts of the “university teachers” that Lukes used in his seminal biography of Durkheim for illustrating Durkheim’s connection with “neo-Kantians” (Lukes [1973] 1985, 54). The picture of Durkheim’s positive relation with some form of “neo-Kantianism” thus became authoritative and set the tone for later research – for example, in the important work of British scholar Susan Stedman Jones on Durkheim and Renouvier (Stedman Jones 2001) or in recent interest for the Durkheimian “category project” (Schick et al. 2022).

We should note here also that claims of a positive relationship between neo-Kantianism and sociology do not necessarily imply a positive evaluation of this relationship. Reconsider the already mentioned case of Rose’s *Hegel Contra Sociology* (1981). Attributing to early sociology a “neo-Kantian paradigm” was for her the starting point for opposing a Hegelian-Marxist social theory to “neo-Kantian sociology”. It served the purpose of legitimating a break with “classical sociology” in the name of Hegel. The positive narrative can thus come with positive or negative attitudes regarding the purported positive relationship between neo-Kantianism and sociology (for further such cases, see below).

Finally, the idea of a positive relationship between neo-Kantianism (or Kantianism *tout court*) and sociology has also been used for various purposes quite independently of the historical issue whether there was in fact such a connection. We can consider here two cases from the 1950s to the 1970s, one in the German, the other in the French context. Both involve the relationship with Marxism and thus, indirectly, issues of political orientation:

(1) First, German sociologist Helmut Schelsky (1912-1984) – one of the most important figures in German post-war sociology, head of the politically conservative “Münster school” (Moebius 2015; 2018; Moebius and Fischer 2019; see also Feuerhahn 2023b, 16), and with a record of political engagement in favour of National Socialism during the war – promoted in his important 1959 book *Ortsbestimmungen der deutschen Soziologie* a “transcendental theory of society” (Schelsky 1959b, 93–109; see also Gerhardt 1979). Without mentioning “neo-Kantianism”, he portrayed this theory as following directly the footsteps of Kant and the way he had defined “transcendental” (Schelsky 1959b, 95). Schelsky’s “transcendental theory” should investigate the basic categories that were presupposed – as quasi-transcendental conditions – in

empirical research, sociological theory and social philosophy – categories such as “role”⁷⁵, “alienation” or “integration”.⁷⁶ It would thus also define – against excessive *Wissenssoziologie* (Schelsky 1959b, 96–97) – the “limits” of “the social” and of sociology. For this, it would have to start from “outside” sociology, i.e. precisely from the “freedom of man from society” (Schelsky 1959b, 96, 99, 106–7).⁷⁷

It was quite transparent what Schelsky “did” with this use of Kant in the context of German post-war sociology (see also Wöhrle 2019, 251–53). On the one hand, he sought to redefine “critical theory” – a label used by proponents of the Marxist “Frankfurt school” since the 1930s (Horkheimer 1937) – in a transcendental and apolitical sense.⁷⁸ He thus opposed “social philosophy”, especially of the Marxist type. On the other hand, he devised a theory of society that would, in a certain sense, precede and provide the foundations for both empirical social research and general sociological theory – a combination that was epitomized at the time in Germany by René König (1906–1992) and his “Cologne school”.⁷⁹ Schelsky thus claimed for his vision of

⁷⁵ German-British sociologist Ralf Dahrendorf’s (1929–2009) influential book on role theory *Homo sociologicus* – including its allusions to Kant (Dahrendorf [1958] 2006, 85–101) – served Schelsky as an example (Schelsky 1959b, 107, 108).

⁷⁶ “Selbstverständlich geht es hier nicht um das Thema einer ‘Apriori-Philosophie’, sondern der Begriff ‘transzendental’ soll nur das Verhältnis dieser ‘Theorie’ zur empirischen Analyse als Einzelforschung und als System der allgemeinen Soziologie anzeigen: Diese ‘transzendente Theorie’ überschreitet beide, *setzt aber beide insofern voraus*, als sie die ‘Bedingungen’ dieses soziologischen Denkens und des in ihm Gedachten zu erörtern hat. Ihre formale und ihre materielle Aufgabe – auch diese Theorie hat diese zwei Seiten – bestehen also darin, *Sinn und Grenzen des Sozialen und des soziologischen Denkens zu bestimmen*.” (Schelsky 1959b, 95–96)

⁷⁷ “Ihren transzendentalen Standpunkt, ihre Freiheit von der Soziologie, kann die formale Theorie des soziologischen Denkens nur gewinnen, wenn diese reflexionsformale Transzendenz zugleich materiell wird, d. h. wenn in ihr *die Freiheit des Menschen von der Gesellschaft* zum materiellen Thema der Theorie selbst wird.” (Schelsky 1959b, 98–99) Schelsky – who had written his dissertation on German idealist philosopher Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762–1814) – employed here a Fichtean reasoning (Schelsky 1959b, 97).

⁷⁸ “Was bleibt als eine legitime soziologisch-theoretische Aufgabe übrig, wenn wir aus den sozialphilosophischen Systemen die phänomenologische, die experimentell empirische und die systematische analytische Aufgabe als soziologische Teildisziplinen eigener Art herausgelöst haben? Es bleibt, wie ich meine, die Aufgabe einer ‘kritischen Theorie des Sozialen’; dabei ist ‘Kritik’ eben nicht im Sinne der Kultur- und Zeitkritik zu verstehen, die in Wirklichkeit meist teilstückhafte materielle Analyse verbunden mit Wertungssubjektivismen ist, sondern wir fassen ‘kritisch’ im Sinne der ‘Kritiken’ Kants auf, die die Bedingungen eines Denkens und einer Wirklichkeit zur kritischen Reflexion stellten. [...] Allerdings ist der Begriff der ‘kritischen’ Theorie heute vieldeutig und durch die Zeitkritik, Kulturkritik, Sozialkritik usw. in einem Maße inflationiert oder sogar mit ihr verschmolzen, daß uns zweckmäßig erscheint, um die hier gemeinte Aufgabe klarer herauszustellen, einen anderen Begriff dafür zu wählen. Ich möchte daher hier die Formel einer ‘transzendentalen Theorie der Gesellschaft’ wagen, weil mir in diesem Begriff die Aufgabe der ‘kritischen’ Theorie heute noch eindeutiger und ungestörter von Mißverständnissen bewahrt zu sein scheint als in der Vieldeutigkeit der soziologischen und sozialen ‘Kritiken’.” (Schelsky 1959b, 94–95)

⁷⁹ Schelsky’s depiction of a “transcendental theory of society” started indeed from a critique of König’s distinction between “theories of society” – general, philosophically oriented sociological systems that König thought had become obsolete – and “sociological theory” – to be pursued, according to König, in dialogue with empirical social research and independently of philosophy: “Indem daher König mit Recht die wissenschaftliche Emanzipation der analytischen Theorie der allgemeinen Soziologie aus dieser Art universaler Systeme als einen wissenschaftlichen Fortschritt ansieht, hätte er doch fragen müssen, was in dieser Dekomposition der synthetisch-universalen Systeme nun als deren Funktion und als Aufgabe einer ‘Theorie der Gesellschaft’ verbleibt.” (Schelsky 1959b, 94) Schelsky thought that his “transcendental theory of society” provided the answer. Schelsky was also opposed to König in what has been called the “civil war” in (West) German

sociology a dominant, indeed a “necessary” role.⁸⁰ Dissatisfied with the politicization of sociology after 1968, Schelsky should turn this approach into outright “anti-sociology” (Schelsky 1981; see also Moebius 2021a, XIV–XV; Merz-Benz and Wagner 2001) – the unexpected outcome of the notion of a positive relationship between (neo-)Kantianism and sociology.

(2) The second case concerns symbolic struggles on Max Weber’s connection with neo-Kantianism in French sociology in the 1960s. The main importer of Weber’s work since the 1930s had been Aron with his *Sociologie allemande contemporaine* (Aron [1935] 2007), his two theses on German theories of history (Aron [1938] 1991; [1938] 2018) – with a strong presence of authors connected to “Southwest neo-Kantianism”, such as Wilhem Dilthey (1833–1911), Rickert, Simmel and Weber – and his later publications on the history of sociology (Aron [1967] 2014).⁸¹ Aron – who did his doctoral dissertations with Brunschvicg and Bouglé and acknowledged the importance of the Kantian tradition in his education (Aron 1983, 36–39, 51–53, 67–68, 111–14) – presented a version of Weber that was close to Southwest neo-Kantianism, especially Rickert (Aron [1935] 2007, 82–86).⁸²

This “Kantianized Weber” was later criticized by Aron’s one-time doctoral student, assistant at the Sorbonne and effective director of the Centre de sociologie européenne (Duval et al. 2022), Pierre Bourdieu. As early as 1967, Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron (1930–) drew attention to the Kantian orientation of Aron’s interpretation of Weber.⁸³ In the early 1970s, after his violent break with Aron in the context of May 1968 (Joly 2015), Bourdieu then opposed to Aron his own reading of Weber’s sociology of religion (Bourdieu 1971c; 1971a). This reading emphasized much more the convergence of Weber with Marx and Durkheim than with the Kantian tradition. In Bourdieu’s own later terms, his reading was about removing from Weber’s work “the neo-Kantian covering” implemented through Aron.⁸⁴ Interestingly, however,

sociology – a conflict concerning the reorganization of the profession after the war and issuing in the “positivism dispute” (*Positivismusstreit*) of the 1960s (for an overview, see Moebius 2021b, 70–75).

⁸⁰ “Die Denkvoraussetzungen der Soziologie wissenschaftlich zu reflektieren und zu begründen, ist nicht nur ein legitimes wissenschaftliches Anliegen, sondern eine notwendige wissenschaftliche Aufgabe.” (Schelsky 1959b, 97)

⁸¹ On Aron’s role as an importer of German sociology (and philosophy), see e.g. Pollak 1986; 1988; Canguilhem [1989] 1992; Paugam and Schultheis 2007.

⁸² For example: “Max Weber s’est toujours donné pour le disciple de Rickert en ce qui concerne la logique de la science. Nous voudrions indiquer ce que Weber doit à Rickert et ce qu’il a fait des thèmes empruntés.” (Aron [1935] 2007, 82)

⁸³ “Thus, in Raymond Aron’s *Introduction à la philosophie de l’histoire* (‘Introduction to the Philosophy of History’), although it claimed to be a critical philosophy of history and, through Weber and Rickert, linked itself to Kantian rationalism, readers of the period, sometimes readers least likely to be confused, found a mine of dramatically existentialist queries on the conflict of values or the ambiguities of political commitment.” (Bourdieu and Passeron 1967, 173)

⁸⁴ Bourdieu defined the task as “l’œuvre de Weber devant être en outre repensée à neuf, en vue de la dégager du revêtement néo-kantien dont l’avait recouverte Aron, son introducteur en France” (Bourdieu 2004, 95). He also called his own reading of Weber “une lecture en rupture avec la réduction néo-kantienne qu’avait opérée Aron” (Bourdieu 2001b, 199). In an interview in March 2001, Bourdieu said that Aron “mutilait Weber et donnait un

Bourdieu argued at the same time for a symbolic rapprochement between the Durkheimian and the neo-Kantian tradition – especially of the Marburg variety (mostly ignored by Aron) – through references to Cassirer and art historian Erwin Panofsky (1892-1968) (e.g. Bourdieu 1970; 1971a, 295–96; 1977). By “de-Kantianizing” Weber and “re-Kantianizing” Durkheim – two authors Aron had pitted against each other, with a clear preference for Weber –, Bourdieu bolstered his own synthesis of Marx, Weber and Durkheim – a synthesis which he imagined as providing a unified “sociological meta-science” or “theory of sociological knowledge” (Bourdieu 1968, 681–82).

In sum, we see that narratives about a positive relationship between neo-Kantianism and sociology – from their onset in the 1920s up to the present day – have played an important role in symbolic struggles concerning the reconstruction of sociology’s past and its relation with philosophy in particular. On the one hand, they have served as a means in fights about the cognitive and social identity of sociology (for these notions, see Lepenies 1981a); on the other hand, they have been the very battlegrounds on which these conflicts have been fought. Any perspective striving for an accurate socio-historical account of neo-Kantianism and sociology will have take the social uses and functions of these narratives into account.

(2) The negative narrative

The negative narrative claims the opposite of the positive narrative: there was a negative relationship between sociology and neo-Kantianism. This does not mean, however, that there was *no* relationship – the latter view would rather amount to the indifferent narrative below. The negative narrative suggests that sociology emerged precisely by defining itself negatively *against* neo-Kantianism. The idea is that there was a fundamental “break” – a sort of “revolution” – between neo-Kantian philosophies and sociology. This break is thought to have been constitutive of sociology’s disciplinary identity. Quantitatively, the negative narrative is clearly less frequent than the positive one. While it shares with the latter an insistence on the importance of neo-Kantianism – be it in a positive or negative sense –, it can sometimes also blur into the (more common) indifferent narrative, especially when the picture of a negative dependence of sociology on neo-Kantianism morphs slowly into one of sociology’s independent emergence. The boundary is where indifferent narratives emphasize that sociology emerged *independently* of philosophy (e.g. drawing on statistics, economics, law, early forms of empirical social research) rather than *against* it (see below).

Max Weber kantianisé, c’était normal, il était élève de Brunschvicg, il a donné un Weber démarxisé, kantisé” (Bourdieu 2001a, around 38:00).

The negative narrative has recently gained some ground, especially in France, through the debates on French sociologist Marc Joly's (1976-) book *La révolution sociologique* (Joly 2017) and its sequels (Joly 2018; [2018] 2022; 2020). In this book, Joly claimed that a fundamental revolution in the order of knowledge occurred in the 19th century, especially in France and Germany, and was completed with the emergence of sociology around 1900. This new "conceptual regime of the social and human sciences" replaced a previous regime in which philosophy held the top position. It provoked a "crisis of philosophy" – more specifically a "sociological crisis of philosophical thought" (Joly 2017, 408) – where the latter found itself in a reactive position vis-à-vis the natural and the social science. Neo-Kantian philosophy was in this situation little more than a "professional ideology" (Joly 2017, 477) reflecting the decline in the status of philosophy and the desperate resistance to the new regime of the social sciences.⁸⁵ On the basis of this overall narrative, Joly established a sort of ranking of sociologists and philosophers, depending on whether they adopted the new regime or resisted to it. The prototype of a sociologist who went to the end of the sociological revolution was for Joly Norbert Elias, joined by Durkheim and Tönnies before him and Bourdieu after him. The other authors discussed were situated either at the pole of reaction – e.g. Simmel, Bergson, Raoul de la Grasserie (1839-1914) and virtually all professional philosophers, from Heidegger to Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1953) and Georges Canguilhem (1904-1995) – or in between – e.g. Weber, Tarde, Richard, Lapie, Georges Palante (1862-1925).⁸⁶

Joly built the main claim of his book on British Eliasian sociologist Richard Kilminster's (1942-) book of the same title, *The Sociological Revolution* (Kilminster 1998). In this book, as in other of Kilminster's works (Kilminster 1989; 2007), "neo-Kantianism" (and the Kantian tradition, more generally) played a major role as a negative foil for sociology – or at least for the authentic type of "post-philosophical sociology" promoted by Elias (Kilminster 2007). Starting from a positive relationship between neo-Kantianism and sociology as a sort of evidence,⁸⁷ Kilminster spoke indeed of a certain type of "transcendental sociology" (Kilminster 1989), "Kantian sociology" (Kilminster 1998, 40) or "neo-Kantian sociologies" (Kilminster 1998, 28). Importantly, Kilminster subscribed here to Rose's sweeping claims about the "neo-Kantian paradigm" of sociology (Rose [1981] 2009). Yet, while he shared her analysis, he did not agree with her solution of "returning to Hegel" (Kilminster 1998, 31). Instead, Kilminster presented Elias as one of the very few sociologists – besides perhaps George Herbert Mead

⁸⁵ Joly called neo-Kantianism "une offensive de restauration de la prééminence de la philosophie comme enquête, autonome vis-à-vis des sciences spécialisées" (Joly 2017, 233).

⁸⁶ For an extensive discussion of Joly's book, I permit myself to refer to Strauss 2021, 542–60.

⁸⁷ "That most of the classical sociology of the early twentieth century (Weber, Simmel, Durkheim) was founded on a neo-Kantian philosophical paradigm is well known." (Kilminster 1998, 28)

(1863-1931), Vilfredo Pareto (1848-1923), Herbert Spencer (1820-1903) or Harold Garfinkel (1917-2011) – who have effectively escaped “the neo-Kantian paradigm” (Kilminster 1998, 40).⁸⁸ Almost all other traditions in sociology – “Durkheim, Simmel, Weber, ethnomethodology, Schutzian social phenomenology, theorizing, critical theory and Althusserian Marxism” (Kilminster 1998, 57), not to forget Parsons (Kilminster 1989) – remained under the sway of some form of Kantian transcendental philosophy.⁸⁹

The historical sources of this specific negative narrative are not difficult to locate. They lead back to a debate in the 1990s on the relationship of Norbert Elias with neo-Kantianism, especially with his *Doktorvater*, Austrian-German neo-Kantian philosopher Richard Höningwald, but also with the work of Ernst Cassirer. This vivid debate started with Dutch sociologist Benjo Maso (1944-) coming forward in 1992 with an article emphasizing the positive debt of Elias’s theory of the “process of civilization” regarding the neo-Kantian tradition (Maso 1992; 1995). This article was fiercely criticized by Kilminster himself and Dutch sociologist Cas Wouters (1943-) (Kilminster and Wouters 1994; 1995). It was also critically reviewed by the close collaborator of Elias, Dutch sociologist Johan Goudsblom (1932-2020) (Goudsblom 1995).

This controversy, in turn, relied on Elias’s own accounts of his relationship with Höningwald, the Kantian tradition and philosophy in general (Elias [1984] 1990; Elias and Heilbron 2014). According to Elias’s testimony (Elias [1984] 1990; Elias and Heilbron 2014, 12), it was precisely the question of the Kantian *a priori* that led to a conflict with Höningwald. The latter apparently obliged Elias to scratch passages critical of the Kantian *a priori* and the notion of validity (as opposed to genesis) from his dissertation (Elias [1924] 2002). Höningwald might thus have contributed to blocking Elias’s graduation process for one and a half years, between July 1922 and January 1924 (Maso 1995, 47; Rosemann 1995; Blomert 2002, 175–76). Elias’s own later account of the episode seems to contain – compared to the historical record – a fair amount of self-stylization (Jitschin 2021, 184–96). Still, this negative experience was involved in Elias’s turn from philosophy to sociology and in the way he later reconstructed his transition. In his works, Elias regularly came back to a general critique of philosophy and especially of philosophy of the Kantian transcendental type (e.g. Elias 1984b; [1990] 2001). The negative

⁸⁸ “In fact, for Elias, neo-Kantian metacritique constituted a *point of departure* for the development of his sociological outlook [...]. This suggests the possibility not of a Hegelian sociology to replace the dominant Kantian sociologies [against Rose, MS], but a sociological framework which goes beyond *both* of them. Indeed, it is my argument that this constitutes the profound burden of the sociological tradition.” (Kilminster 1998, 40)

⁸⁹ A structurally similar case which builds on Rose’s idea of a “neo-Kantian paradigm” is German sociologist Fabian Beer’s recent argument for surmounting the neo-Kantian “representationalist” presuppositions of the sociology of knowledge tradition by following the critiques of American pragmatist philosopher Richard Rorty (1931-2007) (Beer 2022; for references to Rose, see 63, 85–88). I thank Fabian Berr for illuminating discussions on this subject.

narrative as presented by Kilminster and Joly thus goes back – at least in part – to Elias’s personal relationship with academic philosophy, epitomized at the time by Hönigswald, to questions about the relationship of Elias’s work with Kantian epistemology and to the accounts Elias himself gave of these issues.⁹⁰

However, the dependence of these negative narratives on Rose’s account of the “neo-Kantian paradigm” of sociology leads us to still other historical sources, related to the ideological narratives discussed below. For, as we have seen, Rose’s line of reasoning is less inspired by Elias than by a certain form of Hegelian social theory. Her strategy was to depict “classical sociology” as essentially neo-Kantian, point to the dead ends of this “paradigm” and recommend as an alternative a purportedly more adequate non-neo-Kantian Hegelian perspective. We shall encounter a similar tactic in ideological narratives where the non-neo-Kantian alternative will be Marxist socio-economic theory.

Finally, we should note that local and global versions are particularly indistinct in the case of the negative narrative. This has to do with the fact that the adversary – “neo-Kantianism” – remains here particularly ill-defined – at least in the works of Rose, Kilminster and Joly. Reflections on the various meanings and uses of the label in different historical and historiographical contexts are largely missing. The ambition to defend a particular theoretical vision of the social world and the sciences studying it – visions connected in Rose’s case to Hegel, in Kilminster and Joly’s case to Elias, in Beer’s case to Rorty – overrules the strictly historical interest of obtaining, first of all, an accurate picture of the interrelations of emerging sociology with philosophy. The result is a sort of straw man version of “neo-Kantianism” which does not withstand historical scrutiny.⁹¹

Nevertheless, there are indeed some scattered local negative narratives – mostly by historically oriented scholars who contradict, based on their specialized studies, the more common positive narratives. Thus, we find, for example, authors shedding serious doubt on the positive relationship between Durkheim and French neo-Kantians (e.g. Fedi 2018, 277–80). As the following indifferent narratives, these local negative accounts can usefully contribute to refining our conception of the effective relations between sociology and neo-Kantianism.

⁹⁰ Hönigswald became in 1933 the victim of an openly anti-neo-Kantian and disguisedly anti-Semitic diffamation letter by Heidegger, leading to Hönigswald’s dismissal from his chair in Munich (Brinnich 2015; see also Cassirer [1948] 2003, 293). In 1938, Hönigswald was detained in KZ Dachau before emigrating to the United States where he died in 1947 (Wolandt 1972).

⁹¹ For an elaboration of this criticism regarding Joly, see again Strauss 2021, 542–60.

(3) *The indifferent narrative*

The indifferent narrative says roughly that there was no significant or otherwise important relationship between neo-Kantianism and sociology. Neo-Kantianism simply did not make much difference for sociology in the phase of its emergence or later on. This vision is – after the positive narrative – perhaps the most current one today. It is, on the one hand, the narrative of those who think – mostly for historical or historiographical reasons – that neo-Kantianism simply was not crucial for early sociology. This comes often with the notion of other, more significant intellectual, social or political sources. On the other hand, it is also a convenient narrative for those who are for some reason or the other indifferent about the issue itself of the relation between neo-Kantianism and sociology – which is certainly the case for most practicing social scientists and philosophers today.

The indifferent narrative can come in different forms. First, as said, it can consist in emphasizing forces in the intellectual and academic field other than neo-Kantianism – forces that are thought to have been more decisive for sociology. In the German context, this can amount to highlighting, for instance, the role of Dilthey and the philosophy of *Geisteswissenschaften*, of hermeneutic theories of *Verstehen*, of *Lebensphilosophie*, of Husserl's phenomenology with methods such as *Wesensschau*, or of Marxism (e.g. Šuber 2003; 2007; 2010). Regarding Max Weber and the origin of the notion of “ideal type”, German sociologist Uta Gerhardt (1938-), for example, thus called neo-Kantianism simply a “wrong track”, a “Holzweg Neukantianismus” (Gerhardt 2001, 84). This statement was primarily directed against German-American historian Fritz K. Ringer's (1934-2006) study on Max Weber's methodology (Ringer 1997), which analysed Weber's relationship with Rickert, but also against previous accounts going in that same direction (especially Burger 1976; Oakes 1988). A similar indifferent perspective had already been defended since the 1980s by German political scientist and Weber scholar Wilhelm Hennis (1923-2012).⁹² According to Hennis, the focus on Weber's relationship with neo-Kantianism had contributed next to nothing to better understanding Weber's work.⁹³ And even earlier, in the 1950s, German philosopher Dieter Henrich (1927-2022) had attacked positive

⁹² On Hennis's position and background, see Feuerhahn 2023, 15–18.

⁹³ “Die Fixierung der bisherigen Forschung auf Webers wissenschaftstheoretische Gewährsleute, seine behauptete Abhängigkeit oder gar ‘Bestimmung’ durch den südwestdeutschen Neukantianismus hat uns dem Verständnis des Werks keinen Schritt näher gebracht.” (Hennis 1982, 242; see also 1987; 1996) Though certainly in a minority compared to the positive narrative, indifferent positions still seem more frequent than suggested by Feuerhahn (at least, if we go beyond Weber): “Très rares sont ceux qui considèrent, comme Wilhelm Hennis, qu'il s'agit d'une fausse piste.” (Feuerhahn 2023b, 155)

narratives presenting Weber as a “Kantian”, a “neo-Kantian” or as a follower of Rickert (Henrich 1952, 2, 5, 90, 104).⁹⁴

In the French context, the relevance of neo-Kantianism has been scaled down by underscoring instead the importance of other intellectual movements such as eclecticism, spiritualism or positivism. For example, according to American intellectual historian John I. Brooks (1957-), Durkheim cannot be called a “neo-criticist” – first of all because he disagreed with Kant’s “transcendental deduction of categories” (Brooks 1998, 214–15).⁹⁵ Instead, Brooks emphasized the legacy of eclectic spiritualism – a lineage leading from Maine de Biran (1766-1824) to Victor Cousin (1792-1867) and Paul Janet (1823-1899) – and the way it was institutionalized as the official “syllabus philosophy” (Brooks 1998, 215) in secondary education. Following Brooks and building on sociologist Neil Gross’s (1971-) rediscovery of philosopher André Lande’s (1867-1964) notes of Durkheim’s philosophy lectures at the Lycée de Sens (Durkheim [1883–1884] 2002; [1883–1884] 2004), American philosopher of science Warren Schmaus (1952-) further followed this path and highlighted the continuities between Durkheim’s sociological theory of the categories and the eclectic-spiritualist tradition (Schmaus 2000; 2003; 2004). This view, in turn, was taken up in the literature on Durkheim, relativizing sometimes the role of Renouvier, Boutroux and French “neo-Kantianism” (see several contributions in Schick et al. 2022).⁹⁶

⁹⁴ For Henrich, Weber was neither a “Kantian” nor a “neo-Kantian” but went beyond both orientations. For example: “Die verbreitete Meinung, daß Weber deshalb, weil er hier [referring to Weber [1922] 1988, 208–9, MS] Kant zitiert, ein ‘Kantianer’ genannt werden müßte, ist völlig verfehlt.” (Henrich 1952, 90) And Henrich’s conclusion on the relation with Rickert’s philosophy: “Es ist deshalb verfehlt, ihn [Weber, MS] zur philosophischen Schule Rickerts zu zählen, wenn er auch dessen methodologische Analysen auf genommen hat. Vielmehr vollzieht sich in der Wissenschaftslehre im genannten Sinne die Auflösung einer allgemeinen Voraussetzung des Neukantianismus.” (Henrich 1952, 104)

⁹⁵ Brooks argued against positive narratives: “Nevertheless, it would be a mistake to think of Durkheim as a neocriticist, as some have proposed to do. Durkheim made use of a number of Kantian distinctions, but he also found more positivistic ways of expressing the same dichotomies when it suited his purpose. [...] Moreover, he disagreed with certain fundamental parts of critical philosophy. [...] He also questioned the whole premise of critical philosophy, since he did not think one could deduce the a priori conditions of knowledge through any sort of transcendental analysis. [...] Epistemology was for Durkheim an object of sociological inquiry. This was one reason why he became so interested in the social origin of the categories in his later works. Indeed, he often seems to have raised Kantian problems only to give them a Comtean solution.” (Brooks 1998, 214–15) Note that Brooks’s argument makes doctrinal consistency with Kant’s philosophy (here the “transcendental deduction of the categories” in the *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*) a criterion for attributing the property “neo-criticist” (see also his definition in Brooks 1998, 244). This is a contestable strategy because it understates the significance of the element of renewal in “neo-criticism” and the effective distance between Kant and Renouvier – the philosopher consistently associated with the label “neo-criticism”.

⁹⁶ For a brief summary of the whole debate: “In this context, the question arises to what extent Durkheim’s *Elementary Forms* aim at a ‘sociologization’ of Kant’s epistemological analysis of categories (Pickering 1993: 56–57, 66). With regard to this question, divergent answers can be found in the literature. Some authors maintain that ‘Durkheim’s sociology of knowledge stems directly from problems set by Kant’ (64). Others hold that the influence of (Neo-)Kantianism on Durkheim should not be exaggerated and that other philosophical perspectives such as Bergson’s were of greater importance for the development of Durkheim’s thought (Joas [1992] 1993: 194). Still others argue that there is ‘no reason to assume, however, that Durkheim had Kant’s concept of a category in mind’ (Schmaus 1998: 177) and that his project can only be properly understood if

A second form of the indifferent narrative consists in a sort of meta-critique that takes issue with the labels and attributions involved in positive narratives. Thus, ethnomethodologist sociologist Anne Rawls (1950-), for example, questioned the characterization of Durkheim as a “neo-Kantian” arguing that this was done “by fiat, by a process of labeling, not argumentation” (Rawls 2005, 18, n. 23). In fact, putting Durkheim in the Kantian camp was “a misunderstanding of both Durkheim and Kant” (Rawls 2005, 7, n. 8). Instead, she insisted – based on her own interpretation of Durkheim’s *Formes élémentaires* – on the differences between Durkheim and Kant, especially regarding the social origin of the categories: “Durkheim’s position is almost a complete rejection of Kant’s” (Rawls 2005, 73).⁹⁷ Accordingly, she called Durkheim’s position an “anti-Kantian” and “anti-rationalist” “theory of practice” (Rawls 2005, 37) – without any doubt against her own background in (clearly anti-neo-Kantian) ethnomethodology. Still another meta-critical version of the indifferent narrative would insist that there was no such thing as a unified movement of “neo-Kantianism” in the first place. Attributing this label to Durkheim, for example, masks the palpable oppositions between Durkheim and, for example, Renouvierist neo-criticists such as François Pilon (1830-1914) (e.g. Brooks 1998, 215). Similar criticisms can be imagined for the German-speaking context.

Third and finally, indifferent narratives can also come in a form that we might call “anti-philosophical” or “a-philosophical”. By this I mean a variety – compatible with some negative narratives – where the emancipation of sociology from philosophy is emphasized and where, accordingly, the question of philosophical “influences” is put aside as irrelevant. This vision of sociology’s past is largely shared by practitioners of the discipline who are – explicitly or implicitly – interested in distinguishing their practice from other disciplines. It can rely on narratives such as the one already encountered by Paul F. Lazarsfeld according to which sociology only became a serious science by abandoning any kind of “social philosophy”. Thus, Lazarsfeld recounted that the type of pioneering empirical social research he and his collaborators had inaugurated with their *Die Arbeitslosen von Marienthal* (Jahoda et al. [1933] 1975) was opposed to philosophically oriented “sociology” as practiced at the University of Vienna in the early 1930s. One of Lazarsfeld’s explicit targets here was Max Adler who had tried at the time to connect Austro-Marxism with neo-Kantianism (Lazarsfeld [1960] 1975, 14–15).

the development of contemporary French philosophy and its influence on Durkheim’s thought is considered (Schmaus 1998, 2004). This is not only a historical or philological but also a systematically important question. What is at stake here is what Durkheim actually means when using the term ‘category’.” (Nungesser 2020b, 75, n. 13)

⁹⁷ Rawls’s insistence on differences between Durkheim and Kant himself (not actual French “neo-Kantians” or “neo-criticists”) is exposed to the same arguments as Brooks (see above). When positive narratives claimed that Durkheim was “neo-Kantian”, this did not imply that he was strictly “Kantian”. We are here in the midst of the problems of isms discussed below.

Besides, a further basis for the a-philosophical indifferent narrative are histories of the sociology which treat the discipline first and foremost as an institutional fact. Thus, in American sociologist Terry N. Clark's (1940-) valuable account of the institutional setting of emerging French sociology (Clark 1973), there is relatively little consideration of Kant, neo-Kantians, or other intellectual movements in academic philosophy. The Durkheimian conception of sociology appeared simply as anti-philosophical (e.g. Clark 1973, 171). Such narratives could appeal to the many practitioners in sociology and philosophy who, at any rate, were indifferent about the issue of neo-Kantianism and sociology.

Contrary to the other narratives, it is difficult to isolate definite historical origins for the indifferent narrative. This has to do with the fact that the global versions of the narrative share little more than the simple absence of references to the Kantian or neo-Kantian tradition in their depiction of sociology's past. The local versions, on the other hand, concern a multitude of authors with their particular history of interpretations and, again, are written from every possible perspective – except a Kantian or neo-Kantian one. There have, of course, always been conflicting interpretations of authors who were seen as “classical”, “canonical” or simply for one reason or the other as “important”. Thus, there have been positivistic, materialistic, functionalist or pragmatist readings of Durkheim, hermeneutic or phenomenological readings of Weber, *lebensphilosophical* readings of Simmel or Mannheim, Bergsonian readings of Halbwachs, etc. – readings that would oppose interpretations of these same authors in the light of the Kantian or neo-Kantian tradition. In other words, there is not *one* historical origin of indifferent narratives, but it has many independent sources. What is clear, however, is that most of the various indifferent narratives have their own, more or less hidden agenda which guides their historical interpretations – as many instances of the other narratives, for that matter. They are often relatively transparent attempts to incorporate “classical” authors into certain theoretical-methodological traditions – for example, Durkheim into ethnomethodology (e.g. Rawls 2005) or pragmatism (e.g. Joas 1987) or Weber into hermeneutics or phenomenology (e.g. Schütz [1932] 1974; as well as interpretations following Schütz, such as Berger and Luckmann 1966).

Nevertheless, some indifferent narratives also have strictly historical interests (such as Brooks 1998; Schmaus 2004). The advantage of these narratives is that they invite us to be more precise about the exact position and meaning of “neo-Kantianism” in a philosophical and intellectual field that was made up of numerous positions. They force us to ask questions such as: What was the actual importance of “neo-Kantianism” or a specific neo-Kantian philosopher compared to other forces in the intellectual field, say, hermeneutics or Marxism? And especially the meta-critical version of the indifferent narrative invites us to ask what “neo-Kantianism”

actually means – both for historical agents and for historical observers. In this sense, indifferent narratives (as well as local negative narratives) can lead us towards a more nuanced historical account of the matter.

(4) The ideological narrative

There is a fourth type of narratives that I propose to call “ideological” – in a specific and narrow sense.⁹⁸ This narrative seeks to explain the relations between neo-Kantianism and sociology in terms of a direct “ideological” connection between social class and intellectual production. According to the ideological narrative, neo-Kantianism in the social sciences was (and remains) a bourgeois ideology. The connection was the expression of the socio-economic position of the declining bourgeoisie attempting to oppose in the field of the social sciences Marxist “historical materialism” – the doctrine that would provide the basis for a revolutionary proletarian science and practice. While this narrative has lost much of its force today, it was remarkably well institutionalized up until the end of the 1980s and its effects are still with us.

This narrative has been clearly expressed, for instance, by German philosopher Hans Jörg Sandkühler (1940-) in his introduction to a 1970 collection of texts from around 1900 on the debate on “neo-Kantian socialism” (Sandkühler and De la Vega 1970). Sandkühler presented here the various attempts at the time to implement Kantian and neo-Kantian elements in the social sciences and in socialism as a “Trojan horse” introduced by the bourgeoisie into the workers’ movement. What climbed out at night was, instead of Greek invaders, anti-revolutionary “revisionism” and “opportunism” (Sandkühler 1970, 32–33).⁹⁹ Neo-Kantianism in socialism and the social sciences was a bourgeois attempt to undermine “historical

⁹⁸ I use “ideological” here in the narrow sense of the Marxist tradition of “critique of ideology”, going back to works such as Karl Marx (1818-1883) and Friedrich Engels’s (1820-1895) *Deutsche Ideologie* (Marx and Engels [1845–1846] 1990; on the longer history of the word, see Kennedy 1979). This theory claims – at least in some of its versions (e.g. Marx and Engels [1845–1846] 1990, 26–27) – a direct connection between social and economic class position and intellectual products (e.g. law, religion, philosophy, science, political economy, etc.). This narrow sense differs from a broader sense in which also the other narratives could be called “ideological”. For example, also the positive narrative – tracing the genealogy of sociology back to neo-Kantianism – can be said to have an “ideological” function in some situations. For example, it provided in the aftermath of the Second World War – in a social and political world polarized between Western capitalist countries and Eastern communist countries – a non-Marxist and non-American “mythical genealogy” (Bourdieu [1983–1986] 2016, 596) of sociology. An apt example would be Schelsky’s “transcendental theory of society” discussed above. Although he did not refer to the historical movement of neo-Kantianism, this Kant-inspired “transcendental theory” enabled Schelsky to define a space between Marxist “social philosophy” – epitomized at the time by the Frankfurt School – and American social research – epitomized by René König’s “Cologne School”. – I thank Takemitsu Morikawa for suggesting this second, broader sense of “ideological” and pushing me to clarify this point.

⁹⁹ “[D]er klassenspezifisch bürgerliche sozialistische Neukantianismus ist ein Phänomen des bürgerlichen Konservatismus; [...] die bürgerliche Strategie der Revolutionsvermeidung dringt in eine Partei mit revolutionärem Auftrag ein; [...] der dem trojanischen Pferd ‘Kantianismus’ entstiegene Revisionismus ist ein ideologisches Produkt der Bourgeoisie” (Sandkühler 1970, 32–33).

materialism”, i.e. “the scientific basis of class struggle”.¹⁰⁰ The historical class position of the bourgeoisie had changed since Kant’s times and the revival of Kant now simply served the class interest of conserving the bourgeois order.¹⁰¹

A similar ideological account of neo-Kantianism in general was given at around the same time in the official *Philosophisches Wörterbuch* – “das repräsentative Philosophie-Lexikon der DDR” (Sandkühler 1970, 21; see also Köhnke 1986, 12) – edited by East German Marxist philosophers Georg Klaus (1912-1974) and Manfred Buhr (1927-2008) at the Zentralinstitut für Philosophie of the Akademie der Wissenschaften der DDR (Klaus and Buhr 1970). The authors presented neo-Kantianism as a product of the alliance between the German bourgeoisie and the “feudal reaction” against the international proletariat.¹⁰² Comparable characterizations accompanied at the time – in the critical apparatus – the official GDR editions of the works of Marx and Engels as well as of Russian revolutionary leader Vladimir Lenin (1870-1924).¹⁰³ And still some 20 years later, in the 1988 edition on Engels’s *Anti-Dühring*, in the purportedly critical *Marx-Engels-Gesamtausgabe* (MEGA), we encounter basically the same views. Neo-Kantianism – in general, but also specifically in the social sciences – was presented as the

¹⁰⁰ “Der Neukritizismus in der Sozialwissenschaft baute mit Kant eine Front auf ‘gegen den Siegeszug des historischen Materialismus’, die wissenschaftliche Grundlage des Klassenkampfes.” (Sandkühler 1970, 25) Sandkühler cited here from a passage from a critique of Russian writer, revolutionary and suspected undercover agent Oskar Blum (1886-after 1938) against Max Adler: “Die Promotoren des Neukritizismus wußten genau, warum sie sich an KANTS Erkenntniskritik festklammerten. Sie war das letzte Auskunftsmittel gegen den Siegeszug des historischen Materialismus. Es galt, dem Gedanken von der Möglichkeit wissenschaftlicher Vorausbestimmung des sozialen Geschichtsverlaufs entgegenzutreten. Zu diesem Behufe wurde die ‘kritische’ Frage nach der Möglichkeit der Sozialwissenschaft aufgeworfen. Und man wollte den Anschein erwecken, als ob es sich um dieselbe Fragestellung wie bei KANT handle: Wie ist die Erfahrung möglich? – nur ins Sozialwissenschaftliche übersetzt. Die Ähnlichkeit war aber, genauer betrachtet, eine bloß formale.” (Blum 1919, 203)

¹⁰¹ “[D]ie Restauration der Kantischen, der revolutionären Rolle der bürgerlichen Klasse entsprechenden Rechts- und Tugendlehre diene einer veränderten Interessenlage dieser Klasse: dem nunmehr konservativen Interesse der Verteidigung der bürgerlichen Herrschaft vor der Gefährdung durch das revolutionäre Proletariat.” (Sandkühler 1970, 43)

¹⁰² “Der Neukantianismus entstand und entwickelte sich in den sechziger und siebziger Jahren des 19. Jahrhunderts im engsten Zusammenhang mit dem von der deutschen Großbourgeoisie gegen das erstarkte und kampffentschlossene deutsche wie internationale Proletariat geschlossene Bündnis mit der feudalen Reaktion. In dieser Zeit verschärfter Klassenkämpfe erfolgte – fast genau auf das Jahr der Pariser Kommune datiert – der Rückgriff der bürgerlichen deutschen Philosophie auf Kant” (Klaus and Buhr 1970; cited after Köhnke 1986, 12).

¹⁰³ For example: “*Neukantianismus* reaktionäre, in der zweiten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts unter der Losung ‘Zurück zu Kant’ entstandene bürgerliche Philosophie, die die materialistischen Elemente der Lehre von Kant beiseite schob und seine idealistische Erkenntnistheorie im Kampfe gegen den Marxismus und gegen die materialistische Naturwissenschaft ausnutzte” (Marx and Engels 1962, 736). Or: “*Neukantianismus* – eine reaktionäre Richtung in der bürgerlichen Philosophie, die unter der Losung der Wiedergeburt der Philosophie Kants den subjektiven Idealismus predigt” (Lenin [1909] 1962, 381, n. 20). The same narrative applied to Kant himself, for example: “Als Ideologe der liberalen, in ihrem Kampf gegen den Feudalismus inkonsequenten deutschen Bourgeoisie konnte sich Kant von den Begriffen Gott, Freiheit des Willens und Unsterblichkeit der Seele, die die Grundlage der religiösen Moral bilden, nicht lösen” (Lenin [1909] 1962, 469–70).

ideological symptom of the bourgeoisie's frightened resistance to materialism – the revolutionary worldview of the workers' movement.¹⁰⁴

These examples already show that the ideological narrative has, as to its sources, a rich history. It can be traced back to several canonical texts in the tradition of Marxism-Leninism (see also Dussort 1963, 134), for example: Marx's 1873 postface to the second edition of *Das Kapital* (Marx [1873] 1962) where he took sides with Hegel against the "mediocre epigonism" of German academic philosophy – supposedly an allusion to the academic Kant revival;¹⁰⁵ Engels's 1878 *Anti-Dühring* (Engels [1878] 1962b), especially its explicit dismissal of academic neo-Kantianism as "eclecticism", "metaphysics" and as a misguided "fashion";¹⁰⁶ Engels's

¹⁰⁴ This synthetic account deserves to be cited in full: "Die Bedürfnisse der in stürmischem Tempo aufsteigenden Bourgeoisie erforderten eine Weltanschauung, die die bürgerlichen Verhältnisse als normal, ewig und sich ständig in diesem Rahmen fortbewegend theoretisch begründete. Dazu bedurfte es einer Philosophie, die in der Lage war, den Sozialismus in Theorie und Praxis mit modernen Mitteln zu bekämpfen. Sie mußte dem Materialismus aktiv entgegentreten, zugleich jedoch den Aufschwung der Naturwissenschaften so erfassen, daß deren Ergebnisse für die Bourgeoisie nutzbar gemacht werden konnten, der Einfluß von Spekulation und Theologie aber ausgeschaltet wurde. [Paragraph] Eine solche Philosophie war der Neukantianismus, der sich nach 1870 rasch zu einflußreichen akademischen Philosophie entwickelte. Als Reaktion auf den Materialismus und in zunehmendem Maße auf die revolutionäre wissenschaftliche Weltanschauung der Arbeiterbewegung entsprach der Neukantianismus im wesentlichen den Positionen der Bourgeoisie, die nicht mehr entschlossen für ihre antifeudalen Ziele kämpfte und aus Furcht vor dem Proletariat und der demokratischen Volksbewegung den Weg des Kompromisses mit dem reaktionären Junktertum eingeschlagen hatte. [Paragraph] Der Rückgriff auf die Philosophie und Ethik Immanuel Kants ermöglichte in gewissem Maße eine Kritik an den herrschen Verhältnissen und Reformvorschläge, ohne wesentliche Klassenpositionen der Bourgeoisie anzugreifen. Die auf Kants Philosophie fußende ethisch-idealistische Geschichtskonzeption war zugleich gegen die materialistische Geschichtsauffassung gerichtet. [Paragraph] Die Gesellschaftstheorie des Neukantianismus wirkte auch innerhalb der Arbeiterbewegung, vor allem über die Schriften Friedrich Albert Langes und seines Schülers Karl Höchberg, die für eine ethische Begründung gesellschaftlicher Veränderungen eintraten und besonders bei den zur Arbeiterbewegungen gestoßenen kleinbürgerlichen Kräften Anklang fanden. Die ethisch-idealistische Geschichtsbetrachtung war – bei aller Differenziertheit und Unterschiedlichkeit in den Ausgangspositionen und Schlußfolgerungen – eine allgemeine Erscheinung in der bürgerlichen und kleinbürgerlichen Ideologie." (Engels [1878] 1988, 659–60)

¹⁰⁵ Marx's statement went: "Aber grade als ich den ersten Band des 'Kapitals' ausarbeitete, gefiel sich das verdrießliche, anmaßliche und mittelmäßige Epigontum, welches jetzt im gebildeten Deutschland das große Wort führt, darin, Hegel zu behandeln, wie der brave Moses Mendelssohn zu Lessings Zeit den Spinoza behandelt hat, nämlich als 'toten Hund'." (Marx [1873] 1962, 27) The critical apparatus in the *Karl Marx-Friedrich Engels-Werke* (MEW) adds in an explanatory note: "Marx meint hier die deutschen bürgerlichen Philosophen Büchner, Lange, Dühring, Fechner und andere." (Marx [1867] 1962a, 847) It is also possible that Marx, when talking about "Epigontum", had German philosopher Otto Liebmann's (1840-1912) *Kant und die Epigonen* (Liebmann 1865) in mind – a work that, with its repeated call "Also muß auf Kant zu rückgegangen werden!", was later stylized as marking the beginning of the neo-Kantian movement (for a critique of this narrative, see Köhnke 1986, 214).

¹⁰⁶ "Auf den Universitäten machten sich die verschiedensten Sorten von Eklektizismus Konkurrenz, die nur darin übereinstimmten, daß sie aus lauter Abfällen vergangner Philosophien zusammengestutzt und alle gleich metaphysisch waren. Von den Resten der klassischen Philosophie rettete sich nur ein gewisser Neukantianismus, dessen letztes Wort das ewig unerkennbare Ding an sich war, also das Stück Kant, das am wenigsten verdiente, aufbewahrt zu werden. Das Endresultat war die jetzt herrschende Zerfahrenheit und Verworrenheit des theoretischen Denkens." (Engels [1878] 1962a, 332) And on the "fashion" of returning to Kant, even among scientists (*Naturforscher*): "Hier ist bereits ein Anfang gemacht, indem auch außerhalb des schon erwähnten Neukantianismus es wieder Mode wird, auf Kant zu rekurrieren. Seitdem man entdeckt hat, daß Kant der Urheber zweier genialer Hypothesen ist, ohne die die heutige theoretische Naturwissenschaft nun einmal nicht vorankommen kann – der früher Laplace zugeschriebnen Theorie von der Entstehung des Sonnensystems und der Theorie von der Hemmung der Erdrotation durch die Flutwelle –, ist Kant bei den Naturforschern wieder

account of “the end of classical German philosophy” (Engels [1888] 1962; on the context of this writing, see Béguin 2025) where he described the revival of Kant in Germany as a “scientific regression” that had already been unequivocally refuted by materialism and “practice”;¹⁰⁷ and Lenin’s 1909 *Materialism and Empiriocriticism* (Lenin [1909] 1962) where he attacked, besides “Machists” and “positivists” also all sorts of “neo-Kantians” and “Kantians” as allies of reactionary “empiriocriticism” (see especially Lenin [1909] 1962, chap. 4).¹⁰⁸ The return to Kant and the various sorts of neo-Kantianism emerged from these accounts as a reactionary, petty bourgeois movement in philosophy, with a dangerous tendency to intrude the Marxist workers’ movement on both the theoretical and practical level.¹⁰⁹

But the most important moment for the emergence of the ideological narrative was certainly the intense controversy on “neo-Kantian socialism” or “socialist neo-Kantianism” at the turn of the 20th century.¹¹⁰ In this debate, two main parties opposed each other. On the one hand, there were neo-Kantian philosophers of socialist or social-democratic political convictions who believed that socialism needed to be based on the principles of Kantian ethics or Kantian epistemology – authors such as Friedrich Albert Lange, Hermann Cohen, Paul Natorp (1854–1924), Rudolf Stammler, Karl Vorländer (1860–1928), Franz Staudinger (1849–1921) or Max

zu verdienten Ehren gekommen.” (Engels [1878] 1962a, 333–34) Engels’s talk of a “fashion” of returning to Kant was later taken up by Lenin (e.g. Lenin [1909] 1962, 191, 342–43).

¹⁰⁷ “Wenn dennoch die Neubelebung der Kantschen Auffassung in Deutschland durch die Neukantianer und der Humeschen in England (wo sie nie ausgestorben) durch die Agnostiker versucht wird, so ist das, der längst erfolgten theoretischen und praktischen Widerlegung gegenüber, wissenschaftlich ein Rückschritt und praktisch nur eine verschämte Weise, den Materialismus hinterrücks zu akzeptieren und vor der Welt zu verleugnen.” (Engels [1888] 1962, 276) Engels’s alleged refutation of Kantianism through practice went as follows: “Die schlagendste Widerlegung dieser wie aller andern philosophischen Schrullen ist die Praxis, nämlich das Experiment und die Industrie. Wenn wir die Richtigkeit unsrer Auffassung eines Naturvorgangs beweisen können, indem wir ihn selbst machen, ihn aus seinen Bedingungen erzeugen, ihn obendrein unsern Zwecken dienstbar werden lassen, so ist es mit dem Kantschen unfäßbaren ‘Ding an sich’ zu Ende.” (Engels [1888] 1962, 276) Again, these arguments and narratives were taken up by Lenin (e.g. Lenin [1909] 1962, 122).

¹⁰⁸ Lenin presented himself in his critique of neo-Kantianism as a follower of Engels: “Ohne sich auf eine Betrachtung der Unmenge von Nuancen des Neukantianismus in Deutschland und des Humeismus in England einzulassen, verwirft Engels *von vornherein* ihre grundsätzliche Abweichung vom Materialismus. Engels erklärt, daß *die gesamte Richtung* beider Schulen einen ‘*wissenschaftlichen Rückschritt*’ bedeutet.” (Lenin [1909] 1962, 343) And in a letter to Russian Marxist writer Maxim Gorki (1868–1936) in 1908, Lenin presented the anti-materialist return to Kant and neo-Kantianism as the expression of a petty bourgeois current within the socialist movement: “Alle kleinbürgerlichen Strömungen in der Sozialdemokratie kämpfen vor allem gegen den philosophischen Materialismus, sie tendieren zu Kant, zum Neukantianismus, zur kritischen Philosophie.” (Lenin [1895–1911] 1962, 375)

¹⁰⁹ The Marxist theory of ideology was itself based on a peculiar form of sociologizing the *a priori* – one that emphasized historically changing economic relations between men. For example, in his 1847 *Misère de la philosophie*, Marx presented ideas and categories explicitly as “transient historical products” of the economically shaped social relations: “Les mêmes hommes qui établissent les rapports sociaux conformément à leur productivité matérielle, produisent aussi les principes, les idées, les catégories, conformément à leurs rapports sociaux. [Paragraph] Ainsi, ces idées, ces catégories sont aussi peu éternelles que les relations qu’elles expriment. Elles sont des *produits historiques et transitoires*.” (Marx 1847, 100; [1847] 1977, 130; see also [1846] 1977, 554)

¹¹⁰ For accounts and overviews of the debate, see Lübke 1958; 1963; Sandkühler 1970; Willey 1978a, 102–30; Sieg 1994, 274–302; Ferrari [1997] 2001, 118–27; Widmer 2024.

Adler.¹¹¹ They were joined by social-democratic intellectuals and politicians such as Eduard Bernstein (1850-1932) who promoted – against revolutionary Marxism – a political strategy of incremental reforms within the existing bourgeois society (dubbed “revisionism” or “opportunism” by its opponents). On the other hand, there were Marxists and materialists of various creeds who opposed both the theoretical return to Kant and the practical tactics of reform – authors such as Conrad Schmidt (1863-1932), Franz Mehring (1846-1919), Karl Kautsky (1854-1938) or, of course, Lenin. The debate connected various layers in a complex way. It involved questions about the epistemological and moral foundations of socialism, questions about Marx’s economic theory (especially regarding the tendency towards pauperization) and questions about the political strategy of socialist parties, concretely the debate between “revisionism” and “orthodoxy”. In any case, it was in this context that neo-Kantianism in general and its application in the social sciences in particular was regularly presented as the ideological product of the class position of its proponents.

This controversy then had important ramifications. It provided argumentative resources for a certain Marxist critique of neo-Kantianism in the phase of the decline of the movement between the 1920s and the 1940s. These criticisms of neo-Kantianism – depicting it as ideological, bourgeois, academic, professorial, scholastic, regressive, sterile, abstract, etc. – contributed to the eclipse of neo-Kantianism in general and to its disrepute in the social sciences in particular. In the German context, we encounter such ideological narratives in the works of several widely read Marxist authors, for example¹¹² German-American philosopher Karl Korsch (1886-1961) (Korsch [1923] 1966)¹¹³, Georg Lukács (Lukács [1923] 1968a; [1954] 1962)¹¹⁴, Max

¹¹¹ One of the most important expressions of this position was Cohen’s statement – in his “Introduction” to Lange’s *Geschichte des Materialismus* – on Kant as the “founder of German socialism”: “Er [Kant, MS] ist der wahre und wirkliche Urheber des deutschen Sozialismus.” (Cohen [1896] 1914, 112)

¹¹² For overviews and further references, see Köhnke 1986, 11–13; de Warren and Staiti 2015, 1–6.

¹¹³ Korsch sided explicitly with Lenin’s – political – opposition to Kantianism: “Similarly the real importance of *Lenin’s major philosophical work* does not lie in the philosophical arguments he uses to combat and ‘refute’ the various idealist tendencies in modern bourgeois philosophy; of these Kantianism had influenced the revisionist tendency within the socialist movement of the period, while Machian ‘empirio-criticism’ had influenced the centrist tendency. The real importance of Lenin’s work rests in the extreme rigour with which he tried in practice to combat and destroy these contemporary philosophical trends. He regarded them as *ideologies that were incorrect from the standpoint of party work*.” (Korsch [1930] 1970, 124–25)

¹¹⁴ Lukács derided neo-Kantianism as “professors’ philosophy” and “professors’ systems” (*Professorenphilosophie, Professorensysteme*) that were “utterly insignificant”: “Wir wissen freilich, daß auch nach Hegel Professorensysteme (Wundt, Cohen, Rickert usw.) entstanden sind, wir wissen aber auch, daß sie für die Entwicklung der Philosophie völlig bedeutungslos waren.” (Lukács [1954] 1962, 281; see also de Warren and Staiti 2015, 4) Moreover, Lukács came to oppose neo-Kantianism for political reasons: “To Lukács, Kantianism in philosophy was the equivalent of Revisionism in politics, an equation made all the more plausible by Eduard Bernstein’s confused embrace of Kant.” (Jay 1984, 44) Finally, Lukács used against neo-Kantianism even a sort of *reductio ad Hitlerum* by emphasizing British-German antisemitic-racist writer Houston Stewart Chamberlain’s (1855-1927) praise for some of its proponents: “Der Empiriokritizismus, die ‘Als-Ob’-Philosophie der Neukantianer, der Pragmatismus arbeiten auf dem Gebiet der Erkenntnistheorie ununterbrochen mit einer verwandten Methode. Chamberlain nützt alle Errungenschaften dieses Neukantianismus, dessen wichtigste Vertreter, wie Cohen oder Simmel, er (trotz ihres Judentums) wiederholt mit Lob überhäuft, gründlich aus

Horkheimer (Horkheimer 1937, 253–54)¹¹⁵ or German philosopher Karl Löwith (1897-1973) (Löwith [1941] 1995)¹¹⁶.

But similar narratives played also an important role in the French context. We can think here of the works of Marxist authors such as Hungarian-French philosopher Georges Politzer (1903-1942) (Politzer 1926)¹¹⁷ or – certainly most important – Communist writer and philosopher Paul Nizan (1905-1940) (Nizan [1932] 2012; [1931/1960] 2002). In his famous *Les chiens de garde* (Nizan [1932] 2012), Nizan – openly inspired by Lenin¹¹⁸ – combined a fierce critique of French “Kantians” such as Boutroux and Brunschvicg as well as “anti-Kantian” academics such as Bergson with an ideological critique of Durkheim and Durkheimianism – all of them

und führt diese mystische Linie radikal zu Ende.” (Lukács [1954] 1962, 611; for a critique, see Dussort 1963, 22) Lukács’s point of view was later elaborated continued by Romanian-French philosopher and sociologist Lucien Goldmann (1913-1970) (Goldmann 1945; [1945] 1967; 1955).

¹¹⁵ “Das falsche Selbstbewusstsein des bürgerlichen Gelehrten unter der liberalistischen Ära zeigt sich in den verschiedensten philosophischen Systemen. Einen besonders prägnanten Ausdruck hat es um die Jahrhundertwende im Neukantianismus Marburger Prägung gefunden. Einzelne Züge der theoretischen Tätigkeit des Fachgelehrten werden hier zu universalen Kategorien, gleichsam zu Momenten des Weltgeistes, des ewigen ‘Logos’ gemacht, oder vielmehr entscheidende Züge des gesellschaftlichen Lebens werden auf die theoretische Tätigkeit des Gelehrten reduziert.” (Horkheimer 1937, 253–54)

¹¹⁶ Löwith – initially a student of Heidegger – mentioned neo-Kantianism in his widely read history of 19th century philosophy *Von Hegel zu Nietzsche* (Löwith [1941] 1995) only once. He presented it – referring, by the way, to Korsch – as a liberal-bourgeois “regression” behind the problems formulated by the Young Hegelians: “Im Zusammenhang mit dem wirklichen und ganzen Geschehen des Jahrhunderts betrachtet erklärt sich jedoch dieser scheinbar so unмотivierte Rückgang auf Kant daraus, daß die bürgerliche Intelligenz in der Praxis aufgehört hatte, eine geschichtlich bewegte Klasse zu sein und darum auch in ihrem Denken die Initiative und Stoßkraft verlor. Zugleich mit dem Ende der politisch-revolutionären Bewegung verendet auch die philosophische der 40er Jahre. Der Rückgriff auf Kant bezeugt, in der Weise wie er geschah, einen Rückschritt hinter diejenige Grenze der Problematik, welche die Junghegelianer in philosophischer und religiöser, sozialer und politischer Beziehung erreicht hatten. Die in den Fundamenten angegriffene bürgerlich-christliche Welt erlebt in der Geschichte des Neukantianismus eine scheinhafte Wiederbelebung, und erst in der *Krisis des Neukantianismus* ist dann der Versuch zu einer *Erneuerung Hegels* entstanden.” (Löwith [1941] 1995, 136) It is difficult to say what was more disastrous for the collective memory of neo-Kantianism: the disparaging ideological narrative or the simple absence of neo-Kantianism from the rest of Löwith’s account.

¹¹⁷ Politzer portrayed German neo-Kantianism as a useless regression and subsumed it – together with the quasi-totality of other positions in the philosophical field – unter what he called the “school” of “contemporary scholastics”: “Après la faillite de l’hégélianisme, il y eut en Allemagne ce qu’on a appelé le retour à Kant ; mais le ‘retour à la source’ n’a presque rien donné; il a abouti d’une part à ce qu’on appelle la Kantphilologie, c’est-à-dire la projection de la bêtise de tous les pauvres d’Allemagne sur le texte de la Critique de la Raison pure, et, d’autre part, à quelques petites philosophies de pure contingence qui ne doivent leur naissance qu’au fait qu’on a oublié que certains points avaient déjà été traités et n’avaient point besoin d’être redécouverts ou qui exposent en plusieurs volumes une pensée à moitié pensée, dont l’exposé, si elle était poussée jusqu’au bout, demanderait seulement un alinéa: les Cohen, les Rickert, les Avenarius et les autres.” (Politzer 1926, 76–77) And: “Tous ceux donc qui nous entourent, rationalistes, intuitionnistes, bergsonniens ou antibergsonniens, idéalistes, pragmatistes, néokantiens, néo-hégéliens, néo-réalistes, réalistes critiques, pragmatistes et, avec eux, tous les philosophes jouant avec l’art, jouant avec la science ou avec la religion, tous ils appartiennent à la même catégorie, ce sont les *philosophes sans matière*. Ils semblent appartenir tous à la même école: à la *scolastique contemporaine*.” (Politzer 1926, 83–84) For Politzer’s relationship with Kant and Kantian philosophy (he had been a student of Brunschvicg), see Bianco 2018.

¹¹⁸ Nizan attacked – with reference to Lenin – professional academic philosophy as such: “Mais nous n’acceptons plus que les professionnels de la philosophie soient responsables, c’est-à-dire doivent répondre, devant leurs seuls collègues présents et à venir. Nous réclamons une véritable démocratie philosophique et non une de ces démocraties où les ministres ne sont responsables que devant un parlement de politiques. Comme si Kant ne devait des comptes qu’à Boutroux, professeur. Et non à Lénine, théoricien et praticien de la Révolution prolétarienne.” (Nizan [1932] 2012, 23)

presented as proponents of “bourgeois thought” (Nizan [1932] 2012, 20).¹¹⁹ Importantly, also philosopher and writer Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980), the towering figure of French intellectual life after the Second World War, followed Nizan – his former roommate and friend at the École normale supérieure (Sartre [1960] 2002) – in this anti-neo-Kantian position (e.g. Terzi 2022b, 1–2, 197–98; 2024, 165), nourished in his case by both Marxism and phenomenology.

We should note here, more generally, that ideological narratives converge in some respects with positive narratives. They start from the notion of an alliance between neo-Kantian philosophy and sociology. But then they provide an explanatory account of this relation on the basis of shared class interests. Finally, ideological accounts often introduce arguments for overcoming the neo-Kantianism-sociology doublet by a sort of Marxist philosophy, social-economic theory or social science. We encounter here the blueprint for the strategy of Rose’s critique of the “neo-Kantian paradigm” in sociology.¹²⁰

In sum, the ideological narrative deserves our attention for two main reasons. First, it contributed decisively to the eclipse of neo-Kantianism after the 1930s. In this context, it became a major memorial obstacle. In France, for example, disruptive narratives such as Nizan’s perdured through the 1960s and legitimized the oblivion of many aspects of 19th century French philosophy.¹²¹ Similarly, in the German-speaking context neo-Kantianism stood in the decades following the Second World War under the suspicion of being either insignificant or purely

¹¹⁹ Nizan was, by the way, criticized for this attitude regarding Durkheim by his fellow Marxist and Durkheimian René Maublanc (Maublanc [1934] 2011, 8–9; see also Gouarné 2011a; 2011b) – a case that illustrates that Nizan’s stance was not the only possible position within French Marxism at the time.

¹²⁰ I have focused here, under the heading of “ideological narratives”, mostly on what we might call “left anti-neo-Kantianism”. It should not go unmentioned that there is, of course, also a “right anti-neo-Kantianism”, covering a whole spectrum from Heidegger’s highly technical criticisms of neo-Kantians’ interpretation of the “transcendental schematism” in the *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* to denigrations of neo-Kantians in writings of Nazi propaganda (for an example of the latter, see Dussort 1963, 23). The collusion of both anti-neo-Kantianisms has been clearly outlined by Dussort (Dussort 1963, 16–25). In the recent English-speaking revival of interest in neo-Kantianism since the 2000s, “right anti-neo-Kantianism” has absorbed most attention (e.g. Friedman 2000; Gordon 2008; 2010). Yet, for the specific narratives on the relationship between neo-Kantianism and sociology, this latter form was arguably less important than the left variety. I admit, though, that agents such as conservative-catholic sociologist-philosopher Othmar Spann (1878-1950), ideologist of the Austrofascist regime, would deserve further investigation in this respect. As a symbol of the collusion between anti-neo-Kantianisms of the left and the right, we might also take the fact that Nizan, in his Lenin-inspired criticisms of Durkheim, did not hesitate to cite (Nizan [1932] 2012, 125, n. 3) the anti-Durkheimian clichés diffused by Tarde’s son Alfred de Tarde (1880-1925) and Henri Massis (1886-1970) in their conservative-nationalist polemics against the Nouvelle Sorbonne, published under the pen name Agathon (Agathon et al. [1910] 1911; see also Ringer 1992, 237–47).

¹²¹ A prominent case here is Marxist philosopher Louis Althusser (1918-1990). In the preface to his 1965 collection *Pour Marx*, Althusser spoke of “la pitoyable histoire de la philosophie française dans les 130 ans qui suivirent la révolution de 1789” and of “un long siècle d’abêtissement philosophique officiel” (Althusser [1965] 2018, 34) – a century marked by “bourgeois ideology” in the conservative or reactionary forms of idealism, reformism, positivism or spiritualism. Althusser excepted only Auguste Comte from this gloomy picture. In the last 30 years, wrote Althusser in 1965, things had improved – a reference to the 1930s with the interventions of Politzer – explicitly cited by Althusser (Althusser [1965] 2018, 35) – and Nizan (see also Fabiani 1985, 387, 402, n. 8).

ideological. The revival of studies of German neo-Kantianism in the 1980s defined itself in part precisely against these ideological narratives.¹²² Thus, German philosopher Klaus Christian Köhnke (1953-2013) charged them in his seminal 1986 study on *Entstehung und Aufstieg des Neukantianismus* with being “eine platte historisch-politische Reduktion der Philosophiegeschichte” (Köhnke 1986, 13).

Second, the ideological narrative is still interesting in that it took a socio-historical perspective on neo-Kantianism and the relationship between neo-Kantianism and the social sciences. It asked for the social functions that neo-Kantianism fulfilled in its particular historical contexts – as a philosophy and in its exchanges with the social sciences and socialist theory and practice. It thus sought a socio-historical explanation for the relationship between neo-Kantianism and sociology – even if the ideological account it offered seems finally simplistic and unsatisfactory. Nevertheless, the ideological narrative points in this respect to the need for further, more thorough and more sophisticated socio-historical analysis. This is precisely what the last type of narratives tries to achieve.

(5) The sociological narrative

The fifth narrative – I suggest calling it “sociological” or “socio-historical” – is admittedly rather marginal. It has rarely been elaborated specifically for the relationship between neo-Kantianism and sociology, but has emerged instead at the margins of socio-historical accounts of neo-Kantianism in general (e.g. Willey 1978; Köhnke 1986; Sieg 1994) or of broader intellectual and social histories concerning the period in question (e.g. Ringer [1969] 1990; 1992; Bourdieu 1975c; [1975] 1988; Fabiani 1988). Rather than a well-established narrative, there are so far only scattered traces that might be assembled, synthesized and developed into such an account.

According to the sociological narrative (as far as we can reconstruct it), sociology emerged and defined itself in academic contexts (both in France and in German-speaking countries) in which “neo-Kantianism” – or rather: various groups of Kantian or neo-Kantian philosophers – occupied dominant positions, both intellectually and institutionally. Kantianism formed – through the competition of philosophers around the legitimate interpretation and continuation of Kant – something like an “orthodoxy”. Early sociologists – many of whom, moreover, had been educated in philosophy – were obliged to define their intellectual enterprises in one way

¹²² The other part of the marginalization of neo-Kantianism in Germany had to do, of course, with the forced emigration of its last representatives with the rise to power of National Socialism in 1933. This aspect is often associated with the famous 1929 debate between Cassirer and Heidegger in Davos (e.g. Ferrari [1997] 2001, 7–8; see also Friedman 2000; Gordon 2010).

or the other with regard to these dominant positions – positively, negatively or mobilizing other forces in the intellectual field. Throughout the whole academic field, and especially the philosophical field, the Kantian orthodoxy exerted a “field effect” (in Bourdieu’s terms) on emerging sociology. Accordingly, early sociology bore the marks of this context. Nevertheless, the relationship between neo-Kantianism and sociology remained complex – it was neither unambiguously positive nor negative. The effective links (positive, negative, other) between neo-Kantian philosophers and early sociologists had to be reconstructed from the social-intellectual position of neo-Kantian orientations in the wider intellectual field and the specific social dynamics it created at particular points in time and space. The socio-historical narrative thus suggested that these connections should be studied in a historically and sociologically informed way, both regarding sources and methods. It pushed towards a more sophisticated and nuanced picture that went beyond the potential simplifications of the positive, negative, indifferent or ideological narratives.¹²³

One prominent example of this sociological narrative is Fritz Ringer’s already mentioned 1997 study on Max Weber’s methodology (Ringer 1997).¹²⁴ In order to understand Weber’s position in general and, in particular, his relationship with Rickert, Ringer put German neo-Kantian philosophies in the context of the wider “intellectual field”. He thus tried to understand neo-Kantians’ relations with other positions in their field: their opposition to “positivism”, to the hermeneutic tradition epitomized by Dilthey or to the German historical tradition (Ringer 1997, chaps 1–2). Ringer’s study was based, in turn, on his 1962 *The Decline of the German Mandarins* (Ringer [1969] 1990) – an extensive socio-historical study of German academic life between the 1870s and the rise of National Socialism in the 1930s. Ringer had argued there that certain beliefs held by German academics in the social and human sciences at the time – especially their opposition to “materialism”, “positivism”, “psychologism” and the natural sciences more generally – could be understood as a reaction to their declining social status within German society as a result of educational reforms. In the opposition between “orthodox” and

¹²³ Quite typical of this insistence on a historically and sociologically more adequate account, is Köhnke’s critique of existing pictures of neo-Kantianism in the introduction of his own socio-historical study of the early Kant movement (Köhnke 1986, 9–19). Among other things, Köhnke criticized various forms of “presentism” (Köhnke 1986, 12) – both the uncritical positive identification with the neo-Kantian tradition and its omission from historical accounts for present-day reasons – and argued for a “perspective of contemporaneity” (*Perspektive der Zeitgenossenschaft*) in dialogue with general history (Köhnke 1986, 10). Against both ideological and naively ahistorical narratives, he argued – very much in spontaneous convergence with Bourdieu’s sociology of philosophy (e.g. Bourdieu 1975c; [1975] 1988) – for considering the historically varying relative degree of “autonomy” of philosophical developments (Köhnke 1986, 10–11).

¹²⁴ Ringer’s book sparked at the time of its publication a fierce debate, opposing in particular Ringer to American philosopher and historian of the social sciences Stephen P. Turner (1951–) and involving – once again – the issue of Weber’s relationship with Rickert (see Turner 1998; Burger 1998; Oakes 1998; Ringer 1999; Turner 1999).

“modernist mandarins”, Weber emerged as a central representative of the second group (e.g. Ringer [1969] 1990, 180) – and thus in relative opposition to the “orthodox” Southwest neo-Kantians. Ringer later tried – based on his work in comparative history and sociology of education (Ringer 1979; Müller et al. 1987) – to take a comparative perspective in a parallel study on France (Ringer 1992). As in the German context, some form of Kantianism also played an important role in the French intellectual field and in the social and human sciences in particular (e.g. Ringer 1992, 127–40, 209–11, 276, 309). Ringer’s large-scale socio-historical comparison thus enabled him to be more precise about the specific similarities and differences between the two national contexts and the respective meanings of references to Kant.

In his interpretation of Weber as well as of French academic culture, Ringer summoned Pierre Bourdieu’s conception of “fields of cultural production”, more precisely of “intellectual” or “academic fields”. In fact, Bourdieu’s 1975 study on Martin Heidegger’s “political ontology” – which drew, in turn, heavily on Ringer’s 1969 *Decline of the German Mandarins* – is another example of a sociological narrative on neo-Kantianism ((Bourdieu 1975c; [1975] 1988). Neo-Kantianism featured in Bourdieu’s depiction of the German philosophical field in the first decades of the 20th century as the dominant position, i.e. a sort of legitimate orthodoxy. All legitimacy, all “capital of philosophical authority” in this field “emanated from Kant”.¹²⁵ New positions in the field had to be defined against the Kantian orthodoxy which dominated agents’ philosophical “space of possibles”.¹²⁶ Heidegger’s coup – epitomized in the 1929 confrontation with Cassirer in Davos (Cassirer and Heidegger [1929] 2010; Heidegger [1929] 2010; Cassirer 1931; see also Cassirer and Heidegger [1929–1931] 1972) – consisted in using precisely Kant, the source of all legitimacy and philosophical authority, against the neo-Kantians, the legitimate tenants of the Kantian tradition.¹²⁷ Even if Bourdieu barely discussed the social sciences, he indicated that the properly philosophical conflict between Heidegger and the neo-Kantians – as well as between neo-Kantians themselves – could be explained in terms of different visions of the relationship between philosophy and other disciplines, including the social sciences, sociology and the sociology of knowledge (Bourdieu [1975] 1988, 54–55). He thus also raised – at

¹²⁵ Bourdieu spoke of “le capital d’autorité philosophique attaché à la tradition kantienne” and “un champ où toute légitimité émane de Kant” (Bourdieu [1975] 1988, 71). Of the neo-Kantians he also said that “ceux-ci dominant le champ au nom d’un capital symbolique, constitué en garantie des entreprises philosophiques orthodoxes, l’œuvre de Kant et la problématique kantienne”

¹²⁶ “Du fait de la position dominante qu’occupent les différents représentants du néo-kantisme, c’est par rapport à eux (ou, plus exactement, contre eux) en même temps que contre les psychologies de la conscience empirique, psychologisme, vitalisme ou empirio-criticisme auxquels certains d’entre eux semblent accorder le renfort d’une analyse transcendante dévoyée, que se définissent les occupants des autres positions importantes.” (Bourdieu [1975] 1988, 56)

¹²⁷ “Stratégie souveraine qui permet de combattre les néo-kantiens, mais au nom du kantisme, donc de cumuler les profits de la contestation du kantisme et de l’autorité kantienne” (Bourdieu [1975] 1988, 71).

least implicitly – the question of the social background function of neo-Kantianism for the emerging social sciences.¹²⁸

But even in the history of philosophy – and on the part of professional philosophers, not sociologists – similar socio-historical narratives on neo-Kantianism have emerged. American philosopher and historian of science Michael Friedman (1947-2025), in his important 2000 study *The Parting of the Ways* (Friedman 2000) retraced the “analytic-continental divide” in late 20th philosophy back to the 1929 meeting between Cassirer and Heidegger – adding for the occasion German philosopher and logician Rudolf Carnap (1891-1970), one of the main proponents of the so-called “Vienna Circle” of “Logical Empiricism”, who was present in the audience at the meeting. Friedman emphasized that all three protagonists involved had received their academic socializations within a neo-Kantian framework. They shared – contrary to the divided traditions after 1945 – “the same philosophical language” and a “common set of philosophical problems” (Friedman 2000, xi). Neo-Kantianism thus appeared as the common “background”¹²⁹ against which the dominant currents of the 20th century – basically phenomenology and analytic philosophy – had developed.¹³⁰ With this revalorization, Friedman’s study became an important inspiration for the revival of studies on (German) neo-Kantianism in the English-speaking world in the last 25 years.¹³¹ But it also advertised an interesting form of writing the history of philosophy which emphasized the socio-historical and political contexts of philosophical debate (e.g. Friedman 2000, 13) and remained open for sociological analysis.¹³² The social and human sciences were relatively marginal in Friedman’s analysis, but came in at several points (e.g. Friedman 2000, 151–52). This suggested again the question whether

¹²⁸ In conversation, Bourdieu stated – according to an anecdote recounted by Éric Brian – that, in the confrontation in Davos, Heidegger attacked through Cassirer Durkheimian sociologists: “Heidegger visait Cassirer, mais derrière Cassirer, il entendait toucher les durkheimiens français.” (Brian 2023, 288, n. 68) Indeed, Heidegger critically discussed the Durkheimian notion of *mana* in his review of the second volume of Cassirer’s *Philosophie der symbolischen Formen* (Heidegger [1928] 2010; Bourdieu knew this text probably through Cassirer and Heidegger [1929–1931] 1972). Moreover, we know today from the notes of students present at the Davos encounter that, orally, Cassirer did refer to Durkheim and Mauss’s work on “primitive classifications” (Cassirer et al. [1929] 2014, 24).

¹²⁹ The third chapter of Friedman’s book is precisely entitled “The Neo-Kantian Background” (Friedman 2000, 25–37).

¹³⁰ Friedman’s ambition was “to show that carefully attending to the very different ways in which the thought of all three philosophers evolved in sharply diverging directions from a common neo-Kantian heritage can greatly illuminate the nature and sources of the analytic/continental divide” (Friedman 2000, xi)

¹³¹ Friedman’s history of philosophy came also with a systematic project of reviving certain aspects of Marburg neo-Kantianism (see especially Friedman 2001). Accordingly, his study of the Davos encounter ended with a recommendation for studying Cassirer in the interest of overcoming the continental-analytic divide: “Those interested in finally beginning a reconciliation of the analytic and continental traditions, however, can find no better starting point than the rich treasure of ideas, ambitions, and analyses stored in his [Cassirer’s, MS] astonishingly comprehensive body of philosophical work.” (Friedman 2000, 159)

¹³² For an emphasis on the socio-historical dimension of Friedman’s work, see Nemeth 2014; 2018, 580.

neo-Kantianism could be understood in a similar way as a social and intellectual “background” of the social sciences and sociology.

Not surprisingly, these sociological narratives have their historical sources of inspiration often in sociology or history itself. In Ringer’s case, for example, we find elements of his approach in Max Weber’s method of “ideal types” or in Mannheim’s sociology of knowledge (e.g. Ringer [1969] 1990, 1–13; 1992, 18–25; 1997, 6). Mannheim himself – a “modernist rebel mandarin” in Ringer’s classification (Ringer 1969, 434) – had proposed as early as 1925 a sociology of knowledge account of the sociology of knowledge in which neo-Kantianism had played an important role (especially Mannheim [1925] 1964, 328, 331–33) – although it was only one among other equally crucial positions such as “positivism” or phenomenology. Ringer – studying Weber with Weber or Mannheim with Mannheim, as it were – followed to some extent Mannheim’s reflexive strategy for a sociology of sociology or a “historical sociology of knowledge”, as Ringer called it (Ringer 1992, 18–25).¹³³

In Bourdieu’s case, the application of sociological tools to sociology and philosophy is even more transparent. Bourdieu’s very conception of the intellectual, academic or philosophical “field” went back to a structuralist adaptation of Max Weber’s sociology of religion (Bourdieu 1971c). The idea of an academic “learned *habitus*” (*habitus cultivé*), on the other hand, was rooted, among other things, in a reinterpretation of Durkheimian sociology of knowledge, religion and education (e.g. Bourdieu 1967b, 369, 373; [1975] 1988, 93). Thus, it is in sociology and history itself that socio-historical narratives found their resources – at least on a methodological level.

Nevertheless, the sociological narrative of neo-Kantianism and sociology is today still more of a task than a reality. We have so far rather the contours of a problem and some methodological suggestions than concrete analyses and results. There simply is not yet any one coherent socio-historical narrative on neo-Kantianism and sociology. This makes it all the more important to draw on all available, potentially useful resources. To name only a few, we can think here, for example, of Köhnke’s crucial socio-historical study on the rise of neo-Kantianism which foregrounded the early “positivistic” phase of the Kant movement with its palpable links to sociological or social scientific projects such as Comtean or Spencerian sociology or *Völk-erpsychologie* (e.g. Köhnke 1986, 139–40, 345–66). We should also think of American

¹³³ Likewise, Mannheim’s sociology of knowledge was a source of inspiration for American historian Thomas E. Willey’s socio-historical analysis of the neo-Kantian movement and its impact on “German social and historical thought” – probably the first study of this kind: “I believe the neo-Kantians expressed the tentative and unsuccessful efforts of a segment of the upper bourgeoisie to make peace with the proletariat and to retain an attitude of cultural community with the West. Mannheim has also suggested some useful criteria for the study of intellectual groups: The social background of the intellectuals themselves, their particular associations, and their functions in the larger society.” (Willey 1978, 22–23)

sociologist Randall Collins's (1941-) historical sociology of philosophy which allows to better understand the neo-Kantian movement in the context of philosophy's academicization and its conflictual relations with other disciplines since the early 19th century (e.g. Collins 1998a, 687, 688–753). And then there are, of course, countless local historical studies that will be indispensable for building a socio-historical account of neo-Kantianism and its relations with sociology, for example: German historian Ulrich Sieg's (1960-) thorough study of the Marburg School in the context of university politics (Sieg 1994), French sociologist Louis Pinto's (1946-) account on Cohen's background in *Völkerpsychologie* (Pinto 1995; more recently Kusch 2019; Edgar 2020; Widmer 2021b) or, in the French context, historically-minded studies on the reception of Kant in France (e.g. Bonnet 2011; Fedi 2018; Braverman 2020; Terzi 2023) or on the exchanges between philosophers, historians, sociologists and scientists that gave rise to a peculiar French tradition in the history and philosophy of science (Chimisso 2000; 2008; 2024). All these resources will be needed to construct a satisfactory socio-historical account of neo-Kantianism and sociology.

By now, it has probably become clear that I situate my own account within the tradition of this sociological narrative. This is because, on the one hand, this type of account is, in my view, least of all connected to the collective memory and the present-day interests of any one specific group involved – except the interest of historians and sociologists for an accurate account of the past.¹³⁴ It seems most likely to attain a nuanced picture of neo-Kantianism and sociology by following this route. On the other hand, the sociological narrative has the additional strength that it enables us precisely to understand the plurality of accounts of neo-Kantianism and sociology, i.e. how some of these visions have emerged and why they became memorial obstacles for a more truthful picture of the past. In short, the socio-historical narrative can lead us beyond the limitations of the other types of accounts. In this sense, it is only coherent that I openly subscribe to it.

Explaining dissent

We now have an approximate overview of the different types of narratives. We have identified the general characteristics, some examples, historical sources and strengths as well as weaknesses of each story line. In each case, I have tried to highlight that specific groups with their specific interests and agendas were involved in promoting a certain idea of the relationship between neo-Kantianism and sociology. The analysis could undoubtedly have been taken

¹³⁴ For this reasoning, see the discussion of the relationship between the collective memories of groups and “historians’ memory” above.

further, but it is sufficient here to see that specific groups are at the origin of distinct traditions in remembering the issue at hand.

We can now go a step further: Why, in fact, are there so many contradicting accounts in the first place? Why this persisting plurality? According to the sociology of collective memories outlined above, the diversity of groups and group interests certainly explains this situation, at least in part. However, there seems to be more to the enduring confusion. In fact, it seems not even clear what a coherent narrative integrating all the existing interpretations could look like. Would such a narrative be possible at all given the terms (“neo-Kantianism”, “sociology”) in which the problem has been posed? This question leads us to considering some more general, both historiographical and historical problems involved in the way the research topic has been framed so far.

4. Historiographical problems and suggestions

When we take a step back from the narratives on neo-Kantianism and sociology, we can identify at least three major historiographical problems. Considering these difficulties enables us to understand why there are so many conflicting accounts. And trying to clarify them shall lead us to some suggestions for reconfiguring research on neo-Kantianism and sociology. The three problems concern: (1) the labels and categories involved in the various narratives (“neo-Kantianism”, “sociology”), (2) the conceptualization of the relationship between these purported entities, and (3) the selection of cases, together with operations of generalization, extrapolation and interpolation.

“Neo-Kantianism” and “sociology”

On est d’abord “néo-kantien” [...] *pour les autres*. (Dussort 1963, 18)

A crucial problem of most accounts of neo-Kantianism and sociology is that the terms “neo-Kantianism” and “sociology” are highly ambiguous. All narratives concern the relationship between neo-Kantian philosophers and sociologists. But who counts actually as a “neo-Kantian”? Who counts as a “sociologist”? And who is to say who counts as what? As long as we do not have clear answers to these questions, we cannot unambiguously identify and categorize

individual cases. But then we lack, as a consequence, also the basis for making more general statements about the relationship between neo-Kantianism and sociology.¹³⁵

A first pragmatic reply to the above questions might be: “Just look up the definition in a dictionary or in reference works!” Of course, we find various accounts of “neo-Kantianism” in such sources (e.g. Beck 1967; Holzhey 1984; Nastansky and Welter [1984] 1995; Adair-Toteff 2003; Luft and Capeillères 2010). Most famous here is perhaps the regularly cited distinction of seven “orientations” (*Richtungen*) of neo-Kantianism in historian of philosophy Traugott Konstantin Oesterreich’s (1880-1949) volume on 19th century German philosophy in the reference work *Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie* initiated by Friedrich Ueberweg (1826-1871) (Oesterreich [1916] 1923b, 416–83). However, as soon as we start to compare the available definitions, we see that there is relatively little agreement on them among historians of philosophy. In fact, there are histories of 19th century philosophy which do not use the label “neo-Kantianism” at all (or only in a very limited way) – in Germany (e.g. Moog 1922)¹³⁶ and even more so in France (e.g. Parodi 1919; Bréhier 1932; Benrubi 1933). Why then pick one classification of the philosophical field – written from a particular perspective that emphasizes “neo-Kantianism” – rather than another? For which reasons?

The next suggestion could be: “Well, then just look at how historical agents defined these labels!” And indeed, the term “neo-Kantianism” was used by contemporaries at least since the early 1860s – in Germany initially among Hegelians such as Karl Ludwig Michelet (1801-1893) and Ferdinand Lassalle (1825-1864) criticizing other, more heterodox Hegelians such as Karl Rosenkranz (1805-1879) and Eduard Zeller (1814-1908) who reintegrated Kantian elements (Ferrari [1997] 2001, 18–19; Walter 2022, 492, 494; against Holzhey 1984, col. 747). Yet, these various uses do not provide us with an unambiguous definition either. On the contrary, they show us how the label was instrumentalized in different situations for reaching different goals: from polemical purposes – as in the intra-Hegelian conflicts of the 1860s or in the 1929 Heidegger-Cassirer confrontation when neo-Kantianism was on the decline – to integrative purposes – for example, when Rickert or Cassirer sought in the 1920s to construe a retrospective unity of the neo-Kantian movement beyond its internal differences (Rickert 1924; Cassirer 1929).

In short, “neo-Kantianism” and “sociology” are contestable and contested labels, both as historiographical categories – i.e. as used by those observing and writing the history of

¹³⁵ The following discussion focuses mainly on “neo-Kantianism”. However, most considerations apply by analogy also to “sociology”, as I try to indicate at the end.

¹³⁶ German philosopher Willy Moog (1888-1935) used a restricted definition of “neo-Kantianism” which boiled down to the Marburg school and the Southwest school (Moog 1922, 210–48). In his classification of philosophical positions, he did not use “*Neukantianismus*”, but “*transzendentaler Idealismus*”.

philosophy – and as agents’ categories – i.e. as used by contemporaries involved in philosophical activity. The problem with many existing narratives on neo-Kantianism and sociology – some sociological accounts included – is that they tend to take particular agents’ categorizations – including the categorizations of contemporary historians of philosophy such as Oesterreich – for analytical historical categories, thus running the risk of anachronism and other forms of ethnocentrism. Even worse, they sometimes reify and substantialize the categories “neo-Kantianism” and “sociology” – as if these terms referred unequivocally to an entity. In other words, they tend to take labels that are intrinsically practical – they serve to do things – for something theoretical – a sort of description of an independent state of affairs. What they seem to neglect in this way is that labels, isms, categories and concepts are themselves both the object and the instrument of symbolic struggles among agents for the legitimate classification of the social-intellectual world and its past.

This problem is, of course, a well-known issue in intellectual history, history of science and the social and human sciences more generally. For a long time, historians and sociologists have reflected in various ways on the relationship between their analytical categories and agents’ categories. Febvre’s critique (discussed above) of the anachronistic attribution of “atheism” to Rabelais is here just one case in point. At least since the late 19th century, various projects for historicizing and/or rationalizing terminology have come forward. The 20th century then has seen various programmes for a history of concepts or “historical semantics”: from various forms and traditions of *Begriffsgeschichte* in German-speaking countries (e.g. Dathe and Schlüter 2024; Tönnies [1897] 1906; Brunner et al. 1972–1997; Ritter et al. 1971–2008; Oexle 2009) to projects for a *sémantique historique* in France (e.g. Bloch 1939a; [1949] 2020, 228–29; Febvre 1930; Platania 2000b), from contextualist intellectual history emphasizing “political languages” in the United Kingdom (e.g. Skinner 1969; Pocock 1987) to “sociological semantics” in the United States (e.g. Merton [1965] 1993; Merton and Barber 2004; Zuckerman 2010).¹³⁷

In the history of the social and human sciences in particular, authors have studied, for example, the history, uses and functions of isms (e.g. Höpfl 1983; Boschetti 2014a; Cuttica 2013; 2015) – these notoriously ambiguous umbrella terms used to classify the intellectual and social world. In a broader perspective going beyond isms, some have also investigated labels, names of schools, disciplines and disciplinary groups, denominations of chairs and, more generally, concepts, categories and categorizations in and of the scholarly world – for example, by taking inspiration from “labelling theory” (Feuerhahn 2020c, 14) as it emerged in the 1950s and 1960s

¹³⁷ For a fairly exhaustive overview, see Müller and Schmieder 2016. See also Chapter 5 which touches – starting from Henri Berr’s (1863-1954) unfinished *Vocabulaire historique* (Platania 2000b) – upon the international terminological and encyclopaedic movement in the first half of the 20th century.

in the context of “symbolic interactionism” (e.g. Becker 1953; 1963). In France, historian of the social and human sciences Wolf Feuerhahn (1973-) has proposed in this perspective a programme (as well as case studies) for a transnational historical “pragmatics of knowledge names” (*pragmatique des noms de savoir*) (especially Feuerhahn 2020c; 2020a and the ensuing discussion; for case studies, see e.g. 2014; 2017; 2020b; 2023a; Feuerhahn and Mandressi 2025). All these various approaches have pointed to the practical origins and the pragmatic nature of labels, categories and concepts in the intellectual and social world. The basic idea in this context is again that “saying” (or “naming”) is “doing” (Austin [1955] 1975).¹³⁸

The literature on neo-Kantianism in general and on neo-Kantianism and sociology in particular seems largely unaware of these debates in intellectual history. This is, I would argue, the source of the problems indicated above: undue unification and simplification, anachronism and reification. Let us consider in more detail the peculiar issues connected with the two labels involved – the ism “neo-Kantianism” and the disciplinary name “sociology”.

As for “neo-Kantianism”, it has become a commonplace in the literature to emphasize – as a sort of opening statement – the diversity of the movement (e.g. Beck 1967; Ollig 1979, 1; Ferrari [1997] 2001, 8; de Warren and Staiti 2015, 2). The most common solution to the problem of the lacking unity of neo-Kantianism is to speak of a “movement” rather than a definite school or doctrine, using phrases such as “neo-Kantian movement”, “Kant movement”, “‘back to Kant’ movement”, “Kant revival”, “retours à Kant”, etc. Within this movement, then, scholars will usually distinguish different “orientations”, including “schools” such as the most widely known “Marburg school” and the “Southwest”, “Baden” or “Heidelberg school” (e.g. recently Noras [2012] 2020). The most frequent reference point here remains Oesterreich’s already mentioned seven-fold classification produced during and after the First World War. To see why this strategy is problematic, the latter deserves attention.

Oesterreich himself came from the periphery of the Kant movement in Germany. He had studied with philosopher, educator and Kant specialist Friedrich Paulsen (1846-1908) and with psychologist Carl Stumpf (1848-1936) in Berlin and had defended in 1905 a thesis on *Kant und die Metaphysik* – before turning, later on, to the study of parapsychological phenomena (Bauer

¹³⁸ I believe that these various approaches are consistent with Halbwachs’s sociology of memory outlined above and his sociology of knowledge or “collective psychology” more generally. For Halbwachs, concepts are intrinsically social and historical. They can be used both synchronically and diachronically. This, at least, is how I would interpret the metaphor at the end of *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire*: “[S]uivant le sens qu’on choisit pour les parcourir, qu’on remonte le courant, ou qu’on passe d’une rive à l’autre, les mêmes représentations nous sembleront être tantôt des souvenirs, et tantôt des notions ou des idées générales.” (Halbwachs [1925] 1994, 289)

1999).¹³⁹ By updating Ueberweg's widely read *Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie*, Oesterreich came to occupy a strategically important position for (re-)shaping (in the sense of Halbwachs's *remaniement*) the collective representation of 19th century philosophy. In general, Oesterreich presented "neo-Kantianism and neo-criticism" (*Neukantianismus und Neokritizismus*) as the most important "movement" (*Bewegung*) of the decades preceding the 1920s. At the same time, he emphasized instantly the "composite" nature of this movement.¹⁴⁰ The two common traits (*gemeinsames Moment*) he attributed to the whole current – the "importance of thought" and the "problem of values" (Oesterreich [1916] 1923b, 416) – corresponded actually to the two major "schools" of neo-Kantianism he distinguished: the "Marburg school" and the "Southwest school".¹⁴¹

While Oesterreich had distinguished in the 11th edition of 1916 already six different orientations of neo-Kantianism – claiming, by the way, to offer the first comprehensive overview of the "neo-criticist movement"¹⁴² –, the expanded 12th edition of 1923 added a seventh current (the "psychologistic transformation of criticism") and a further group of "thinkers influenced by Kant" (*von Kant beeinflusste Denker*). Oesterreich's classification went as follows (Oesterreich [1916] 1923b, 416–83):

Es sind sieben Richtungen im Neukritizismus zu unterscheiden: 1. die *physiologische* Richtung (*Helmholtz, Lange*); 2. die *metaphysische* Richtung (*Liebmann, Volkelt*); 3. die *realistische* Richtung (*Riehl*); 4. die *logizistische* Richtung (*Cohen, Natorp, Cassirer* – die Marburger Schule); 5. der *wert-theoretische* Kritizismus (*Windelband, Rickert, Münsterberg* – südwestdeutsche oder badische Schule, der auch *Bauch* nahesteht); die *relativistische* Umbildung des Kritizismus (*Simmel*); 7. die *psychologische*, welche an *Fries* anknüpft (Neufriesische Schule, *Nelson*). (Oesterreich [1916] 1923b, 417)

The number of pages he accorded to each "orientation" indicated already an order of relative importance.¹⁴³ Most space was dedicated to "value-theoretical criticism" or the "Southwest school" with 18 pages, followed by the "logistic orientation" of the "Marburg school" with 15 pages. Far behind these two major schools – the ones still most present today in the historiography of 19th century philosophy – came the "metaphysical" (7 pages), the "psychological" (6

¹³⁹ Oesterreich classified himself under the category "new metaphysics", sub-category "metaphysics of religion", and under "parapsychology" (Oesterreich [1916] 1923b, 600–601, 605–9, 617–24).

¹⁴⁰ "Die umfangreichste Bewegung während der letzten Jahrzehnte ist der *Neukantianismus* bzw. *Neokritizismus* gewesen. [...] Die ganze Bewegung ist, wie schon oben hervorgehoben wurde, sehr zusammengesetzter Natur." (Oesterreich [1916] 1923b, 416)

¹⁴¹ Oesterreich used both labels in his 1923 classification. However, as Feuerhahn has shown, the label "Southwest or Baden school" was still lacking in the 1916 edition (Feuerhahn 2023b, 65).

¹⁴² "[E]s ist das wohl überhaupt die erste eingehende Gesamtübersicht über die neukritizistische Bewegung" (Oesterreich [1916] 1923a, X).

¹⁴³ For the history of this basic operation of "quantitative content analysis", see Thackray and Merton 1972.

pages), the “realistic” (5 pages), the “relativistic” (4 pages) and the “physiological” orientation (3 pages). The six pages occupied by “thinkers influenced by Kant” covered more than 20 authors (counting only those receiving at least one phrase of characterization) and contained barely more than bibliographical information. What is more, Oesterreich seemed to distinguish vaguely between “orientations” (*Richtungen*) and “transformations” (*Umbildungen*) of neo-Kantianism – the latter attribute applying to the relativistic and the psychological current.

Oesterreich’s division into “orientations” seemed to many a convincing way of accounting for both the unity and the diversity of the “neo-Kantian movement”. However, what appeared to be a neat classification posed several problems. First, Oesterreich did not answer the fundamental question of what was meant by “neo-Kantianism”. The two common characteristics he named were hardly veiled references to the two main “schools” and did not cover all the currents he discussed. Second, speaking of a “neo-Kantian movement” instead of “neo-Kantianism” did not solve the basic issue of delimitation. It merely shifted the question of the limits of “neo-Kantianism” to the question of the limits of the “neo-Kantian movement”.¹⁴⁴ Third, Oesterreich’s classification of “neo-Kantians” disagreed in several respects with how contemporaries used the expression. On the one hand, he classified authors as neo-Kantians who would barely have called themselves “neo-Kantians” – e.g. the “psychological” German philosopher and mathematician Leonard Nelson (1882-1927) (Holzhey 1984, col. 751)¹⁴⁵, but also Simmel or Weber. On the other hand, he excluded agents who were arguably crucial in the Kant movement – in particular, German philosopher Hans Vaihinger (1852-1933), a student of German “positivist” Ernst Laas (1837-1885) and follower of Lange, who founded the journal *Kant-Studien* (1896) as well as the Kant-Gesellschaft (1904). Oesterreich subsumed the latter under the heading “Idealist-pragmatist positivism” and presented him as a (slightly “deeper”) German version of English-speaking pragmatism.¹⁴⁶ Finally and perhaps most importantly, Oesterreich never really reflected on the status of the label “neo-Kantianism”, neither on its meaning, nor on the history of its use or its function in auto-designation and hetero-designation.¹⁴⁷ All these problems are, of course, exacerbated once we seek to extend this use of “neo-Kantianism” to other

¹⁴⁴ For the issues involved in the notion of “movement”, see Frickel and Gross 2005. For a critique of thinking in such “movements”, see Boschetti 2014, 5–6.

¹⁴⁵ American philosopher and Kant specialist Lewis White Beck (1913-1997) spoke with reference to Nelson’s “neo-Friesianism” – going back to Jakob Friedrich Fries (1773-1743) who had proposed an early psychological interpretation of Kant – of “Göttingen neo-Kantianism” (Beck 1967, 472).

¹⁴⁶ “Vaihingers Philosophie ist die (tiefer) deutsche Parallelerscheinung zum amerikanisch-englischen Pragmatismus.” (Oesterreich [1916] 1923b, 411)

¹⁴⁷ In this respect, French philosopher and sociologist Henri Dussort (1926-1960) had criticized Oesterreich’s classification as early as 1959/1960 in his remarkable account of the Marburg school (Dussort 1963).

national contexts such as France and ask whether there was something like a “French neo-Kantianism”.¹⁴⁸

It is true that later authors have been more attentive to the history of the term “neo-Kantianism”.¹⁴⁹ Thus, German-Swiss historian of philosophy and Cohen specialist Helmut Holzhey (1937-) has retraced the label to the 1870s and to the struggles between different factions of German philosophy at the time.¹⁵⁰ “Neo-Kantianism” – as many other isms (Höpfel 1983; Boschetti 2014a) – served here first of all as a polemical hetero-designation (e.g. Hartmann 1877; Vaihinger 1876).¹⁵¹ Holzhey showed that the usefulness of the term as a historiographical category was already debated among contemporary philosophers and historians of philosophy, for example regarding the tension between faithfulness to Kant’s philosophy (“Kantianism”) and the element of innovation indicated by the prefix “neo” (e.g. Erdmann [1896] 1964, 764). Also, several authors objected to Oesterreich’s popular classification – as Holzhey himself, who criticized the latter’s “inflationary” use of the term “neo-Kantianism” (Holzhey 1984, cols 750–751). Further important contributions to a critical history of the term “neo-Kantianism” have been made, for example, by Köhnke who questioned the conventional narrative attributing the beginning of the movement to Liebmann’s 1865 *Kant und die Epigonen* (Köhnke 1986, 213–14, 484–85).¹⁵²

Yet, these histories of the term “neo-Kantianism” have mostly remained descriptive, without offering an analytical scheme for better understanding the sources of existing ambiguities. To go a step further, we should consider some formal properties of the term. To begin with, the

¹⁴⁸ For a critique of the historiographical category “French neo-Kantianism”, see Strauss [forthcoming] 2024. Was there any such thing as a “French neo-Kantianism”? There is no agreement among today’s historians (e.g. the contrasting positions in Capeillères 1998; Fedi 2018; see recently also Terzi 2024) and the label “*néo-kantisme*” is virtually absent from categorizations by historical agents (Fouillée 1881 is the most prominent exception, but refers exclusively to Renouvier).

¹⁴⁹ The first to insist on the problems connected with the *étiquette* “neo-Kantianism” and its uses was, to my knowledge, Dussort. In his pioneering study on the “Marburg school” – unfortunately a fragment due to Dussort’s untimely death – he started with a critique of the “*préjugé défavorable*” against neo-Kantianism, produced and entertained primarily by Marxists and Heideggerians (Dussort 1963, 16–25). By the way, Dussort’s account – edited by French philosopher Jules Vuillemin (1920–2001) – should become an important source of Bourdieu’s already mentioned *L’ontologie politique de Martin Heidegger* (Bourdieu 1975c; for the reference to Dussort, see [1975] 1988, 56, n. 11). Notably, Bourdieu took up Dussort’s notion of a “*kantisme de gauche*” attributed to the Marburg school (Dussort 1963, 52; Bourdieu [1975] 1988, 56, n. 11; later uses of this term, see Meyer 2005; Widmer 2024). The copy used and apparently underlined by Bourdieu can be found in the library of the Paris Maison des Sciences de l’Homme, today part of the Humathèque on Campus Condorcet, Paris-Aubervilliers, under the code “C 2COHEN 6”.

¹⁵⁰ As indicated above, Holzhey’s chronology must be corrected. First occurrences of “*Neukantianismus*” (and cognates) can be retraced to the early 1860s (Ferrari [1997] 2001, 18–19; Walter 2022, 492, 494).

¹⁵¹ “Die Kennzeichnung des Kritizismus als ‘N.’ soll demnach dessen dogmatisches und scholastisches Moment enthüllen.” (Holzhey 1984, col. 748)

¹⁵² For the history of the specific labels “*Marburger Schule*” and “*Südwestdeutsche Schule*”, see Sieg 1994; Natorp 1912; and Feuerhahn 2023b, 64–67; Rickert 1931; 1934. Remarkable – but finally unsuccessful – is also Brooks’s attempt to build up a population of French “neo-Kantians” from contemporary classifications (Brooks 1998, 244).

expression “neo-Kantianism” raises problems typical for isms in general (Höpfl 1983; Cuttica 2013; 2015; Boschetti 2014a) and, in particular, for expressions claiming to identify “intellectual communities” (Vogt 1982; Pudal 2005). That is, the term inevitably suggests the existence of a discrete unit or entity. It thus conceals the polemical-practical origin and multiple uses of the label in contemporary agents’ symbolic struggles (Boschetti 2014a, 5). It also comes with a multiplicity of possible meanings, ranging from a definite “doctrine” to a “general orientation” and, indeed, a “phenomenon of any kind” – without obliging its users to make explicit what they mean (Höpfl 1983, 12). Finally, isms can become genuine “categories of scholarly thought” guiding intellectuals’ perceptions, evaluations and actions. As such, they can create a host of “false problems” – for example, the issue of delimitation and membership, with questions of the type “who belongs to the ism and who does not?” (Boschetti 2014a, 5–7, 16)¹⁵³

In the case of the ism “neo-Kantianism”, however, two other aspects introduce further complications. First, there is the reference to a particular historical individual – 18th century Prussian philosopher Immanuel Kant – and his work, his “philosophy”.¹⁵⁴ This reference¹⁵⁵ inevitably involves certain (historically and socially situated) representations and interpretations of this individual and of his products. Which interpretation of Kant and his work will we call “Kantianism”? What does Kant’s philosophy – or his “system” – actually consist in? Which parts of it are essential, which are more or less contingent? To be a “Kantian”, is it necessary to subscribe to Kant’s analysis of scientific knowledge in the “transcendental analytics” in the *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, or to his “transcendental deduction” of the categories, or to his critique of metaphysics in the “transcendental dialectics”, or to his practical philosophy and his foundation of a new critical metaphysics?¹⁵⁶ These issues have been under permanent debate since the rise to prominence of Kant’s work in the late 18th century. On which grounds, from a historical perspective, should we choose between the different interpretations on offer? The problem is obviously not solved (or only superficially) by replacing the reference to “Kant” and

¹⁵³ We should add that the use of isms has its own long-term history and sociology. Höpfl isolated two major historical periods with increased production of isms: the late 16th and first half of the 17th century; and the first half of the 19th century (Höpfl 1983, 4; see also Boschetti 2014a, 336).

¹⁵⁴ “Neo-Kantianism” is thus part of a class of isms described by Höpfl as “-isms with a specifically doctrinal referent” (Höpfl 1983, 15) connected with a proper name, such as Christianity, Lutheranism, Calvinism, Platonism, Marxism, etc. These isms might be “less problematic than -isms purporting to refer to a phenomenon – such as fascism, imperialism, totalitarianism, racism, sexism, monetarism, capitalism, communism, colonialism, leftism, pacifism, individualism, collectivism, etc.” (Höpfl 1983, 15). But I am less optimistic than Höpfl regarding the criteria for imputing such isms. They are still highly ambiguous as it is not clear what the individual referred to by the name, their work or other production stand for.

¹⁵⁵ For the diversity of meanings and uses of references and citations as such, see Olivesi 2007.

¹⁵⁶ Most “Kantianisms” and “neo-Kantianisms” seem to come with some version of a selective “good Kant-bad Kant” narrative. The most striking specimen is perhaps German evolutionist, naturalist and philosopher Ernst Haeckel’s (1834-1919) distinction between a good “Kant I” – the critique of metaphysics, the physicist, the monist, the atheist – and a bad “Kant II” – the founder of a new metaphysics, the moralist, the dualist, the theist (Haeckel 1904, 506, 528).

“Kantianism” with “criticism” – as a designation for Kant’s doctrine (but suggesting more distance from the historical individual). How should we then define “criticism”?

The second complicating factor in “neo-Kantianism” is the prefix “neo”. It indicates a “return” or “revival” to something indicated by the ism. “Neo-Kantianism” shares this “logic of return” with other “revival movements” (Collins 1998a, 619) in philosophy and intellectual and cultural history, such as neorealism, neoliberalism, neo-classicism or – involving again proper names – neo-Platonism, neo-Marxism, neo-Fregeanism, neo-Lamarckism, etc.¹⁵⁷ In these “returns”, as we might say with Halbwachs, specific parts of philosophers’ “collective memory” are reactivated from the standpoint of a specific historical present. The past of the discipline is “reconstructed” from a new, different perspective. The revival implies, on the one hand, that there has been a period of relative or absolute oblivion of what the ism pretends to designate. On the other hand, “neo” also suggests a renewal under the conditions of a new historical situation, i.e. a certain degree of development or innovation beyond what is taken to be the initial position. This creates then a tension with the referent of the ism. How much “neo” can a “neo-Kantianism” contain to still count as a “Kantianism”? And conversely, how much “Kant” can a “neo-Kantianism” contain to still count as a “neo-Kantianism”? These are issues that were already discussed by 19th century philosophers and historians of philosophy (e.g. Erdmann [1896] 1964, 764) as well as by prominent “neo-Kantians” during the decline of the movement (e.g. Rickert 1924; Cassirer 1929; Cassirer in Cassirer and Heidegger [1929] 2010, 274; see also Sternberg 1920; 1930)¹⁵⁸. Yet, they still haunt the literature on neo-Kantianism (and

¹⁵⁷ Lalande’s *Vocabulaire technique et critique de la philosophie* contained some reflection on the prefix “neo”, remarking in passing that its use seemed more frequent in Germany than in France: “NÉO... – préfixe servant à désigner certaines écoles philosophiques, pour les rattacher à une école antérieure qu’elles continuent à quelques égards. Les expressions de cette forme paraissent être plus usuelles en Allemagne qu’en France, où il y en a peu qui soient couramment employées; les plus connues sont *Néo-platonisme* (PLOTIN, PORPHYRE, JAMBLIQUE); *Néo-criticisme* (RENOUVIER, BROCHARD, HAMELIN; MM. PILLON, DAURIAC et les autres collaborateurs de la *Critique philosophique*); *Néo-scolastique* (MM. D. MERCIER, de WULF et les autres collaborateurs de la *Revue néoscolastique* de Louvain).” (Lalande [1902-1923] 2010, 680)

¹⁵⁸ Rickert insisted in his obituary of Austrian-German “realist” neo-Kantian Alois Riehl (1844-1924) that only those should be called “neo-Kantians” who have introduced – as Kantians – something new: “Im strengen Sinne sollte man nur die als Neukantianer, d. h. als Kantianer, die etwas *Neues* gebracht haben, bezeichnen, die, wie Riehl sagt, durch ein erneutes und vertieftes Studium Kants die Philosophie *über sich selbst zu besinnen* suchten und dadurch zugleich wirklich über ihren schon vorher erreichten Stand *hinausführten*.” (Rickert 1924, 163–64) With Riehl’s death ended, according to Rickert, “neo-Kantianism as a historical phenomenon” (Rickert 1924, 164). In a different way, Cassirer – in his entry on “Neo-Kantianism” in the 1929 edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* – emphasized that the element of novelty in “neo-Kantianism” resulted from the new historical situation of the sciences faced by those returning to Kant: “But, notwithstanding differences of detail, there is a certain methodical principle common to all of them [individual thinkers belonging to the neo-Kantian movement, MS]. They all see in philosophy not merely a personal conviction, an individual view of the world, but they enquire into the possibility of *philosophy as a science* with the intention of formulating its conditions. They take their cue from the *most general* statement of the Kantian problem in the preface to the *Critique of Pure Reason* and in the *Prolegomena*. But in returning to the fundamental aim of Kant, to lead philosophy ‘into the safe road of a science’, Neo-Kantianism finds itself confronted with a new task inasmuch as it must face a different state of science itself.” (Cassirer 1929, 215)

sociology) with the problems of membership and imputation they create (e.g. “was *X* a neo-Kantian?”).

All three elements of the term “neo-Kantianism” – “ism”, “Kant” and “neo” – can become a source of polysemy and thus of confusion and misunderstanding. It is hardly surprising that, as a result, the label “neo-Kantianism” has been used to designate very different phenomena – especially when we consider the various returns to Kant in a transnational perspective (Ferrari [1997] 2001; Luft and Capeillères 2010). The content and delimitation of this ism regularly pose problems, typically in the form of the question whether a particular author is “really” or “still” a neo-Kantian. Moreover, this question of demarcation is asked in a quite different sense both by historical agents involved – discussing the legitimacy of certain uses and interpretations of Kant – and by historiographers – seeking to produce a convincing classification of historical agents’ activity. It occurs frequently that both perspectives intermingle, with historians becoming sometimes the judges of historical agents.

As a sort of measure of intellectual hygiene, we should answer three (sets of) questions – corresponding to the three elements of the term – for each use of the word “neo-Kantianism”: (1) Which is the meaning of the ism? A doctrine, a school, a movement, an orientation, or something else? Who has used the ism (e.g. historical agents, contemporary historiographers, present-day philosophers or historiographers)? In which context? And to which effect? (2) Which is the meaning of “Kant” and “Kantianism”? Which interpretations are involved? Which is the symbolic value of “Kant” in the philosophical field at the time, and which is thus the meaning of referring to “Kant”? (3) Finally, which is the meaning of “neo”? Which is the sense of the return, the reactivation and the renewal in each context? What are the historical narratives these returns come with? To which extent and in which areas are new elements introduced distinguishing “neo-Kantianism” from mere “Kantianism”?

These questions would oblige us to be more precise about the social and intellectual reality designated by (a certain use of) “neo-Kantianism”. Not answering them has led to the confusing variety of meanings given to the term in the literature. We can indeed distinguish here – without any claim to exhaustivity – several uses of “neo-Kantianism”, each with its respective troubles:

- (1) A definite philosophical doctrine – for example, regarding the relationship between sensibility and understanding, the interpretation of the natural and historical sciences, the questions of values, etc. (e.g. Oesterreich [1916] 1923b, 416). – The obvious problem with this definition is the factual diversity of doctrines of authors called “neo-Kantians” both by contemporaries and historians (even among those forming the two core “schools”).

- (2) A definite philosophical method, especially what has been presented by Cohen and the Marburg tradition as Kant's "transcendental method" (e.g. Cohen [1881] 1914, IX; [1883] 1968), i.e. the investigation of the "conditions of possibility" of the "fact" of the mathematical natural sciences. "Neo-Kantians" are then those, for example, who subscribe to Kant's "transcendental deduction of the categories" (e.g. Brooks 1998, 214–15). – The problem here is that the meaning of this "transcendental method" – in fact, the meaning of the very term "transcendental" – has been controversial since the early reception of Kant's work.
- (3) A general "orientation" or "direction" of philosophical research, with a certain "scientific" conception of this activity – for example, as Cassirer proposed it in his "functional definition" of "neo-Kantianism" against Heidegger's "substantialist" definition in terms of an epistemology of the natural sciences (Cassirer 1929; Cassirer and Heidegger [1929] 2010).¹⁵⁹ – The problem with this wider definition is that it risks becoming too extensive. Indeed, the variegated 19th and 20th century movement of "scientific philosophy" was wider than authors called "neo-Kantians" (e.g. Richardson 1997; 2023).
- (4) An academic "school" – either in a wider intellectual sense referring back to meanings (1) and (2); or in a stricter sociological or institutional sense, referring to a social formation with a specific location in space and time that involves at least two successive generations of philosophers connected through personal teacher-pupil ties (for the ambiguities of "school", see also Collins 1998, 64–65; Dayé 2015; Orain and Marcel 2018). In the second sense, we can indeed speak of a "Marburg school" (Sieg 1994); but already the "Southwest school" seems less well-defined. – The problem with "neo-Kantianism" as a "school" is that, taken in the intellectual sense, it remains as vague as the ism itself. Taken in the institutional sense, however, it would exclude numerous important authors who are usually qualified as "neo-Kantians" but operated independently of "schools".
- (5) A heterogeneous scientific, academic and cultural "movement", characterized by a "return to Kant" or, at least, a positive reference to this author (e.g. Willey 1978; Ferrari [1997] 2001). Thus conceived, this movement could be quantified, for example, in terms of the number of publications and academic lectures on Kant (e.g. Köhnke

¹⁵⁹ "Ich meine, es gibt kaum einen Begriff, der so wenig deutlich umschrieben wäre wie der des Neukantianismus. [...] Man muss den Begriff 'Neukantianismus' nicht substanziell, sondern funktionell bestimmen. Es handelt sich nicht um die Art der Philosophie als dogmatisches Lehrsystem, sondern um eine Richtung der Fragestellung." (Cassirer and Heidegger [1929] 2010, 274)

1986). – The problem is that, taken in this sense, the “neo-Kantian movement” would not satisfy more rigorous sociological definitions of “scientific-intellectual movements” (Frickel and Gross 2005): its purported members were too strongly opposed to each other, both intellectually and socially, to share something like a collective identity characteristic of a “movement”. If taken in a wider sense, on the other hand, “movement” is beset with the same problems of vagueness and delimitation as the initial “neo-Kantianism”.

- (6) The totality of (positive and negative) references to Kant and his philosophy at a certain point in time, both in publications and in official teaching. In this sense, for example, the idea of a “French neo-Kantianism” has been justified by the fact that Kant was at the end of the 19th century “un impératif pour tous” (Bourel 2009). – The problem is, of course, that the mere presence (positive or negative) of an author in published writings and teachings is not a sufficient criterion for speaking of a “neo-Kantianism” – an ism that suggests a homogeneous entity. Also, the difference between “Kantianism”, “neo-Kantianism” and even “anti-Kantianism” becomes difficult to grasp if the sole condition is the presence of the author.¹⁶⁰

To simplify and put these different meanings in order, we can distribute them along two axes, creating a matrix of four types of use. On the first axis, “neo-Kantianism” is taken either as a primarily intellectual phenomenon, defined in terms of some intellectual content; or as a primarily social phenomenon, defined in terms of social characteristics of group formation, sociability, socialization, organization and institutionalization.¹⁶¹ On the second axis, “neo-Kantianism” is taken either in a narrow or in a broad sense. Crossing these two distinctions creates four groups with types of different meanings of “neo-Kantianism”. Thus, there are: (1) narrow intellectual meanings – e.g. a defined doctrine or method; (2) broad intellectual meanings – e.g. a set of different doctrines united by a common method or orientation; (3) narrow social meanings – e.g. a delimited group or a well-defined school with its relationships between teachers and pupils; and (4) broad social meanings – e.g. a set of schools or groups somehow connected to each other and forming a vague “movement”, or, as a limiting case, the simple quantitative increase in references to Kant.

¹⁶⁰ At the margins, “neo-Kantianism” is also present in the literature as a polemical label (e.g. Holzhey 1984; Köhnke 1986; Walter 2022) involved in the symbolic struggles for scientific legitimacy among historical agents in the philosophical field (and beyond); and, at least as an ideal, as a purely analytical historiographical category in the history of philosophy, defined according to objective criteria and independent from historical agents’ classifications (Vogt 1982) – the problem being not only the determination of criteria, but also the fact that historical agents did use that label.

¹⁶¹ These two perspectives are not perfectly exclusive – as we have seen in the case of “schools” – but they can serve as an orientation.

Equivocations and misunderstandings concerning the word “neo-Kantianism” seem to result often from surreptitious and uncontrolled shifts between these four types of uses. For example, one and the same actor can be at the same time “neo-Kantian” in the narrow social sense of belonging to a line of transmission between a master and a disciple; and “non-neo-Kantian” according to the narrow intellectual criterion of proximity or loyalty to certain ideas or doctrines – and vice versa. In this sense, it has sometimes been said, for example, that Cassirer, with his *Philosophie der symbolischen Formen*, “went beyond neo-Kantianism” or “was no longer neo-Kantian” – a characterization which, of course, has no sense from the point of view of sociological criteria.

The situation is made even more complex by the fact that historical agents themselves engaged in controversies over the meaning of “neo-Kantianism” – jumping sometimes from one type of meaning to the other. A prominent case is, of course, the already mentioned confrontation between Cassirer and Heidegger in Davos in 1929. In France, we might think, for example, of Brunschvicg’s opposition to Renouvier’s *néo-criticisme*, which the former considered to be “dogmatic” and a form of “uncritical Kantianism” (Brunschvicg 1920, 285, 325; see also Terzi 2022b, 87–91; 2023, 363–67). Unfortunately, these symbolic struggles of historical agents over the true meaning and justification of “neo-Kantianism”, over Kant’s doctrine or the legitimate use of Kant have sometimes had an impact on historiographical debates on whether a certain author, current or group are part of “neo-Kantianism” or not (for the case of Boutroux, see e.g. the opposition between Capeillères 1998; Heidelberger 2009).

In sum, much confusion is created by passing from one meaning of “neo-Kantianism” to another. Choosing one meaning and sticking to this definition would certainly help. But it remains uncertain whether “neo-Kantianism” can ever become an unequivocal category of historical analysis. These more general considerations on the label “neo-Kantianism” have, of course, important consequences for the issue of the relationship between neo-Kantianism and sociology. For what are we actually referring to when we ask about sociology’s connections with “neo-Kantianism”? It is now clear that this can mean a variety of things.

But the situation is even worse. For the second term involved in the relation – “sociology” – is beset with problems quite analogous to those involved in “neo-Kantianism”. Who counts as a “sociologist”? The answer is far from simple – neither from the point of view of historical agents nor from the perspective of historical observers. I cannot go here into the details, as I have done for “neo-Kantianism”, but provide only a few indications.

We might start from the simple fact that one of most prominent agents presented as a positive case for a “neo-Kantian influence” on sociology – Max Weber – had actually for most of his life a fairly complicated relationship with the label “sociology” (Feuerhahn 2014, 176–77). It

seems that only after his involvement in the foundation of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Soziologie (DGS) in 1909/1910, Weber came to use the term to designate his own project (e.g. Weber [1913] 1988; [1913] 2018) – perhaps to separate the notion precisely from the “dilettantes” he had encountered in the DGS, especially Austrian sociologist and philosopher Rudolf Goldscheid (1870-1931). Later, in the context of his work for the *Grundriss der Sozialökonomik* – what should be published posthumously as *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* (1921/1922)¹⁶² – he identified his typological work equally as “sociological” (e.g. Weber [1921] 2014).¹⁶³ Thus, only in 1919 did he self-identify as “primarily a sociologist”.¹⁶⁴ Yet, these self-designations fell in a period posterior to the close engagement with Rickert’s *Grenzen* around 20 years earlier. When he started his methodological articles around 1903, Weber still preferred – as Rickert – the label “*Kulturwissenschaften*” (Feuerhahn 2023b, 25, 153–54) and was suspicious of the Comtean classification of the sciences that contained the term “*Soziologie*” (Weber [1922] 1988a, 412–13). Was Weber thus a “sociologist” positively influenced by “neo-Kantianism”? Certainly not in his own terms.¹⁶⁵

This points to the fact that “sociology” around 1900 had a variety of meanings and connotations – both in Germany and in France. Collective representations went from a sort of natural science of society, a “positivistic” project, a “Western European” and certainly “non-German” enterprise, to a philosophy of history, a social psychology, a programme for social reform, a socialist undertaking or – on the contrary – a bourgeois ideology.¹⁶⁶ For the German-speaking area, Wolf Feuerhahn, for example, has analysed the use of the label in book titles and shown

¹⁶² On the complex editorial history of what is often taken to be Weber’s most important work, see Borchardt et al. 2014. As early as 1977, Friedrich Tenbruck had announced a “Abschied von *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*” (Tenbruck 1977).

¹⁶³ Weber then defined “sociology” as follows (not without remarking the ambiguous uses of the term): “Soziologie (im hier verstandenen Sinn dieses sehr vieldeutig gebrauchten Wortes) soll heißen: eine Wissenschaft, welche soziales Handeln deutend verstehen und dadurch in seinem Ablauf und seinen Wirkungen ursächlich erklären will.” (Weber [1921] 2014, 1) For an overview of the differences with contemporary conceptions of “sociology” by Stammler, Spann and Simmel, see Borchardt et al. 2014, 235–28.

¹⁶⁴ “Erst 1919 bezeichnete er sich selbst ‘primär als Soziologen’ und wollte der überarbeiteten Fassung seines Beitrages zu *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* im *Grundriß der Sozialökonomik* den Titel *Soziologie* geben. Bei der Gründung der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Soziologie sah er seine Aufgabe vor allem darin, strenge Kriterien aufzustellen, die dafür sorgen sollten, ‘daß nicht “gequatscht” wird und nur Berufene reden’ (Weber 1994: 114). Insbesondere in dem Mitbegründer, Rudolf Goldscheid, sah er einen Gegenpol, da dieser für populäre Vortragsveranstaltungen eintrat; Weber hielt ihn für einen ‘Spektakel- und Reklamemacher’.” (Lepsius 2011, 9) See also Weber’s late commitment to “*Gesellschaftswissenschaft*” – for him the equivalent of “*Soziologie*” – in the negotiations concerning his last chair in Munich, entitled “*Gesellschaftswissenschaft, Wirtschaftsgeschichte, Nationalökonomie*” (Borchardt et al. 2014, 231).

¹⁶⁵ The reverse situation applies to Durkheim. He self-identified early on as a “sociologist” (e.g. Durkheim 1888). But was there something like a “French neo-Kantianism” to “influence” him? Or was Durkheim even Durkheim himself a “neo-Kantian philosopher” (Turner 2017; 2021)? Not in the terms of contemporaries, I would argue (Strauss [forthcoming] 2024).

¹⁶⁶ For histories of the word and concept “sociology” and cognates, see e.g. Pankoke 1984; [1995] 2017; Acham [1995] 2017. For the possibly earliest – non-public – occurrences of the term “*sociologie*” in manuscripts from the 1780s by French writer, politician and revolutionary Joseph Sieyès (1748-1836), see Guilhaumou 2006; Kaufmann 2017.

the stark contrast between what counted then as “sociology” and what did so later on and today. He drew attention to the specifically German resistance to the French and “positivist” label “*Soziologie*”¹⁶⁷ and to the use of other expressions such as “*Gesellschaftswissenschaft*” or “*Gesellschaftslehre*”. Not only the meaning of all these names was fiercely debated, but even the very possibility of something like an autonomous science of society – for example, in the critiques of historian and politician Heinrich von Treitschke (1834-1896) (Treitschke 1859; against Mohl 1851; 1855) or of Dilthey (Dilthey [1883] 1990).¹⁶⁸ Given the factually existing variety of projects summarized under the terms “*Soziologie*”, “*Gesellschaftswissenschaft*” or “*Gesellschaftslehre*”, it amounts to an anachronism to project today’s term “sociology” on the past – and, for example, call an author like Weber without qualification a “sociologist”.

But also in France – the country which had given the world the term “sociology” – the expression covered around 1900 a lot more than later representations of the discipline would betray. This has been convincingly shown by French sociologist Sébastien Mosbah-Natanson who studied – as Feuerhahn for Germany¹⁶⁹ – sociology as an “editorial fact”, i.e. as it was used in book publications (Mosbah-Natanson 2007; 2011; 2017). Criticizing the dominant “Durkheimocentrism” (e.g. Mosbah-Natanson 2017, 20, 22, 39) in the historiography of French sociology, Mosbah-Natanson could show that what he called the “sociological movement” was in fact much broader, reaching from social reform projects based on empirical social research in the tradition of Le Play to quasi-religious positivist and even Catholic versions. Contrary to what a certain Whig historiography of French sociology suggested, not all non-Durkheimian sociologists were automatically “amateurs” who could be duly forgotten. In any case, Mosbah-Natanson raised the question of who we call “sociologists”, and based on which criteria. It is clear that, in a historical perspective, we should avoid definitions involving teleology, anachronism or partiality.¹⁷⁰

In sum, “sociology” appears to be just as ambiguous as “neo-Kantianism”. And, similarly, this seems to go back to the fact that “sociology” was always used – either by historical agents or historical observers – to “do things”. We could indeed apply to it a similar typology as the one proposed above for “neo-Kantianism”, distinguishing between narrow and broad

¹⁶⁷ According to Feuerhahn, there were three main obstacles to the use of “*Soziologie*” in Germany: “La méfiance vis-à-vis de la sociologie résultait donc de l’association qui était alors faite par nombre d’universitaires entre l’idée qu’elle incarnerait l’emprise de la démarche nomologique des sciences de la nature sur les sciences de l’esprit, qu’elle serait une science française renouvelant l’esprit de la révolution ainsi que la réalisation du socialisme sur le terrain scientifique.” (Feuerhahn 2014, 173)

¹⁶⁸ For the German-speaking debates on “sociology” and the resistance to it, or “anti-sociology”, see also Lepenies [1985] 2006, 283–310; Merz-Benz and Wagner 2001.

¹⁶⁹ In fact, Feuerhahn drew on Mosbah-Natanson’s bibliometric approach (Feuerhahn 2014, 160).

¹⁷⁰ For a detailed review of Mosbah-Natanson’s work, I permit myself to refer to Strauss 2021, 521–30.

intellectual or doctrinal definitions (e.g. narrowly in terms of the Durkheimian or Weberian conception of the discipline or broadly in terms of any “science of society”) and narrow and broad social or sociological definitions (e.g. narrowly in terms of the Durkheimian group or broadly in terms of the use of the label on the editorial market). Therefore, when we ask for the relationship between “neo-Kantians” and “sociologists”, who and what are we actually talking about? To get an idea of the different possible meanings of the relationship, we would have to multiply the various senses of “neo-Kantianism” by those of “sociology”. It then seems quite hopeless to identify anything like the *one* meaning of the relationship between “neo-Kantianism” and “sociology”. In other words, when we ask the question in these terms, there simply is no unequivocal answer.

The combined ambiguity of “sociology” and “neo-Kantianism” has made it easy for group-related interests to come in, to determine collective representations of the issue and to maintain a plurality of contradicting narratives. Contrary to neo-Kantianism – which pretty much died out after 1945, became a marginal object of historical investigation in the 1980s, and was revived only recently in English-speaking philosophy of science –, sociology became after the Second World War a well-established academic discipline. Thus, there existed a specific group – sociologists – with their specific “collective memory” and their vested interest in certain “re-constructions” of the past of their discipline. This has increased the danger of “presentist”, “anachronist” or otherwise “ethnocentric” definitions of sociology applied to the past. If anything, the above discussion shows that we should counter the convenient polysemy of the terms “neo-Kantianism” and “sociology” with some heightened vigilance regarding their use. In a historical perspective at least, it is necessary to be as clear as possible about the meanings we give to these words, i.e. the social and intellectual realities we take them to refer to, including the relationship between how we use them and how historical agents used them.

Construing the relationship

Unfortunately, there is still a third element introducing and maintaining ambiguity in the question about the relationship between neo-Kantianism and sociology. Not only the two terms involved are equivocal, but also the supposed relationship between them. What counts actually as a “relationship”? Personal contacts between supposed “neo-Kantians” and “sociologists”? Explicit or implicit references in their writings? Reception and exchange of “ideas”? Participation in shared “contexts” or even a shared “paradigm”? Socialization? Membership in intellectual networks? Or more institutionalized connections? As remarked above, in the existing literature a host of mostly vague metaphors is used to characterize the relationship: physical metaphors such as “influence”, “impact”, “transmission”, but also “base-superstructure”;

biological metaphors such as “filiation” or “lineage”; or social metaphors such as “heritage”, “debt” or “legacy”. In using these pictures, existing narratives mostly neglect methodological critiques of these notions in intellectual history and the history and sociology of science since the 1960s (e.g. Bourdieu 1966; Skinner 1969; Foucault 1969; Koselleck 1979; see also Chapter 2).

In part, the polysemy of the labels is passed on to the relation between them. How we conceive the relationship will depend on how we conceive the entities that we relate to each other. If, for example, we construe “neo-Kantianism” in a narrowly intellectual sense – e.g. as a specific doctrine – then there are good chances that the relationship with “sociology” will be defined in narrowly intellectual terms too – for example, as a transmission or “influence” of concepts, ideas or arguments (e.g. the use of the Rickertian notion of “*Wertbeziehung*” by Weber or of the Renouvierist account of categories in Durkheim). On the other hand, if we construe “neo-Kantianism” and “sociology” in broadly sociological terms, e.g. as participation in certain networks, reference to certain authors and themes, etc., the relationship too will tend to be interpreted as a social one.

Consider an example illustrating the problem. In the narratives on neo-Kantianism and sociology in the German-speaking area, most commentators have focused on the “Southwest school”, paying relatively little attention to the “Marburg school” (with the partial exception of Cassirer, but see Strauss 2025a). This focus seems obvious when we have classifications such as Oesterreich’s or narratives such as Heidegger’s or Lukács’s in mind – narratives which insisted on Marburg neo-Kantianism being “logicistic”, “methodological” and exclusively concerned with the mathematical natural sciences. Yet, it was Cohen and Natorp who signed in support of the creation of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Soziologie in 1910, not Windelband and Rickert (Sieg 1994, 285; Lichtblau 2018, 20). The latter remained staunchly opposed to “sociology” (except perhaps for the respect Rickert paid to Weber’s late work¹⁷¹). Nevertheless, compared to the focus on the Southwest school the relations between Marburg neo-Kantianism and sociology have remained almost unexplored. This is not due to a lack of material: the connections are reaching from the Marburgers’ central role in the debates on “neo-Kantian

¹⁷¹ Rickert remarked Weber’s appropriation of the term “*Soziologie*” and related it to his own classification of the sciences with the opposition between generalizing *Naturwissenschaften* and individualizing *historische Wissenschaften* (see Feuerhahn 2023b, 81–82 for a graph of Rickert’s classification): “Weber scheint mir, falls man den unvergleichlichen Mann überhaupt einordnen will, unter die großen Historiker zu gehören. Aber es lebte in ihm zugleich ein starkes Bedürfnis nach systematischer Konstruktion, wie es sich bei Historikern selten findet. Das hat ihn besonders in späteren Jahren dazu geführt, denselben Stoff, den er geschichtlich durchforschte, auch generalisierend und insofern ungeschichtlich darzustellen. So kam er dazu, seine letzten Arbeiten als ‘Soziologie’ zu bezeichnen und damit dem seit Comte viel gebrauchten und auch mißbrauchten Namen eine neue Bedeutung zu verleihen.” (Rickert [1921] 2007, XXIV)

socialism” – which implied also basic questions in the epistemology of the social sciences (e.g. the central role played by Stammer [1896] 1924; see also Coutu et al. 2001; Adair-Totef 2014; Härpfer and Kaden 2017) – to the personal relations between Tönnies and Natorp (e.g. Sieg 1994, 284–85)¹⁷² or Tönnies and Paulsen (Tönnies and Paulsen 1961; Bond 2010; see also Merz-Benz 2016)¹⁷³. The relative absence of interest in these topics is all the more surprising as already Willey, at the end of the 1970s, had drawn attention to the Marburgers’ involvement in political and social debates (Willey 1978).

This case clearly raises the question what “relationship” means and which relations we consider. What is more important for speaking of a positive relationship between neo-Kantianism and sociology: the support for the institutionalization of the discipline or some theoretical-methodological exchange between “neo-Kantians” (Rickert) and “sociologists” (Weber)? Concrete social relations or sometimes ill-defined intellectual “influences”? There is no doubt that most of the literature has answered the question in favour of the second alternative. Again, at least we should be clear about what we mean by “relation”. The sociological narrative, in any case, pushes us towards identifying the social support for the type of relationship we are talking about.

Selection and generalization

Finally, there is the problem of selection, generalization and even extrapolation. We distinguished above between global and local narratives, i.e. between narratives concerning the relationship between neo-Kantianism and sociology in general and those concerning only some agents thought to exhibit it. Both cases raise problems. How are the individual cases selected? And how can we generalize or extrapolate from these local cases?

¹⁷² In 1924, Tönnies called Natorp himself posthumously a “sociologist”: “Der letzte war der hervorragende Marburger Philosoph Paul *Natorp*. Auch er gehört zu der nicht sehr großen Gruppe derjenigen Denker, die in Anknüpfung an eine Ueberlieferung, die an der Universität Marburg auf Friedrich Albert Lange zurückgeht, immer ein starkes Bewußtsein von der außerordentlichen Bedeutung der soziologischen Fragen für das Geistesleben, für das sittliche Leben, für Erziehung und Unterricht geltend gemacht haben. Von diesem Standpunkt aus war er Soziologe, wie er auch als Sozialpolitiker sich bekannt hat.” (Tönnies et al. 1925, 2–3)

¹⁷³ Merz-Benz offers basically a negative narrative about Tönnies’s relations with neo-Kantianism: “Und doch ist der Gegensatz, in dem die Tönniessche Philosophie zur Kantianischen Denktradition steht, gleichzeitig Ausdruck eines engen systematischen Zusammenhangs; insofern nämlich, als gerade in Abgrenzung von der Kantianischen Philosophie wesentliche Züge der Tönniesschen Philosophie, vornehmlich der Erkenntnistheorie, begriffen zu werden vermögen als Antworten auf eine zentrale, beide Seiten gleichermaßen beschäftigende Frage: auf die Frage nach dem Verhältnis der Vernunft zum Alogischen, auf die Frage, inwieweit sich das Erkennen als von den Vorstufen des naturhaften Empfindens sowie des phylogenetisch bestimmten Bereichs der menschlichen Psyche losgelöst erweist.” (Merz-Benz 2016, 61) In Joly’s account, Tönnies features as the most anti-neo-Kantian of the three main founders of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Soziologie (the others being Simmel and Weber) (Joly 2017, chap. 6). There is, of course, an important polemic between Tönnies and Rickert in 1902 (Bickel 1991; Joly 2017, 198, Fn. 2; see also Simmel 2005, 421). But this is only one side of the story.

First, regarding selection, one problem is that the authors considered so far were mostly “big names” – “founding fathers of sociology” such as Max Weber, Émile Durkheim or Georg Simmel. Specific disciplinary interests came in here. These classics were worth of attention – they are stable parts of the disciplinary memory – whereas more marginal figures in the history of sociology were not.¹⁷⁴ This has introduced a bias in favour of present-day interests. In other words, the selection of relevant agents has been made according to “presentist” and “anachronistic” criteria. As a result, some historical agents were neglected who, in their own time, were arguably more important for the relationship between neo-Kantianism and sociology than the today canonical authors. The existing narratives have become here indeed what I called “memorial obstacles”. They impede a genuinely historical and sociological account of the issue by canalizing all attention into the same well-known and unquestioned channels.

A telling illustration of this problem is the case of already mentioned legal scholar and philosopher of law Rudolf Stammler. Stammler, impressed by the proponents and works of the Marburg school, published a much-discussed neo-Kantian critique of “historical materialism” (Stammler [1896] 1924) which should provide at the same time a solid foundation for “social science”¹⁷⁵. This proposal was widely discussed by sociologists interested in methodological and epistemological questions (e.g. Simmel [1896] 1999; Adler 1913b; 1913a; 1904a; Spann 1902; Tönnies 1907; 1908; 1909; Weber [1907] 1988; [1922] 1988b) as well as in the vivid debate on “neo-Kantian socialism”. Thus, at the end of the 19th century Stammler was probably the single most prominent author in the German-speaking world associated with the attempt of providing a neo-Kantian foundation for the social sciences.¹⁷⁶ Yet, Stammler –difficult to situate between the disciplines of law, philosophy and the social sciences – was swiftly forgotten and has been almost absent from the literature on neo-Kantianism and sociology. At best, he has been remembered as the target of a curiously ferocious attack by Max Weber (Adair-Toteff 2014; Härpfer and Kaden 2017). In a historical perspective, it seems unacceptable to operate according to criteria which leave agents such as Stammler out of the picture.

The second problem is generalization and extrapolation. From the purported importance of some *particular* “neo-Kantian” author for some *particular* “sociologist” (say, Durkheim or Weber) some seem to have concluded to the importance of the relationship between sociology and neo-Kantianism *in general*. We thus encounter sometimes in the literature a tacit or explicit

¹⁷⁴ For the status of “founding fathers”, “classics” and the function of the “canon” in sociology, see Baehr [2002] 2016. For the case of the invisibilization of women in the history of sociology, see e.g. Lengermann and Niebrugge [1998] 2007; 2016; Holzhauser 2018; 2021.

¹⁷⁵ Stammler preferred “*Sozialwissenschaft*” over “*Soziologie*” (e.g. Stammler [1896] 1924, 208–11).

¹⁷⁶ As an example for an enthusiastic statement about Stammler’s project: “Der Geist Kants ist aufs Neue im Gebiete der Sozialwissenschaft lebendig geworden. Die bislang noch immer schwankenden Fundamente derselben werden durch ihn eine gesicherte Grundlage erhalten.” (Gerlach 1899, 663)

transition from the local to the global level. The obvious problem here is that the basis of induction is often too slim to allow for credible generalization or extrapolation. The latter step is rarely warranted by the individual cases studied. What is more, the scope of the generalization is not always clear. The fact that the “Kant movement” is still mostly considered in “methodologically nationalist” (Wimmer and Schiller 2003) terms poses a particular difficulty here: Are general statements about the relation between neo-Kantianism and sociology thought to apply without qualifications, or only to Europe, to France or to Germany? It seems that we would need for such general statements a broader understanding of the position of neo-Kantian philosophies in the academic fields and the relationship between the philosophical field and emerging sociology in the national contexts involved. But the literature is still a far cry from this kind of understanding. In the meanwhile, the back-and-forth between local cases and global claims makes it difficult to stay on top of the whole issue.

The problems of selection and generalization or extrapolation are, of course, exacerbated by the ambiguity of the terms as well as the purported relation involved. In many cases, it is not clear in which sense particular agents are thought to be “neo-Kantians” or “sociologists”. And ambiguity only increases when, on a more global level, we pass to the ism “neo-Kantianism” and the disciplinary label “sociology” with their reifying tendencies. Indeed, each time we would have to ask: What are the cases presented as instances of a relationship between neo-Kantianism and sociology actually cases of? What kind of relationship do they illustrate? And which is the sense of the labels employed? Often, narratives on neo-Kantianism and sociology have not posed any of these questions.

Unfortunate combinations

The three issues addressed – the labels involved, the conception of the relationship and selection and generalization – are fairly bothersome already when considered in isolation. Yet, unfortunately, they tend to combine. When they come together, they produce a sort of *pars pro toto* representation of the relationship between “neo-Kantianism” and “sociology” without it becoming clear what is actually meant by these terms and their relation. The particular relationship of *some* neo-Kantian philosophers with *some* sociologists (and vice versa) is then taken to represent the whole relationship of “neo-Kantianism” and “sociology”.

A recent illustration of how the three problems can become intertwined is Joly’s already discussed account of the “sociological revolution” (Joly 2017; for details of my critique, see again Strauss 2021, 542–560). Based on a particular present-day representation of what “sociology” is or should be (mostly informed by Elias) – and drawing on Elias’s own narrative of the relationship between sociology and Kantian philosophy – Joly built a strawman version of

“neo-Kantianism”. He relied in his notion of the movement basically on Rickert’s philosophy of values in Germany and the peculiar idealism of the founders of the *Revue de métaphysique et de morale* (1893) in France. This non-representative sample led inevitably to caricatures: for example, when Joly imputed to all neo-Kantian philosophies the assumption of an invariant, quasi-divine and “ineffable” *a priori* (Joly 2017, 8, 471, 483). The simple inclusion of the Marburg school would have sufficed to correct this misrepresentation (e.g. Cassirer [1906/1922, reprint of 3rd edition] 1995, V–IX). Given the partiality of Joly’s notions of both “sociology” and “neo-Kantianism”, it is little surprising that he arrived at a negative narrative. Yet, this makes it difficult to account for some historically attested positive contacts, for example for the fact that some of the first proposals for a sociology of knowledge emerged in dialogue and some continuity with the dominating neo-Kantian theories of knowledge (e.g. Durkheim 1909).

Another recent example is Stephen Turner’s attempt to present Durkheim as a “neo-Kantian philosopher” (Turner 2017; 2021). Turner argued that Durkheim was “literally” a “neo-Kantian philosopher”: by training, by his implication in the Société française de philosophie and by the solutions he proposed with his sociology to the “core problems of neo-Kantianism”.¹⁷⁷ Turner sought to establish similarities between arguments in Cohen, Durkheim and the Durkheimians – more generally, regarding Cohen’s “transcendental method”, but also in the specific area of the interpretation of sacrifice. He then took these resemblances as a basis for speaking of a “transformation of neo-Kantian philosophy into social science” (Turner 2021, 151). Yet, at no point Turner reflected on the use of the label “neo-Kantian”. He treated “neo-Kantianism” as an unproblematic entity, made no difference between Germany and France and did not address the question as to whether there was such a thing as “neo-Kantianism” in France (and in which sense) – or Durkheim’s relations with Renouvier’s *néo-criticisme*, for that matter. He simply passed from Cohen to Durkheim or, alternatively, from Windelband to Durkheim (Turner 2017, 57, 65) as if they were having a conversation in the same room. The historical basis for Turner’s claim of positive connections – we might think of the trace of a reception of Cohen by Durkheim, for example¹⁷⁸ – remained obscure. It is hard not to think here of Febvre’s scornful portrayal of historians of philosophy who “vivant de leur vie propre en dehors du temps et de l’espace, nouent d’étranges chaînes, aux anneaux à la fois irréels et fermés” (Febvre [1938] 2021a, 405).

¹⁷⁷ “Durkheim was, literally, a neo-Kantian philosopher, by training, and, from 1906 to the end of his life, was a member of the Société française de philosophie. He inherited the core problems of neo-Kantianism, and his sociology is a solution to these problems.” (Turner 2017, 49)

¹⁷⁸ I am aware of only one cursory reference of Durkheim to Cohen’s *Von Kants Einfluß auf die deutsche Kultur* (Cohen 1883), in Durkheim’s account of the teaching of philosophy in Germany (Durkheim 1887, 330, n. 1). This writing shows, by the way, that Durkheim was well aware of the “renaissance du kantisme” (Durkheim 1887, 329) in Germany at the time. In any case, the subject would deserve further – historical – investigation.

In sum, the three problems I have outlined here explain, at least in part, why the diverging opinions and narratives on neo-Kantianism and sociology are so persistent. They help us to understand why it is difficult to imagine any coherent narrative in the present state of the literature. Given the ambiguity of the terms involved, there will always be a loophole for introducing or maintaining opposed interpretations – often based on specific group interests (disciplinary, national, doctrinal, etc.) in recollecting the past in a certain way. In this situation, coherent criteria for deciding what the relationship between neo-Kantianism and sociology really consisted in simply seem to be lacking.

Which conclusions should we draw from this situation? How should we investigate the topic if we take these issues seriously? In my view, we need to consider reconfiguring studies on neo-Kantianism and sociology.

Reconfiguring studies on neo-Kantianism and sociology

Au lieu de dissenter dans l'abstrait et de tracer sur le papier des limites bien profilées, mettons-nous en face des réalités. Et appliquons la bonne méthode: compliquons ce qui paraît trop simple. (Febvre [1938] 2021b, 307)

So far, I have spent much time pulling the rug out from under our feet. What remains of the issue of the relationship between neo-Kantianism and sociology? I would like to conclude my analysis by proposing some strategies for handling the problems we have identified. These suggestions will inevitably remain programmatic. But they will also lead us back to the issue of the sociologization of the *a priori* and make us understand why, in studying this problem, we must go beyond the focus on neo-Kantianism and sociology. There are three proposals I would like to make:

(1) Abandon generic questions about neo-Kantianism and sociology: First, I would argue indeed that we should abandon generic questions – or suggestions – concerning something like a general relationship between “neo-Kantianism” and “sociology”. From the above discussion we have seen that we cannot give any unambiguous meaning to this question on a general level, i.e. when we operate with with generic and unquestioned notions of “neo-Kantianism” and “sociology”. If we want to understand the effective relations between philosophers drawing on Kant and early sociologists, we must get behind the smoke screen of these terms with their reifying, hypostatizing or substantializing tendencies.

Instead, we should understand “neo-Kantianism” and “sociology” relationally, i.e. as defined through their relations with other positions in the fields of philosophy, emerging sociology and social sciences, and academia more broadly – including the way historical agents classified these fields and used the labels involved. We need indeed a “functional” definition of “neo-Kantianism”, as Cassirer suggested in his response to Heidegger (Cassirer and Heidegger [1929] 2010, 274). Yet, it is not enough – as Cassirer did – to just broaden the notion in intellectual terms and speak of a more general “orientation of asking questions” (*Richtung der Fragestellung*) or a common “methodical principle” (Cassirer 1929, 215). The “functionalization” of “neo-Kantianism” and “sociology” must include a social dimension. Karl Mannheim used the word indeed in this sense.¹⁷⁹

This meets, of course, with Bourdieu’s insistence on “relational thought” (e.g. Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 196–206) and, more specifically, his precept to establish systematic relations between the space of intellectual stances (*prises de position*) and the space of social positions (*espace des positions*) via the mediation of agents’ acquired dispositions or *habitus* (see Chapter 2). In a Bourdieusian perspective, the meaning of “neo-Kantianism” (or “sociology”, for that matter) would be defined through the totality of its relations with other elements in the philosophical and broader academic field – both intellectually and socially (see the discussion of Bourdieu [1975] 1988 above). Cassirer’s “orientation of asking questions” would have to be understood in terms of its oppositions to other relevant “orientations” in the academic field. And we would have to establish homologies between proponents of these various orientations and their social positions.

What can we do to work towards such a relational representation of the issue? To begin with, we should leave behind the almost exclusive focus in the existing literature on well-established, “classical” or canonical authors who have become important later on. It could be a salutary move against “presentist” tendencies to bracket these authors temporarily – including what has later been said in the literature about the purported relations between “neo-Kantianism” and “sociology”. Instead, we should – in a sort of “historicist” turn – take a fresh look at various contemporaneous sources and recover the point of view of the contemporaries.¹⁸⁰ How did they

¹⁷⁹ For example: “Das Funktionalisieren bedeutet zunächst die Aufdeckung aller jener existentiell (seinsmäßig) bedingten Zusammenhänge, die das Auftreten und Einsetzen eines geistigen Gebildes erst ermöglichen.” (Mannheim [1926] 1964, 395) And: “Eine jede soziologische ‘Erklärung’ z. B., indem sie geistige Gebilde einer historischen Gemeinschaft auf das dahinter stehende ‘soziale Sein’ hin funktionalisiert, setzt dieses soziale Sein als einen umfassenderen, wenn auch anders gelagerten *Sinnzusammenhang*, aus dem heraus eigentlich der letzte Sinn des besonderen Gebildes erst verstanden werden soll.” (Mannheim [1926] 1964, 396–97) For the further use of the substantive “*Funktionalisieren*” and “*Funktionalisierung*”, see also the index of Mannheim 1964, 728.

¹⁸⁰ This move is, of course, similar to Köhnke’s insistence on the “perspective of contemporaneity” (Köhnke 1986, 10).

actually perceive, present and evaluate the relations between “neo-Kantianism” (or, more broadly, references to Kant’s philosophy) and “sociology” (or, more broadly, the social sciences)? What did it mean at the time – intellectually and socially – to emphasize this relation, or, on the contrary, to discard it? What did historical agents “do” with such references? How did they position themselves in the field as they perceived it?

There are multiple historical sources we could exploit for reconstructing the point of view of contemporaries. For example, for following contemporary debates involving references to Kant and the social sciences and for identifying contemporary perceptions, presentations and accounts, we could draw on academic journals (e.g. *Kant-Studien* or *Revue de métaphysique et de morale*), conference proceedings (e.g. the Congrès internationaux de philosophie), the activities of scholarly societies (e.g. the Kant-Gesellschaft, the Société française de philosophie or the Institut international de sociologie) or on collective commemorations such as the tributes to Kant in 1881, 1904 and 1924 (e.g. Kopper and Malter 1974). We should also look at contemporary reference works and contemporary historiography to get a grasp of how agents at the time categorized and classified their environment (e.g. Parodi 1919; Benrubi 1933; Oesterreich [1916] 1923b; Bouglé 1935). I would argue here that we should not make from the outset a categorical difference between agents who participated in the historical situation that interests us (say, Weber, Durkheim or Simmel) and agents who produced historiographical accounts of it (say, Schelting, Bouglé or Parsons). All of them contributed to producing certain representations of the relationship between Kantian philosophy and sociology – with different chances, of course, of imposing their definitions as legitimate. Rather than taking historiographical accounts for granted (as it has often happened in the literature, for example, with Oesterreich’s classification discussed above), we should take them as symptoms and indicators of historical agents’ classifications and rather try to “classify the classifiers by their classifications” (Bourdieu 1979b; 1984b), i.e. relate these classifications to classifiers’ social positions.

The resulting picture of “neo-Kantianism” and “sociology” would certainly go beyond the usual focus on a few “big names”. It could foreground hitherto relatively neglected figures such as already mentioned Rudolf Stammler, Viennese philosopher, psychologist and sociologist Wilhelm Jerusalem (1854-1923) (e.g. Huebner 2013; Rol 2017; Uebel 2012a; 2019), Russian positivist philosopher and sociologist Eugène de Roberty (1843-1915) (e.g. Gofman 2019) or – to name one of the very few women involved – French philosopher and historian of science Hélène Metzger (1889-1944) (e.g. Chimisso 2019). Yet, through this reconfiguration of research the very notion of “neo-Kantianism” (perhaps also “sociology”) might finally become increasingly superfluous and sterile. In the end, it might disappear or dissolve in a plurality of uses of Kant – within and without sociology. Where does that lead us? Does the plea for more

small-scale historical scholarship mean that we can no longer say anything reasonably general about the relations between sociology and neo-Kantianism? I do not think so. This leads to the second suggestion.

(2) Towards a typology of uses and functions of references to “Kant” in the social sciences: I would suggest, second, to reformulate the whole issue of “neo-Kantianism” and “sociology” in terms of the uses and functions of references to Kant, Kantian and neo-Kantian philosophy in the social sciences (especially in the work of those claiming to do “sociology”). In the historical sources indicated above, these uses could be identified relatively easily through explicit and implicit references to Kant, his terminology as well as its transformations through later authors.¹⁸¹ The functions of these uses could then be located with the help of the study of the contexts in which they occur, especially contemporary controversies, debates, processes of transfer and reception, etc. – situations, in short, in which agents took stances with and against each other (*prises de position*). These occasions would illuminate what these references “did” in specific historical situations and in which way authors took position through them. Parallel to this inventory, we could compile basic socio-biographical information about the authors of these uses, defining their positions in intellectual and academic, but also in social, political and economic terms. We could then try to establish relations between certain uses of references to Kantian philosophy, their functions and the social positions of their proponents.

The result would hardly be an entirely chaotic picture of various local, incompatible and equally important references to Kant in the social sciences.¹⁸² On the contrary, I think that we could manage to group specific uses together according to both intellectual and social criteria: for example, which parts of Kant do authors use, what do they do with it, who do they interact with, which positions do they occupy in the academic field and the wider social space? We could thus arrive at a relational “space of uses” of Kant in the social sciences – or, in other words, a sort of typology of interrelated uses.¹⁸³ This space would have to be constructed first of all on a national and/or linguistic level, i.e. starting from authors who were part of the same field and who effectively defined themselves against each other in competition for recognition and resources (which does not exclude them using “foreign” sources as resources and weapons

¹⁸¹ Concretely, an analysis in terms of keywords (e.g. author names and elements of terminology) of the main academic journals at the time (most of which are now easily accessible and searchable in a digitalized form) would produce a first corpus of references.

¹⁸² It is true, of course, that a hyper-canonical author like Kant has been used for or made compatible with (almost) every imaginable philosophical, political and social purpose – and its contrary: from the foundation of socialism (e.g. Sandkühler and De la Vega 1970) to the justification of racism or misogyny (e.g. Chamberlain 1905; Weininger [1903] 1904). But this diversity of uses does not imply that we cannot identify some regularities.

¹⁸³ I have tried to apply the procedure described here in my account of “French neo-Kantianism” – a notion I sought to replace by the reconstruction of a “relational space of uses of Kant” in French philosophy between the 1850s and the 1930s (Strauss [forthcoming] 2024).

in their struggles, of course). In a second step, two or more of such national spaces could be related to each other – with processes of transfer and reception helping to identify possible homologues.¹⁸⁴ In this way, we might reach a level of generality where we dispose of a typology of uses of Kant in the social sciences on a European or even on a global perspective. To arrive there, we will most probably have to put the label “neo-Kantianism”, perhaps even “sociology” aside. But on the other hand, we might thus gain a historically more accurate picture of the effective uses of Kant in the social sciences.

(3) Focus on specific problems and controversies: Finally, I would suggest focusing in a first step on studies of specific problems, topics or controversies where references to Kant occur in the social sciences (or conversely, references to the social sciences in Kant-using philosophers). Indeed, the areas concerned by these references reach from the philosophy, epistemology and methodology of the social sciences to issues of morals, education and politics – sometimes in one and the same author.¹⁸⁵ One of the problems in the existing literature on neo-Kantianism and sociology is that sometimes only one of these aspects has been picked out – without much consideration for the others – and has been presented as the main area of contact between the two “movements”.¹⁸⁶ Making here an explicit selection of problems – thus expressly excluding others – might help to avoid misleading generalizations. In any case, as long as we do not dispose of a somewhat complete table of uses of Kant in the social sciences, a focus on specific problems seems to me a useful and feasible strategy. It corresponds to a stage of research where – despite around a century of literature on “neo-Kantianism” and “sociology” – a lot of historical groundwork remains to be done.¹⁸⁷

With my investigation into the problem of sociologizing the *a priori* I intend to offer a study of this latter type, i.e. concerning one specific area where there have been contacts between (neo-)Kantianism and sociology. Thus, I will not engage here in a systematic reconstruction of all the uses of Kant in the social sciences in France and the German-speaking world, with all the topics and areas involved. This would be a different project – the typological one outlined

¹⁸⁴ We might think here, for example, of the contacts between the Marburg school and Renouvier’s *néo-criticisme* (e.g. Cassirer 1912a; [1914] 2001).

¹⁸⁵ We can think here, for example, of Durkheim’s noteworthy references to Kant in his account of morals and education (Durkheim [1922] 2022; [1925] 2025, 231–33). In this context, Durkheim also referred positively (Durkheim [1922] 2022, 111; [1925] 2025, 85) to Lange and to Natorp’s *Sozialpädagogik* (Natorp 1899) – inspired, in turn, by Tönnies’s distinction between *Gemeinschaft* und *Gesellschaft* (Tönnies [1887/1935] 1991).

¹⁸⁶ For example, the “sociological Kantianism” German sociologist Hans-Peter Müller (1951–) imputed to Durkheim (Müller 2013; 2019) is primarily a sociological account of morals and law. Müller mostly leaves aside Durkheim’s references to the Kantian tradition in his “sociological theory of knowledge”.

¹⁸⁷ Of course, such a more problem-oriented approach will come with the obligation to control the construction of the problems we are deciding to focus on. It must involve a critical reflection on prior constructions of these problems and on the present-day interest in them. I have already addressed this aspect under the heading of “reflexivity” in Chapter 2.

above. Instead, I restrict myself to one specific sub-group of these references and uses: those which involved the issue of the Kantian *a priori* and its reformulations. In this way, my work is certainly more limited compared to existing narratives on neo-Kantianism and sociology. But at the same time, it also goes beyond this topic. I address one single aspect of this relationship, but study it in a diachronic or longitudinal perspective, as it were, going beyond the usual chronological, geographical and disciplinary boundaries. With this oblique strategy, I hope indeed to be able to make some limited but historically more nuanced and reflexive contributions to our understanding of the relations between Kantianism and sociology.¹⁸⁸ The development of my investigation, however, will be determined much more by a specific problem, with its proper chronology, than by the two purported entities “neo-Kantianism” and “sociology”.

5. Conclusion: Going beyond the obstacle

In sum, I have tried to dissipate here some persisting ambiguities affecting research on neo-Kantianism and sociology and – indirectly – the issue of the sociologization of the *a priori*. The typology of narratives I have offered should incite to handle the whole topic with precaution. It showed that present accounts in this area are often rooted in historical controversies on the issue. They express the interests of the groups – contemporary or posterior – that have promoted them. Moreover, they are beset with basic historiographical problems concerning the labels “neo-Kantianism” and “sociology” plus their relationship. These two factors together can explain the divergence of opinions and the continuing dissent among commentators. I have argued that, to solve these difficulties, we should consider the functions of disciplinary histories within discipline-specific collective memories and be more attentive to the different historical layers of agents’ symbolic struggles about intellectual labels and their controversial categorizations. This could result in a large-scale analysis of contemporary uses of “Kant” and his philosophy in the social and human sciences. While I will not offer such an account in the following, we can – in the meanwhile – meaningfully engage in a study of one portion of these references, namely those regarding the Kantian notion of “*a priori*”.

Most importantly, situating the different narratives on neo-Kantianism and sociology and identifying the problems of this very research topic enables us to go beyond several misleading ideas about the sociologization of the *a priori*: the notion that it would have been a development in simple continuity with neo-Kantianism (positive narrative); that it would have been diametrically opposed to neo-Kantian academic philosophy (negative narrative); that there would have

¹⁸⁸ My account of the dialogue between Cassirer and the Durkheimians can perhaps count as such a partial contribution (Strauss 2025).

been no significant relation at all (indifferent narrative); or that it would simply be the ideological expression of an alliance between bourgeois philosophy and a bourgeois view of the social and historical world (ideological narrative). This is not to say that these interpretations – sometimes elaborated through painstaking historical scholarship – were always wrong or misleading. But we should know where to place them – where they come from, which purposes they served and still serve – and thus try to control their respective socio-historical conditions when using them. Only in this way – through what I called with Bourdieu “anamnesis” – can we arrive at a historically and sociologically more satisfying account of the sociologization of the *a priori*.

The shortcomings of existing narratives on neo-Kantianism and sociology have also shown us the need for a relational and sociological perspective, in the tradition of the socio-historical narrative sketched above. The same will be true of the sociologization of the *a priori*. Only if we explore the various historical contexts in which this strategy appeared and was used – apparently with the intention to achieve certain things (be it only a credible intervention in an academic debate) –, only if we understand how it distinguished itself from other contemporary strategies (say, transcendental, psychological, evolutionist or economic accounts), only if we comprehend its various uses and functions – only then can we hope to grasp its actual meaning, or rather: its various meanings. Even if it turns out, as I shall argue, that sociologizing the *a priori* was a highly ambiguous strategy – neither as revolutionary nor as reactionary as some have portrayed it –, even then should we prefer this more complex picture over a simpler, but most probably false one. Once more in Febvre’s words: “Comprendre, c’est compliquer. C’est enrichir en profondeur. C’est élargir de proche en proche. C’est mêler à la vie.” (Febvre [1927] 2021, 124)

Concentrating on the sociologization of the *a priori* and retracing the history of *this* problem then means to go beyond the focus on the relations between neo-Kantianism and sociology around 1900. The issue neither started nor ended with relations such as those between Durkheim and Renouvier or Weber and Rickert. The problem is both more specific and more general. It is more specific because it concerns only one sub-group of references to Kant in the social sciences (to “*a priori*” and connected concepts and issues). But it is also more general because understanding these references necessitates to broaden our perspective, both regarding the transnational dimension and the chronological framing. To understand its structure, we have to turn back to those who provided the conceptual tools underlying the problem, i.e. the notions of “*a priori*” and of “sociology” articulated by Kant and Comte respectively. But we also have to extend our view to those – well after the turn of the 20th century – who have summoned the issue once again in their “boundary-work” (Gieryn 1983) between sociology and philosophy.

It is them who have handed the problem down to us today, often producing the narratives we will have to surmount as memorial obstacles.

I thus also hope to have shown through this chapter that a reflexive socio-historical investigation into how the history of sociology and philosophy has been written¹⁸⁹ is sometimes – maybe not always¹⁹⁰ – necessary to advance in (re-)writing the history of particular topics in these disciplines. Pretty much in the same way as Febvre had to destruct the false question about Rabelais’s purported “atheism” to advance to the question of the factual place of religion in the *mentalité* of 16th century French erudites, we had to try to dismantle the obstacle of the focus on neo-Kantianism and sociology to reach a better view of the problem of the sociologization of the *a priori*. Using again the framing of Bourdieu’s *Le Métier de sociologue* (see the conclusions of Chapters 1 and 2), we might say that the operation here consisted in surmounting the “epistemological obstacle” of “neo-Kantianism and sociology” to “conquer” (see especially Bourdieu et al. [1968] 2005, 27–49) the problem of sociologizing of the *a priori*.

I admit that the notion of “obstacle” – “epistemological” or “memorial” – has a polemical and normative overtone which might provoke a feeling of unease in readers. What should give me the right to denigrate whole strands of respectable, highly informative scholarship as “obstacles”? The key lies here in the right understanding of “polemics” and “obstacle”. Bachelard’s notion of “epistemological obstacle” was based on what he called a specifically epistemological “point of view of evolved reason”: “L’*épistémologue* doit donc trier les documents recueillis par l’historien. Il doit les juger du point de vue de la raison et même du point de vue de la raison évoluée, car c’est seulement de nos jours, que nous pouvons pleinement juger les erreurs du passé spirituel.” (Bachelard [1938] 2011, 19)¹⁹¹ Similarly, the present judgement of aspects of prior literature as “obstacles” relies on the point of view of *better* historical knowledge. Only in the light of this “evolved” knowledge can previous knowledge appear and be judged – with an inevitably normative dimension – as an obstacle that had to be surmounted. However, what this improved knowledge exactly amounts to remains to be demonstrated – in a way sufficiently

¹⁸⁹ Feuerhahn has described the operations involved here quite aptly as “historiciser l’historiographie des acteurs” and “historiciser l’historicisation” (Feuerhahn 2020a, 224–29). My problem-historical approach diverges, however, from Feuerhahn’s framing of this stance as “radical historicism” (Feuerhahn 2021a).

¹⁹⁰ I have mentioned (Chapter 2) reflexivity’s tendency towards decreasing scientific returns when iterated. Yet, in the case of the research topic “neo-Kantianism and sociology”, second-order reflexivity – not only “history of sociology”, but “sociology of the history of sociology” – seems to have indeed some utility.

¹⁹¹ Bachelard expressed in this context also his view of the difference between the work of the historian of science and the epistemologist: “On peut voir ici ce qui distingue le métier de l’*épistémologue* de celui de l’historien des sciences. L’historien des sciences doit prendre les idées comme des faits. L’*épistémologue* doit prendre les faits comme des idées, en les insérant dans un système de pensées. Un fait mal interprété par une époque reste un *fait* pour l’historien. C’est, au gré de l’*épistémologue*, un *obstacle*, c’est une contre-pensée.” (Bachelard [1938] 2011, 20) The present critique of existing research might then perhaps be characterized as “epistemological-sociological”.

convincing to make talk of previous accounts as “obstacles” plausible. This is then what the following elements on the history of the problem of sociologizing the *a priori* should achieve.

PART II. EXPLORATIONS IN THE HISTORY AND EPISTEMOLOGY OF SOCIOLOGIZING THE *A PRIORI*, 1780s-2020s

Ich fragte Goethe, welchen der neueren Philosophen er für den vorzüglichsten halte. [Paragraph]
“*Kant*, sagte er, ist der vorzüglichste, ohne allen Zweifel. Er ist auch derjenige, dessen Lehre sich fortwirkend erwiesen hat, und die in unsere deutsche Kultur am tiefsten eingedrungen ist. Er hat auch auf Sie gewirkt, ohne daß Sie ihn gelesen haben. Jetzt brauchen Sie ihn nicht mehr, denn was er Ihnen geben konnte, besitzen Sie schon.” (Eckermann [1836] 2011, 242–43)

CHAPTER 4. BETWEEN KANT AND COMTE: A CONFLICT OF CLASSIFICATIONS

Die Logik kann keinen empirischen Teil haben, d. i. einen solchen, da die allgemeinen und notwendigen Gesetze des Denkens auf Gründen beruheten, die von der Erfahrung hergenommen wären; denn sonst wäre sie nicht Logik, d. i. ein Kanon für den Verstand, oder die Vernunft, der bei allem Denken gilt und demonstriert werden muss. (Kant [1785] 1974, 7, BA IV)

Il était donc indispensable de s'élever enfin directement jusqu'à la saine appréciation dynamique de l'intelligence collective de l'humanité, convenablement envisagée dans l'ensemble de son développement continu; ce qui doit certainement caractériser à ce sujet le seul état vraiment normal, désormais atteint dans ce traité par la création de la sociologie, d'où dépend aujourd'hui l'entière élimination de l'absolu. (Comte [1839–1842] 1975, 728)

[R]emonter aux origines n'est jamais inutile, lorsqu'on veut se rendre un compte exact de la position moderne d'un problème scientifique. (Febvre 1922, 112)

1. Introduction: A problem in the classification of knowledge and the sciences

To the roots of the problem

The present enquiry started off from present-day linguistic patterns in the social and human sciences suggesting various historical and sociological reinterpretations of transcendental reasoning as it goes back to German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) (Chapter 1).¹ I argued that it was a worthwhile endeavour to examine the roots of these expressions and their epistemological presuppositions and that we could do so by focussing on the specific problem I called the “sociologization of the *a priori*”. By that expression I meant the possibility that the domain of the *a priori* might become an object of sociology.

¹ The present chapter would hardly have been written without the decisive inputs by Johan Heilbron on Comte's classification of the sciences (e.g. Heilbron 2017a) and by Elisabeth Nemeth on Kant's *Streit der Fakultäten* (e.g. Nemeth 1996). The starting point of this work was indeed a course on Comte and the history of “positivism” taught together with Elisabeth Nemeth at the University of Vienna in winter term 2018, involving a workshop with Johan Heilbron. I then had the occasion to present early versions of my work at the conference “Cartésianisme et kantisme” at the University Sorbonne Université in June 2022; at the conference “Bourdieu et la philosophie” at the University Paris-Nanterre in May 2025; and in courses on Kant taught at the University of Strasbourg in the academic year 2024-2025. I am grateful to participants in these events for their feedback and questions.

With our considerations on “sociological problem history” (Chapter 2) it then became clear that the problem of sociologizing the *a priori* – contrary to what the pomposity of the expression might perhaps suggest – did not emerge and develop in a sort of ether of eternal ideas or problems. As other socio-intellectual problems, it had its specific time, place, and socio-historical conditions under which it appeared. Contrary to what the focus in the literature on the relationship between neo-Kantianism and sociology around 1900 suggested (Chapter 3), the problem surfaced for the first time already in the first decades of the 19th century in the academic and intellectual fields in Germany and France. But where did it come from? How did it arise? What kind of problem is it? And precisely what does it consist in?

The present chapter examines the socio-historical and intellectual roots of the problem. More exactly, it provides some preparatory work for doing so – the completion of the task being out of the reach of the present work. In this perspective, I seek to combine here problem history with a historical sociology of science, philosophy and sociology. Basically, we would have to understand how the logical terms of the problem – the tension between “*a priori*” and “sociology” – related to contemporary larger-scale transformations of the institutional structure of science. For this purpose, I construe the problem of sociologizing the *a priori* as a conflict between two contrary ways of classifying knowledge and the sciences – in Kant’s “transcendental philosophy” on the one hand, and in French mathematician and philosopher Auguste Comte’s (1798-1857) “positive philosophy” on the other.

From the tension between these two classifications emerged the first historical version of a genuine “sociologization of the *a priori*” in Comte’s early work. For the first time the type of knowledge qualified in Kant as “*a priori*” became here the object of a new general science of society bearing the name of “sociology”. With this move, Comte set the terms of the problem as it should play out further between “criticism” and “positivism” throughout the 19th century and, arguably, until today.

A persistent barbarism

To illustrate the underlying conflict of classifications of science and knowledge, we can start from a simple present-day observation. Today, the most frequent reaction we can encounter in response to the idea of a “sociologized *a priori*” – at least among those having acquired some basic familiarity with Kantian philosophy – seems to be something like the following: “This ‘sociologization of the *a priori*’ is simply a contradiction in terms. An oxymoron. A paradox. A barbarism. A monstrosity. How can something that is ‘*a priori*’ be ‘sociological’ or ‘sociologized’? How can something that is ‘sociological’ be ‘*a priori*’? Certainly, when someone speaks in that way, the ‘*a priori*’ in question cannot be *really a priori*. Or the other way round, the

word ‘sociological’ cannot *really* mean sociology as we would usually understand it. But a genuine ‘sociologization of *a priori*’ is not only monstrous, but outright impossible. It is simply nonsensical.”

What does this reaction rely on? Which are its presuppositions? If we take a step back, we can translate it into in a simple question: How can something that is *classified as “a priori”* be at the same time *classified as “sociological”*? The one attribute seems to strictly exclude the other.²

It is not only among sceptics or opponents of the idea of a sociologized or sociological *a priori* that we can encounter this worry. We find traces of it even among those who effectively and explicitly introduced and defended some version of a historicized or sociologized *a priori*. For instance, French philosopher and historian Michel Foucault (1926-1984) conceded, when introducing his notion of an “*a priori* historique”, that “[j]uxtaposés, ces deux mots font un effet un peu criant” and spoke of “ce terme un peu barbare” (Foucault 1969, 174). Similarly, French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002) acknowledged, when explaining the choice of the title “sociology of symbolic forms” for one of his books (Bourdieu 1970), that “la combinaison est détonnante: une ‘sociologie des formes symboliques’, c’est une sorte de barbarisme, [...] beaucoup de commentateurs allemands y voyaient une sorte d’accouplement un peu monstrueux, un peu bestial, entre l’inférieur et le supérieur” (Bourdieu [1983–1986] 2016, 778). We can find like remarks in different authors from different historical periods since the 19th century.³

Statements such as these from proponents of a sociologized or historicized *a priori* are anticipations of the dismissive reactions sketched above. They contain a recognition of the fact that talk of a sociological or historical *a priori* constitutes a transgression of symbolic borders, an offence to established distinctions, a “hybridization” of things that must be kept apart. Performing this transgression seems to necessitate a form of “impression management” (Goffman

² The same applies also to related “barbarisms” such as the “improper expression” of a “historical transcendental”. The latter has been taken to be characteristic of the French tradition of “épistémologie”: “Questa problematica è quanto abbiamo voluto definire attraverso l’espressione apparentemente impropria di ‘trascendentale storico’. Un’espressione ‘impropria’, perché si potrebbe dubitare che essa sia in grado di designare il concetto di una posizione filosofica razionalmente sostenibile, tanto essa può apparire ossimorica e paradossale. Il termine ‘trascendentale’ non rinvia forse al problema dei fondamenti del sapere? Dunque alla razionalità, validità e universalità delle nostre conoscenze? Se è così – e lo è almeno da Kant in poi – come potrà mai essere storicizzato l’approccio trascendentale, senza perdere la propria specificità? Senza cioè annegare nello storicismo il proprio senso di indagine critica sul valore razionale dell’attività conoscitiva? [Paragraph] L’epistemologia francese deve la propria originalità appunto al tentativo di tenere assieme i due lati di questo dilemma, senza rinunciare a nessuno dei due.” (Cavazzini 2006, 5)

³ For example, Austro-Marxist philosopher and sociologist Max Adler (1873-1937) seemed to ask for permission when introducing for the first time in his work the notion of the “transcendental-social” nature of human knowledge (later the “social *a priori*”, the *Sozialapriori*): “die Herausarbeitung der – wenn dieses Wort zu bilden gestattet ist – transzendental-sozialen Natur alles menschlichen Erkennens” (Adler 1904b, 170). For elements on Adler, see Chapter 6.

[1956] 1959, chap. 6). These authors seem eager to convince their readers that these “barbarisms” are not simply “barbaric”, i.e. based on ignorance of these distinctions. Yet, in this way, even those who propose the transgression (especially those who had had a formal philosophical training like Foucault and Bourdieu) recognize it as such. They recognize and acknowledge the symbolic frontiers they are trespassing with the talk of a sociological or historical *a priori*.⁴

Whether by way of objection or by way of anticipation, talk of a “contradiction in terms”, an “oxymoron”, a “paradox”, a “barbarism”, and so forth, all indicates the same issue. The contradiction is attached to the meaning of the terms “*a priori*” and “sociology”. How can something that is “*a priori*” be at the same time “sociological”? This is the simplest form of the problem of the sociologization of the *a priori* and indicates its basic structure. This problem is essentially a conflict of classifications. It is a matter of classifying things as “*a priori*” and “sociological” and these classifications becoming incompatible. But where do the meanings of these words come from?

Back to Kant and Comte

The spatio-temporal location of the problem of the sociologization of the *a priori* is indicated by the history of the words and concepts the problem is composed of: “*a priori*” and “sociology”. Obviously, these two elements need to be in place in order to be able to formulate the very problem of the sociological or sociologized *a priori*. Historically, these notions were stabilized at different points in time, in different contexts and by different authors: “*a priori*” in Kant’s “transcendental philosophy” in Germany from the 1780s onwards; “sociology” in Comte’s “positive philosophy” in France from the 1830s onwards.

⁴ It could be heuristically useful to consider this recurrent type of remarks in the anthropological perspective of German-French ethnologist Arnold van Gennep (1873-1957) as a form of “rite of passage” (Van Gennep [1909] 1981). By this, van Gennep meant specific rites that accompany the transgression of a symbolic boundary and acknowledge the boundary they are transgressing (typically the frontier between sacred and profane, here the frontiers *a priori-a posteriori* or transcendental-empirical). More precisely, the remarks considered might be conceived as a type of “rites de marge” or “rites liminaires” (Van Gennep [1909] 1981, 27). See especially Bourdieu’s reinterpretation of van Gennep’s concept: “L’acte culturel par excellence est celui qui consiste à tracer la *ligne* qui produit un espace séparé et délimité, tels le *nemus*, bois sacré donné en partage aux dieux, le *templum*, enceinte délimitée pour les dieux, ou tout simplement la maison qui, avec le seuil, *limen*, lieu dangereux où le monde se renverse, où s’inverse le signe de toute chose, fournit le modèle pratique de tous les *rites de passage*. Si, comme l’a bien vu Arnold Van Gennep, tous les rites de passage ont quelque chose en commun, c’est qu’ils visent à régler magiquement le franchissement d’une limite magique où, comme au seuil de la maison, le monde ‘pivote’. [Paraphrase] Le sens de la limite, qui sépare, et du *sacré*, qui est séparé, est indissociable du sens de la transgression réglée, donc légitime, de la limite qui est la forme par excellence du rituel: le principe de la mise en ordre du monde est encore au fondement des actions rituelles visant à rendre licites, en les déniaient, les transgressions nécessaires ou inévitables des limites. Tous les actes qui défient la *diacrisis* originaire sont des actes critiques, qui font courir un danger à tout le groupe et, d’abord, à celui qui les accomplit *pour* le groupe, c’est-à-dire à sa place, en son nom et en sa faveur.” (Bourdieu 1980b, 348–49) Applying this anthropological perspective to the symbolic boundary between *a priori* and *a posteriori*, between the transcendental and the empirical, would, of course, require much further work.

In this perspective, a statement like “The *a priori* cannot be sociological” (as expressed in the above negative reactions) can itself be considered – drawing on American philosopher and logician Saul A. Kripke (1940-2022) – as a sort of “contingent *a priori* truth”, i.e. a truth that relies for its analytic truth on contingent linguistic stipulations.⁵ The problem of the sociologization of the *a priori* might then be adequately described as a “contingent *a priori* contradiction”, “paradox” or “dilemma”. It is a dilemma created by linguistic stipulations concerning the words “*a priori*” and “sociology”. The problem of the sociologization of the *a priori* depends entirely on these definitions. This problem is the “civil status”, as it were, of the contradiction between the meanings given to these terms.⁶ Conversely, where there are no such stipulations (or different ones), there is no such problem.

The advantage of this way of looking at things is that the “sociological *a priori*” thus turns from a seemingly timeless sphinx-like puzzle into a particular issue arising at a specific point in space and time. It becomes a socio-historical phenomenon that we can seek to explain and understand through socio-historical investigation. If we want to know how the problem emerged, we must reconstruct and understand where these linguistic stipulations came from, what purposes they served, and how they became universally accepted. We need to know first how expressions like “*a priori*”, “transcendental” or “sociology” became established pieces of philosophical and scientific language or, in other words, how they became standard tools in the philosophical and intellectual *outillage mental*.⁷ This means, first of all, to turn to the two

⁵ The notion of “contingent *a priori* truths” – cutting across common identifications of aprioricity with necessity – was introduced by Kripke in his influential 1970 Princeton lectures on *Naming and Necessity* (Kripke 1972). Examples for such contingent *a priori* truths are the statements “Stick *S* [referring to the Paris standard metre] is one meter long at *t*₀” and “Water boils at 100°C at sea level”. Kripke elaborated the idea of a “contingent *a priori* truth” for the case of the Paris standard metre: “What then, is the *epistemological* status of the statement ‘Stick *S* is one meter long at *t*₀’, for someone who has fixed the metric system by reference to stick *S*? It would seem that he knows it *a priori*. For if he used stick *S* to fix the reference of the term ‘one meter’, then as a result of this kind of ‘definition’ (which is not an abbreviative or synonymous definition), he knows automatically, without further investigation, that *S* is one meter long. On the other hand, even if *S* is used as the standard of a meter, the *metaphysical* status of ‘*S* is one meter long’ will be that of a contingent statement, provided that ‘one meter’ is regarded as a rigid designator: under appropriate stresses and strains, heatings or coolings, *S* would have had a length other than one meter even at *t*₀. (Such statements as ‘Water boils at 100°C at sea level’ can have a similar status.) So in this sense, there are contingent *a priori* truths.” (Kripke 1972, 56) Kripke’s “contingent *a priori*” presupposes two important distinctions: a dissociation between “necessary” and “*a priori*” (Kripke 1972, 38) and a distinction between definitions “giving the meaning” of a term and definitions “fixing the reference” of a term (Kripke 1972, 55). Another consequence of these distinctions is Kripke’s introduction of “necessary *a posteriori* truths”, mostly “[t]heoretical identities [...] involving two rigid designators” (Kripke 1972, 140), such as “Hesperus is Phosphorus”, “Gold is the element with the atomic number 79” or “Water is H₂O”. Kripke’s idea of contingent *a priori* truths has recently been explored by Marco Ruffino, who considers them as the product of declarative illocutionary speech acts with wide application in the sciences and everyday life (Ruffino 2022, xi).

⁶ “Die bürgerliche Stellung des Widerspruchs, oder seine Stellung in der bürgerlichen Welt: das ist das philosophische Problem.” (Wittgenstein [1953] 1984, para. 125, 303).

⁷ As explained in Chapter 2, as a model for such an investigation, we can think of French historian Lucien Febvre’s (1878-1956) study of the linguistic *outillage mental* of French humanist writer François Rabelais

intellectual contexts in which the meaning of each term – “*a priori*” and “sociology” – emerged and was stabilized in a way that then became more or less canonical⁸. These two contexts were Kant’s “transcendental philosophy” and Comte’s “positive philosophy”.

In fact, the words “*a priori*” and “sociology” did not stand alone. They were part of larger networks of concepts, of at once philosophical and terminological systems. The historical individuals involved (Kant and Comte) developed these larger wholes to reply to what they perceived as pressing problems in their day. Which were these problems? How did they come about? How were the concepts “*a priori*” and “sociology” supposed to reply to these problems or, at least, to be part of the solution? There are undoubtedly multiple ways of reconstructing the respective problems of Kant and Comte today.⁹ In this chapter, I construe “transcendental philosophy” and “positive philosophy” as containing two different – and partly incompatible – ways of classifying knowledge and the sciences.

If we stopped at this point, we would remain on the level of traditional “history of ideas” or contextualist “intellectual history” (see Chapter 2). Yet, the two systems of classification did not evolve in a vacuum. How can we connect then – in a more sociological perspective – the logical terms of the problem with its socio-historical conditions? For this, we must put the two systems concerned in the larger context of the socio-historical transformations of the academic and scientific fields at the time. I shall explore here the hypothesis that each of these two systems of classification responded to peculiar transformations in the structure of science and the academic and scientific field, especially in the division of intellectual labour. In Kant’s case, the situation was defined by the so-called “Scientific Revolution”, completed at the end of the 17th century in Newtonian mathematical physics, as well as the crisis of the German university system at the end of the 18th century. In Comte’s case, it was the so-called “Second Scientific Revolution”, i.e. the increasing differentiation and specialization of science along disciplinary lines, roughly between the 1770s and the 1830s – a process which was particularly advanced in France at the time. Thus, we can conceive the problem of the sociologization of the *a priori* as emerging from a fundamental conflict between two systems of classification, each of which reacted to a peculiar socio-historical state of science. By holding together its logical and socio-

(1483 or 1494–1553) (e.g. Febvre [1942] 2003, 328). For a study in the history of the social sciences applying Febvre’s notion of *outilage mental* to Nicolas de Condorcet (1743–1794), see Brian 1994.

⁸ The word seems particularly appropriate in the context of the “contingent *a priori*” – with its paradigmatic example of the Paris standard metre – if we consider the literal meaning of the Greek “κανών” as a rod for ruling and measuring (*A Greek-English Lexicon* [1843] 1996, under ‘κανών, ὄνοζ, ὀ’).

⁹ German neo-Kantian philosopher Ernst Cassirer (1874–1945) provided one prominent “problem-historical” account of Kant and Comte in his *Das Erkenntnisproblem in der Philosophie und Wissenschaft der neueren Zeit* (Cassirer [1906–1950] 1995, especially volume 2 covering Kant and volume 4 covering Comte).

structural dimensions, we might succeed in understanding the problem in its “properly sociological logic” (Bourdieu 2022a, 660).

The plan

The next section develops the particular perspective adopted here. I explain what I mean by a “historical sociology of classifications of knowledge and the sciences” and present some fore-runners of this approach. I then describe how we can apply this outlook to Kant, Comte and – in a problem-historical perspective – to the problem of the sociologization of the *a priori*. I discuss in some detail my two main sources for this operation: Dutch sociologist Johan Heilbron’s (1952-) account of Comte and the “Second Scientific Revolution” (Heilbron 2017a); and American sociologist Randall Collins’s (1941-) account of Kant and the “German university revolution” (Collins 1987; 1998b; 1998a, chap. 12). Together, these accounts incite us to conceive Kant and Comte – drawing on a concept by Bourdieu – as “symbolic revolutionaries” in the classification of knowledge and the sciences.

However, if we want to understand the emergence of the problem of sociologizing the *a priori*, we will have to develop Heilbron’s and Collins’s accounts further. Accordingly, the third section focuses on the classification of knowledge and science that emerged around 1780 in Kant’s new “transcendental philosophy”. In fact, it mainly tries to surmount the persistent “memorial obstacle” (see Chapter 3) consisting in the polarization between “sacralizing” and “profanating” accounts of Kant’s life and work. This obstacle impedes the application of the historical-sociological perspective we recommended.

Our preparatory work will end at this point. What we can do in the rest of the chapter is provide only several indications on how a study on Kant and Comte might be executed along these lines and which results we could expect. What we would need, it seems, is a sociological account of Kant’s transcendental strategy in autonomizing philosophy as an academic discipline. In this context, we would have to consider the peculiar logic of transcendental arguments (regarding the conditions of the possibility of knowledge), Kant’s classification of the sciences and knowledge and his conception of the place of philosophy within the university and wider society. Against this background, we would also have to study the place Kant attributed to what we call today the “social and human sciences” and – most importantly – the consequences for the (im-)possibility of sociologizing the *a priori*.

Comte’s classification of the sciences and his conception of sociology would have to be studied in similar terms. The socio-intellectual emergence of this project is today relatively well-understood, notably due to Heilbron’s work. We could focus here primarily on establishing the connection between Comte’s and Kant’s views, starting with Comte’s partial reception

of Kant in the 1820s and his subsequent statements on the German philosopher. It would be important to carve out the fundamental differences between Comte and Kant regarding the classification of the sciences, in particular their disagreement on the peculiar discipline that is to produce this classification. All while dismissing “metaphysics”, Comte integrated what he believed to be aspects of Kant’s work and sought to reformulate them in a “positive” or scientific way. He produced in this way the first historical instance of sociologizing the *a priori* – even if, admittedly, he did not use this specific expression. In any case, the original conflict between Kant’s and Comte’s classifications should persist and nourish further debates in the 19th and 20th century.

Once again, what I can provide here is essentially preparatory work. Nevertheless, this is an indispensable step if we want to move towards a better understanding of how the problem of sociologizing the *a priori* emerged.

2. Towards a historical sociology of Kant’s and Comte’s classifications of science

Predecessors

As said, the present chapter construes the problem of the sociologization of the *a priori* as a conflict in the classification of knowledge and the sciences that emerges with the so-called “Second Scientific Revolution”. It treats classifications of science and knowledge in the perspective of a historical sociology of the sciences, philosophy and sociology. This perspective needs some further explanation. It has its sources in the recent as well as the more remote past of the social sciences.

Looking back, we can identify an important antecedent in French sociologists Émile Durkheim (1858-1917) and Marcel Mauss’s (1872-1950) work on “primitive forms of classification” (Durkheim and Mauss [1903] 2017). Their basic idea was that “the classification of things reproduces the classification of men” (Durkheim and Mauss [1903] 2017, 37). In their study, they focused primarily on “primitive” or “elementary” forms of religious and mythical classifications in traditional societies. But they presented their inquiry also as an introduction to the study of genuinely *scientific* classifications (Durkheim and Mauss [1903] 2017, 28, 113–14, n. 1, 120). Unfortunately, neither Durkheim and Mauss nor other members of the Durkheimian group applied this research programme systematically to the sciences (Fournier 1982).¹⁰ A

¹⁰ Mauss himself explicitly recognized this lacuna concerning “l’histoire naturelle et sociale des sciences” in 1927 (Mauss 1927, 120–23). As potential allies in this project, he mentioned at the time Belgian-American historian of science George Sarton’s (1884-1956) journal *Isis* (1913-) and the work of French philosopher and historian of science Abel Rey (1873-1940). Among the Durkheimians, closest to a “sociology of science” came perhaps Maurice Halbwachs (1877-1945) with his sociology of collective memory (Fournier 1982, 57, 64; Brian 2008; 2013) and Marcel Granet (1884-1940) with his study of Chinese thought (Granet [1934] 1999). The absence of a genuine Durkheimian sociology of science favoured later appropriations of the Durkheim-Mauss research

fortiori, they did not either use their basic hypothesis concerning the relation between social and cognitive structures¹¹ to understand the peculiar second-order classificatory activity by which agents produce scientific or scholarly classifications of the sciences themselves.¹²

A step in this direction was taken – independently of the Durkheimians, though – in the historical sociology of science developed by Austrian philosopher, historian and sociologist Edgar Zilsel (1891-1944) around 1940. Against the background of Marxism (especially its “Austro-Marxist” variety), Zilsel developed a claim known as the “Zilsel thesis” (Zilsel 1942; 2003). According to this thesis, modern science emerged in the West during the 16th century through the merging of three distinctive socio-professional groups (or “classes”) with their respective specific competences and professional ideals: university scholars, humanists and artisans. Their division corresponded to – and was at the same time legitimated by – a peculiar classification of the arts and sciences that went back to classical antiquity and had been codified in the Middle Ages: the division into “liberal” and “mechanical arts”. This classification was, according to Zilsel, basically a “social antithesis” (Zilsel 1942, 550). It was only under the impact of emerging early-modern capitalism and via the formation of a special intermediary group of “artist-engineers” that this division was toppled. A new synthesis of the three social groups and the corresponding arts and sciences formed. With it emerged around 1600 the modern type of Western natural science with its peculiar combination of reason (logic, rational distinction and classification, mathematization, formalization, etc.) and experience (systematic experimentation, causal thinking, measurement, construction of technical devices, medical dissection, etc.). A transformation in social structure thus enabled a transformation in cognitive structure.

The new type of scholar was epitomized by men like English physician and natural philosopher William Gilbert (1544-1603), Italian astronomer and physicist Galileo Galilei (1564-1642) and English statesman and promotor of scientific method Francis Bacon (1561-1626). While Zilsel did not explore the topic of the classification of the sciences much further,¹³ it is clear

programme. For one controversial reinterpretation along the lines of the “strong programme” in the sociology of knowledge, see Bloor 1982.

¹¹ For the different possible interpretations of this thesis, see the still useful summary in Lukes [1973] 1985, chap. 22.

¹² French historian Roselyne Rey (1951-1995) hinted at this connection when opening the editorial of the important issue of the *Revue de Synthèse* on the classification of the sciences between 1750 and 1850 with a quotation from Durkheim and Mauss’s 1903 article (Rey 1994b, 5).

¹³ Zilsel acknowledged indeed Bacon’s important role in the promotion of the idea of scientific progress and of scientific co-operation (Zilsel 1942, 557; 1945; 2003, chap. 8). He also recognized that Bacon’s ideas were fundamentally opposed to the earlier classification of the sciences into the “seven liberal arts” and asked explicitly for “the sociological origin of Bacon’s ideas” (Zilsel 2003, 160).

that we must situate Bacon's new "prospective" division of the sciences¹⁴ in the context of the new division of labour that merged the ideals and competences of university scholars, humanists and artisans. Bacon's new classification became, in turn, not only one of the major reference points for modern debates on the classification of the sciences – among other things it provided the blueprint for the "Système figuré des connoissances humaines" in Denis Diderot (1713-1784) and Jean Le Rond d'Alembert's *Encyclopédie* (1751) (Malherbe 1994). It also played, especially through the impact of his *New Atlantis* (Bacon [1627] 2002), an important role in the institutionalization of modern science in the form of national royal academies such as the Royal Society of London (1660) or the Paris Académie royale des sciences (1666) (Zilsel 1942, 558). In any case, in Zilsel's perspective, the divisions and mergers of social groups were causally related not only to the emergence of modern science as such but also to the concomitant classifications of knowledge and the sciences.

The perspective of a historical sociology of science and classifications of science adumbrated by the Durkheimians and by Zilsel was furthered in the following decades mostly by authors studying the institutional, organizational and macro-sociological conditions of scientific activity. Slightly prior to Zilsel,¹⁵ the young American sociologist Robert K. Merton (1910-2003) had proposed in his doctoral dissertation a sociological analysis of 17th century science in England (Merton [1938] 1970). Studying the religious, economic and technological backgrounds of the foundation of the Royal Society, he retraced the emergence of modern science as a "partially autonomous" (Merton 1970, x) social institution with its corresponding set of

¹⁴ Bacon elaborated this division of the sciences in works such as his *Advancement of Learning* (Bacon [1605] 2002) or the projected first part of his *Instauratio Magna* (1620) (preceding the *Novum Organum*) on the "Partitiones scientiarum" (Bacon [1620] 1999, 36–41, 66–67; Krohn 1999, XXXI–XXXV). Bacon's aim was not to provide in a retrospective perspective an inventory of all areas of knowledge that existed. On the contrary, he wanted to map the "*globus intellectualis*" – an influential metaphor coined by him – in an exploratory and prospective manner, identifying those areas that have not yet been cultivated and seeing how these new domains transform our vision of the whole of knowledge (Jaquet 2010, 13–18): "Partiones tamen Scientiarum adhibemus eas, quae non tantum jam inventa et nota, sed hactenus omissa et debita, complectantur. Etenim inveniuntur in globo intellectuali, quemadmodum in terrestri, et culta pariter et deserta. Itaque nil mirum videri debet, si a divisionibus usitatis quandoque recedamus. Adjectio enim, dum totum variat, etiam partes earumque sectiones necessario variat: receptae autem divisiones receptae summae scientiarum, qualis nunc est, tantum competunt." (Bacon [1620] 1999, 38) In the German translation by Rudolf Hoffmann: "Die Einteilung der Wissenschaften nehme ich so vor, daß sie nicht nur das schon Entdeckte und Bekannte, sondern auch das bisher Übergangene und noch Notwendige umfaßt. Denn man findet auf der Geisteskugel wie auf der Erdkugel sowohl bearbeitete als wüste Gebiete. Es ist deshalb nicht verwunderlich, wenn ich die gebräuchliche Einteilung manchmal verlasse. Denn ein Zusatz, der das Ganze verändert, verändert notwendigerweise auch die Teile und Abschnitte, und die übernommenen Einteilungen der Wissenschaften entsprechen nur dem Stand des Wissens, wie es jetzt ist." (Bacon [1620] 1999, 39)

¹⁵ For the relationship – or rather the *rendez-vous manqué* – between Zilsel and Merton, see Fleck 1993; 2015; 2022. Zilsel cited indeed Merton's 1938 dissertation in his 1942 paper (Zilsel 1942, 561). Arguably, both Zilsel (implicitly in Zilsel 1942, 544–45) and Merton (explicitly in Merton 1938, 321) started off from the question about the specificity of Western modern science as formulated by Max Weber (1864-1920) in the context of his thesis on the specific "rationalism" of Western culture (Weber [1904] 1988, 213; [1920] 1988b, 1, 3, 10–11). They provided diverging but eventually complementary answers to this question.

norms or “ethos” (Merton 1936; 1938; 1942).¹⁶ In this context, he also remarked that Bacon’s classification of the sciences was congenial to the positive valuation of the new “experimental natural philosophy” among the Puritan founders of the Royal Society (Merton [1936] 1968, 630). However, neither Merton nor his numerous students did inquire systematically into the social causes and/or social effects of classifications of science and knowledge. In fact, the Mertonian “paradigm” (Storer 1973, xi) as it was consolidated in the 1950s and 1960s focussed increasingly on synchronic questions regarding the internal functioning of science as a social institution (e.g. the “reward system of science”) rather than on diachronic, historical and comparative issues.

A historical-comparative orientation was pursued – independently from the Mertonian programme, but with several convergences (Storer 1973, xxvii–xxviii; Freudenthal 1991) – by Hungarian-Israeli sociologist of science Joseph Ben-David (1920-1986). Using the sociological concept of “role”, Ben-David studied the transformation of scientific institutions in a long-term historical and comparative perspective (Ben-David 1971). He focussed especially on the institutional infrastructure supporting the respective roles of the scientist in particular societies, for example the organization of science in academies, in universities, in disciplines or in research institutes. In this context, he also analysed the relations between scientific disciplines and the mechanism of “role-hybridization” (Ben-David 1960). With then young American sociologist Randall Collins (1941-) he studied how this mechanism contributed to the emergence of new disciplines and new scientific roles in the case of 19th century experimental psychology (Ben-David and Collins 1966). However, while Ben-David and Collins explored the social causes of the hierarchy and dynamics of the system of academic disciplines, they paid relatively little attention to the concomitant controversies on the division and classification of the sciences.¹⁷

Merton’s and Ben-David’s approaches thus produced essential contributions for understanding the emergence, the internal functioning and organization as well as the historical and national variations of modern science as a social institution. But they hardly explored the classification of the sciences as an activity proper that accompanies, justifies or relates in other ways to institutional change. They did not pay much attention, it seems, to how and why the objective institutional division of knowledge into sciences and disciplines prompted agents’ perceptions of and discourses on these divisions; and how these accounts, in turn, could impact

¹⁶ On the grounds of Merton’s vision of science as a social institution with partial “functional autonomy” (Merton 1970, xxiii), Pierre Bourdieu, proponent of a conception of science as a “relatively autonomous field”, later performed – after initial criticisms (Bourdieu 1975b) – a rapprochement with Merton (Bourdieu 1990a; [1990] 1994; 2001b, 25–34; see also Saint-Martin 2013, 27–28; 2020).

¹⁷ For a complementary sociological study of the controversies accompanying the emergence of experimental psychology in Germany, see Kusch 1995.

institutional structure. They did not make an explicit topic of the connections between the level of institutional structure and the level of agents' actions, including the concrete content and consequences of these actions (e.g. the content and effects of texts defending a specific classification of knowledge).

We encounter a more general and fruitful model of the relationship between “classes” and “classifications” – applicable to classifications of science – in the work of Bourdieu. Bourdieu's account of this topic is in a way summarized in his characterization – used as a sort of motto for his book *La Distinction* (1979) – of social agents as “classifiers classified by their classifications”.¹⁸ This laborious expression resumed several basic ideas:

- (1) Social agents can not only be classified by outside observers (such as sociologists) along some objectively measurable socio-economic indicators (income, education, etc.). They are also classified by and classify in turn their fellows as well as the social world in general. They produce themselves classifications, they are “classifiers”.¹⁹
- (2) Social agents can be classified by outside observers according to the classifications agents produce. Agents' classifications can be systematically related to their social class (defined as the whole of their social and economic conditions of existence) through the mediation of a set of acquired classificatory dispositions (or “practical schemes”) that Bourdieu called the “*habitus*”.²⁰
- (3) Agents' classifications are an integral part of social reality. They have not only a proper “symbolic power” (Bourdieu 1977b) and feed back into the social structure of which they are an expression. They are also the stake in specific “symbolic struggles” between agents who compete with various strategies for the legitimate vision, division

¹⁸ This phrase opens the blurb of *La Distinction* (Bourdieu 1979b): “Classeurs classés par leurs classements, les sujets sociaux se distinguent par les distinctions qu'ils opèrent – entre le savoureux et l'insipide, le beau et le laid, le chic et le chiqué, le distingué et le vulgaire – et où s'exprime ou se trahit leur positions dans les classements objectifs.”

¹⁹ “Ainsi, les agents sociaux que le sociologue classe sont producteurs non seulement d'actes classables mais aussi d'actes de classement qui sont eux-mêmes classés.” (Bourdieu 1979b, 544)

²⁰ “[L]a science sociale [...] se donne pour objet, entre autres choses, de décrire la *genèse sociale* des principes de construction et [...] elle cherche dans le monde social tel qu'elle peut l'appréhender le fondement de ces principes. [...] [E]lle cherche dans les distributions objectives des propriétés, en particulier matérielles [...], le fondement des systèmes de classement que les agents appliquent à toutes choses, à commencer par les distributions elles-mêmes. [...] [E]lle s'interroge sur la relation entre les principes de division et les divisions sociales (entre les générations, les sexes, etc.) qui en sont le fondement et sur les variations de l'usage qui est fait de ces principes selon la position occupée dans les distributions” (Bourdieu 1979b, 545). For a the graphical representation of this scheme, see Bourdieu 1979, 191, figure 8.

and classification of the world. Sociology must take these classifications and classification struggles into account when it seeks to understand social reality.²¹

We can apply these general insights into the relationship between “classes” and “classifications” to the case of classifications of the sciences. Most important here is Bourdieu’s “hypothesis” of a “homology” between social positions and agents’ stances (*prises de position*), more precisely, the homology between the relational space of social positions and the relational space of intellectual (and other) positions taken explicitly by the respective agents (e.g. Bourdieu [1981–1983] 2015, 496–98). In the case of classifications of knowledge and the sciences, we deal with positions taken mostly in the scientific or the broader intellectual and cultural fields. The question then becomes how social positions and trajectories translate into these “relatively autonomous” fields to express themselves in specific intellectual strategies that take the form of particular classifications of knowledge and the sciences.

While Bourdieu himself has not offered any systematic account of this peculiar type of symbolic struggle in (and on) the division and classification of the scientific field,²² we can apply his perspective profitably to the subject. The classification of knowledge and the sciences thus appears as a problem located at the interface between a historical state of science with its respective socio-economic conditions and internal structure of divisions and classifications (especially into disciplines), agents’ positions and trajectories within this structure, and their various corresponding strategies for classifying or re-classifying the scientific field in which they are operating. We can construe classifications of knowledge and the sciences – at least as a heuristic hypothesis – as agents’ “classificatory strategies” (Bourdieu 1984b, 31) that respond and correspond to a specific state and dynamics of the scientific field and their position and trajectory within this field.

This Bourdieusian perspective enables to see, first of all, under which particular conditions of the scientific field the classification of knowledge and the sciences becomes a problem or, in other words, a “focus of scientific interest” (Merton [1938] 1970, chap. 3).²³ Second, it allows

²¹ “Parler d’habitus, c’est inclure dans l’objet la connaissance que les agents, qui font partie de l’objet, ont de l’objet et la contribution que cette connaissance apporte à la réalité de l’objet. [...] C’est conférer à cette connaissance un pouvoir proprement constituant” (Bourdieu 1979b, 544).

²² For some scattered remarks on the classification of the sciences in Bourdieu’s work, see especially Bourdieu, Passeron, and Chamboredon 1968; Bourdieu 1975b; [1975] 1988; 1984; 2001.

²³ Debates on the classification of the sciences and knowledge do not always have the same intensity and importance. Historically, there seems to be a surge of interest in the topic in the early 19th century with, most prominently, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel’s (1770–1831) *Enzyklopädie* (1817–1830) in Germany, Auguste Comte’s *Cours de philosophie positive* (Comte [1830–1835] 1998; [1839–1842] 1975) and André-Marie Ampère’s (1775–1836) “classification naturelle de toutes les connaissances humaines” (Ampère 1834) in France, the classifications of William Whewell (1794–1866) (Whewell 1840a), John Stuart Mill (1806–1873) (Mill [1843] 1974a) and Herbert Spencer (1820–1903) (Spencer [1864] 1891) in Britain, etc. This increased interest can be plausibly interpreted as a response to the structural transformations connected to the so-called “Second

to understand how various agents – situated in different positions in the scientific field – reply differently to these conditions with their respective classificatory strategies. Finally, the repercussions of these classifications can be surprisingly far-reaching and long-lasting, both in terms of agents’ perceptual categories and in terms of institutional structures. These effects could be studied in terms of strategic appropriations of certain distinctions at a later point in time, in structurally different situations.

On the whole, it would be the task of a comparative historical sociology of classifications of knowledge and sciences to explore these topics. Its object could be defined as the socio-intellectual conditions and effects of these classifications. Its aim would be to understand the dynamic relationship between divisions of intellectual labour (“social morphology” in the Durkheimian sense) and the visions of this division (“physiology of practices and representations”), including the perpetual symbolic struggles surrounding these visions/divisions.²⁴

In relation to the general methodological outlook of a “sociological problem history” (Chapter 2), such a historical sociology of classifications of the sciences allows us to adapt problem history to the specific content of the problem of sociologizing the *a priori*. What then about the two specific classifications – those of Kant and Comte – that seem to underpin this problem? Concretely, the account I offer is heavily influenced by two works: on the one hand, Heilbron’s account of Comte’s classification of the sciences as a response to the “Second Scientific Revolution” (Heilbron 2014; 2017a); on the other hand, Collins’s account of the role of Kant’s transcendental philosophy in what he called the “German university revolution” or the

Scientific Revolution”. The topic continued to be discussed throughout the second half of the 19th century in the debates on the classification of the social and human sciences in Germany – most notably, with the contributions of Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911), Wilhelm Windelband (1848-1915) and Heinrich Rickert (1863-1936). The repercussions of these debates were felt at least until the 1920s and 1930s, for example in the controversies on the sociology of knowledge. It is hard to overestimate the long-term impact of these debates on the classification of the sciences.

²⁴ To my knowledge, there has so far been no genuine attempt in this direction. In terms of perspective and breadth, Randall Collins’s *Sociology of Philosophies* (Collins 1998a) comes maybe closest to it – although focusing on philosophy. Another inspiring work in terms of scope would be Max Weber’s sociology of religion (Weber [1920] 1988a) which contains *in nuce* a comparative historical sociology of intellectuals – those coming normally up with classifications of knowledge and the sciences. More recently, there has also been burgeoning interest in the labelling of scientific and scholarly practices (Merton and Barber 2004; Dufoix 2014; Boschetti 2014a; Feuerhahn 2020c). These works – drawing on diverse sources such as German *Begriffsgeschichte* (Brunner et al. 1972–1997; Koselleck 1979), Eliasian historical sociology (Elias [1939] 1997b, chap. 1) or French works from the *Annales* tradition on “sémantique historique” (Febvre 1930; Bloch [1949] 2020, chap. 4) – touch regularly upon the issue of the social division and classification of knowledge and the sciences. However, due to the focus on specific labels and their local contexts they rarely study, it seems, the whole of a classificatory system (but see Feuerhahn 2023b) or the evolution of classifications of knowledge in connection with large-scale social change. For a recent, more relational and holistic perspective on the system of disciplines and their internal oppositions construed as “fractal distinctions”, see Abbott 2001. A historical sociology of classifications of knowledge would also have to draw, of course, on the larger social scientific literature on classifications and their functions in the social world (e.g. Douglas and Hull 1992; Fradin et al. 1994; Bowker and Star 1999; Descola 2005; for an overview, see Nungesser 2020a). Other obviously important sources would be works in the history of science (e.g. Rey 1994a; Frängsmyr 2001) and in the history and sociology of education (e.g. Ringer 1979; 1992; Charle and Verger [1994] 2012).

“academic revolution” (Collins 1987; 1998b; 1998a, chap. 12). I start with Heilbron’s approach to Comte and will then seek to extend it with the help of Collins’s work to Kant.

Comte and the Second Scientific Revolution

Else the rival institutions which have sprung up, all around the Society [the Royal Society of London, MS], while it slept its slumbers of conscious and secure importance – sprung up too, with a luxuriance of numbers and structural organs, and power of production equaling almost Australian vegetation – the Linean Society, the Geological, the Astronomical, the Mathematical, the Zoological, the Geographical, the Statistical, the Medico-Chirurgical, the Entomological, and the Phrenological Societies, the Royal Institution, the Society of Arts, and above all the British Association, will shoot upwards into mighty trees, and interlacing their far spreading branches over the Royal Oak planted by Charles and reared by Newton, (once the sovereign and sole occupier of the soil, but now stunted and neglected,) cast their blighting shadow over it, whereby it shall perish, entombed before its death. (Granville 1836, x–xi)

Heilbron argues that Comte’s early major work *Cours de philosophie positive* (1830-1842) should be conceived as an intellectual answer to the processes of disciplinary differentiation associated with what various authors have called the “Second Scientific Revolution”. He sees indeed the main purpose of Comte’s *Cours* in expounding an original “historico-differential theory of science”.²⁵ This theory was encapsulated in the second lesson of the *Cours* on the hierarchical order of the sciences that reaches – in the order of increasing complexity and decreasing generality – from mathematics through astronomy, physics, chemistry and biology to sociology.

According to Heilbron, Comte sought to account with this classification simultaneously for the unity and the differences between these sciences – a problem raised by the structural transformations of the Second Scientific Revolution. Comte built on the most recent advances in the sciences connected to increased disciplinary specialization. For example, he modelled the “relative autonomy” of sociology on the one recently gained by “biology” vis-à-vis physics and chemistry (Heilbron 2017a, 27, 29–31). He thus came to formulate a vision of the sciences that went beyond the contemporary opposition between reductionism to mathematics or physics (in Condorcet, Laplace or Quetelet) and dualism (in Cousin and the Académie des sciences morales

²⁵ Heilbron has elaborated this interpretation of Comte’s theory in more detail elsewhere, see Heilbron 1990; 1991; [1990] 1995, pt. III; 2003; 2015, chap. 2. The most extensive analysis of Comte’s social and intellectual trajectory can be found in Heilbron [1990] 1995, chaps 11–13.

et politiques) (Heilbron 2017a, 27). Instead, he offered with his classification of the sciences a “systematic defense of the relative autonomy of the different sciences” (Heilbron 2017a, 32). In other words, his theory of the sciences should be conceived as a “theory of the *second scientific revolution*” (Heilbron 2017a, 24).²⁶

For demonstrating his hypothesis, Heilbron connects Comte’s classification of the sciences with both Comte’s specific social position in the scientific field of his time and with the structural transformations that this field was experiencing. Comte’s position was defined, according to Heilbron, by his peculiar insider-outsider position. He had acquired important “scientific capital” through his education in the elite École polytechnique (founded in 1794). At the same time, he became involved with utopian social reformer Henri de Saint-Simon (1760-1825) and his group. Under this impression, Comte turned from the mathematical and physical sciences to the life sciences. While his main “reference group” remained the mathematical and physical scientists at the Académie des sciences and the École polytechnique, Comte sought to introduce a new and more comprehensive account of all sciences based on the recent emergence of the life sciences. He thus brought to fruition the advantages of his position as both an insider and an outsider to the established sciences: “His differential theory of science was based upon a differential relation to the sciences.” (Heilbron 2017a, 33)

At the same time, the intellectual position developed by Comte from his peculiar social position would not have been possible without the structural transformations of the scientific field at the time. Heilbron identifies as the main trait of these transformations the formation of relatively independent scientific disciplines (see also Heilbron 2004). This process was especially advanced in France at the time with the abolition of the universities in 1793 and the foundation of specialized professional schools under the authority of the state, such as the École polytechnique or the École normale supérieure (also founded in 1794). With it came the decline of the national academies of science and the rise of disciplinary scientific journals, disciplinary societies and chairs (Heilbron 2017a, 34–38). All this inaugurated a new division of labour between

²⁶ As Heilbron himself remarked (Heilbron 2017a, 28, n. 9), this interpretation of Comte was anticipated, at least to some extent, by German sociologist Norbert Elias (1897-1990) (Elias [1970] 2006b, chap. 1). Elias – an exception among German sociologists and philosophers who were notoriously reluctant vis-à-vis Comte’s “positivism” – emphasized that Comte was responding with his theory of science to the “problem of scientific specialization” (Elias [1970] 2006b, 59–61) and that he attributed a “relative autonomy” (Elias [1970] 2006b, 45, 57) to sociology. Even before Elias, in the German-speaking literature neo-Kantian philosopher Ernst Cassirer (1874-1945) identified these issues in Comte in the fourth volume of his *Erkenntnisproblem* (Cassirer [1950] 1995, 14–17, 250–53). Cassirer, in turn, built on an independent reading of Comte and the best available French secondary literature (such as Lévy-Bruhl 1900). Given the family ties between Cassirer and Elias (Jitschin 2021, 69–70, 318–32), it is quite possible that Elias knew Cassirer’s account of Comte. Nowadays, the expression “relative autonomy” is, of course, primarily associated with the work of Bourdieu, who used it since the late 1960s to characterize fields of cultural production such as the literary or the religious, later also the scientific field (Bourdieu 1966, 866; 1971a; 1971c; 1975b; Sapiro 2020a; see also Chapter 2). Comte himself did not use the phrase, also if the idea was arguably there (Heilbron [1990] 1995, 245).

the sciences and, in fact, a new model of “disciplinary science” that, according to Heilbron’s “enlarged conception of the second scientific revolution” (Heilbron 2017a, 39), stretched also out over the social and human sciences, including philosophy. Comte’s theory of the sciences then was the attempt to account for this process of differentiation without abandoning the idea of a unity of all of these different sciences. It was the result of this process and Comte’s social position within this process – the result of an “inseparably social and intellectual dynamics” (Heilbron 2017a, 33).

Methodologically speaking, it is remarkable that Heilbron seeks to connect three distinct levels: the level of intellectual products, the level of intellectual producers, and the level of the conditions of intellectual production (see also Heilbron 2015, 5). Thus, Heilbron can be said to apply the Bourdieusian framework sketched above concerning the interrelation between classes and classifications to the special case of Comte’s classification of the sciences. He establishes a relation between Comte’s intellectual “position-taking” (*prise de position*) in terms of his theory of science presented in the *Cours*; his social position in terms of his social origins, trajectory, “capital” and “habitus”; and the structure and structural transformations of the scientific “field” of which he was a part in terms of the Second Scientific Revolution. We can thus understand Comte’s specific classificatory strategy against the background of the social position that he occupied within the large-scale transformations of the scientific field.

For the strategy of the present chapter, Heilbron’s hypothesis regarding Comte and the Second Scientific Revolution plays a key role. First, I shall directly build on Heilbron’s analysis of Comte’s theory of science. I will try to elaborate the consequences of Comte’s classification of the sciences for his specifically sociological account of the *a priori*. Second, I shall extend the basic idea of a correspondence between the structure of the scientific field and the classifications of the sciences to the case of Kant’s transcendental philosophy. Finally, I shall use this perspective to understand the relationship between Kant and Comte and the conflict between their classifications of science and knowledge. In this way, I will argue that the emergence of the problem of the sociologization of the *a priori* is at bottom the outcome of the Second Scientific Revolution.

Kant and the German university revolution

Ce que Fichte, Cohen et Heidegger cherchent chez Kant, n’est-ce point [...] cette méthode éternelle de philosopher dont il a fourni le modèle? Sans doute nous répètent-ils tous à l’envie que Kant a découvert la finitude – à la condition cependant que l’on excepte de cette finitude Kant lui-même, le Kant éternel de la pensée. (Vuillemin 1954, 302)

For realizing the envisioned strategy, a second work is crucial. This is Randall Collins's account of Kant and Kantian transcendental philosophy in the framework of his comparative historical sociology of philosophies (Collins 1998a).

Collins discusses Kant in the context of what he calls the "German university revolution" or, more broadly, the "academic revolution" or the "university revolution".²⁷ This revolution took place in Germany in the decades around 1800. The central piece of it was the upgrading, within the universities, of the "lower" philosophical faculty in relation to the "higher faculties" of theology, law and medicine (Collins 1998b, 150; 1998a, 644). Kantian transcendental philosophy and idealism functioned, according to Collins, as the "ideology" and the motor of this revolution (Collins 1998b, 153; 1998a, 646, 650–60). It made philosophy an autonomous academic discipline independent from the claims and control of theology and the state. Even more, it elevated philosophy above the other faculties by conceiving it as the one discipline that provided the foundations for all the others, including the natural sciences (then practiced as a marginal topic within the philosophical faculties). The Berlin university founded in 1809/1810 after the plans of linguist, scholar and philosopher Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767-1835) epitomized the reorganization of disciplines in the framework of a new model of the research university. According to Collins, the university revolution and its international diffusion had lasting effects to this day. There is a both institutional and intellectual continuity in philosophy between the end of the 18th century and today. Beyond internal scissions and controversies, virtually all academic philosophy has become and remained to some extent "critical" or "transcendental" in style (Collins 1998b, 141, 157; 1998a, 687).²⁸

In order to make his case for this "great transformation" or "revolution" in philosophy (Collins 1998b, 141, 158), Collins proposes a three-layer causal analysis of the development of German idealistic philosophy between the 1780s and the 1830s. The three levels are:

- (1) the micro level of agents and their competition in networks of interaction, including the ideas and intellectual contents they produce;

²⁷ Collins has developed this topic in a series of publications (Collins 1987; 1998b), most comprehensively in his *The Sociology of Philosophies* (Collins 1998a, chap. 12).

²⁸ "All academic philosophers since about 1800 have been post-Kantians. That is to say, they all do 'critical' philosophy, taking for granted that ontological claims must pass through an epistemological filter; and all search for what there is in the mind, or to depersonalize it further, in the semiotic process, which shapes the nature of what is taken to be knowledge. Kant taught philosophers to use the argumentative weapon of asking what it is that must necessarily be presumed for an argument to be made at all; virtually all subsequent philosophy might be described as 'transcendental' in the strict sense, however much later philosophers might despise the terminology." (Collins 1998b, 157; see also 1998a, 687) Collins converges here with American philosopher Richard Rorty's (1931-2007) notion of a "transcendental turn" in philosophy (Rorty 1979, 162). Indeed, Collins's and Rorty's approaches are complementary: Collins focuses on the sociological and Rorty on the intellectual dimension of the same basic transformation.

- (2) the meso²⁹ level of organizational and institutional structures in which they produce their work (e.g. systems of patronage, academies, the commercial market or the universities); and
- (3) the macro level of the larger political, economic and religious context.

For the concrete case of “German idealism”, these three levels are:

- (1) the sequence of intellectual innovations epitomized by Kant’s *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (1781), Johann Gottlieb Fichte’s (1762-1814) *Wissenschaftslehre* (1794), Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling’s *Naturphilosophie* (1775-1854) (1797) and Hegel’s *Enzyklopädie* (1817-1830) that emerged within the competitive intellectual networks located in Königsberg, Jena, Weimar and Berlin;
- (2) the crisis of the German university system at the end of the 18th century and its reform (achieved with the 1809/1810 foundation of Berlin university) which made the university an indispensable institution within the educational system and upgraded the philosophical faculty within the university; and
- (3) the French Revolution and the turmoil of the Napoleonic wars that transformed the relationship between state and religion in German states and offered opportunities for political, religious and institutional reform (Collins 1998a, 622).

Importantly, these three levels do not “reduce” in any way to each other, according to Collins. Especially the micro-level phenomena of intellectual content do not reduce to macro-level conditions. They are “mediated” through the competition in the relatively independent “attention space” created by intellectual networks and through the institutional structures that form the immediate context and the “material basis” of intellectual production (Collins 1987, 49; 1998b, 141–42).

In this perspective, the content of philosophical work is most intimately connected with transformations on the meso level of the university – and vice versa. Not only did the content of idealist philosophies support university reform ideologically by emphasizing the importance of philosophy among the different sciences. The most important protagonists of this movement – Kant, Fichte, Humboldt, Schelling, Hegel – were indeed at the same time “leaders in the movement to reform the university” (Collins 1998b, 153; 1998a, 646–50). Idealist philosophy thus expressed in intellectual terms what the university revolution expressed in institutional terms: the autonomization of philosophy as an academic discipline (Collins 1998a, 687; 1998b, 158). Through the German university revolution intellectuals succeeded in “taking control of

²⁹ Collins himself does not use the word “meso”, but he is explicitly interested in an account of the relationship between “micro” and “macro” levels in intellectual production (Collins 1981; 1987).

the material base” (Collins 1998a, 618, 663; 1998b, 158) of their own production, the university.

Kant occupies in Collins’s account of the academic revolution an outstanding position. He features as the creator of the enduring “transcendental” style of academic philosophy that became institutionalized with the new division of labour in the reformed university system. At the same time, Kant’s position is ambiguous. He was the initiator of the intellectual movement of idealism – without being himself a proponent of full-blown idealism; and he was a major contributor to the debates on the reform of the university system – all while spending the whole of his career in the old unreformed system.

Kant thus occupies in Collins’s analysis a transitional position as a “role hybrid” (Collins 1987, 62). He is located between the earlier pre-idealist networks and the later idealist networks; between the old university system, together with forms of collective patronage in the academies, and the new system (which he helped to bring about); between the role of the Enlightenment intellectual engaged in science or “natural philosophy” and the role of the university professor in philosophy. According to the mechanism of role hybridization (Ben-David 1960; Ben-David and Collins 1966), in a situation where chairs in natural science within the philosophical faculties were extremely rare, Kant – himself a practising “scientist”³⁰ or “natural philosopher” – introduced standards from the high prestige-high competition field of science into the then relatively low prestige-low competition field of university philosophy (Collins 1987, 62; 1998a, 646–47).

Kant’s major innovation in philosophy – laid out in the *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (first published in 1781) – was, according to Collins, the result of his peculiar position at the intersection of various networks as well as of the structural opportunities and obstacles he faced at the university. Collins places Kant between the three dominant networks that opposed each other in Northern Germany around 1750 (Collins 1998a, 650–51):

- (1) the network of Wolffian rationalists at Prussian universities, especially in Halle, Leipzig and Königsberg;
- (2) the network of Pietists opposing the rationalists at these same universities; and
- (3) the network of Newtonians at the Berlin Academy of Sciences – mathematicians and physicists such as Pierre Louis Moreau de Maupertuis (1698-1759), Leonhard Euler

³⁰ Applying the word “scientist” to Kant would, of course, be an anachronism. The word doesn’t appear until 1833 in the debate between *Naturphilosophie*-influenced Romantic poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834) and, well, scientist, philosopher and historian William Whewell (1794-1866) at the meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science (founded in 1831) in Cambridge on 24 June 1833 (Ross 1962). The new term – and the collective identity it designates – is precisely an outcome of the discussions on the process of specialization in the “Second Scientific Revolution”.

(1707-1783) and Johann Heinrich Lambert (1728-1777) – who opposed simultaneously Wolffian rationalists and Pietists.

According to Collins, Kant succeeded in “reconciling” elements from these opposed networks of rationalists, Pietists and Newtonians and forged them into a new powerful combination. He combined, for example, a Leibniz-Wolffian view of the ideality of space and time with a critique of rationalist metaphysics; a critique of Pietist theology and irrationalism with the insistence on the moral foundations of religion; or an orientation towards a Newtonian method in metaphysics with a rejection of Newton’s “absolute space” and the view of mathematics as tautological.

Out of the latter context – debates concerning the character of mathematical knowledge as conducted especially at the Berlin Academy of Sciences –, Kant developed the decisive distinction between “analytic” and “synthetic” *a priori* knowledge. The “synthetic *a priori*” would become the key of Kant’s critical philosophy by providing the foundations of mathematics and natural science and enabling at the same time a limitation of metaphysics and theology (Collins 1998a, 651–54). Philosophy became the enquiry into these “synthetic *a priori*” conditions that make knowledge and experience possible in the first place.

With this view, Kant achieved, according to Collins, a decisive upgrade of philosophy within the system of disciplines, primarily at the expense of theology. The central task of “critique” placed philosophy beyond – and to some extent above – the claims of other areas of knowledge, including theology, law and the natural sciences. These other domains, all while remaining relatively independent, now had to admit philosophical examinations of their foundations.³¹ The very content of Kant’s critical philosophy, Collins argues, supported the German university revolution with its tenet of rising the status of the philosophical faculty. With his redefinition

³¹ In Collins’s words: “The initial phase of idealism in Kant’s critical philosophy, was directed against the claims of theology to know ultimate reality. It is impossible to know the thing-in-itself, and any such claims lead to inescapable antinomies. There is no justification for religion except that which is provided by transcendental critique demonstrating the necessity of moral and teleological categories of thinking. Kant’s critical philosophy also demonstrates that no field can know the validity and limits of its own claims of knowledge, until they have been examined by the transcendental methods of philosophy. Kant’s revolution simultaneously downgrades theology, and raises philosophy into the arbiter of all knowledge. Kant does not cut off the validity of any empirical, phenomenal field of inquiry as long as its practitioners stick to their own sphere of investigation. Empirical scholarly inquiry is encouraged; so are ongoing philosophical investigations to reveal how the empirically derived laws (synthetic *a posteriori*) of specific fields are related to the transcendental categories (synthetic *a priori*).” (Collins 1998b, 154) Collins bases his interpretation upon statements such as Kant’s claim of an “age of critique” in the first preface to the *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*: “Unser Zeitalter ist das eigentliche Zeitalter der *Kritik*, der sich alles unterwerfen muß. *Religion*, durch ihre *Heiligkeit*, und *Gesetzgebung*, durch ihre *Majestät*, wollen sich gemeiniglich derselben entziehen. Aber alsdenn erregen sie gerechten Verdacht wider sich, und können auf unverstellte Achtung nicht Anspruch machen, die die Vernunft nur demjenigen bewilligt, was ihre freie und öffentliche Prüfung hat aushalten können.” (Kant [1781] 1974, 13, A XI, n.; see Collins 1998b, 1007, n. 25)

of the role of philosophy Kant intervened in the existing social hierarchy of the sciences and knowledge.

This materialized especially in Kant's last published work, *Der Streit der Fakultäten* (1798). Kant developed there – against the background of his experience with religious state censorship concerning his earlier *Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der bloßen Vernunft* (1793) – the view that the “lower” faculty of philosophy should not be answerable to the claims of the “higher” faculties of theology, law and medicine, which acted ultimately under the authority of the state. On the contrary, these higher faculties would have to submit their claims to the scrutiny of the philosophical faculty which, in turn, would be free of government regulations. Indeed, through the later Prussian university reform – supported after Kant by Fichte, Schelling, Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834), Hegel, and realized by Humboldt – the philosophical faculty should become a full-blown “higher” faculty and, in fact, the very centre of the German university.

In sum, Collins's analysis of Kant and the German university revolution shows how socially institutionalized divisions of knowledge interacted concretely with debates on the classification of knowledge and the sciences. Towards the end of the 18th century in Prussia, a peculiar institutional hierarchy of the sciences went – for various reasons (Collins 1998a, 640–44) – into crisis. This provoked propositions for a new classification of knowledge and the sciences among certain intellectuals. These proposals, in turn, became to some extent institutionalized through educational reform in the 1809/1810 Berlin university. Through the international diffusion of the new model of the German research university throughout the 19th century this reclassification of the sciences came to have lasting effects – to the point where “[v]irtually all subsequent philosophy might be described as ‘transcendental’” (Collins 1998a, 687). We can hence interpret the classification of knowledge and the sciences in Kant's transcendental philosophy – just as Comte's positive philosophy later – as a response to a given historical state, or rather an ongoing dynamic, in the social division of knowledge and the sciences.³²

³² Collins's portrayal of Kant's pivotal role in the social evolution of philosophy bears several similarities with earlier analyses by American philosopher Albert William Levi (1911-1988) – without Collins citing Levi's work. Levi, in his insightful *Philosophy as Social Expression* (Levi 1974), presented Kant as the major agent of the professionalization of philosophy (Levi 1974, 233–49). Distinguishing between “the age of the gentleman” (late 15th to late 18th century) and the “age of the professional” (late 18th century to today), Kant marked the transition between the two regimes (e.g. Levi 1974, 166, 174, 306). The two major “internal” factors of professionalism Levi saw in Kant's philosophy were terminology and methodical systematicity; two other “external” factors in the 17th and 18th century were the emergence of specifically philosophical journals and of specific histories of philosophy (Levi 1974, 238). Levi illustrated the transition nicely through the change in philosophers' daily routines (although, as Kühn has shown, we should be wary of caricatures of Kant's regulated lifestyle): “Descartes, the gentleman, customarily lay in bed until noon. Kant, the professional, retired promptly at ten, and his servant had strict orders never to let him sleep later than five in the morning.” (Levi 1974, 247)

In this way, Collins offers an account of Kant's classification of knowledge that is complementary to and compatible with Heilbron's account of Comte. As Comte's classification responded to the Second Scientific Revolution, Kant's classification responded to the crisis of the German university system and initiated the "academic revolution". Incidentally, there are also some remarkable methodological similarities between Heilbron's and Collins's analyses, despite the fact that they are coming from different theoretical-methodological backgrounds.³³ Both Collins and Heilbron seek to account sociologically for the very contents of Kant's and Comte's works, defying the conventional distinction between "internalist" and "externalist" approaches.³⁴ They do so by combining an analysis of Kant's and Comte's intellectual products with an examination of their social characteristics, their position in their academic fields and specific networks, the structural transformations of these academic fields and the broader political and economic context. Both Heilbron and Collins seek explicitly the links between the macro and the micro level, between institutional and intellectual structure, between organizational patterns and scientific contents. Both do so by assuming a "relatively autonomous" intermediate structure – called variously the "academic field", the "intellectual field" or the "attention space". Both construe these fields as spaces of competition and conflict between agents who are striving for a specific form of "capital".³⁵ The logic of the competition that generates concrete intellectual contents is conditioned by external factors, but not reducible to them. Accordingly, both Collins and Heilbron suggest that if we want to understand

³³ For the comparison of their methodological approaches, compare especially Heilbron [1990] 1995, 1–15; 2015, 1–11; and Collins 1987, 47–49; 1998a, 1–133. I cannot go into the details of where Heilbron's and Collins's approaches diverge, for example regarding Collins's stronger emphasis on interaction and "interaction ritual chains" (Collins 1998a, 20–28) or his critique of the Bourdieusian hypothesis of "homology". For the convergence between Collins and Bourdieu-inspired sociology of philosophy more generally, see Heidegren and Lundberg 2010.

³⁴ Collins goes here beyond his teacher Ben-David who had explicitly excluded – at least temporarily – the contents of scientific knowledge as a subject for the sociology of science (Ben-David 1971, vii). This exclusion came later under heavy attack by the proponents of the "new sociology of science" from the 1970s onwards (e.g. Bloor [1976] 1991, 3). Ben-David's actual position turned out to be more sophisticated (Ben-David 1991, pt. 6).

³⁵ Collins uses, indeed, both "intellectual field" and "cultural capital" (Collins 1987, 47–49). In the latter case, he refers explicitly to Bourdieu and emphasizes the similarities between his own approach and Bourdieu's (Collins 1998a, 29, 948, n. 4). However, Collins disagrees with Bourdieu on the issue of the "homology" between intellectual fields and the broader social space: "I disagree with Bourdieu's principle that the intellectual field is homologous to the social space of non-intellectuals, however; the dynamics of struggle over the intellectual space is shaped in a distinctive way by the law of small numbers; and the cultural capital specific to the forefront of intellectual competition is not the cultural capital of educated persons generally, and it is not directly transposable with economic capital, in either direction." (Collins 1998a, 948, n. 4, see also 1019–1020, n. 41) I would argue that Collins's opposition relies on a certain misunderstanding of Bourdieu's use of "homology". This concept applies rather to the relation between the space of social positions and the space of intellectual positions taken (*prises de position*) within a specific field (e.g. the scientific or philosophical field). "Homology" is less a "principle" than a "hypothesis" about the relationship between the space of intellectual products and the space of intellectual producers mediated via the latter's acquired system of dispositions or *habitus* – a hypothesis that must be explored and confirmed in each individual case (Bourdieu [1981–1983] 2015, 496–98).

sociologically Comte's and Kant's classifications of knowledge and the sciences we should focus on their positions and strategies within the evolving structure of these relatively autonomous academic and intellectual fields.

All in all, we could retain from the earlier steps towards a historical sociology of classifications of knowledge and the sciences the general hypothesis that there is "some relation" between the social division of knowledge institutionalized in the scientific field and the way in which knowledge and the sciences are classified and re-classified by the agents involved. Taken together, Heilbron's and Collins's work now enables us to be more specific about the particular cases of Kant's and Comte's classifications. We must situate them in the context of the "Second Scientific Revolution" and the "German university revolution". The remaining chapter will seek to expand and specify³⁶ Heilbron's and Collins's analyses and to use them for a better understanding of the social roots of the problem of the sociologization of the *a priori*. In sum, the present chapter might thus be considered as a contribution to one particular – and arguably important – episode in the historical sociology of classifications of sciences and knowledge.

Two revolutions in one: The disciplinarization of science

Now, both Kant and Comte appear in Heilbron's and Collins's analyses as "revolutionary" – at different times, in different places and in different ways. But what exactly was revolutionary about them? And how did the two revolutions they responded to relate to each other?

Taking a step back, we might argue that the two revolutions were indeed one. Could Kant and Comte be part of one and the same transformatory process in the structure of the scientific field? In fact, there are some important connections between the two notions of the "Second Scientific Revolution" as used by Heilbron and the "university revolution" as elaborated by Collins. On the one hand, already American historian of science Roger Hahn (1932-2011) – the first, as far as I see, to argue for such a Second Scientific Revolution in a primarily institutional sense³⁷ –, emphasized the transnational character of this revolution. He explicitly saw an

³⁶ Collins, for example, emphasizes Kant's redefinition of philosophy vis-à-vis theology, but remains quite un-specific about Kant's relationship with the natural sciences – except for the idea that Kant would have preferred a chair in natural science and would have settled on general philosophy primarily due to better career opportunities (Collins 1998a, 646–47, 651). Collins doesn't consider either Kant's account of the human and early social sciences (psychology, anthropology, history).

³⁷ American historian and philosopher of science Thomas S. Kuhn (1922-1996) had used the term "Second Scientific Revolution" already in 1961, at first in a sense that concerned primarily intellectual developments within the sciences. The trademark of the Second Scientific Revolution for Kuhn was the "quantification" and "mathematization of the Baconian sciences" (for the distinction between "classical physical sciences" and "Baconian sciences", see Kuhn [1976] 1977): "Successful quantification of the Baconian sciences had scarcely begun before the last third of the eighteenth century and only realized its full potential in the nineteenth. That realization – exemplified in the work of Fourier, Clausius, Kelvin, and Maxwell – is one facet of a second scientific revolution no less consequential than the seventeenth-century revolution. Only in the nineteenth century did the Baconian physical sciences undergo the transformation which the group of traditional sciences had

equivalent to the French development – which pioneered, according to Hahn, this revolution chronologically – in the German university reform and the resulting model of the research university.³⁸ On the other hand, in his account of the “German university revolution” Collins pointed out that one major structural consequence of this revolution was disciplinary specialization and autonomization (Collins 1998a, 618–20) – precisely the trademark of the Second Scientific Revolution, as Heilbron uses the notion. According to Collins, the “post-revolutionary condition” of philosophy (Collins 1998a, chap. 13) is defined by the creation of academic specialties through the differentiation of the philosophical faculty. This process accounts for the creativity of the German university model – compared to other, more conservative and stagnant forms of the academicization of knowledge production – and has provided philosophy with a source of new topics for reflection ever since (Collins 1998a, 688–89).³⁹

This convergence between the Second Scientific Revolution and the German university revolution is plausible from a historical point of view. Both were, in fact, outcomes of almost

experienced two or more centuries before.” (Kuhn 1961, 188; 1977, 217–18) Kuhn acknowledged institutional aspects in his notion of the Second Scientific Revolution (Kuhn 1961, 190; [1961] 1977, 220), but argued that they were too general to explain the specific phenomenon of mathematization. He came to emphasize them only later on (Kuhn [1971] 1977, 146–47) – very much along the lines of Hahn’s analysis (Kuhn had, in fact, discussed his paper with Hahn, see Kuhn [1971] 1977, 127, n.). Another rather “internalist” notion of the Second Scientific Revolution is employed in the work of Italian historian of science Enrico Bellone (1938–2011). Characteristically, Bellone’s “Chronology of Physics in the Second Scientific Revolution” (Bellone [1976] 1980, 203–7) doesn’t mention a single institutional fact. American historian of science I. Bernard Cohen (1914–2003) provided an overview of the historiography of the Second Scientific Revolution (Cohen 1985b, 97–101). Cohen himself recommended searching for the “causal relationships [...] between changes in the intellectual content and style of science and changes in the institutions and style of *doing* science” (Cohen 1985b, 96–97) and claimed that, so far, only Canadian philosopher and historian of science Ian Hacking (1936–2023) had called for such a connection regarding the Second Scientific Revolution (Cohen 1985b, 101; Cohen refers to Hacking [1983] 1987).

³⁸ “This second revolution was marked by the eclipse of the generalized learned society and the rise of more specialized institutions, and by the concurrent establishment of professional standards for individual scientific disciplines. It was the crucial social transformation that ushered science into its more mature state and, like the first revolution in the seventeenth century, cut across national boundaries. In the German states, it was marked by the rise of the university and the establishment of research institutes, in England by the curricular reforms at Oxford and Cambridge, and in France by the establishment of the ‘Grandes Ecoles.’ Everywhere in Europe, the age of professionalized science cultivated in institutions of higher learning and perfected in specialized laboratories was replacing the age of academies that had dominated the scene since the middle of the seventeenth century.” (Hahn 1971, 275) And for the pioneering role of France in the Second Scientific Revolution: “While acknowledging the international character of this scientific revolution, which is ultimately linked to the broad economic, social, and intellectual movements of the age, we must note that its first concrete manifestations appeared in France.” (Hahn 1971, 276)

³⁹ “Structurally, the academic revolution divided the old all-purpose intellectual role of the philosopher into a multitude of academic specialties. The process of specialization, not yet ended today, has affected the contents of intellectual life in several ways. Most obvious is the crystallization of the subject matters of the new disciplines, ranging from psychology, sociology, and the other social sciences, to the natural sciences, humanities, and literature, now incorporated as academic subjects. [...] Nevertheless, the general-purpose intellectual role continues to exert an attraction, and finds new subject matters in the very topic of the disciplinary challenge. [...] Far from emptying out the contents of philosophy, the rise of the disciplines created a new mode of generating intellectual innovations on the most general (i.e., philosophical) turf itself. This is one reason why, despite so many pronouncements to the contrary, modern philosophy has not faded away but prospered.” (Collins 1998a, 619–20)

contemporaneous reforms of higher education in the different national contexts of France and Germany, in particular Prussia. There were two markedly different scenarios here. In France, universities were abolished in 1793 and replaced by a system of higher professional schools with research remaining centred at the Académie des sciences. In Prussia, instead, the medieval university was reformed and put at the very centre of the educational system. Teaching and research were united in one and the same institution. The University of Berlin, founded in 1809/1810, quickly became the model for the rest of the German states and then for educational reforms in other countries.

France and Prussia thus present us with two markedly different ways of reforming higher education in response to various forms of political, economic, religious and social pressure.⁴⁰ Moreover, the two models also interacted to some extent: the French development served as a foil for German reorganization, which was largely triggered and made possible by the effects of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars. Importantly, in each case socially different intellectual groups supported these reforms. In France, the leaders of reform were mainly scientists, in Prussia mainly philosophers and philologists.⁴¹ As Ben-David suggested, the respective reforms bore the mark of the characteristics and interests of these groups and their position within wider society.⁴² The Second Scientific Revolution and the German university revolution, as they have been described in the literature, thus seem to have both been part of a larger process – and we can consider Kant and Comte as being both part of it too.

How should we call this overarching transformation? “Second Scientific Revolution” seems too specific. It suggests a focus on the natural sciences – tellingly, Heilbron had to extend the notion to the social and human sciences in order to include sociology (Heilbron 2017a, 35). Also, it seems to take as its primary model the French development.⁴³ “Academic revolution”, “university revolution” or “German university revolution”, on the other hand, are too limited

⁴⁰ For a concise overview and comparison of the French and the German model, see Charle and Verger [1994] 2012, 82–92.

⁴¹ “Out of thirty-one people mentioned by Liard as having taken part in the initiation and planning of the reform of French higher education during the Revolution, at least twelve were well-known scientists, two were philosopher-scientists, one was an economist, one (Sieyès) can be described mainly as a political ideologist, and only one was a well-known literary man (Auger). [...] In Germany the most important group of intellectuals participating in the process were the philosophers (Fichte, Schelling, Schleiermacher) and the philologists (Wolf and Humboldt). [...] The few scientists who took part in the discussions also favored the specialized institutions (schools such as medical, mining, etc.) where most of them taught.” (Ben-David 1971, 113–14, n. 10)

⁴² “These innovations [in Germany], like those which had occurred in France about 1800, were initiated by intellectuals, and their original shape was determined by the needs and the ideas of this group. The initial differences between the new French and German systems were due to the differences between the composition and character of the intellectual classes that in turn were rooted in the altogether different class structures of the two countries.” (Ben-David 1971, 109)

⁴³ Both Hahn and Heilbron insist on the pioneering role of the French context, regarding the Second Scientific Revolution (Hahn 1971, 276) and the formation of a “regime of disciplines” (Heilbron 2004, 32) respectively.

as well. These terms focus obviously on the German scenario with the central position allotted to the university. The latter, however, did not play an eminent role in France or Britain until the end of the 19th century. What is common to both notions is that they locate the main social and institutional transformation in the formation of specialized disciplines. This applies to philosophy in the context of the German university revolution as well as to scientific disciplines such as “physics”, “chemistry”, “biology” and “sociology” in the context of the Second Scientific Revolution.

I would thus suggest as a possible umbrella term encompassing both notions (and the phenomena they describe) the term “disciplinary revolution”⁴⁴. To avoid controversies surrounding historiography in terms of “revolutions” (e.g. Shapin 1996), one might also prefer “disciplinary transformation” or simply “disciplinarization”. In any case, this process has been usefully described by Heilbron in terms of the formation of a “regime of disciplines” (Heilbron 2004) and it is indeed “at the core” of the “Second Scientific Revolution” as he uses this term (Heilbron 2017a, 35). The advantage of the term “disciplinary revolution” is that it is, on the one hand, more specific than “Second Scientific Revolution” and “academic revolution” in terms of the content and the long-term effects of this transformation. On the other hand, it is sufficiently broad to cover both the French and the German-speaking developments – without excluding the fact that the disciplinarization of the sciences could take markedly different national routes – which, in turn, interacted at several points.

Symbolic revolutionaries in the classification of science

Once we have formulated the idea of an institutional transformation encompassing both French and German-speaking scenarios, which positions did Kant and Comte occupy within this development? In which respects were their positions different, in which similar? Why should we consider both their intellectual positions as “revolutionary”? And how can we understand these “revolutionary” intellectual positions against the background of their peculiar social positions within the overarching process of structural transformation in the scientific and academic field?

In short, the difference is that, within the same overarching process, Kant stood at the beginning of the German sequence while Comte stood at the end of the French sequence. Kant was in the 1780s at the beginning of what Collins calls the “academicization of philosophy” (Collins 1998b, 145–47), i.e. the fact that the university became the primary locus for the production of philosophy. This academicization implied an autonomization as well as a disciplinarization of

⁴⁴ Unfortunately, the term has already been used in a completely different sense – indicating the connection between Calvinism and the formation of the modern state – by historical sociologist Philip S. Gorski (Gorski 2003).

philosophy. Philosophy became an autonomous discipline: on the one hand, within the university in relation to the other faculties of theology, law and medicine; on the other hand, within the philosophical faculty itself in relation to natural science, but also to all sorts of “history”, psychology, anthropology, etc. Philosophy thus also became one discipline among others, albeit at first a dominant and – especially in German idealism – a fundamental one. While Kant was in a way the prophet of this revolution, its institutional support was still to be created with the Prussian university reform. Nevertheless, if we want to understand the process of the autonomization of philosophy as an academic discipline – in a sense that has remained relatively stable to this day – there still is hardly a better place to start with than Kant’s transcendental philosophy. There is good reason to think that it was Kant who invented the intellectual tools that allowed to accomplish this feat of autonomization.

Comte, on the other hand, stood in the 1820s at the end of the French sequence. In terms of his education and his general orientation, he was a pure product of the French development with its abolition of the universities, its professional schools – Comte himself had been educated at the École polytechnique and taught there for some time –, the central research-oriented Académie des sciences and the high social prestige accorded to natural scientists. Ironically, Comte stood chronologically also at the end of French scientific leadership in Europe – an evolution that has been attributed to the lacking capacity of the centralized French system to adapt to new scientific developments, to the new collective mode of scientific work and to the successful German model of organizing higher education and research (Ben-David 1971, 100–107).⁴⁵ At the same time, however, Comte stood at the beginning of the autonomization of “sociology” in intellectual and scientific terms. The scientization of social theory and the idea of a “social science” had already been around for some 50 years when Comte started work on his *Cours*. But Comte was arguably the first to conceive “sociology” not after the model of another already existing science – mathematics, physics or physiology –, but as “autonomous” both in terms of content and methods.⁴⁶ Given his position within the French sequence, it shouldn’t be much of a surprise that Comte contested the Kantian model of philosophy based on the idea of the

⁴⁵ In this perspective, the absence of a significant echo to Comte’s *Cours* in the scientific establishment and his subsequent turn away from the scientists at the Académie des sciences and the École polytechnique after his 1838 crisis (Heilbron [1990] 1995, 249, 254; 2017a, 39) might also be interpreted as a failure of the French system to accommodate disciplinary innovation. Instead of obtaining a permanent position in higher education, Comte finished in a precarious position outside all institutions relying basically on financial patronage by his disciples (Pickering 2009, 8, 424–29). The rigid French system was not able to integrate Comte’s innovation. The German system with its basis of research at the universities seems to have been more adaptable to specialization and differentiation (Ben-David 1971, 125–29). Tellingly, it was not until the adaptation of the German model in France between the 1870s and 1900s that “sociology” would enter the French universities (Charle and Verger [1994] 2012, 109–12).

⁴⁶ I follow here the periodization of the “predisciplinary history of French sociology” elaborated by Heilbron (Heilbron [1990] 1995, 7–8).

“synthetic *a priori*”. In Comte’s model, “sociology” would take care of this domain by identifying the laws of the collective intellectual development of humanity.

But in spite of all their differences, Kant and Comte were in somewhat analogous positions. Both were central agents in processes of autonomization – regarding philosophy in Kant’s case and sociology in Comte’s case. More precisely, both were intellectual initiators of such an autonomization without living to see its consequences in their own lifetimes. As Kant didn’t live to see the effective upgrading of the philosophical faculty and its later split into various academic specialties, Comte didn’t see the institutionalization of sociology in scholarly societies, scientific journals or at the university (as it happened only some 30 years after his death). Most importantly, both Kant and Comte initiated these processes of autonomization by proposing new classifications of knowledge and the sciences. These classifications responded to their respective historical situation which was defined in each case by a peculiar social and intellectual crisis – the crisis of the German university system in Kant’s case, the crisis provoked by specialization and disciplinarization in France in the first decades of the 19th century in Comte’s case.

In both cases, the new classifications were “revolutionary” in a specific sense. Both Kant and Comte made the classifications that were available in their day turn around a new pivot: “transcendental philosophy” and “synthetic *a priori*” knowledge in Kant’s case; “positive philosophy” and “sociology” in Comte’s case. In this sense, both Kant and Comte can be called – with a concept coined by Bourdieu – “revolutionary classifiers”. Their classifications were the two different outcomes of the same structural transformation as it played out in two different national scenarios in Germany and France around 1800: the German sequence with the German university revolution that brought about the autonomization of philosophy; and the French sequence with the Second Scientific Revolution that brought about the autonomization of “sociology” and a new type of “*philosophie des sciences*”⁴⁷. Perhaps due to the homology of their positions as “revolutionary classifiers” Kant and Comte should later also play similar roles as major reference points in their respective national contexts.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ The phrases “*philosophie des sciences*”, “philosophy of sciences”, “philosophy of science” seem to emerge between the 1820s and the 1840s (Pulte 2004). Important instances are Comte’s 1829 “Avertissement” to his *Cours* (Comte [1829] 1998a) – preceded by unpublished notes from 1819 for his “Essais sur la philosophie des mathématiques” (Comte [1819–1820] 1970) –, Ampère’s 1834 *Essai sur la philosophie des sciences* (Ampère 1834) and Whewell’s 1840 *Philosophy of the Inductive Sciences* (Whewell 1840a). For a recent account emphasizing the role of the French context in the emergence of the philosophy of science, see Brenner 2021.

⁴⁸ This point was emphasized by Cassirer: “Comte’s ‘Cours de philosophie positive’ spielt im französischen Denken des 19. Jahrhunderts fast dieselbe Rolle, die Kants Kritik der reinen Vernunft in Deutschland gespielt hat. Er wird zum Mittelpunkt und zum geistigen Sammelpunkt aller Bestrebungen, die auf eine Erneuerung der Logik und Erkenntnislehre gerichtet sind.” (Cassirer [1950] 1995, 14)

But Kant and Comte seem to have been revolutionaries also in another more far-reaching sense. In fact, both of them have properties characteristic of initiators of “symbolic revolutions” as variously described by Bourdieu.⁴⁹ Bourdieu introduced the concept of “symbolic revolution” initially in the context of the sociology of religion (Bourdieu 1971a, 329–30, 334). There it referred to the intervention of prophets and heretics against religious orthodoxy. Bourdieu’s first examples, however, came from science and political theory. He cited the Copernican and Galilean Revolution as well as the “Machiavellian revolution” as instances. Already in this early use, Bourdieu emphasized that such symbolic revolutions “correlate” in some way to political and social revolutions (in the given examples, the demise of the feudal order). He pointed to the fact that they had their peculiar social conditions as well as consequences.

Later, Bourdieu elaborated the concept of symbolic revolutions and symbolic revolutionaries in some detail for the cases of writer Gustave Flaubert (1821-1880), poet Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867) and painter Édouard Manet (1832-1883) (Bourdieu [1992] 1998; [1998–2000] 2013).⁵⁰ These men shared several characteristics that are proper to symbolic revolutionaries. First, they had initially acquired a high specific capital in their respective fields and were very well acquainted with its rules and history. At the same time, they had some properties (social, economic, geographical, religious, ethnical, psychological, etc.) that singularized or marginalized them within these fields. They found themselves in an ambivalent position of insider-outsiders with a “cleft habitus” (Bourdieu [1998–2000] 2013, 377–78, 461). Their symbolic innovations, accordingly, consisted in subverting the existing rules of the game from within. Second, the symbolic revolutions of these agents corresponded to the autonomization of a field of symbolic activities – the literary or the artistic field, for example. Their revolutions were “inaugural revolutions” (Bourdieu 1975b, 107, n. 31) that made these fields increasingly independent from other spheres of activity. This was possible because the symbolic innovations they proposed met with favourable conditions in the social world, for example with moments of crisis of different sorts (Bourdieu [1998–2000] 2013, 392, 647). Finally, these symbolic revolutionaries operated with their innovative work on basic “categories” of thought, perception and evaluation. Through this – and the subsequent institutionalization of their revolutions

⁴⁹ For a concise overview of Bourdieu’s use of “symbolic revolution”, see Boschetti 2020. Comparably little attention has been paid so far to this concept, which, however, is arguably an important piece of Bourdieu’s “field theory” (see, for example, his insistence in Bourdieu 2022a, 659–62). For some recent accounts, see Fowler 2020; Petzke 2022; Delgado and Pestaña 2022. Most of the recent interest in the notion seems to go back to the posthumous publication of Bourdieu’s lectures on Manet in 1998-2000 at the Collège de France (Bourdieu [1998–2000] 2013, published in English translation in 2017).

⁵⁰ To a lesser degree and in a somewhat different sense, also German philosopher Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) appears in Bourdieu’s study of his “political ontology” as such a “symbolic revolutionary” – yet a “conservative” one (e.g. Bourdieu [1975] 1988, 57, 73).

within fields – they had such a strong impact on later ways of seeing things that it became difficult for later generations to even perceive the properly revolutionary character of their work. Their symbolic revolutions produced the very categories through which people would later perceive them (Bourdieu [1992] 1998, 507, n. 38; [1998–2000] 2013, 13–14, 549).⁵¹

We can describe Kant and Comte as “symbolic revolutionaries” in this sense. As the analyses of Collins and Heilbron show, both of them detained a high initial capital – Kant in terms of his connections with the three dominant networks in German philosophy at the time, Comte in terms of his scientific capital acquired at the *École polytechnique*. At the same time, both had social properties that singled them out and produced peculiar tensions – in Kant’s case, for example, his affiliation with both rationalism and Pietism or his interest in natural science (then at the university a marginal but prestigious subdomain within the philosophical faculty); in Comte’s case, the frustration of expectations nurtured by his elite education at *École polytechnique* (Heilbron [1990] 1995, 212–16), his involvement with Saint-Simon or his deception with physical scientists. Against this background, both produced deliberately revolutionary conceptions that became instrumental in distinct processes of autonomization – academic philosophy in Kant’s case, sociology as an autonomous science in Comte’s case. Both their innovations coincided with fundamental social transformations and concomitant crises – in Kant’s case the German university revolution, in Comte’s case the disciplinarization of science in the Second Scientific Revolution. Finally, both had an impact such that they transformed our (or, at least, certain professionals’, especially philosophers’ and sociologists’) way of seeing and conceiving things. Both have altered our classifications of knowledge and the sciences in an enduring manner. Consequently, it has become hard to even see the specific novelty of their accomplishments.⁵² Kant’s “transcendental” conception of philosophy (and all the fundamental distinctions that came with it) has become as evident and unquestionable to us as Comte’s conception of “sociology” as an autonomous science. In this perspective then, both Kant and Comte appear – in different ways, in different national academic contexts, with around 50 years of distance between their most important works and with different degrees of success – as “symbolic revolutionaries”.

Yet, there is still something else that is peculiar about Kant’s and Comte’s symbolic revolutions. It has to do with the fact that both revolutionize specifically classifications of knowledge and the sciences. In Bourdieu’s conception, all “symbolic revolutionaries” are to some extent

⁵¹ It should not go unnoticed that Bourdieu seems to have identified himself to some degree with these symbolic revolutionaries (see his sociological auto-analyses in Bourdieu 2001; 2004; and Casanova 2013).

⁵² Kant’s and Comte’s own revolutionary rhetoric – and the way it has been perpetuated by followers, opponents and historians – is, if anything, an obstacle to a truly historical understanding of their intellectual innovations.

“classificatory revolutionaries”. They all operate on our classifications and categories of perception, evaluation and action. Kant and Comte, however, become such “classificatory” or “symbolic revolutionaries” precisely by way of being “revolutionary classifiers”. That is, they operate on the explicit level of classifications of knowledge and the sciences. It is through new and in some respects revolutionary classifications of knowledge that they accomplish their symbolic revolutions. Through the relative success of these revolutions, Kant’s and Comte’s classifications of knowledge and the sciences have become self-evident. This “self-evidence” is, in fact, just another way of saying that they have become, as Bourdieu described it, part of our (or some professionals’) current “mental structures”. Even more, our “mental structures” are the “product” of these relatively successful symbolic revolutions (Bourdieu [1992–1993] 2017, 89).⁵³

Conceiving Kant’s and Comte’s classifications of knowledge and the sciences thus as “symbolic revolutions” illuminates, finally, the nature of the problem of the sociologization of the *a priori*. We started out from the apparently oxymoronic character of this problem: How could something that is “*a priori*” be possibly at the same time “sociological”? We considered this contradiction itself as a “contingent *a priori* contradiction”, i.e. as a contradiction relying on peculiar linguistic stipulations. We now understand a bit better where these stipulations came from and why they had such an enduring appeal. The dilemma embodied in the “sociologized *a priori*” is the result of the two symbolic revolutions that were initiated respectively by Kant and Comte and were later institutionalized in the structure of the academic field. The sociologization of the *a priori* as a problem arises through a conflict between these two symbolic revolutions that were produced under markedly different social conditions in different national contexts.

But if, as it has been suggested, Kant and Comte were really part of the same transformatory social process of “disciplinarization”, were their revolutionary intellectual positions also internally connected through this process? More precisely, is there a connection between the contents of these revolutions besides the purely formal parallel as “symbolic revolutions”? One might speculate: Did the “academicization” of philosophy at the beginning of the German university revolution perhaps bear already the seeds for philosophy’s later “sociologization” at the end of the Second Scientific Revolution (or, at least, the sociologization of its core area, the *a*

⁵³ As far as I see, this reading of Kant and Comte as “symbolic revolutionaries” has not been considered so far. Neither Heilbron nor Collins – my main references for this reading – are using the expression. Both, however, clearly hint in this direction. Of course, more work must be done to establish the point conclusively. For example, to which extent were Kant’s and Comte’s symbolic revolutions successful (Kant) or not (Comte)? What did success depend on? How precisely were these revolutions diffused and institutionalized? How are their symbolic innovations maintained, to some extent until the present day?

priori)? Could Kant's and Comte's intellectual projects be the two sides of the same social-cum-intellectual coin? Perhaps even the two concrete sides of Foucault's somewhat free-floating "empirico-transcendental doublet" of "man" (Foucault [1966] 1990, 329–33)?⁵⁴ This is not the place to elaborate these conjectures. It is important, however, to note that Kant and Comte – as revolutionary classifiers and classificatory revolutionaries – might have had more in common than is commonly believed given the latter-day oppositions between "criticism" and "positivism".⁵⁵ What is more, there is reason to believe that what they had in common – as well as where they were opposed to each other – was connected to the institutional transformations in science of which they both were part.⁵⁶

3. Sociologizing Kant: Beyond sacralization and profanation

Questions on Kant and the autonomization of academic philosophy

We can now turn in more detail to Kant. We would have to expand here Collins's sociological account in order to better understand how Kant's classification of knowledge and the sciences replied to the scientific and institutional transformations connected to the first Scientific Revolution and the crisis of the German university system. According to my overall purpose, I would suggest to focus here specifically on the role of Kantian distinctions such as "*a priori-a posteriori*", "transcendental-empirical" and "analytic-synthetic" – oppositions that should become fundamental for the later problem of sociologizing the *a priori*. We can suppose that, in the end, in Kant's attempt to provide the "foundations" of various sciences, including the human sciences, there was indeed no place for such a thing as a sociologized *a priori*.

⁵⁴ This reading would at least have the virtue of hinting at the concrete institutional underpinning of Foucault's suggestive but somewhat unseizable thesis concerning the history of the human sciences.

⁵⁵ It seems that here, as in other cases, the opposition between the German and the French development has served as a basis for the symbolic opposition between "Kant" and "Comte", between "criticism" and "positivism". Tracing these oppositions back to their concrete historical and social sources – here: the nationally specific transformations of the academic and scientific fields – might enable new, previously forbidden combinations. Or as Bourdieu put it: "On pourrait ainsi montrer que l'opposition historique entre la France et l'Allemagne a servi de base (inconsciente, refoulée) à un certain nombre de grandes alternatives (par exemple culture/civilisation) *qui n'ont de fondement qu'historique* et qu'il faut défétichiser ou, ce qui revient au même, dénaturaliser." (Bourdieu [1992] 2022b, 345)

⁵⁶ It should not go unmentioned that, in the literature, the comparison between Comte and Hegel has attracted far more attention than the connections between Comte and Kant (e.g. Salomon-Delatour 1935; Hayek 1952, 191–206; Negt 1964; [1964] 1974; see also Pickering 1989). There might, of course, be interesting similarities and differences to explore between Comte and Hegel – in the present perspective especially in the area of their respective classifications of the sciences (e.g. Hegel [1817–1830] 1991). But from the point of view of the sociologization of the *a priori* it is more important to reconsider the relationship between Kant and Comte – a relationship which, too often, has been conceived in terms of a simple epistemological as well as political (Hayek 1952, 206) opposition. From Comte's point of view, in any case, Kant was far more important as a predecessor of "positive philosophy" than Hegel (e.g. the presence of Kant and absence of Hegel in Comte [1852] 1874, 8) – even if the latter, as the former, got his day in the "Positivist Calendar" (Pickering 1993, 299, 301).

An investigation along these lines would have to respond to the following (groups of) questions:

- (1) How can we account sociologically for Kant's intellectual production? Which are the historiographical obstacles opposed to such an approach?
- (2) How did Kant's project of "transcendental philosophy" emerge against the background of the sciences of his day – including their institutional organization? How did Kant come into contact through his social and intellectual trajectory with the problems of these sciences? How would he perceive these problems and how would he seek to solve them with his new conception of philosophy?
- (3) What did Kant's classification of knowledge and the sciences look like? Which were the fundamental distinctions it was based on?
- (4) Which role did Kant allot to philosophy in this classification of sciences and knowledge? How did he classify the peculiar discipline that produced this classification? Which was the institutional function he imagined for philosophy?
- (5) How did Kant conceive the place of what we would today call the "social and human sciences" in his classification of the sciences (concretely, empirical psychology, physiology, universal history and pragmatic anthropology)? Especially, how did he consider the relationship between these sciences and philosophy?
- (6) And finally: What did all that mean for the prospect of a sociological (or social or human science) account of the *a priori*? Why did a sociological *a priori* seem unthinkable?

In preparation of future, more substantial studies, I shall seek to reply here at least to the first set of questions.

Some obstacles

L'histoire de la vie d'Emmanuel Kant est difficile à écrire, car il n'eut ni vie ni histoire (Heine [1835] 1998, 115).

Man kann kein Urteil über Kant abgeben, ohne in jeder Zeile zu verraten, welche Welt man im eigenen Kopfe trägt. (Cohen [1871] 1987, XI)

The idea of a socio-historical account of Kant's classification of knowledge and the sciences in transcendental philosophy instantly encounters several problems and challenges.

To begin with, there are the standard doubts about sociological accounts of intellectual production in general that resurge: How can we sociologize a hero of modern philosophy such as Kant? Is it possible at all to account sociologically for the very contents of Kant's technically highly complex work? Are not such sociological explanations inevitably reductionist? These qualms concern, in fact, the very possibility of a sociology of philosophy, and a sociology of science and intellectual production, for that matter.⁵⁷ As they are not specific to Kant, I suggest to set them aside. Let us assume for a moment that such an account is possible and focus on putting it into practice.

But even then there remain problems that are peculiar to "sociologizing Kant". They have to do mostly with what we can call the "collective memory" of Kant, i.e. with the way the relatively stable "collective representations" of Kant have evolved, among professional philosophers, scholars in general and the wider public.⁵⁸ Concretely, this involves the way in which biographies of Kant and accounts of the connection between his work and his life have been written. Even specialists in Kant's biography and the historiography of his biography admit here a curious fact (e.g. Ritzel 1971, 99; George 1987, 485; Kühn [2001] 2007, 33): compared to the innumerable philosophical works on Kant, there is relatively little systematic literature on his biography and his socio-historical context (which is, given Kant's status, still a lot, of course). Some of the difficulties we encounter in this area are properly "memorial obstacles" (Chapter 3) for a socio-historical account of Kant and, more precisely, of his classification of knowledge and the sciences.

To begin with, there is a properly "material obstacle". It concerns the availability of biographical primary sources on Kant. This difficulty was partly produced by Kant himself. Kant famously refused to talk about himself and his life. "De nobis ipsis silemus" – this motto, drawn from Bacon's preface to the *Instauratio magna* (Bacon [1620] 1999, 32–35), opened the second edition of the *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (Kant [1781/1787] 1974, 7, B II). It seems that this

⁵⁷ For discussion of these general questions, see Chapter 2, especially on the internal-external distinction.

⁵⁸ The notions of "collective memory" and "collective representations" refer, of course, to the work of Halbwachs. Halbwachs applied this notion also to specialized memories such as those of professional groups, for example musicians (Halbwachs [1939] 1997). The notion can be further applied to the way scholarly disciplines reconstruct their own past (Brian 2013; for a Halbwachsian account of narratives in sociology, see Levine 1995; for further discussion, see Chapter 3). In the present case, I focus on the evolution of the collective memory of Kant mostly among professional philosophers. We could retrace the evolution of these collective representations through a systematic study of commemorations of Kant – in scholarly societies and associations, in scientific journals, in the wider public, etc. For a precious collection of such commemorations, see Kopper and Malter 1974. The following reconstruction of the collective representations of Kant was guided to a fair extent by the extremely useful work in this area by philosopher and biographer of Kant Manfred Kühn (1947–) (Kühn [2001] 2007, 15–39).

maxim also guided Kant's personal attitude. As a result, we do not have a diary – Kant was opposed to this practice which was widespread at the time in the Pietist circles he knew through his education (Kühn [2001] 2007, 70). And Kant's correspondence, although crucial for understanding his intellectual work and development, is relatively poor on his personal life (Cassirer 1918, 4–6; Malter 1986; Kühn [2001] 2007, 35).

The lack of autobiographical sources shifted the weight considerably to contemporaneous biographical accounts of Kant's life.⁵⁹ Most important among the early documents were the biographical sketches by Ludwig Ernst Borowski (1740-1831), Reinhold Bernhard Jachmann (1767-1843) and Ehregott Andreas Christoph Wasianski (1755-1831), published together in 1804 by Kant's editor Friedrich Nicolovius (1768-1836). However, these early sources, written by authors who had known Kant personally at some point in his life, are problematic. As philosopher and biographer Manfred Kühn (1947-) has convincingly shown (Kühn [2001] 2007, 22–30), the depictions of these three “official biographers” were often guided by their own interests and perspectives. This concerned, for example, Kant's relationship with religion. All three of the official biographers were Königsberg theologians and tended to overemphasize the importance of religion, especially Pietism, while downplaying Kant's conflicts with religion.⁶⁰ Most importantly, all three of them focussed on Kant's late life with its notorious regularity and eventlessness. Not only did they have almost nothing to say about Kant's early life. They did not consider the content of Kant's work either.

Kant's first biographers thus produced a specific image, a set of “collective representations” or a “collective memory” of Kant: on the one hand, a revolutionary work of pure timeless genius; on the other hand, an eventless life of crude anecdotes and ridiculous idiosyncrasies. This picture had long-lasting effects. For a long time, in fact, most of the biographical work on Kant was directly or indirectly based on the accounts of Borowski, Jachmann and Wasianski. We can find its traces also in later popular images of Kant such as German poet Heinrich Heine's (1797-1856) statement according to which Kant had “neither life nor history” (Heine [1835] 1998, 115) – pretty much the “caricature of a caricature”, as Kühn pointed out judiciously (Kühn [2001] 2007, 30).⁶¹

⁵⁹ For a study of the earliest accounts of Kant's life, see Vorländer 1918.

⁶⁰ This went so far that Borowski – who submitted the first part of his sketch for rectifications to Kant himself – refused to correct the – false – information that Kant had studied in the theological faculty (Kühn [2001] 2007, 25–26). In fact, Kant did not study in any of the higher faculties but only in the lower philosophical faculty (Cassirer 1918, 19; Vorländer [1924] 1992, 51).

⁶¹ Already Cassirer addressed the memorial effects, as it were, of Kant's earliest biographies: “Und wie hier [in the earliest biographers, MS] die Gestalt Kants gezeichnet worden ist, so ist sie in die Tradition und in das allgemeine Gedächtnis übergegangen.” (Cassirer 1918, 6) Connected with this, he instigated a critique (pretty much in the Kantian sense) of our representations and memories of Kant: “so sollten wir uns daher immer fragen, ob diese Sonderbarkeit lediglich im Objekt des Kantischen Lebens, oder in der subjektiven Betrachtung

Kantian accounts of Kant

Things changed markedly after the decline of German idealism after 1831, with the German Kant revival in the second half of the 19th century and, connected with it, the burgeoning so-called “*Kant-Philologie*”.⁶² Both movements were fuelled by an important controversy in the 1860s between philosopher and philologist Adolf Trendelenburg (1802-1872) and historian of philosophy Kuno Fischer (1824-1907). The question of this “Fischer-Trendelenburg-Debatte” was whether Kant’s doctrine of space and time (the “transcendental aesthetics” in the *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*) should be interpreted in a “realist” or an “idealist” way. Fischer had published at the time widely read reference works on Kant’s life and work: his lectures on *Kant’s Leben und die Grundlagen seiner Lehre* (Fischer [1860] 1906) and two volumes on Kant in his *Geschichte der neueren Philosophie* (Fischer [1860] 1909; [1860] 1899) that went through several editions. The acrimonious academic debate with Trendelenburg not only showed that Kant was back “at the centre of attention” (Beiser 2014, 215). It clearly indicated the need for distinguishing between a historical-philological account of Kant’s position and the use and reinterpretation of his philosophy for present-day systematic purposes. It was the question of the relationship between both approaches that drove some of the first properly “neo-Kantian” works (e.g. Cohen [1871] 1987).⁶³

In the aftermath of the Fischer-Trendelenburg debate, increasingly serious historical research on Kant and his life was done, often based on newly established primary sources. Now, there was no longer a lack of historical investigations on Kant. Studies focused indeed on every

gegründet ist, der dieses Leben zunächst und zumeist unterworfen wurde” (Cassirer 1918, 7). More recently, it has been Kühn’s merit to excavate various layers of the collective memory of Kant for critical purposes and to seek a new image – especially of Kant’s early life as a scholar (Kühn [2001] 2007, especially 15–39). Kühn drew especially on independent accounts of contemporaries who were close to Kant – for example, the correspondences of Johann Georg Hamann (1730-1788) or Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803).

⁶² Vorländer provides a short overview of this movement in his 1903 *Geschichte der Philosophie*: “Zu den ‘Kantphilologen’ zählen wir diejenigen Schriftsteller, die entweder als Herausgeber und Textkritiker einen reineren Kanttext herzustellen sich bemüht, oder Beiträge zur Kenntnis von Kants Leben und Persönlichkeit geliefert, oder sich durch Kommentierung seiner Werke verdient gemacht, oder endlich den Entwicklungsgang des Philosophen und sein historisches Verhältnis zu den Vorgängern, Zeitgenossen und Nachfolgern ohne eigentlich systematische Absicht in den Bereich ihrer Untersuchung gezogen haben.” (Vorländer [1903] 1911, 436–37) Vorländer mentioned several proponents of *Kant-Philologie* and divided them roughly into three groups: a first group of the “most deserving” Kant philologists grouped around the journal *Kant-Studien* (1896-) and comprising Benno Erdmann (1851-1921), Hans Vaihinger (1852-1933), Emil Arnoldt (1828-1905) and Rudolf Reicke (1825-1905); an earlier local group of Königsberg Kant specialists grouped around the journal *Altpreußische Monatsschrift*, including besides Reicke and Arnoldt also Arthur Warda (1871-1929); and a third group of Kant philologists involved in the *Akademieausgabe*, i.e. the edition of Kant’s works at the Berlin academy of sciences, comprising Erich Adickes (1866-1928), Max Heinze (1835-1909), Oswald Külpe (1862-1915), Paul Menzer (1873-1960), Paul Natorp (1854-1924), Vorländer himself, Wilhelm Windelband (1848-1915) and Georg Wobbermin (1869-1943). For a partly quantitative analysis of *Kantphilologie*, see Köhnke 1986, 367–87.

⁶³ For the Fischer-Trendelenburg debate, see Köhnke 1986, 257–72; Beiser 2013, 107–20; 2014, 212–15.

minute detail of his life and work.⁶⁴ This situation created, however, a new, different problem. What was lacking now was a synthetic overview of Kant's life and a unified vision of his life and work. Thus, introducing his short biography of Kant in 1911, German philosopher and Kant scholar Karl Vorländer (1860-1928) could still wonder about the "curious fact" that, despite the fact that Kant had been at the centre of attention for the previous 50 years, and in contrast to the thousands of publications on Kant's doctrine, there was not one single serious account of his life.⁶⁵ Similarly, Cassirer acknowledged in his 1918 biographical account of Kant the merits of *Kant-Philologie*, but insisted at the same time on the difficulties it had created for a coherent conception of the whole of Kant's life and work. In a way, the problem now was not too little but too much information about Kant.⁶⁶

It was precisely Vorländer's and Cassirer's works that contributed significantly to changing the situation in the historiography of Kant's biography. Both were written and published around the First World War against the background of Marburg neo-Kantianism and in the context of large editorial projects of Kant's works.⁶⁷ Vorländer – a disciple of the founder of Marburg neo-Kantianism Hermann Cohen (1842-1918) and known primarily for his works combining neo-Kantianism and socialism (e.g. Vorländer 1900; 1911) – did probably most to further biographical work on Kant. His 1924 two-volume biography of Kant still counts as a "touchstone" for modern biographies (Kühn [2001] 2007, 33–34). Historiographically, Vorländer and Cassirer emphasized Kant's individuality, his personality and character, and sought to demonstrate the

⁶⁴ For examples of such studies – covering topics ranging from Kant's name and Kant's family to Kant's house, Kant's books, Kant's diet, Kant's grave and Kant's skull – see Malter's bibliography of biographical works on Kant (Malter 1992).

⁶⁵ "Es bleibt eine merkwürdige Tatsache, daß derjenige Philosoph, dessen *Lehre* in den letzten fünfzig Jahren weit häufiger als die jedes anderen, in Tausenden von Schriften behandelt worden ist, in dieser ganzen Zeit keine einzige Sonderdarstellung seines *Lebens* erfahren hat." (Vorländer [1911] 1986, IX) There were, of course, accounts of Kant's life such as the works of Kuno Fischer, Friedrich Paulsen (1846-1908) and Moritz Kronenberg (1865-1935) – and Vorländer acknowledged them. But, according to Vorländer, they were either too focused on Kant's doctrine or not taking into account the recent results of *Kant-Philologie*. In his large 1924 biography of Kant, Vorländer still admonished the lack of a "scientific biography" of Kant, although *Kant-Philologie* had provided the necessary materials for it (Vorländer [1924] 1992, XVII–XIX).

⁶⁶ "Dennoch scheint mir, als habe diese Richtung der Detailforschung [i.e. *Kant-Philologie*, MS] die lebendige Anschauung von dem, was Kants Philosophie als Einheit und als Ganzes bedeutet, häufig eher gehemmt als gefördert." (Cassirer 1918, V) And: "Die adäquate Erfassung von Kants Persönlichkeit leidet nicht unter dem Zuwenig, sondern unter dem Zuviel an Daten und Nachrichten, die uns von ihm übermittelt sind." (Cassirer 1918, 5–6)

⁶⁷ Vorländer's 1911 short biography was conceived as an addition to the edition of Kant's works in the series "Philosophische Bibliothek" of the Hamburg publishing house Felix Meiner (Vorländer [1911] 1986, X; on the history of this series, see Bast 1991). Vorländer's later big Kant biography of 1924 was the outcome of the shorter one (Vorländer [1924] 1992, XVII). Cassirer's 1918 book was a complementary volume to the edition of Kant's works in ten volumes (*Immanuel Kants Werke*) he edited together with Hermann Cohen and other philosophers connected to Marburg neo-Kantianism between 1912 and 1923. Besides, there was at the time the ongoing *Akademie-Ausgabe* of Kant at the Berlin Königlich Preußische Akademie der Wissenschaften (1900–) under the editorship of Wilhelm Dilthey. On the history of the latter as well as on the editorial history of Kant's works around 1900 in general, see Wilken 2022a; 2022b.

unity between his life and his work.⁶⁸ However, they displayed relatively little consideration for the social conditions of Kant's work – which is particularly surprising in Vorländer's case, given his explicit socialist convictions.⁶⁹ Even more, they excluded these “external circumstances” to some extent, claiming that they finally could not tell much about Kant's work.⁷⁰ All while emphasizing Kant's personality, they seemed to insist on a neat separation between the internal logic of Kant's work and the external circumstances of his life. At the core, Kant's philosophy, his transcendental method seemed to have “no history”.⁷¹

Thus, Vorländer and Cassirer – in spite of their insistence on the unity of Kant's life and work – did not really change existing representations on this matter. A sort of dualism, almost schizophrenia, persisted. The picture of a “double Kant” or of “two Kants” (Friedell [1927–1931] 2007, 762–65) remained popular. On the one hand, there was the radical philosophical revolutionary, on the other, the petty bourgeois pedant with his eventless life in his provincial Königsberg.⁷² Between the two Kants there was apparently little connection. This dual view continued in one form or the other until quite recently, even in the writing of Kant's biography.

⁶⁸ “Wie beide Momente [Kant's life and his doctrine] sich wechselseitig bedingen und ergänzen, wie sie auf denselben Ursprung zurückweisen und sich zuletzt zu einem einheitlichen Resultat zusammenschließen und wie somit die Persönlichkeit und das Werk Kants in der Tat aus *einem* Gusse sind, habe ich zu zeigen versucht” (Cassirer 1918, VII). And: “Schon denen, die ihm persönlich näher standen, fiel auf, daß bei Kant in einem Maße, wie selten bei einem Menschen, Leben und Lehre, Denken und Handelns *eins* waren” (Vorländer [1924] 1992, II, 350).

⁶⁹ Vorländer remained somewhat ambiguous and evasive. On the one hand, he set as his goal to “zeigen, wie Kants Werk aus seinem äußeren und inneren Leben, aus seiner Persönlichkeit, auf dem Hintergrunde seiner Zeit mit Notwendigkeit hervorgewachsen ist” (Vorländer [1924] 1992, XVII). On the other hand, he avoided methodological issues by retreating into his perspective as biographer: “Wie weit auch die *Lehre* eines Philosophen bedingt ist durch seine Persönlichkeit, [...] das ist freilich ein Problem für sich, das hier nicht weiter erörtert werden kann. Der *Biograph* jedenfalls muß sie in erster Linie aus dem Leben und der Person seines Helden entwickeln.” (Vorländer [1924] 1992, XVII) In his actual writing of Kant's biography, he did not do much to demonstrate how Kant's work came about from its historical and personal conditions “with necessity”.

⁷⁰ Cassirer emphasized the relative uselessness of Kant's “external life” for understanding his work in the framework of a “philosophical biography”: “[D]enn derjenige Teil des Kantischen Lebens, der sich *außerhalb* seines Werkes bewegt, kann ohnehin für die tiefere Aufgabe, die sich die philosophische Biographie zu stellen hat, nicht von bestimmender Bedeutung sein. Was uns hier das Werk selbst nicht sagt, das vermöchte uns auch keine noch so ausgebreitete Kenntnis des inneren und äußeren Lebens seines Urhebers irgend zu ersetzen.” (Cassirer 1918, 5)

⁷¹ “Weniger als jedes andere philosophische System scheint die kritische Lehre des Rückgangs auf ihre Entstehungsbedingungen zu bedürfen. Die Vernunftkritik bildet ein vollendetes und abgeschlossenes Ganze, das auf sich selber steht und aus sich selbst erklärt sein will. [...] Der zentrale methodische Grundgedanke besitzt daher seinem wesentlichen Inhalt nach keine Geschichte; nur seine allmähliche Ausführung und seine immer weiter greifende Anwendung ist es, die sich in verschiedene zeitliche Phasen auseinanderlegen läßt.” (Cassirer [1907/1922] 1995b, 2:585) To be fair, Cassirer insisted – like his fellow Marburg neo-Kantians – on the historical conditions of Kant's problems, his “geschichtlichen Problembedingungen” (Cassirer [1907/1922] 1995b, 2:585), especially in the sciences of his day. But he conceived these historical conditions as essentially intellectual conditions without considering their social dimension.

⁷² “Da war ein Kant, der mit einer beispiellosen Scheidekunst alles zerlegte und auflöste, ein radikaler Revolutionär, dämonischer Nihilist und unbarmherziger Zerstörer des bisherigen Weltbilds. Da war aber auch ein Kant, der nichts anderes war als der kleine Bürger einer weltentlegenen Provinzstadt, altpreußisch, protestantisch, pedantisch, verwinkelt, konservativ, vor der Staatsallmacht, dem Kirchendogma und der öffentlichen Meinung kapitulierend, korrekt bis zur Genrehaftigkeit, Tag für Tag nach derselben genauen Einteilung lebend, so pünktlich um dieselbe Stunde das Haus verlassend, vom Kolleg zurückkehrend, zu Mittag essend,

Given the apparent banality of Kant's life, it became plausible to collapse the distinction between life and work altogether and to identify Kant's life simply with his work. Already German philosopher and sociologist Georg Simmel (1858-1918) had stated in his 1904 lectures on Kant that the uniquely personal trait of Kant's philosophy was precisely its impersonality. Importantly, Simmel used an identification of Kant's personality and his personal-impersonal work precisely to justify his exclusive focus on the latter.⁷³ Likewise, more recently, Russian-Soviet philosopher Arseniy Gulyga (1921-1996) opened his 1977 biography of Kant with the statement that "Kant has no other biography than the history of his thought" (Gulyga [1977] 1987, xi).⁷⁴ If Kant's life was his work and his work was his life, then the order of "external" causes and the order of "internal" reasons coincided. Except perhaps for some anecdotes, there was little else to tell about Kant's life than the internal development of his ideas. This stance, of course, eliminated from the beginning the question about the relationship between the socio-historical conditions and the contents of Kant's work.

How was it possible that Kant – with all the attention he attracted over the last 250 years – remained for most of the time a sort of "sacred cow", inaccessible to a socio-historical history of philosophy? The material difficulties we mentioned – the relative lack of autobiographical and reliable biographical material – are not sufficient explanations. The dissociation between Kant's work and life seems to be at least to some extent the product of a certain ideology. This

spazierende, daß die Nachbarn nach ihm ihre Uhren richteten." (Friedell [1927–1931] 2007, 763–64) For another way of distinguishing between "Kant I" and "Kant II" along the lines of his theoretical and his practical philosophy, see Haeckel 1904, 506, 528.

⁷³ Simmel's well-known *bon mot* goes: "Man könnte sagen, der unvergleichlich persönliche Zug der Kantischen Philosophie wäre ihre unvergleichliche Unpersönlichkeit." (Simmel [1904] 1913, 7; [1904] 1997, 18; see also Kühn [2001] 2007, 30) This statement relies on a prior identification of Kant's person and work and an exclusion of his "so-called personal circumstances of life": "Gerade nur das Werk Kants ist die 'Persönlichkeit' Kants, da er nur in ihm der ganz Einzige und Unverwechselbare ist, keineswegs aber in seinen sogenannten persönlichen Lebensverhältnissen, deren Qualitäten er mit Unzähligen teilt, die also das eigentlich Unpersönliche am Menschen sind. [Paragraph] Indem ich diese also schlechthin übergehe, weil sie zu der sachlichen oder weltgeschichtlichen Bedeutung seiner Lehre, auf die allein es uns hier ankommt, nicht das geringste beitragen, so beginne ich die Darstellung doch mit einem sozusagen persönlichen, – aber eben keineswegs biographischen Momente, das einen Gesamtzug der Lehre ausmacht." (Simmel [1904] 1913, 4) The idea of the personal impersonality or impersonal personality of Kant's work thus enabled Simmel to make a distinction between the "personal" and the "biographical" level and to focus on "personal but not biographical" aspects. As such a central aspect Simmel isolated Kant's "intellectualism", even "logical fanaticism" (Simmel [1904] 1913, 4–5). This, of course, was an interpretation on Simmel's part of the basic tendency of Kant's whole *work*. To be fair, Simmel related this fundamental trait of Kant's philosophy to the socio-economic factor of the money economy. "Andererseits, in der Praxis, bezeugt die durchgedrungene Geldwirtschaft die Herrschaft des intellektuellen Prinzips: die rücksichtslose Folgerichtigkeit, die Ablehnung aller gefühlsmäßigen Subjektivität, die prinzipielle Zugänglichkeit für einen jeden, – dies sind ebenso Charakterzüge der Geldwirtschaft der Neuzeit wie ihrer Intellektualität. Und eben dieser Intellektualismus hat in Kant seinen Gipfel gefunden" (Simmel [1904] 1913, 7). But Simmel didn't explore this empirical sociological hypothesis in any further detail, it seems. He stuck to the Kantian distinction between a philosophy's empirical-psychological "genesis" and – independently of it – its "*objective* coherence and meaning" (Simmel [1904] 1913, 4).

⁷⁴ Kühn emphasized the continuity between Gulyga's and the Romantics' picture of Kant, such as Heine's "*ni vie ni histoire*" view (Kühn [2001] 2007, 30).

ideology, ironically, was nourished by Kant himself. Distinctions and categories he forged played a role in it, such as the distinctions between *quid facti* and *quid iuris* accounts of cognition, between facts and values, between the empirical genesis and the validity of knowledge and between the empirical and the transcendental. These distinctions informed, it seems, how biographers have conceived Kant's life and, more precisely, the relationship between his life and work.

In fact, Kantian vocabulary has frequently resurfaced in the mouth of Kant's biographers reflecting on their own practice. Cassirer's description of the methodology of his biography of Kant, for instance, is full of Kantian overtones. As the Kantian transcendental subject puts order in the chaos of sense data, it is the task of the biographer of Kant to organize the chaos of biographical information on Kant into a meaningful whole.⁷⁵ Even more, the unity of Kant's life and work cannot be constructed in a piecemeal fashion, but must be presupposed by way of a sort of "reflective judgment" (Kant [1790] 1974, 87, A XXIII-XXIV, B XXV-XXVI) – which turns the whole of Kant's life into a kind of "regulative ideal".⁷⁶ In this way, there are what we might call "Kantian biographies of Kant", i.e. biographies that remain faithful to basic distinctions of Kant's philosophy and his classification of knowledge, historiographically and methodologically speaking.⁷⁷

The problem is that this peculiar "Kantian ideology of Kant's life and work" – nurtured by the fact that, given the technicity of Kant's work, it was mainly professional philosophers who have written Kant's biography, not historians or sociologists⁷⁸ – has contributed to maintaining a separation between Kant's work and life and has been an obstacle to serious socio-historical accounts of Kant's work. It has disconnected his life from his work and blocked investigations about links between them. For what could a biography of Kant possibly look like according to the standards of his own critical philosophy? Given the above Kantian distinctions, what could a biography of Kant possibly tell about the validity of his philosophy? How could Kant's work

⁷⁵ "Ihre Aufgabe [the task of a biography of Kant] könnte erst dann als erfüllt gelten, wenn es ihr gelänge, das stoffliche Chaos von Notizen und Nachrichten, die wir über Kants Person und über seine Lebensführung besitzen, derart zu gliedern und zu deuten, daß dieses Aggregat von Einzelzügen sich wieder zu einer wahrhaft einheitlichen geistigen Gesamtgestalt, nicht nur zur Einheit eines sittlichen Charakters, zusammenschließt." (Cassirer 1918, 6–7) In this respect, Cassirer charges Kant's first biographers with a lack of "methodisches Bewußtsein" (Cassirer 1918, 7).

⁷⁶ "Die charakteristische Geschlossenheit und Ganzheit, die sich in Kants Dasein ausdrückt, kann nicht dadurch zur Anschauung gelangen, daß man versucht, dieses Ganze aus seinen einzelnen 'Teilen' zusammenzusetzen; man muß es als ein Erstes und Ursprüngliches denken, das beiden, dem Werk und dem Leben, zugrunde liegt." (Cassirer 1918, 8)

⁷⁷ For further characteristic examples, see Ritzel 1971; 1985b. I acknowledge that this point concerning "Kantian biographies of Kant" would need more demonstration than I am able to provide here.

⁷⁸ The situation here is comparable to the history and sociology of science. For a long time, it was the practitioners of scientific disciplines, i.e. those who had acquired the necessary technical mastery, who wrote the history of their disciplines – often at the expense of basic historiographical standards.

be possibly explained by the “external” circumstances of his life? Is a biography of Kant possible at all?⁷⁹ It was the impact of Kant’s own work, it seems, that contributed to making its socio-biographical circumstances seem trivial.

We should note that the fact that Kantian categories have influenced the way Kant’s life and work has been written is, in fact, quite typical for “symbolic revolutions” and their initiators. As we have seen above, it is part of what makes it difficult to reconstruct these revolutions when they have been successful (Bourdieu [1998–2000] 2013, 13–14). Kant became, in a way, the first victim of his own symbolic revolution. Although things have been changing to some extent – Kühn’s contextual biography of Kant and Collins’s sociological account are cases in point – the dualistic Kantian representation of Kant’s life and work still remains the dominant and orthodox approach, it seems.

Profanating Kant

However, in opposition to this orthodoxy, there is – at least since the late 19th and early 20th century and up to this day – another, relatively marginal but persistent heterodox (or heretical) movement.⁸⁰ It consists in putting Kant’s work in the context of its historical and social conditions. In fact, when we take a closer look beyond established academic philosophy, we see that there has been no lack of calls for a historical and sociological perspective on Kant. Different orientations – philosophical, political, ideological, social scientific – have motivated and bolstered these calls. They evolved, in part, as a critical reaction to the neo-Kantian dominance at universities and the “Kantian accounts” of Kant. Examples of such initiatives for historicizing or sociologizing Kant can be found in the works of markedly different orientations.⁸¹

⁷⁹ Kant biographer Wolfgang Ritzel (1913–2001) has provided probably the clearest formulation of this problem when asking “how a biography of Kant is possible at all” – according to Kant’s own critical philosophy (Ritzel 1971; 1985b; 1985a): “[I]st eine Kant-Biographie nach dem Urteil ihres Helden eine Sache, um die es ernsthaft (und nicht bloß aus Kuriosität) zu tun sein kann? [...] [D]as Vorhaben einer Kant-Biographie geht Kant sehr wohl an, weil dieselbe Kants Philosophie reproduzieren und sich ihren Geltungsanspruch zu eigen machen muß, und weil sie ihrerseits einen Geltungsanspruch erhebt: wie wenn nach Kants Lehre eine Philosophen-Biographie *nicht möglich* sein sollte?” (Ritzel 1985a, 475) Ritzel concedes that from the standpoint of Kant’s critical philosophy a biography of Kant can be nothing more than a curiosity. Finally, he justifies his biography of Kant methodologically by drawing on Kant’s own aesthetic theory: “Immanuel Kant 1724–1804” is conceived as an “aesthetic idea” (Ritzel 1985a, 477). Ritzel thus offers an explicitly Kantian biography of Kant.

⁸⁰ I am drawing here, of course, on the distinction between orthodoxy and heterodoxy (or heresy) as it was elaborated by Bourdieu in his early sociology of literature and his interpretation of Max Weber’s sociology of religion (Bourdieu 1966; 1971c; 1971a; 1971b) before being applied and generalized to various social “fields” (for various studies on different fields, see Bourdieu 2022a; for applications to the scientific, the philosophical and the academic field, see 1975b; [1975] 1988; 1984b; for the history of these notions in Bourdieu’s work, see Sapiro 2020e; 2020d).

⁸¹ Among the authors of this alternative view are – by way of a non-exhaustive list: German intellectuals and socialist political theorists Karl Marx (1818–1883) and Friedrich Engels (1820–1895) (Marx and Engels [1845–1846] 1990; Engels [1888] 1962; [1878] 1962b), German historicist philosopher Wilhelm Dilthey (1833–1911) (Dilthey [1883] 1990), British-German antisemitic-racist writer Houston Stewart Chamberlain (1855–1927) (Chamberlain 1905), Russian revolutionary and political theorist Vladimir Lenin (1870–1924) (Lenin [1909]

Many of these authors proposed a radical historicization of Kant without presupposing the Kantian – or rather “Kantoid” – distinction between the empirical genesis and the validity of beliefs. Incidentally, most of them also took their distance with Kantian epistemology in general. The theoretical and political framework of these historicizations, however, has varied as widely as their concrete execution. We cannot reconstruct here the whole array of variants but take only two examples of such socio-historical interpretations of Kant as illustrations. Both of these accounts, it is true, are rather marginal and barely more than sketches. But they demonstrate pretty well the different options and political backgrounds for a heterodox historicized image of Kant around the First World War, contemporaneous to the “Kantian biographies” of Vorländer and Cassirer considered above.

On the one hand, there is German philosopher and sociologist Max Scheler (1874-1928), one of the initiators of *Wissenssoziologie* in Germany in the 1920s and a representative of the so-called “Conservative Revolution” in Weimar Germany (Mohler [1949] 1989, 307). He developed at the margin of one of his war writings, *Die Ursachen des Deutschen Hasses* (Scheler 1917), a socio-political account of Kant’s epistemology.⁸² Scheler connected the structure of Kant’s epistemology directly to the structure of the Prussian state. He saw a clear “analogy”⁸³ between the basic elements of Kant’s theory of knowledge and the social strata in Prussia at the time. Kant’s distinction between given sense perceptions, the ordering understanding and the mediating transcendental schematism corresponded, according to Scheler, point by point to the social structure of the Prussian state with its indigenous “heavily Slavic-permeated” lower class, the ruling aristocracy and the intermediary bureaucracy.⁸⁴ The *völkisch* tinge of Scheler’s

1962), German conservative philosopher and sociologist of knowledge Max Scheler (1874-1928) (Scheler 1917), Austro-Marxist theoretician and politician Otto Bauer (1881-1938) (Bauer [1924] 1971), Hungarian Marxist philosopher Georg Lukács (1885-1971) (Lukács [1923] 2013), Hungarian-German-British sociologist Karl Mannheim (1893-1947) (Mannheim [1922] 1964a; 1925; [1929] 1995; [1931] 1995), German historian and sociologist Kurt Breysig (1866-1940) (Breysig 1931a; 1931b), German-British sociologist Norbert Elias (1897-1990) (Elias [1939] 1997b; 1984b; [1990] 2001), German-British Marxist economist and philosopher Alfred Sohn-Rethel (Sohn-Rethel [1936] 1985; [1937] 1971; [1947-1990] 2018), Romanian-French Marxist sociologist Lucien Goldmann (1913-1970) (Goldmann 1945; [1945] 1967), French philosopher and historian Michel Foucault (1926-1984) (Kant [1798] 2008; Foucault [1966] 2001; [1984] 2001), Italian historian of philosophy Giorgio Tonelli (1928-1978) (Tonelli 1959) and German philosophers Gernot Böhme (1937-2022) and Hartmut Böhme (1944-) (Böhme and Böhme [1983] 2016).

⁸² I thank Bastian Stoppelkamp for first having drawn my attention to this passage.

⁸³ “Welch beispiellose Naivität gehört dazu, die so klare als tiefe Analogie zu übersehen, die schon bei Kant zwischen den einfachsten Grundelementen seiner Lehre und dem inneren Aufbau des preußischen Staates als eines einzigartigen, historischen Sondergebilde besteht!” (Scheler 1917, 190)

⁸⁴ “Was war dem heroischen preußischen Staate zu seiner so mächtig formenden und prägenden Tätigkeit ‘gegeben’? Kein schon in sich *gegliedertes* Volk mit eigenem Gesamtbewußtsein, mit eigenem Kulturwillen, mit einheitlichen Sitten, religiösen Glaubenseinstellungen – kurz mit allem, was zu einem *Volke* und was zu *einem* Volke gehört. Ein Haufen sehr verschiedener Stämme ohne natürliche Verbindung mit einer sehr dienstbereiten, fremde Formprägungen leicht aufnehmbaren Unterschicht stark slawischer Durchsetzung war ‘gegeben’. Alles andere, was später ‘Preußen’ hieß, haben seine großen Fürsten, Könige, ihre Offiziere und Staatsdiener, hat der ‘Staat’ *konstruiert* und erzeugt. Was ist für Kant dem ‘Verstande’ und seiner nach apriorischen Formgesetzen konstruierenden und ordnenden Tätigkeit (Spontaneität) ‘gegeben’? Nach seinem

interpretation – he also spoke of the “volksmäßigen *Wurzeln* des *Geistes* dieser [i.e. Kant’s] Philosophie” (Scheler 1917, 190) – was visible for the naked eye.

The general intention of Scheler’s historicization of Kant’s epistemology was to demonstrate the particularity of its social conditions and thus to undermine its purported universal validity. Kant’s philosophy was, according to Scheler, not the product of “pure reason” but of the particular political circumstances of 18th century Prussia. For Scheler, Kant’s “theoretical reason” was nothing but a transmogrification of the Prussian state.⁸⁵ If this was true, his philosophy could only have limited validity.⁸⁶ Scheler pushed the point and asked even how this quintessentially Prussian philosophy could ever be of any interest for Thuringians, Rhinelanders or South Germans.⁸⁷ Scheler’s sociological aperçu of Kant might have been little more than a marginal note to a nationalist pamphlet. Clearly, it was supported by anti-universalistic and anti-Prussian sentiment under the peculiar circumstances of the First World War. Nevertheless, Scheler proposed in this context – against the orthodox proponents of Kantianism and neo-Kantianism⁸⁸ – one possible radical historicization of Kant’s philosophy. He sketched a political explanation of Kant’s epistemology in an ideologically conservative vein.

berühmten Satze – dem Grundirrtum seiner ganzen Philosophie – daß alles, was in der Welt der gegenständlichen Erfahrung an ‘Verbindung, Einheit, Ordnung und Verknüpfung’ aller Art enthalten sei, *nicht* ‘gegeben’ sein könne, sondern vom konstruktiven Tun des Verstandes hinzugetan und hineingelegt sein müsse: Ein Chaos von Empfindungen in der Theorie und ein Chaos von Triebimpulsen innerhalb der praktischen Welt. O, wie sehr gleicht doch dieses ‘Chaos’ dem, was dem preußischen Staate ‘gegeben’ war! O, wie sehr gleicht doch dieser halbvergottete, der Natur ‘seine Gesetze vorschreibende Verstand’ mit seinen 12 Kategorien dem seit altersher halbvergotteten, alles ‘vorschreibenden’ preußischen Staate selbst – mit den Schematas seiner Bürokratie!” (Scheler 1917, 191)

⁸⁵ “Seine theoretische Vernunft – sie ist eine Art in das Innere des Menschen verlegter, verdünnter und sublimierter *preußischer Staat*, und seine Philosophie ist eine Art Universalisierung und Metaphysizierung des historischen Ursprunges und des Geistes des preußischen Staates – zum Ursprung der Welt.” (Scheler 1917, 192)

⁸⁶ “Es gibt in mir – wie sicher auch in Ihnen – eine Art künstlerische Freude über diese tiefe Harmonie einer Philosophie, eines Charakters und des Staates, in dem diese Philosophie und dieser Charakter emporwuchsen. Und gewiß macht diese Harmonie die *Denkerfigur* Kants nicht kleiner, sondern eher noch *größer* und bewundernswerter. Aber über dieser künstlerischen Freude dürfen wir nicht übersehen, daß eben dieselbe Harmonie auch das sichtbarste Zeichen ist für die innere *Partikularität und Enge* des durch die konkreten historischen Lebensbedingungen des großen Denkers gebundenen Geistes dieser Philosophie, eine Enge – die es allein schon *ausschließt*, sie für ein Ergebnis ‘reiner Vernunft’ zu halten, ja die es schon ganz und gar ausschließt, sie zum Fundament der Bildung und Erziehung des *deutschen* Geistes überhaupt zu machen.” (Scheler 1917, 192) And: “Schon an sich ist auch der ältere preußische Geistestypus – so heldisch und herrlich er nach tausend Beziehungen ist – vermöge seiner sehr partikularen Daseinsbedingung nicht geeignet, ausschließlich für deutsches Wesen vorbildlich zu sein.” (Scheler 1917, 101)

⁸⁷ “Was sollen Thüringer, Rheinländer, Süddeutsche mit dieser in metaphysische Ausdrücke gefassten Geschichte Altpreußens?” (Scheler 1917, 192)

⁸⁸ When Scheler refers to the “representatives” of Kant’s philosophy who neglect its historical particularity, he has most likely in mind the various proponents of neo-Kantianism in Germany at the time: “Schon seit Kant [...] steht der Hauptstrom des deutschen theoretischen wie moralischen Denkens unter einer so mächtigen Suggestion maßlosester Überschätzung des konstruktiven Tätigkeitsvermögens und Tätigkeitsrechtes des menschlichen Geistes, daß selbst das Bewußtsein der Partikularität und Enge der historischen und volksmäßigen *Wurzeln* des *Geistes* dieser Philosophie (nicht ihrer einzelnen Argumente) ihren Vertretern völlig fehlt – so *sehr* fehlt, daß sie ganz ehrlich und naiv meinen, sie sei ein Produkt der ‘reinen’ Vernunft selbst.” (Scheler 1917, 190)

Situated at the opposite end of the political spectrum but no less radical was the contemporaneous historicization of Kant's philosophy by Austro-Marxist theoretician and politician Otto Bauer (1881-1938). In his short sketch *Das Weltbild des Kapitalismus* (Bauer [1924] 1971), written in 1916 in Russian captivity and published in 1924, Bauer outlined a Marxist history of science and philosophy, including a Marxist account of Kant's philosophy.⁸⁹ For Bauer, it was not the regional political context of 18th century Prussia that explained Kant's epistemology. It was rather Kant's historical embeddedness in a specific economic mode of production: Bauer portrayed Kant as a "child of capitalism" (Bauer [1924] 1971, 40). According to Bauer, Kant relied, on the one hand, on the mechanistic-atomistic conception of nature that was the counterpart to the individualistic economic system of capitalism.⁹⁰ On the other hand, he drew on the individualistic bourgeois conception of natural law – in turn, a response to the capitalist transformation of the state and of law.⁹¹ Combining both elements, Kant made human understanding the universal lawgiver of nature. His conception of experience and knowledge was thus based on two fundamental notions both provided by capitalism.⁹² According to Bauer, he only generalized the historically peculiar experience characteristic of individualistic capitalism. Kant universalized bourgeois "understanding" into "normal human understanding" (Bauer [1924] 1971, 40).⁹³

⁸⁹ Incidentally, Bauer's sketch proved particularly important for already mentioned philosopher, historian and early sociologist of science Edgar Zilsel (Zilsel [1929] 1992, 42; Mozetič 1992, 20–21). I thank Elisabeth Nemeth for pointing out Bauer's text to me.

⁹⁰ "Der Kapitalismus hat die alten Verbände, die das Wirtschaftsleben durch Befehl, Satzung und Gewohnheitsrecht geordnet hatten, zerstört. Er hat die Gesellschaft aufgelöst in eine Masse unorganisierter Individuen, deren jedes nur seinem eigenen Interesse nachgeht. [...] Nach dem Vorbild dieser Gesellschaftsordnung malten sich die Menschen ihr Weltbild. Nach dem Vorbild des Individuums ersannen sie das Atom [...]. War die Gesellschaft zersetzt in selbstherrliche Individuen, so dachten die Menschen auch die Natur zerfällt in selbständige Atome. [...] Die mechanistisch-atomistische Naturauffassung schuf die Welt nach dem Ebenbilde des Kapitalismus." (Bauer [1924] 1971, 20–21)

⁹¹ "Das emporstrebende Bürgertum stellte dem Rechte des Feudalismus und des Absolutismus sein eigenes bürgerliches Recht gegenüber. Das dem Kapitalismus angemessene, den Bedürfnissen des Bürgertums jener Zeit entsprechende Recht erschien ihm als das Naturrecht, das die Natur selbst jedem Menschen in die Seele gepflanzt habe und dem nur rohe Gewalt Geltung versage. [...] Diese Vorstellung vom menschlichen Recht wird wieder auf die Ordnung der Natur übertragen. [...] Nicht ein Gott gibt der Natur ihre Gesetze; die Menschen selbst haben die Naturgesetze in die Welt hinaus verlegt und diese Gesetze haben in der unveränderlichen Natur des menschlichen Erkenntnisvermögens ihren Grund." (Bauer [1924] 1971, 36)

⁹² "Auch Kant ist ein Kind des Kapitalismus. Er übernimmt die Naturauffassung des Kapitalismus: aller Erfahrung letztes Ergebnis sind mathematische Bewegungsgesetze. Er übernimmt die naturrechtliche Staatsphilosophie des individualistischen Kapitalismus und bildet nach ihrem Vorbild seine Erkenntnislehre: die Gesetze der Mathematik und der Kinematik sind unveränderliche Gesetze, die unser Erkenntnisvermögen der Natur vorschreibt, wie die Satzungen des Naturrechtes unveränderliche Gesetze sind, die unsere moralische Natur aller menschlichen Gesellschaft diktiert." (Bauer [1924] 1971, 40)

⁹³ "Die Gesetze, mittels derer der Kapitalismus sich die Welt nach seinem Ebenbilde schafft, sind für Kant ewige Gesetze des menschlichen Bewußtseins überhaupt. Auch von Kant hätte Marx sagen können, daß er den bürgerlichen Verstand als menschlichen Normalverstand schlechthin proklamiere." (Bauer [1924] 1971, 40) And: "Kant war ein Zeitgenosse der Physiokraten. Ihm waren die die Denkformen der Epoche des individualistischen Kapitalismus die Denkformen des menschlichen Erkenntnisvermögens überhaupt." (Bauer [1924] 1971, 61)

In this way, Bauer offered a Marxist socio-economic explanation of Kant's philosophy. One strength of Bauer's account was that it offered even an according theory of how it became historically possible to go beyond Kant's worldview. With the transition from the stage of individualist to organized capitalism came, according to Bauer, also the decline of the mechanistic view of nature. New "positivist" and "relativist" notions of the laws of nature arose that replaced the Newtonian conceptions of time and space on which Kant had built (Bauer [1924] 1971, 51–52). This made it possible to see that Kant's purportedly universal forms of intuition and understanding were, in fact, "historical categories": the product of a specific historical period with its specific socio-economic organization and the corresponding development of the natural sciences.⁹⁴

From politically and ideologically opposed perspectives and with differing explanatory strategies, Scheler and Bauer both offered radical historicizations or sociologizations of Kant. Both accounts were heterodox – even iconoclastic – in the sense that they rejected the dominant orthodox Kantian image of Kant with the clear distinction between the empirical genesis and the philosophical validity of Kant's philosophy. Not surprisingly, in their own epistemological orientations, both Scheler and Bauer were anti-neo-Kantian or, at least, non-Kantian.

Since Scheler and Bauer, there have, of course, been further socio-historical interpretations of Kant's life and work in this heterodox vein. I cannot offer here a full-blown history of socio-historical accounts of Kant's life and work. In any case, many of the most advanced accounts of this type were inspired by Marxism – for instance, Lucien Goldmann's heavily Lukács-informed account of Kant (Goldmann 1945; [1945] 1967) or Alfred Sohn-Rethel's historical-economic analysis of Kant's transcendental subject as an expression of the capitalist commodity-form (Sohn-Rethel [1936] 1985; [1937] 1971; [1947–1990] 2018).

However, this was not universally the case – as illustrates a more recent controversial work on Kant. German philosophers Gernot Böhme (1937–2022) and Hartmut Böhme (1944–) (Böhme and Böhme [1983] 2016) offered roughly a psychoanalytical interpretation of Kant's

⁹⁴ "Erst die Selbstaflösung der Naturauffassung des individualistischen Kapitalismus befähigt uns, die Formen der Anschauung und des Denkens, die Kant für Anschauungen und Denkformen des Menschen schlechthin hielt, als 'historische Kategorien', als Anschauungs- und Denkformen einer bestimmten Geschichtsepoche, einer bestimmten Gesellschaftsordnung, einer bestimmten Klasse zu erkennen. Erst der moderne Relativismus, der die Raum- und Zeitvorstellungen Newtons überwunden hat, befähigt uns, zu begreifen, daß Kants apriorische Formen der Anschauung nur die apriorischen Anschauungsformen der Naturwissenschaft einer heute bereits überwundenen Entwicklungsphase waren." (Bauer [1924] 1971, 61) Incidentally, Bauer's historicist-Marxist vision of Kant's philosophy was also the source of his opposition to his fellow Austro-Marxist Max Adler's notion of the "social *a priori*". In Bauer's view, Adler remained caught in an ahistorical bourgeois admiration for Kant: "Hier nun setzte die individuelle, originelle Leistung Max Adlers ein. Auch er nahm den Neukantianismus auf und eignete sich ihn an; die Nabelschnur, die sein Denken dadurch an die Ideologie der bürgerlichen Intelligenz band, hat er nie zu zerschneiden, die sozialen Wurzeln der Philosophie Kants im bürgerlich-individualistischen 18. Jahrhundert, des Neukantianismus in der Abkehr der Bourgeoisie von dem kämpferischen Liberalismus ihrer Jugend hat er nie zu erkennen vermocht." (Bauer 1937, 299)

philosophy informed by a radicalized reading of Horkheimer and Adorno's critique of the "dialectics of Enlightenment" plus selective allusions to Elias's studies on the "process of civilization" and Foucault's work on "disciplinary society" (Böhme and Böhme [1983] 2016, 12, 16). They emphasized the procedures of exclusion and outright violence embedded in the Enlightenment ideal of reason and applied this reading grid to Kant's life and work. The Böhmes thus sought to establish a direct correlation between Kant's psychological structure – for example, the violent repression of bodily drives, his narcissism or his hypochondria – and the structure of his philosophical work. They took Kant's philosophy and lifestyle as a symptom of the predicament of the Enlightenment in general. While the Böhmes' fairly speculative reading of Kant provoked legitimate criticisms,⁹⁵ its style was quite typical for a certain "postmodernist"⁹⁶ heterodox account of Kant.⁹⁷

Polarized interpretations

All in all, there seem to have been two opposed camps concerning Kant's biography and the relationship between his life, his socio-historical contexts and his work: on the one hand, the orthodox Kantian biographies of Kant, drawing on a Kantian or Kantoid ideology of Kant's life and work; on the other hand, the heterodox radical historicizations of Kant, drawing on philosophically and ideologically different sources, but agreeing on a direct connection between Kant's work and his social, economic, historical or psychological conditions.

These two extremes can be better understood with the help of the Durkheimian distinction between the "sacred" and the "profane".⁹⁸ In this perspective, the Kantian biographies of Kant

⁹⁵ Kühn criticized the Böhmes heavily for basing their psychoanalytical reading of Kant on the picture established by the first biographers of Kant. What they psychoanalyzed, Kühn suggested, was rather Borowski, Jachmann and Wasianski than the historical Kant (Kühn [2001] 2007, 31). For further specific criticisms, see Gerhardt 1985.

⁹⁶ "Postmodernist" is to be taken here in the literal sense. The Böhmes explicitly dismissed the "project of modernity": "Es kann nicht mehr darum gehen, das Projekt der Moderne zu vollenden (Habermas), es muß darum gehen es zu revidieren." (Böhme and Böhme [1983] 2016, 11) For another such reading, see Cutrofello 1994.

⁹⁷ Most recently, the question of the socio-historical conditions of Kant's work, what they imply for the validity of his philosophy and our present-day stance on it has been intensely discussed regarding Kant's account of human races (e.g. Allais 2016; Geier 2022; Lu-Adler 2023; for the controversial debate on Lu-Adler, see Cooper 2024; for an up-to-date bibliography, see Ramsauer 2023). I cannot go here into the details of this ongoing debate. I suppose, however, that the socio-historical perspective I am siding with below would have some implications for it.

⁹⁸ The *locus classicus* for this distinction is a passage from Durkheim's *Formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse*: "Mais ce qui est caractéristique du phénomène religieux, c'est qu'il suppose toujours une division bipartite de l'univers connu et connaissable en deux genres qui comprennent tout ce qui existe, mais qui s'excluent radicalement. Les choses sacrées sont celles que les interdits protègent et isolent; les choses profanes, celles auxquelles ces interdits s'appliquent et qui doivent rester à distance des premières. Les croyances religieuses sont des représentations qui expriment la nature des choses sacrées et les rapports qu'elles soutiennent soit les unes avec les autres, soit avec les choses profanes. Enfin, les rites sont des règles de conduite qui prescrivent comment l'homme doit se comporter avec les choses sacrées." (Durkheim [1912] 2013, 56) The distinction first appeared some 15 years earlier in Durkheim's works on the prohibition of incest and the definition of religious phenomena (Durkheim 1898; 1899) and in Henri Hubert and Marcel Mauss's study on sacrifice

take over and identify with the categories offered in Kant's work and apply them to Kant's own life. Kant's life and work may only be touched upon by putting on gloves made of the same Kantian fabric, as it were. These readings tend to sacralize their object by applying to it the sacred categories and distinctions that emanate from it. They reiterate a division – suggested by Kant himself – between the philosophical sphere and other, external, empirical or otherwise profane spheres. They thus purify the sacred object and keep it in the sacred sphere.⁹⁹

The radical historicizations of Kant, on the other hand, profanate the sacred object “Kant”. They bring Kant's philosophy into immediate contact with other profane objects stemming from historical, psychological, political, national, economic, social and other contexts. They put Kant and his work on a par with these non-philosophical matters and reject protective separations such as the one between empirical genesis and validity. They draw Kant into the profane sphere – not without relishing their transgression. To the orthodox hagiography they react with heterodox iconoclasm. Importantly, these two opposed accounts hardly communicate with each other – except through mutual stereotypes and caricatures. The result is a polarization between the “sacralization” and the “profanation” of Kant and his work.

It should be noted that this polarization into sacralization and profanation is not peculiar to Kant. We can observe it, more generally, with what we might call “hyper-canonical” authors – authors of a stature comparable to Kant, such as Marx or Freud.¹⁰⁰ “Hyper-canonical” indicates

(Hubert and Mauss 1899; see also 1909b). The sacred-profane distinction, originally developed for religious phenomena, can arguably be extended to other spheres of activity (e.g. philosophy) and objects (e.g. Kant). Durkheim himself suggested this when applying it to “les croyances communes de toute sorte, relatives à des objets laïques en apparence, tels que le drapeau, la patrie, telle forme d'organisation politique, tel héros ou tel événement historique, etc. Elles sont obligatoires en quelque sens, par cela seul qu'elles sont communes; car la communauté ne tolère pas sans résistance qu'on les nie ouvertement. Il semble donc qu'elles rentrent dans la définition précédente. Mais c'est qu'en effet elles sont, dans une certaine mesure, indiscernables des croyances proprement religieuses. La patrie, la Révolution française, Jeanne d'Arc, etc., sont pour nous des choses sacrées auxquelles nous ne permettons pas qu'on touche.” (Durkheim 1899, 20) For further elements on the history of the sacred-profane distinction, see Borgeaud 1994.

⁹⁹ Possessing and protecting such a sacred area is, of course, nothing exceptional or anomalous. It is typical of most social institutions, not only religious ones. In specifically scientific enterprises, however, this attitude gets regularly into conflict with the institutional norm of “organized scepticism”, as analysed by Merton: “Most institutions demand unqualified faith; but the institution of science makes scepticism a virtue. Every institution involves, in this sense, a sacred area, which is resistant to profane examination in terms of scientific observation and logic. The institution of science itself involves emotional adherence to certain values. But whether it be the sacred sphere of political convictions or religious faith or economic rights, the scientific investigator does not conduct himself in the prescribed uncritical and ritualistic fashion. He does not preserve the cleavage between the sacred and the profane, between that which requires uncritical respect and that which can be objectively analyzed.” (Merton [1938] 1968a, 601) In this sense, the sacred areas of science itself – canons, research traditions, fundamental concepts, methods, etc. – can be expected to become regularly the object of struggles for desacralization. In the present case, boundary disputes between disciplines play a role as well. The desacralization consists in Kant becoming the object of a type of scientific investigation (historical, sociological, etc.) other than philosophical.

¹⁰⁰ For the parallel with Freud, see Mayer 2017. Mayer points to the opposition between hagiography and iconoclasm in the writing of Freud's biography and the history of the psychoanalytic movement. A genuine historicization and contextualization of psychoanalysis would have to go beyond this opposition (for this orientation, see Marinelli and Mayer 2006).

here that these authors are not only part of explicit canons of learning and education, but stand even beyond (or beneath) them. They have become part of the implicit references in a field of activities. Their concepts, tools and methods of thinking exhibit a particularly high degree of what Merton conceptualized as “obliteration by incorporation” (Merton [1967] 1968, 28, 35; Garfield 1975).¹⁰¹ In some cases, they have become an integral part of collective, professional or otherwise institutionalized identities, such as academic philosophers (Kant), psychoanalysts (Freud) or Marxists (intellectuals or party politicians).

Paradoxically, the obstacles for a proper historicization or sociologization of the lives and intellectual projects of such widely known authors are much higher than for lesser known or unknown authors. This “paradox of hyper-canonical authors” has been addressed multiple times in the context of the biographies of these “great men” (women are virtually absent from this arena). Frequently appears here the question of whether and how it is possible to write their biography at all (Ritzel 1971; 1985a; Stedman Jones 2016, 1–5; Heinrich [2018] 2019; Mayer 2020). In this perspective, the problems with writing Kant’s biography appear as a special case of a more general problem with the biographies of hyper-canonical authors.¹⁰² In fact, given the outstanding value attributed collectively to these figures, attempting to historicize authors such

¹⁰¹ Merton has not written systematically on the “OBI” phenomenon, although many of his publications touched upon it (Merton [1965] 1993, 218–19; [1975] 1976, 130, n. 53; Merton and Barber 2004). In 1987, the topic still featured on Merton’s “to-do list” under the title “OBI: *Obliteration (of Source of Ideas, Methods, or Findings) by Incorporation (in Canonical Knowledge)*” (Merton 1987, 25). One succinct characterization of the phenomenon can be found in the context of his discussion of citation analysis: “Certain patterns of referencing behavior would seem to set limits on the use of citation counts for tracing the long-term genealogy of ideas. One of these patterns has been described as ‘obliteration by incorporation’: the obliteration of the source of ideas, methods, or findings by their incorporation in currently accepted knowledge. In the course of this hypothesized process, the number of explicit references to the original work declines in the papers and books making use of it. Users and consequently transmitters of that knowledge are so thoroughly familiar with its origins that they assume this to be true of their readers as well. Preferring not to insult their readers’ knowledgeability, they no longer refer to the original source. And since many of us tend to attribute a significant idea or formulation to the author who introduced us to it, the altogether innocent transmitter sometimes becomes identified as the originator. In the successive transmission of ideas, repeated use may erase all but the immediately antecedent versions, thus producing an historical palimpsest in which the source of those ideas is obliterated.” (Merton 1979, vii)

¹⁰² Authors like Freud and Marx – more recently also Bourdieu (for a remarkable Bourdieusian account of Bourdieu’s work, see Duval et al. 2022) – seem to pose difficulties to biographers because the theories they developed contain a certain way of considering individual human beings and – by way of self-application – of writing (or not writing, see Bourdieu 1986) their own biographies. The same problem appears in a radicalized form in Kant’s case for Kant’s work seems to deny all interest to his own biography. Given the place that Kant himself allotted to empirical psychology, history, anthropology, etc., what could a Kantian biography of the historical Kant possibly look like? Again, the problem was most clearly identified by Kant biographer Wolfgang Ritzel (Ritzel 1971; 1985b; 1985a), who developed a sort of accommodation strategy for justifying in a Kantian way the writing of Kant’s biography. More generally, the attractivity of such “reflexive” (e.g. Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992; Bourdieu 2001b; 2022b) or “self-exemplifying” (e.g. Merton [1965] 1993, 29, 194; 1973, ix; Cole and Zuckerman [1975] 2017) strategies (applying Kant to Kant, Freud to Freud, Merton to Merton, Bourdieu to Bourdieu, etc.) resides, it seems, in the fact that they allow to cumulate two forms of gratification normally opposed to each other in scientific activity: a premium on originality and innovation (taking distance from authority) and a premium on conformity (doing it in accordance with authority).

as Kant is in some respect comparable to historicizing religious figures such as Jesus, Mohammed or Buddha.¹⁰³

Beyond sacralization and profanation

From the point of view of the sociological approach to classifications of knowledge and the sciences outlined above, sacralization and profanation are both equally wrongheaded. Methodologically speaking, the problem is that neither of the two strategies has an appropriate vision of the “relative autonomy” of intellectual production. Sacralizations of Kant tend to rely on the idea of a sort of total autonomy of his intellectual work. There are not (and must not be) any significant ties between this sacred area of critical philosophy and the profane empirical circumstances under which it was done. Profanations of Kant, on the other hand, tend to rely on the idea of some total heteronomy. Kant’s work is “nothing but” the mundane expression of the Prussian state ideology, of his position within the capitalist bourgeoisie or his idiosyncratic psychological structure.¹⁰⁴

The opposition between sacralization and profanation, however, is misleading.¹⁰⁵ It functions, in fact, as an “epistemological couple” – and one that becomes an “epistemological obstacle” for a realistic historical-sociological conception of Kant’s work.¹⁰⁶ The polarization

¹⁰³ The parallel with Jesus and Socrates is explicitly established by Kühn: “Hinter diese Texte [the first biographies of Kant, MS] zurückzugehen und zum historischen Kant zu gelangen ist schwierig, wenn nicht gar unmöglich, aber das heißt nicht, daß wir es nicht versuchen sollten. Die Situation hat gewisse Ähnlichkeit mit derjenigen, in der wir uns Sokrates und Jesus gegenüber befinden, wenn sie auch vielleicht nicht ganz so problematisch ist.” (Kühn [2001] 2007, 32)

¹⁰⁴ This “nothing but” vision makes socio-historical accounts of Kant often unsatisfactory regarding the analysis of the concrete contents of Kant’s work (e.g. Goldmann [1945] 1967, 33–59) – which, in turn, reassures those tending towards sacralization. Bourdieu has described this hidden complicity between “externalism” and “internalism” and its functioning as an “epistemological couple” 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’oeuvre, 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 [1975] 1988, 11) On this form of complicity between internalism and externalism, see Chapter 2.

¹⁰⁵ Again, the situation is analogous to the one described by Marinelli and Mayer for the historiography of psychoanalysis: “Up to the present day, psychoanalytic historiography has remained trapped in a Manichean logic, with the result being that an orthodox camp seeks to erect Freud as a monument while a heretical camp does its best to smash it by unveiling his moral and intellectual dishonesty and by pointing to other neglected figures (sometimes depicting them as martyrs or mounting them as counterheroes).” (Marinelli and Mayer 2006; see also Mayer 2017)

¹⁰⁶ I draw here, of course, on notions developed by French philosopher of science Gaston Bachelard (1884–1962) (especially Bachelard [1938] 2011, 15–26) and the way they were later applied to sociology by Bourdieu (Bourdieu et al. [1968] 2005, 24–49, 92–94). Bachelard himself observed that “epistemological obstacles” appeared always in couples and proposed a quasi-sociological explanation of this phenomenon: “Il est d’ailleurs très remarquable que, d’une manière générale, les obstacles à la culture scientifique se présentent toujours par paires. C’est au point qu’on pourrait parler d’une loi psychologique de la bipolarité des erreurs. Dès qu’une difficulté se révèle importante, on peut être sûr qu’en la tournant, on butera sur un obstacle opposé. Une telle régularité dans la dialectique des erreurs ne peut venir naturellement du monde objectif. A notre avis, elle provient de l’attitude polémique de la pensée scientifique devant la cité savante. Comme dans une activité scientifique, nous devons inventer, nous devons prendre le phénomène d’un nouveau point de vue. Mais il nous faut légitimer notre invention: nous pensons alors notre phénomène en critiquant le phénomène des autres. Peu

itself, with its two opposed poles of collective representations of Kant, is the “memorial obstacle” (Chapter 3) we need to surmount.

The following considerations regarding Kant’s transcendental philosophy and his classification of science seek a middle ground between sacralization and profanation, hagiography and iconoclasm. I would argue indeed that the historical-sociological account outlined above can offer a “third way” beyond this opposition. For it relies on a third option beyond absolute autonomy and absolute heteronomy: the notion of the “relative autonomy” of fields of cultural production¹⁰⁷ or, in Collins’s term, the “intellectual attention space”¹⁰⁸. It is Kant’s scientific, philosophical and academic field that provides the central “middle term” that connects his social, religious and political context with his philosophical and scientific problems, concepts, arguments and solutions. Tellingly, it is precisely this dimension that seems to have been neglected by both sacralizing and profanating approaches. If we want to appreciate Kant and his work in this socio-historical perspective, we have to understand the state and history of intellectual-cum-social problems in the scientific and academic field he entered, how he acquired a specific perception of these problems, how he intervened strategically in these debates in competition with other socially situated contenders, and how he came finally to try to reconfigure the terms of the discussion by the consciously “revolutionary” feat of the “critique of reason”.

Importantly, we must not presuppose here distinctions between the “internal” and the “external”, between Kant’s life and his philosophical work and arguments (see Chapter 2). On the contrary, for establishing the connection between Kant’s work and its socio-historical conditions, we have to start from the academic and scientific field – the 18th century world in which people like Kant acted and evolved – as a “total” or “concrete reality” – or, with Mauss’s expression, a sort of “fait social total”.¹⁰⁹ That is, the scientific field combines on the level of

à peu, nous sommes amenés à réaliser nos objections en objets, à transformer nos critiques en lois. Nous nous acharnons à varier le phénomène dans le sens de notre opposition au savoir d’autrui. C’est naturellement surtout dans une science jeune qu’on pourra reconnaître cette originalité de mauvais aloi qui ne fait que renforcer les obstacles contraires.” (Bachelard [1938] 2011, 23–24) As one example of such a complementary epistemological obstacle, Bachelard discussed the opposition, in philosophy of science, between the *a priori* and the *a posteriori*, the general and the immediate, rationalism and empiricism (Bachelard [1940] 2012, 4–7).

¹⁰⁷ “Dire que le champ est relativement autonome par rapport à l’univers social environnant, c’est dire que le système de forces qui sont constitutives de la structure du champ (tension) est relativement indépendant des forces qui s’exercent sur le champ (pression). Il dispose en quelque sorte de la ‘liberté’ nécessaire pour développer sa propre nécessité, sa propre logique, son propre *nomos*.” (Bourdieu 2001b, 95)

¹⁰⁸ “Intellectuals manoeuvre within their own attention space, reshaping the tools at hand from past and current controversies internal to their own sphere, while energized by the structural opportunities opening up in the material and political world surrounding them.” (Collins 1998b, 142; see also 1998a, 37–40) The concept of the “intellectual attention space” is closely connected to Collins’s “Law of Small Numbers” according to which the attention space is invariably divided into three to six positions (Collins 1987, 57).

¹⁰⁹ Mauss applied the expression “fait social total” to the phenomenon of gift exchange and defined it as follows: “Mais, s’il en est ainsi, c’est qu’il y a dans cette façon de traiter un problème un principe heuristique que nous voudrions dégager. Les faits que nous avons étudiés sont tous, qu’on nous permette l’expression, des faits sociaux *totaux* ou, si l’on veut – mais nous aimons moins le mot – généraux: c’est-à-dire qu’ils mettent en

scientific *practice* the various dimensions – scientific, intellectual, social, economic, psychological, political, etc. – that scholarly distinctions separate *theoretically* and *ex post*.¹¹⁰

That does not mean that agents themselves do not introduce or operate with such distinctions between work and life, internal and external. Kant's own distinction between his life and the content of his work – epitomized in the Baconian motto “de nobis ipsis silemus: de re autem [...] agitur” (Kant [1781/1787] 1974, 7, B II; see also Ritzel 1985b, 475) – is the best example for this practice. But such distinctions have a fundamentally different function when agents involved in practical action produce them and do things with them, and when historical-sociological observers seeking to account for agents' actions and products use them as analytical categories. In practice, these distinctions are part and product of agents' struggles with each other – in the case of Kant's distinction, for example, the relationship with contemporary “Popularphilosophie” (Holzhey 1989) embodied by the likes of Christian Garve (1742-1798) (e.g. the background of Kant [1783] 2001; [1793] 1992).¹¹¹ As observers, however, we cannot take over uncritically – and, at worst, reify – distinctions which have their own socio-historical origins and functions in practice. When seeking to understand historical agents' actions such distinctions are not to be presupposed but to be explained as socio-historical facts in their own right. We have to understand how and under which social-cum-intellectual conditions these distinctions were produced and used.¹¹²

branle dans certains cas la totalité de la société et de ses institutions (potlatch, clans affrontés, tribus se visitant, etc.) et dans d'autres cas, seulement un très grand nombre d'institutions, en particulier lorsque ces échanges et ces contrats concernent plutôt des individus. [Paragraph] Tous ces phénomènes sont à la fois juridiques, économiques, religieux, et même esthétiques, morphologiques, etc.” (Mauss [1925] 2013, 274) I refer here less to the aspect of the definition concerning the involvement of the whole society than to the properly methodological aspect of the definition according to which it is necessary to start from concrete social phenomena as “wholes” without presupposing divisions such as that between biological, psychological, economic, historical and sociological dimensions. Mauss called this the perspective of “l'homme total” (Mauss [1924] 1950, 304–5; [1936] 2013, 369).

¹¹⁰ Bourdieu described this “concrete” or “syncretic” reality of fields for the case of the philosophical field in his study on Heidegger: “Les historiens de la philosophie oublient trop souvent que les grandes options philosophiques qui balisent l'espace des possibles, néo-kantisme, néo-thomisme, phénoménologie, etc., se présentent sous la forme sensible de personnes, appréhendées dans leurs manières d'être, de se tenir, de parler, leur chevelure blanche et leur air olympien, et en association avec des dispositions éthiques et des choix politiques qui leur donnent une physionomie concrète. C'est par rapport à ces configurations sensibles, syncrétiquement aperçues, dans la sympathie ou l'antipathie, l'indignation ou la complicité, que s'éprouvent les positions et que se définissent les prises de position: le sens du jeu inséparablement éthique, politique et philosophique que supposent les placements et les déplacements réussis dans le champ philosophique se repère à ces indices surdéterminés pour produire un projet philosophique qui confond pratiquement la ‘révolution conservatrice’ et le renversement contre-révolutionnaire de la critique néo-kantienne de la métaphysique et de la ‘domination de la raison’.” (Bourdieu [1975] 1988, 63)

¹¹¹ Kant's peculiar terminology is one of the battlegrounds of the distinction between a sphere of philosophical specialists and the larger lay public. See, for example, Kant's insistence on the limits of “popularizing” critical philosophy in the preface to his “popular” *Prolegomena* (Kant [1783] 2001, 14–15).

¹¹² My argument here is similar to Shapin and Schaffer's account – in their 1985 study on *Leviathan and the Air-Pump* – of how the distinction between the scientific and the political arena and, more generally, between “internal” and “external” factors, was historically produced: “Insofar as we have displayed the political status of solutions to problems of knowledge, we have not referred to politics as something that happens solely outside

For this, again, we need to start with the scientific field as a concrete or total historical reality. We have to consider that this field is the historical product of a process of autonomization, that it possesses varying degrees of autonomy at different times and that it undergoes further differentiation along disciplines and specialities. When we employ distinctions such as those between the “intellectual” and the “social” for understanding scientific practice, we have to be aware that we make a specifically scholarly use of them. That is, we use them as abstract analytical categories with the aim of “recomposing”¹¹³ a total reality – scientific practice in a scientific field – which defies these distinctions. At the very least, we have to specify in each case the historical conditions for applying these distinctions.

If we harness the notion of relatively autonomous intellectual, scientific or philosophical fields, we can “sociologize Kant” in a way, I would argue, that avoids the pitfalls of both sacralization and profanation, of “internalism” and “externalism”, and goes beyond this unfortunate pair of obstacles. Among earlier authors, sociologist Karl Mannheim came perhaps closest to a socio-historical conception of Kant’s work which avoided both sacralization and profanation (see especially Mannheim [1922] 1964a; [1926] 1964; [1931] 1995). Against sacralizing tendencies relying on the genesis-validity distinction, Mannheim argued that this distinction itself was the result of an undue generalization from the one specific type of knowledge we encounter in the mathematical natural sciences and starting from which Kant had developed his transcendental philosophy.¹¹⁴ On the other hand, against the profanating Marxist ideological explanation of Kant’s categorical imperative by Marxist historian and politician Franz Mehring (1846-1919) (Mehring 1922, 81), Mannheim argued that this sort of explanation was only sociologically relevant if it contained some meaningful interpretation

of science and which can, so to speak, press in upon it. The experimental community vigorously developed and deployed such boundary-speech, and we have sought to situate this speech historically and to explain why these conventionalized ways of talking developed. What we cannot do if we want to be serious about the historical nature of our inquiry is to use such actors’ speech unthinkingly as an explanatory resource. The language that transports politics outside of science is precisely what we need to understand and explain. We find ourselves standing against much current sentiment in the history of science that holds that we should have less talk of the ‘insides’ and ‘outsides’ of science, that we have transcended outmoded categories. Far from it; we have not yet begun to understand the issues involved.” (Shapin and Schaffer [1985] 2011, 341–42). For another example of a study investigating the socio-historical emergence of such distinctions, see Kusch’s study on “psychologism” and the separation between psychology and philosophy (Kusch 1995, e.g. 1–3).

¹¹³ “Les éléments sentent et objectent à juste titre que les sociologues font trop d’abstractions et séparent trop les divers éléments des sociétés les uns des autres. Il faut faire comme eux: observer ce qui est donné. Or, le donné, c’est Rome, c’est Athènes, c’est le Français moyen, c’est le Mélanésien de telle ou telle île, et non pas la prière ou le droit en soi. Après avoir forcément un peu trop divisé et abstrait, il faut que les sociologues s’efforcent de recomposer le tout. Ils trouveront ainsi de fécondes données.” (Mauss [1925] 2013, 276)

¹¹⁴ “Mit der zum Apriori erhobenen Feststellung, daß aus der Tatsachenwelt nichts aufsteigen könne, was gelungsrelevant wäre, sperrt man sich vor der Beobachtung, daß ursprünglich eben *dieses Apriori selbst eine vorschnelle Hypostasierung eines Faktizitätszusammenhanges gewesen ist, das an einem bestimmten Typus von Aussagen abgelesen* wurde und nur an ihnen sein phänomenologisches Recht hatte, aber von hier aus überschnell zum noologisch-erkenntnistheoretischen Axiom erhoben wurde.” (Mannheim [1931] 1995, 246)

(*Sinndeutung*), i.e. if it established a functional relation between the meaning of Kant's sentence ("treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, never merely as a means to an end, but always at the same time as an end") and the equally meaningful social reality of capitalism (presupposing a both free – i.e. treatment as an end – and useful – i.e. treatment as a means – labour force) (Mannheim [1926] 1964, 396, n. 5).

In this sense, the point of my efforts to historicize or sociologize Kant is to "particularize" his classification of knowledge and the sciences with its basic distinctions such as *a priori-a posteriori* or transcendental-empirical. This means, in Mannheim's sense (Mannheim [1931] 1995, 242–44), not only to "relate" Kant's view to its social conditions, but also to ask critically what this "relatedness" implies for the validity of his view.¹¹⁵ Indeed, we need to "de-naturalize" Kant's classification if we want to go beyond the vision of the sociologized *a priori* as an "obvious" contradiction in terms. Only then can we understand the conflict between the Kantian and the Comtean classification of knowledge and the sciences properly and without bias for one of the two positions. The weight of Kant's revolution, in fact, is still such that we have to make a conscious effort at historicizing and sociologizing its basic notions in order to be able to take an "impartial" and "symmetrical"¹¹⁶ stance on the issue of the sociologization of the *a priori*.

The sociological-historical accounts of Heilbron and Collins, discussed at length above, are in my view good recent examples of an approach beyond sacralization and profanation. They focus precisely on the "middle term" of the academic and scientific field without engaging in any sort of reductionism, either in the direction of ideas or of external circumstances. This orientation thus seems most promising for our purposes – especially when combined, for example, with recent scholarship on Kant's work in the context of the history of science and of the human sciences.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵ "Im Partikularisieren transzendiert also die wissenssoziologische Analyse die ursprüngliche Faktizitätsfestellung, auf die sich das bloße Relationieren noch beschränkt. Jede, ihren eigenen Intentionen nachgehende wissenssoziologische Analyse erreicht jenen Punkt, wo die Wissenssoziologie mehr ist als eine soziologische Erzählung der Tatsache, wie bestimmte Einsichten aus einem bestimmten Milieu entstanden sind, sondern wo sie auch Kritik ist, weil sie die Fassungskraft und die Grenzen der Fassungskraft von Aussagen rekonstruiert." (Mannheim [1931] 1995, 244) Importantly, Mannheim's notion of "particularizing" relies on a double refusal. On the one hand, he repudiates the "doctrine of ideology" that concludes from the fact that certain views are socially conditioned to their falsity; on the other hand, he rejects the dualism between genesis and validity according to which the former has no implications whatsoever for the latter. Mannheim seeks to hold the middle ground between these two extremes (Mannheim [1931] 1995, 243–44).

¹¹⁶ For the principles of "impartiality" and "symmetry" – two of the "four tenets" of the "strong programme" –, see Bloor [1976] 1991, 7. These principles – as well as the principle of "reflexivity" – are, in fact, rather general guidelines for socio-historical work. We can use them without committing to specific claims of the "strong programme".

¹¹⁷ This type of historiography of Kant goes back historically to Marburg neo-Kantianism (e.g. Cohen [1883] 1968; Cassirer [1907–1922] 1995b). It has been revived in recent decades – in a sort of "neo-neo-Kantianism" – by the works of American philosopher of science Michael Friedman (1947–2025) and others (e.g. Friedman

The point here is not, of course, to offer a full-blown “sociology of Kant” and his philosophy – an immense task that is, as far as I see, still up for grabs.¹¹⁸ What I am interested in here is only Kant’s classification of the sciences and knowledge as far as it helps us to understand his notions of “*a priori*” and “transcendental” – always with the problem of the sociologization of the *a priori* in mind. If, in passing, we can make some local contributions to such a wider “sociology of Kant” – for instance, by connecting Kant’s classification of science with his intervention in the “conflict of faculties” –, so much the better.

What I hope to have shown here is that a socio-historical view of Kant’s life and work is possible beyond the correlative traps of sacralization or profanation. If I have dwelled at some length on the obstacles opposed to such a view – a topic of mere erudition, some might say –, this is because the critique of these obstacles is indeed an integral part of “particularizing” (Mannheim [1931] 1995, 242–44) the notion of “*a priori*” and Kant’s whole classification of knowledge and the sciences. To some extent, we have to develop a sociological account of these issues out of the obstacles that are opposed to it – and out of a socio-historical account of these obstacles. This general property of “memorial obstacles” (Chapter 3) illustrates again what Bachelard called “le caractère polémique de la connaissance” (Bachelard [1934] 2017, 16): “En fait, on connaît *contre* une connaissance antérieure, en détruisant des connaissances mal faites, en surmontant ce qui, dans l’esprit même, fait obstacle à la spiritualisation.” (Bachelard [1938] 2011, 15–16)

4. Outline for future studies on Kant, Comte and the sociologization of the *a priori*

As announced at the beginning, our preparatory work ends here. What could future studies on the topic look like? I want to give here at least some indications.

1992; Watkins 2001). The interest into Kant’s relationship with the human sciences is even more recent (e.g. Sturm 2009; Kraus 2011; Sturm 2012; Cohen 2009) and remains – except for the current interest in Kant’s raciology – rather marginal (see below). Even this literature, although considering Kant in the context of the history of science, seems to take rarely into account the properly sociological dimensions of either the sciences or philosophy.

¹¹⁸ Recently, French sociologist Marc Joly has offered in his book *La Révolution sociologique* a short “Sociogenèse du kantisme” (Joly 2017, 425–30), inspired by Elias and Bourdieu and drawing on Collins. Although this analysis bears considerable weight in the general economy of Joly’s argument, it is hardly satisfactory as a sociological account of Kant and, even less, of “Kantianism”. Joly is certainly right in emphasizing the role of Kant’s philosophy in the formation of a professional identity of academic philosophers, speaking of a “habitus professionnel” and a “habitus proprement philosophique” (Joly 2017, 425). However, he seems to use an anachronistic division between natural sciences and philosophy when he presents Kant as leading a “subtle ideological war” against the Scientific Revolution (Joly 2017, 428). Following Kant’s first biographers, especially Borowski, Joly also seems to overemphasize the role of religion in Kant’s work when he claims that Kant, in his epistemology, basically “saved God” (Joly 2017, 428). For a sociological account, it is surprising that Joly finally does not consider Kant’s concrete position within the institutional setting made up of the university crisis, the conflict between philosophy and theology as well as the state, the role of scientific academies, etc. For a more extensive critical discussion of Joly’s book, see Strauss 2021, 542–60.

The next step would be, of course, to turn to the classification of knowledge and science that emerged around 1780 in Kant's transcendental philosophy. This classification (e.g. Tonelli 1975; 1994; Sturm 2009; Rovira 2018) represented a self-conscious philosophical response to the achievement of the first "Scientific Revolution" (for a critical perspective on this label, see Shapin 1996) in Newtonian mathematical physics (Kant [1781/1787] 1974; esp. [1787] 1974; M. Friedman 1992; see already Cassirer [1907/1922b] 1995; [1907/1922a] 1995; [1918/1921] 1975; Vuillemin 1955). Kant's *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (1781/1787) should provide – among other things – the foundation and justification for this science by providing an answer to the question how "synthetic *a priori* judgments" – i.e. judgments that are independent of experience, but enlarge nevertheless our knowledge – are possible (Hahn 1988; Capeillères 2004). In this context, Kant introduced – building on uses established by Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646-1716) or David Hume (1711-1776) – the distinction between "*a priori*" and "*a posteriori*" knowledge and between "transcendental" and "empirical" inquiries.

The latter distinction became fundamental in autonomizing philosophy as an academic discipline in the context of the "German University Revolution" (Collins 1998a, chap. 12), especially through Kant's use of "transcendental arguments" (for an overview, see Stern 2019). As Kant made it clear, in his system of classification there was no place for an "empirical part of logic" (Kant [1785] 1974, BA IV) or for any kind of "empirical deduction" of the concepts of space and time or the categories (Kant [1781/1787] 1974, 126, A 85-86, B 118; Ferrari 2003, 16). Any such attempt was bound to end in a sort of *petitio principii*, trying to deduce from experience precisely what is presupposed by any possible experience. Deducing – and thus legitimating – the categories of the understanding with the help of the transcendental method was thus the genuine task of philosophy.

This view also influenced Kant's stance on the sciences that we would today range with the "human sciences", especially psychology, history and anthropology (Kant [1798] 2008; Zammito 2002; Sturm 2009; Cohen 2009; Zhavoronkov 2022). For example, he maintained all along a relatively clear distinction between transcendental philosophy and psychology as well as "pragmatic anthropology" (for their relationship, see especially Kant [1798] 2008). In short, there was no possibility for such a thing as an "empirical *a priori*" in Kant's terminology and the concomitant classification of knowledge and the sciences. This applied, obviously, also to "social physics" or "sociology", as it should appear some twenty years after Kant's death.

Once we have a clear picture of Kant's classification, including its social conditions, we could turn to the classification of the sciences that emerged in the 1820s and 1830s with Comte's "positive philosophy". This classification put mathematics, astronomy, physics, chemistry, physiology or biology and, finally, "social physics" or "sociology" (Comte [1825] 1854;

[1829] 1998b; Heilbron [1990] 1995, 229–49) into an order going from simplicity to complexity and from generality to particularity. It continued not only earlier attempts at establishing a rational encyclopaedic order of human knowledge, from Francis Bacon (1561-1626) to the Enlightenment *Encyclopédie* of Diderot and d’Alembert (1751-1772) (Petit 1994), as well as attempts at putting social theory on a scientific basis, since at least the 1770s and the work of Condorcet (1743-1794) (Heilbron [1990] 1995, 164–91; Brian 1994).

As we have seen (Heilbron 2017a), Comte’s classification responded also to the fundamental transformation of the academic and scientific field that has been variously described as a “Second Scientific Revolution”, i.e. the increased differentiation of science along disciplinary lines, roughly between the 1770s and the 1830s. In this new context – partly brought about by the previous “academic revolution” and its international reception and diffusion (Collins 1998a, chap. 12) – Comte presented “social physics” and then “sociology” as the science that would not only achieve the organization of an increasingly anomic division of academic labour (Comte [1822] 1854). It would also cover – under the heading of “intellectual and moral functions” (Comte [1837] 1998) – those parts of knowledge and the sciences that Kant had deemed “*a priori*” or “transcendental” and that he had conceived as the proper domain of philosophy.

Yet, the positivist classification of the sciences was not simply opposed to the criticist one, as it has later often been presented (Fedi 2014a, 18–23). Indeed, there were concrete historical connections between them. This is evident in Comte’s early reception of Kant’s philosophy of history (esp. Kant [1784] 1999) and his epistemology (esp. Kant [1787] 1974 and the “transcendental aesthetics”) from the 1820s onwards (Pickering 1993, 275–301, esp. 289–96; Fedi 2014c). This reception – although known publicly since at least the 1860s – has attracted surprisingly little attention in the literature.¹¹⁹ For a long time, this had to do in part with Comte’s own public denial that he had ever read the work of Kant (and other German philosophers) in any language and any detail.¹²⁰ This statement was taken for granted by Comte’s followers,

¹¹⁹ Émile Littré (1801-1881) in his 1863 *Auguste Comte et la philosophie positive* was the first, it seems, to draw attention to Comte’s reception of Kant via d’Eichthal. He insisted not only on Kant’s role as a precursor of Comte (Littré 1863, chap. 4) – a narrative Comte himself had developed –, but also published for the first time the correspondence between Comte and d’Eichthal, which the latter had given to him (Littré 1863, chap. 8). Later, Pierre Laffitte (1823-1903) – leader of the “orthodox” branch of positivism – took up again the issue of Comte’s relationship with Germany (Laffitte 1882) and republished the correspondence with d’Eichthal (Laffitte 1896a; 1896b) in the *Revue occidentale*. Further discussions on the relationship between Comte and Kant can be found in Lucien Lévy-Bruhl’s (1857-1939) account of Comte’s philosophy (Lévy-Bruhl 1900, e.g. 53–54, 139) and in a 1902 debate at the Société française de philosophie between Émile Boutroux (1845-1921) and Lévy-Bruhl on “Comte et la métaphysique” (Boutroux and Lévy-Bruhl 1903). The decisive correspondence between Comte and d’Eichthal was later republished in the reference edition of Comte’s correspondence (Comte 1973). In the German-speaking world, an early echo to Littré’s publication of the links between Comte and Kant is Austrian philosopher Robert Zimmermann’s (1824-1898) 1874 *Kant und die positive Philosophie* (Zimmermann 1874).

¹²⁰ Comte’s famous statement went as follows: “Je n’ai jamais lu, en aucune langue, ni Vico, ni Kant, ni Herder, ni Hegel, etc.; je ne connais leurs divers ouvrages que d’après quelques relations indirectes et certains extraits

especially by the “orthodox”¹²¹ positivists embracing Comte’s “religion of humanity”.¹²² Historian and biographer of Comte Mary Pickering, however, has shown that this statement was inaccurate or, at least, highly misleading (Pickering 1989; 1993, 275–301). Drawing on Comte’s archives and papers Pickering demonstrated that Comte came in touch with extracts of Kant’s work in 1824 through the translations of his pupil and friend Gustave d’Eichthal (1804-1886).¹²³ Subsequently, Comte referred occasionally to selected aspects of Kant’s philosophy, and mostly positively. He ended up considering Kant as one of his major intellectual predecessors and dedicated even a day to his memory in his Positivist Calendar (Pickering 1993, 296).

There is little doubt that Comte’s reading of Kant remained limited, fragmentary and idiosyncratic. It was guided mostly by Comte’s interest in finding new intellectual references and potential predecessors after his break with Saint-Simon in 1824 (Pickering 1989, 461–62). Nevertheless, the episode with d’Eichthal and Comte’s subsequent references to Kant are important, especially in the light of the later opposition between “criticism” and “positivism”. Comte’s reception was mediated in important respects by d’Eichthal who travelled Germany in 1824, advertising Comte’s work and sending him self-fabricated translations of German philosophers such as Kant, Herder and Hegel. It took place against the previous reception of Kant by French *idéologues* such as Antoine Destutt de Tracy (1754-1836) (Destutt de Tracy [1798–1802] 1992; Heilbron [1990] 1995, 177–78) or Joseph Marie Degérando (1772-1842), but also, in the

fort insuffisants.” (Comte [1839–1842] 1975, 479, n.) It is to be found in Comte’s 1842 “Préface personnelle” to the sixth and last volume of the *Cours*. The statement appears in the context of Comte’s explanation of his infamous “hygiène cérébrale”, i.e. his self-restriction in reading the work of other people. The reference to Kant and others appeared in a footnote where he explained that this “hygiène cérébrale” had extended even to authors relevant for sociology. It thus implies an acknowledgment of Kant’s relevance for sociology. Nevertheless, the effects of this statement were deleterious: “As a result, biographers of Comte have always relied on his own statement in the *Cours* that he had never read the works of Herder, Kant, or Hegel ‘in any language’, and they dismissed the possible impact of German philosophy on his development.” (Pickering 1993, 278)

¹²¹ For the distinction between “orthodox” and “heterodox” positivists, see Heilbron 2009. Earlier, Walter M. Simon had already opposed the “orthodox positivists” around Laffitte to the “scientific positivists” around Littré (Simon 1963a, chap. 2).

¹²² Laffitte acknowledged Comte’s reading of Kant’s “Idee zu einer allgemeinen Geschichte” but downplayed its impact: “Outre qu’Auguste Comte n’a connu ce travail qu’en 1824, les écrits de Condorcet, de Montesquieu et des Économistes lui ont fourni, en réalité, et, au fond, d’une manière supérieure, le point de départ de ses admirables découvertes, et, suivant la juste observation de Littré, il s’est même exagéré, d’après une première impression, la valeur de cet opuscule de Kant. [Paragraph] Je n’insisterai pas davantage, mon but n’étant pas d’apprécier ici l’évolution philosophique de l’Allemagne, mais seulement d’indiquer comment son plus éminent représentant préparait, *plus tard et moins nettement* que l’évolution franco-anglaise, l’avènement de la sociologie et de la philosophie positive. [Paragraph] Auguste Comte, lorsqu’il a accompli sa grande fondation, n’avait donc aucune connaissance de l’évolution philosophique allemande.” (Laffitte 1882, 227) In general, Laffitte had a low opinion of German philosophy. He regarded it as a “mouvement avorté” that might as well be scratched from history and distracted from Comte’s accomplishments (Laffitte 1882, 224).

¹²³ In the 1980s, Pickering rediscovered in the archives of the Maison d’Auguste Comte the translations of Herder, Kant and Hegel that d’Eichthal had sent to Comte (Pickering 1989, 444; 1993, 278–79). It is her merit to have corrected the established view of an absence of relations between Comte and German-speaking philosophy. My account is mainly based on her comprehensive work on the topic.

opposite “spiritualist” camp, by Pierre Maine de Biran (1766-1824) and Victor Cousin (1792-1867) (Azouvi and Bourel 1991; Fedi 2018; Braverman 2015; 2020).

Comte’s reception of Kant had several notable features: (1) On the suggestions of d’Eichthal, Comte interpreted Kant in a “relativist” way since Kant related systematically the “objective” to the “subjective” – and thus anticipated in an important way the anti-absolutism of “positive philosophy” (Comte [1839–1842] 1975, 727). (2) Comte understood Kant basically as a “phenomenalist”, thus suppressing the problem of the relation between phenomena and the “thing-in-itself” as “metaphysical” (Pickering 1993, 293). (3) Comte thought that he could elaborate and complete Kant’s distinction between “subjective” and “objective” by explaining it in terms of the biological theory of the relationship between “organism” and “milieu” as well as in terms of a sociological theory of collective intellectual development – the law of the three states (Comte [1839–1842] 1975, 728; Pickering 1993, 294–95). Comte thus proposed a relativization, dynamization and a sociologization of the domain that Kant had circumscribed with the words “*a priori*” or “transcendental”. We encounter here, we could argue, the first historical version of a genuine sociologization of the *a priori* – bearing in mind, of course, Comte’s peculiar notions of “*a priori*” and “sociology”.

Against this background, we should try to understand better the tensions between the Kantian and the Comtean systems of classifying knowledge and the sciences. Contrary to a commonplace picture in the later reception of “positivism”, especially in Germany, we could try to show that Comte’s classification with its sociologization of the *a priori* was not an empiricist “regression” into a “pre-critical” stance compared to Kant’s classification – a “barbarism” involving a fundamental “category mistake” between the empirical and the transcendental level. Instead, building both on a peculiar tradition of “French empiricism”, especially the work of the *idéologues* (Braverman 2015; Comte [1830–1835] 1998, 855), and a peculiar tradition of French “rationalism” (Cassirer [1950] 1995, 17), Comte tried to incorporate some of the insights of Kant’s transcendental philosophy – as far as they were known to him – and to complete the latter’s work with his own means, among which “sociology”. Most importantly, Comte did so in a way that sought to account for the increased differentiation of the sciences around 1800, including chemistry, physiology, medical science and biology. In this respect, Comte’s historical theory of science and knowledge (Heilbron 1990) and his sociology is far from representing a “regression”. If anything, it was Kantian transcendental philosophy with its neat distinctions between *a priori* and *a posteriori*, between transcendental and empirical, that, in the course of the 19th century, was increasingly becoming a sort of “survival” (Tylor 1871) from an earlier historical stage of science.

Again, along these lines an investigation could show that the emergence of the problem of the sociologization of the *a priori* was connected to more general transformations in the academic and scientific fields in the early 19th century – first and foremost the self-conscious conception of a new scientific discipline called “sociology” linked to the “Second Scientific Revolution” – as well as to patterns of transnational exchange between Germany and France. From the 1840s onwards, the problem of the sociologization of the *a priori* was not only conceivable, but had found its first model in Comte’s sociology and his historical theory of science and knowledge. Through their pervasive impact (Cassirer [1950] 1995, 14), Kant and Comte set the constitutive tension that made up the problem of the sociologization of the *a priori* and that should be played out between “criticism” and “positivism” throughout the 19th century.

5. Conclusion: Setting the terms of the problem

In this chapter, we have sought to make a first step towards clarifying both the basic intellectual structure of the problem of sociologizing the *a priori* and towards identifying some crucial social conditions – should we say “social conditions of possibility”? – under which this problem could emerge. We can retain the following results from this preliminary investigation.

First, methodologically speaking, the problem of sociologizing the *a priori* can be fruitfully reconstructed as a conflict between two different classifications of knowledge and science, epitomized by Kant’s transcendental philosophy and by Comte’s positive philosophy. This perspective enabled us to connect this problem – which, at first, might seem purely intellectual – to concrete socio-historical processes, namely the reforms of higher education in France and in German-speaking lands around 1800. As Kant’s conception of philosophy with its emphasis on the *a priori* in its transcendental function appeared in the context of the German university reform, Comte’s notion of sociology with its role in reorganizing the sciences can be seen as a response to the disciplinarization of the sciences which, in the first half of the 19th century, was particularly advanced in France. Of course, the point remains to be demonstrated in detail for both Kant and Comte.

Second, after having discarded some “memorial obstacles” impeding a sociological account of Kant’s work, it became clear that we should try to retrace connections between three different levels: Kant’s new transcendental style of philosophy and the autonomy it granted to the science investigating the conditions of possibility of knowledge and other forms of objectivity, especially via the new argumentative form of transcendental arguments; his classification of the sciences in his “architectonics” and the prominent role it allotted to philosophy as the classifying authority; and his theory of the institutional function of philosophy within the university and within society as a whole which granted to philosophy not only some form of “relative

autonomy”, but also legislative power over other domains of knowledge. Although Kant developed with his “pragmatic anthropology” a complex project in the then ill-defined field of the “sciences of man”, the place he attributed to this discipline in his system made something like a historically and socially variable *a priori* impossible, at least in the “constitutive” sense. This view corresponded to a historical situation in which philosophy emerged as an autonomous academic discipline.

Third, the context in which Comte developed his project of positive philosophy and sociology was markedly different. Comte’s account of the sciences emerged under the conditions of the French reform of the system of higher education. The idea of organizing the sciences had a more immediately political dimension. “Social physics” was as much a solution to political as to intellectual anarchy. In search for new references after his break with Saint-Simon, Comte discovered in Kant a useful and illustrious predecessor and drew both on the latter’s philosophy of history and on his epistemology. Through a phenomenalist, relativistic and sociological reading of Kant, Comte arrived at an early form of sociologizing the *a priori*. The subjective element of intellectual organization varied historically with the evolution of humanity which, as Comte thought, followed his “law of the three states”. The science that established not only the law of this evolution, but also the “encyclopaedic law” organizing the sciences was sociology – not philosophy. Importantly, rather than a “pre-critical” regression behind Kant, Comte’s sociologization of the *a priori* was the active attempt to integrate and adapt some of Kant’s findings with recent developments in the sciences.

Fourth and finally, Kant and Comte became from the 1850s onwards symbols of two opposed views which we can call “criticism” and “positivism” – used here in the sense of ideal-types. The tension between these two orientations should nourish debates on various forms of “naturalizing” the *a priori* in the second half of the 19th century. It is at the intersection of criticist and positivist lineages – in the intermediate area of “criticist positivism” and “positivist criticism” in both France and German-speaking countries – that should emerge later attempts to sociologize the *a priori*.

CHAPTER 5. 27 FEBRUARY 1929, 17H15, 2 RUE DE MONTPENSIER: ROBERT BOUVIER'S LONG HISTORY OF THE *A PRIORI* AT THE CENTRE INTERNATIONAL DE SYNTHÈSE

[T]he woof and warp of all thought and all research is symbols, and the life of thought and science is the life inherent in symbols; so that it is wrong to say that a good language is *important* to good thought, merely; for it is of the essence of it. (Peirce [1903] 1998, 263)

Faire l'histoire d'un mot, ce n'est jamais perdre sa peine. Bref ou long, monotone ou varié, le voyage est toujours instructif. (Febvre 1930, 1; cp. Merton 2004, 230)

1. Introduction: A collective clarification of “*a priori*” in the social and human sciences 27 February 1929, 17h15, 2 rue de Montpensier

In the late afternoon of Wednesday, February 27, 1929,¹ a handful of scholars of different disciplines and nationalities met in the Palais-Royal in Paris, at 2 rue de Montpensier in the locations of the Institut international de coopération intellectuelle (IICI, 1925-1946), an organization of the League of Nations founded in 1925 with the aim of enhancing international cooperation in culture and intellectual life and securing peace after the First World War – in fact, the predecessor organization of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).² These men gathered as members of the Centre international de Synthèse (CIS), a scholarly institution founded in 1925 by philosopher, historian and

¹ This title is partly inspired by Peter Schöttler's article “13, rue du Four – Die ‘Encyclopédie française’ als Mittlerin französischer Wissenschaft in den 1930er Jahren” (Schöttler 2005). As far as I see, Schöttler was the first to draw attention to Robert Bouvier and his role as a mediator between the “Berr galaxy” and the Vienna Circle (Schöttler 2006; 2015b; 2015a; 2016; see also Nemeth 2007). I am grateful to Peter Schöttler for sharing with me some of his articles, exchanging on sources on Bouvier, indicating me an important biographical-autobiographical text by Bouvier (Bouvier 1964) and receiving me for a discussion in Berlin. I myself discovered Bouvier's article on “*a priori*” and “*a posteriori*” by pure “serendipity” (Merton [1948] 1968; Merton and Barber 2004) while searching for Lucien Febvre's entry “Génération” in the *Bulletin du Centre international de Synthèse* (Febvre 1929). Bouvier quickly came to represent for me the historical “missing link” between two different intellectual traditions that were part of my own academic socialization in Vienna and Paris and that my two supervisors, Elisabeth Nemeth and Éric Brian, were respectively involved in. I thank both for their help with the present chapter: Éric Brian for supporting my demand of access to the Fonds Henri Berr at the Institut Mémoires de l'édition contemporaine (IMEC); and Elisabeth Nemeth for sending me a copy of the correspondence between Bouvier and Otto Neurath at the Institute Vienna Circle (IVC), Vienna. Furthermore, I thank the participants of the doctoral seminar of Elisabeth Nemeth and Friedrich Stadler in the winter term 2022, where I presented a first draft of this text, especially Bastian Stoppelkamp, Henriikka Hannula and Ivan Ferreira da Cunha.

² On the history of the IICI, see Renoliet 1992; 1999; Grandjean 2018; Riondet 2020. The archives of the IICI are part of the UNESCO archives and can be freely accessed on their web page: <https://atom.archives.unesco.org/iicic> (accessed 27/02/2023).

intellectual entrepreneur Henri Berr (1863-1954) and playing a central role in the French social and human sciences in the interwar period.³ More precisely, they were associates of one of the Centre's sections, the section entitled "Synthèse historique", and met in order to discuss entries for the section's project of a historical dictionary, the so-called *Vocabulaire historique*. This dictionary aimed at clarifying and unifying the terminology used in the historical and social sciences.

On that afternoon in February 1929, they were to discuss an article project on the notions "*a priori*" and "*a posteriori*" by Swiss philosopher Robert Bouvier (1886–1978). In his short text, submitted in advance and read at the meeting, Bouvier set out something like a "long history" of the word and concept of "*a priori*"⁴ in philosophy, the natural sciences and history. This proposal was then discussed among the members of the CIS present at the meeting and the minutes of the discussion were published in the Centre's *Bulletin* in June 1929 (Bouvier 1929a; Bouvier et al. 1929).

Bouvier's text as well as the ensuing debate among members of the CIS indicate how the notion of "*a priori*" had transformed in the course of the 19th century in reaction to developments in the natural sciences, philosophy and history, how it had become problematic and how it stood hitherto in need of collective clarification. The episode shows how the whole issue was perceived from the peculiar point of view of the Centre's scholars who sought to promote a specific interdisciplinary vision of the "unity" or "unification" of the natural, social, historical and human sciences. This vision should also bring them into contact with the project for a "unified science" fostered at around the same time by members of the so-called "Vienna Circle" – with Bouvier himself acting in the second half of the 1930s as the main intermediary between the two intellectual universes and the *Revue de Synthèse* being one of the chief platforms for the import of the so-called "*École de Vienne*" in France (Schöttler 2015b).

The documents concerning Bouvier's article project enable us to retrace the work of collective reflection and clarification of "*a priori*" among this group of scholars and observe it *in actu*. They are a precious source for a problem history of the sociologization of the *a priori* (see

³ At the time, the CIS still held its meetings in the wing of the Palais-Royal attributed in 1925 to the IICI (Grandjean 2018, 359). On the relationship between the CIS and the IICI – passing through its director Julien Luchaire (1876-1962), its deputy chief Robert Eisler (1882-1949, see below), its secretary André D. Tolédano (1888-1972, he was simultaneously the general secretary of the CIS) as well as Jean Rudolf von Salis (1901-1996, see below) –, see Gemelli 1987, 246–49; Schöttler 2006, 105–6. On May 22, 1929 the CIS celebrated its move to the Hôtel de Nevers at 12 rue de Colbert, the place where the *encyclopédistes* around Diderot and d'Alembert had met in the 18th century (Gemelli 1997, 280).

⁴ According to the typographical conventions explained in the Introduction, when referring to the word, notion and concept "*a priori*" taken as an object, I use quotation marks, e.g. "the notion '*a priori*'". When referring to the meaning – however vague – picked out by the word, notion, concept, I use italics, e.g. "the *a priori*". In all cases, I use italics, as with all other non-English words (e.g. *Volksgeist*, *mentalité*). Meanwhile, when I cite from sources, I keep the original – often inconsistent – typography.

Chapter 2). Moreover, the Centre international de Synthèse is certainly one of the nodal points through which Durkheimian sociology of knowledge with its programme for an empirical sociological enquiry into the *a priori* passed into French-speaking history and history and philosophy of science. It – and indeed the whole “Berr galaxy” – can thus be conceived as a “strategic research site” (Merton 1987) for studying the reception and diffusion of Durkheimian sociology of knowledge in the French human and social sciences. Also, it allows to take into account the specific internationalist context in the second half of the 1920s with the so-called “Locarno Era” (Jacobson 1972; Bock 1991; 2014).

The plan

To reconstruct the episode, I shall first characterize its immediate context: Henri Berr’s network of institutions, his intellectual project of “synthesis” and especially the enterprise of the *Vocabulaire historique*. In the subsequent part, I will turn to the author of the article project, Robert Bouvier, and examine his career and his role as a mediator between France and the German-speaking world, especially regarding the philosophy of Austrian physicist and historian of science Ernst Mach (1838-1916) and, later, the Vienna Circle. The fourth section examines in detail Bouvier’s article project and the discussion at the Centre international de Synthèse, including complementary documents from the Fonds Henri Berr (IMEC). I shall carve out here the peculiarity of Bouvier’s long history of the *a priori* against the background of contemporary terminological accounts of “*a priori*” in other reference works – hoping to establish thus something like a “CIS account of the *a priori*”.

The fifth part, finally, explores the question of how this terminological approach to “*a priori*” in the historical sciences was related to the problem of the sociologization of the *a priori*. I show that, while Durkheimian sociology of knowledge did not play an explicit role in the debates at the Centre international de Synthèse, it lurked large in the background, with Berr himself engaging in a critical debate with the Durkheimians over some fifty years (Berr 1904; 1906; 1911; 1953a). I shall also address here the discussions at the Centre in the 1930s on philosopher and historian of science Hélène Metzger’s (1889-1944) account of the *a priori* in science and the historiography of science. Lastly, I provide some indications on how, through the activities of the Centre international de Synthèse, some basic ideas of French sociology of knowledge, especially of the Durkheimian and Lévy-Bruhl type, were translated into the domains of general history and of the history and philosophy of science. I shall conclude that the approach discussed at the Centre international de Synthèse is not only useful as a historical document, but that it can still serve, at least in some respects, as a guide for writing today an interdisciplinary long history of the *a priori* with the aim of illuminating present-day use.

2. Henri Berr's "galaxy" and the *Vocabulaire historique*

Berr as a scientific entrepreneur

To understand Bouvier's account of "*a priori*" and the following discussion properly, we must locate it first within the network of agents, institutions and intellectual projects of which it was a part. This network was for the most part a creation of aforementioned Henri Berr.⁵ Coming from the small town of Lunéville in Lorraine from a family of glove producers, Berr studied from 1881 on philosophy and *lettres* at the École normale supérieure (ENS) in Paris, among others with Kantian spiritualist philosopher Émile Boutroux (1845-1921).⁶ After having obtained his *agrégation* in *lettres*⁷ in 1884, Berr taught for some years in secondary schools in small French towns (Tours, Douai). In 1899, he defended his *thèse d'État* under the title *La Synthèse des connaissances et l'histoire. Essai sur l'avenir de la philosophie* (Berr 1899).⁸ This title announced already Berr's *idée fixe* of "synthesis" – first in history, then in all sciences – that should feature in most of his later enterprises (Castelli Gattinara 1996). His 1911 major work *La Synthèse en histoire. Essai critique et théorique* (Berr 1911; [1911] 1953) set a programme that should last for the rest of his career.⁹ However, Berr did not enter higher education after his *thèse* (roughly the equivalent of German *Habilitation*). Apart from two failed bids for the Collège de France in 1903/1904 (against Gabriel Monod) and 1911/1912 (Gemelli 1987, 229–31), he remained professor at the *lycée* for some 40 years, of which he spent 29 years as a professor of rhetoric at the prestigious Parisian Lycée Henri-IV.¹⁰

⁵ For overviews on Berr and his various projects, see Biard, Bourel, and Brian 1997; Castelli Gattinara 1998; Leroux 1998; [1998] 2018; Chimisso 2008, esp. chapters 4 and 5.

⁶ Boutroux is sometimes presented as Berr's "maître" (Revel 1996b, 168; Neri 1996, 205–6). Boutroux – especially in his influential thesis on *De la contingence des lois de la nature* (Boutroux 1874) – was one of the first to introduce Auguste Comte's (1798-1857) *philosophie positive*, especially his classification of the sciences, in the field of academic philosophy all while taking a critical stance on determinism and maintaining the "relative autonomy" (Boutroux's expression) of philosophy vis-à-vis the sciences (e.g. Boutroux 1900b). For an illustration of the central position of Boutroux in the French philosophical field, see the network of French philosophers depicted in Collins 1998, 759. (I thank Johan Heilbron for this hint.) Boutroux also contributed the opening article to the very first issue of the *Revue de Synthèse historique* in 1900 (Boutroux 1900a).

⁷ This is an important aspect of Berr's unusual trajectory. He was *agrégé* neither in history nor in philosophy, but in *lettres*, teaching later accordingly as a professor of rhetoric. Lucien Febvre, in his obituary of Berr (Febvre 1955a), emphasized this point: "[C]et homme n'était, ni d'origine ni de formation, un historien. Agrégé de lettres, il fut, pendant toute sa vie universitaire, professeur de rhétorique [...]. Seulement, en marge, il avait deux passions dévoratrices: l'histoire et la philosophie." (Febvre 1955a, 2)

⁸ Berr's *jury de thèse* consisted of classical philologist Alfred Croiset (1845-1923), already mentioned Kantian spiritualist philosopher Émile Boutroux, philosopher and educator Ferdinand Buisson (1841-1932), broadly Kantian philosopher Gabriel Séailles (1852-1932) (Benrubi 1933, 674–80), philosopher and psychologist Victor Egger (1848-1909) and sociologist and philosopher Alfred Espinas (1844-1922) (Prochasson 1996, 68). For an account of Berr's *soutenance de thèse*, see 'Thèses de doctorat' 1899; Brian forthcoming.

⁹ Berr re-edited *La Synthèse en histoire* in 1953, emphasizing that he did not find it necessary to change anything in the space of forty years (Berr 1953b, V–VI).

¹⁰ Being a professor in secondary education, especially in a prestigious Parisian *lycée*, did not necessarily indicate a marginal position. In some cases it could even be more prestigious than being a full university professor somewhere "in the Province" (Gemelli 1987, 228; see also Fabiani 1988). The most famous case here is Henri

From 1900 on, Berr was above all a tireless scientific organizer and entrepreneur.¹¹ He created over the years an institutional infrastructure that commentators have sometimes called the “Berr galaxy” (Bourel 1996, 16; Schöttler 2015b, 216). This galaxy had various components, most of which, remarkably, continue to exist until this day.¹² Its centrepiece was, first of all, Berr’s scholarly journal, the *Revue de Synthèse historique*, founded in 1900 and renamed in 1931 *Revue de Synthèse* (Fugler 1996; Brian 2010; Forthcoming). After the success of this first project, there was, second, the encyclopaedic book series aiming at a “universal history” called “L’Évolution de l’humanité” (Pluet-Despatin 1996) which Berr started planning with his network of collaborators in the early 1910s and which published its first volume – due to the intervening First World War – in 1920 (Perrier 1920; Berr [1913] 1920b; [1913] 1920a). Some 50 more volumes should follow until Berr’s death in 1954, several of which, written by eminent historians, philosophers, sociologists and scientists, became classics in their field and references in French post-war social and human sciences, such as Lucien Febvre’s *Le problème de l’incroyance au XVI^e siècle. La religion de Rabelais* (Febvre [1942] 2003).¹³ Third, Berr founded in 1925 his own research institute, the above mentioned Centre international de Synthèse (Gemelli 1987), which bundled existing projects and became the starting point for still further activities. One of them was, fourth, the series of international conferences called Semaines internationales de Synthèse. They started in 1929 with a conference on the two topics of “L’évolution en biologie” and “Civilisation – le mot et l’idée” (Berr and Centre international de Synthèse 1930) and assembled over the years a remarkable number of outstanding scientists, social scientists, historians and philosophers (Neri 1996; Bensaude-Vincent 1996). This conference series, in turn, resulted in some 20 volumes of proceedings in Berr’s lifetime.¹⁴

Bergson (1859-1941) who – *normalien* as Berr – entered the Collège de France after teaching for some twenty years in secondary education, also at the Lycée Henri-IV.

¹¹ For some recent literature on the role of the scientific entrepreneur, see Stöckel 2022; see also the review essay C. Fleck 2022.

¹² The *Revue de Synthèse* was directed until recently by French historian and sociologist of science Éric Brian (1958-2025) and is published by Brill, see <https://brill.com/view/journals/rds/rds-overview.xml?language=en> (accessed on 03/01/2023). For an overview of the first 110 years of the *Revue*, see Brian 2010.

¹³ Other prominent examples from the series are historian Marc Bloch’s *La Société féodale* (Bloch 1939b; 1940) philosopher Abel Rey’s monumental *La Science dans l’antiquité* (Rey 1930-1948), historian of philosophy Émile Bréhier’s *Philosophie du Moyen Âge* (Bréhier 1937), sociologist Henri Hubert’s (1872-1927) posthumous works on Celts and Germanic peoples (Hubert 1932; 1952), sociologist Marcel Granet’s works on Chinese civilisation and thought (Granet 1929; [1934] 1999) and historian and sociologist Louis Gernet’s work on Greek religion (Gernet and Boulanger 1932). For the complete catalogue of the book series, which continues to be published until today, see the catalogue of the Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF): <https://catalogue.bnf.fr/rechercher.do?index=TOUS3&numNotice=34232649&typeNotice=C> (accessed on 30/01/2023).

¹⁴ For the 31 proceedings (1929-1975) of the Semaines internationales de Synthèse, see the catalogue of the BnF: <https://catalogue.bnf.fr/rechercher.do?index=TOUS3&numNotice=41949683&typeNotice=S> (accessed on 30/01/2023).

In addition to these successful enterprises, Berr started still other projects that eventually failed, at least in part. This is the case of the project that interests us here most, the *Vocabulaire historique*, pursued by the Centre's section "Synthèse historique" roughly between 1925 and 1945 and definitely abandoned in 1954 (Platania 1996; 2000b). It also concerned Berr's project for an encyclopaedia published in fascicules entitled *Science. L'Encyclopédie annuelle* (1936-1938). This enterprise led, in particular, to some conflicts between Berr and his long-time collaborator, historian Lucien Febvre (1878-1956), who had become in the meantime the director of the *Encyclopédie française* (1935-1966) (Gemelli 1987, 252–58; Schöttler 2005, 192–93).

Berr's network was also well-connected with other innovative intellectual enterprises and groups at the time. From the beginning of the *Revue de Synthèse historique* on, there were links with the group around sociologist Émile Durkheim's (1858-1917) *L'Année sociologique* (Prochasson 1996, 70–74). Then, most prominently, the *Annales d'histoire économique et sociale*, founded by Febvre and Marc Bloch (1886-1944) in 1929, were to a large extent an outgrowth of the *Revue de Synthèse historique* and the CIS (Febvre 1952; 1997; Müller 1996; 2003). Moreover, there were connections with the network of the already mentioned *Encyclopédie française* (Schöttler 2005), but also with philosopher and historian of science Abel Rey's (1873-1940) Institut d'histoire et de philosophie des sciences et des techniques (IHPST, founded in 1932) (Schöttler 2005; Braunstein [2006] 2015) as well as with early journals in the history and philosophy of science, such as Aldo Mieli's (1879-1950) *Archeion* (1919), George Sarton's (1884-1956) *Isis* (1913) and, later, the *Revue d'histoire des sciences et de leurs applications* (since 1947) (Berr 1947; Chimisso 2008, 100–107; Fauque 2022).

Berr's project of "synthesis"

These different projects were held together – apart from Berr's apparently engaging personality¹⁵ – by the ecumenical idea of "synthesis". Although not all of Berr's collaborators subscribed to it and the idea finally did not catch on (at least not under this label), it certainly allowed for bringing together scholars from different disciplines and nationalities that otherwise would not have met and collaborated. To understand this idea – which might be retraced to Berr's *thèse secondaire* on French philosopher and scientist Pierre Gassendi (1592-1655) (Brian forthcoming) –, it is useful to look at the positioning of the *Revue de Synthèse historique* and its initial programme in 1900 (Berr 1900; 1910). What Berr called "Synthèse historique" (he insisted on the majuscule) was at first primarily a historiographic project, i.e. a project

¹⁵ For some testimonies by his collaborators on Berr's personality, see issue 85 of the *Revue de Synthèse* on the centenary of Berr's birthday (Bedel et al. 1964) as well as Febvre 1952.

concerning the logic and methodology of history. It attempted to define a middle ground between two extremes that had their respective advocates in the field of academic history in France at the time.¹⁶

The first pole was represented by the *Revue historique*, founded in 1876 by historians Gabriel Monod (1844-1912) and Gustave Fagniez (1842-1927), as well as by Charles Seignobos (1854-1942) and Charles-Victor Langlois (1863-1929) – protagonists of what came to be called the “École méthodique” for its preoccupation with sound historical method, often with the added polemical qualification “positivistic” (Bourdé [1983] 1997).¹⁷ This approach had its precursors and references in historians such as Ernest Renan (1823-1892), Hippolyte Taine (1828-1893) and Numa Denis Fustel de Coulanges (1830-1889), but also in German historian Leopold von Ranke (1795-1886).¹⁸ It focussed on the methodical establishment of historical facts from first-hand – mostly written – sources and their critique. It tended towards maximal erudition concerning historical details, focussed on historical individuals and political history and followed – if it generalized at all – primarily inductive procedures that came only after the exhaustive establishment of facts (Langlois and Seignobos 1898). It is this attitude that Berr called “érudition” (learnedness) (Berr 1911, 1–3) and attributed polemically to the “historiens historisants” – an expression used also by sociologist and economist François Simiand (1873-1935) (Simiand 1903, 3) and popularized later by Febvre (Febvre 1948).¹⁹ Against this position Berr argued that the methodical establishment of facts must not be fetishized and become an aim in itself. The genuine aim of science was not to attain the particular but the general: “Il n’y a de science, selon la vieille formule, que du général.” (Berr 1900, 7)

The second – and older – pole was a tendency described at the time as “philosophy of history”. It was associated with diverse and internally opposed positions such as, on the one hand,

¹⁶ The two poles had, moreover, an institutional dimension, symbolized by two distinctive styles of history as practiced at the two Parisian elite schools, the École nationale des chartes (history based on first-hand archives and documents) and the École normale supérieure (narrative history). For the context of these historiographical debates in France, see also Ringer 1992, 265–82, especially 276–78.

¹⁷ For the main methodological statements of this group, see Monod 1876; Langlois and Seignobos 1898. Monod said of the *Revue historique*: “Nous voudrions contribuer à former par l’exemple d’une bonne méthode les jeunes gens qui veulent entrer dans la carrière historique, encourager et maintenir dans la bonne voie ceux qui y marchent déjà, servir à tous de centre de ralliement et d’information.” (Monod 1876, 35) On the problems with the qualification of this approach as “positivistic”, see Carbonell 1978; Ringer 1992, 265–82. For the context of “scientific history”, see Leroux [1998] 2018, chapter 2.

¹⁸ According to Boutroux, one of Fustel’s sayings went: “Il faut toute une vie d’analyse pour une heure de synthèse.” (Boutroux 1900a, 9)

¹⁹ The conflict between “traditional history” and the new social scientific history inspired by sociology came clearly to the fore in the *Revue de Synthèse historique* in a famous controversy between Simiand (Simiand 1903) and Charles Seignobos (Seignobos 1901). On this debate and the peculiar position of Simiand, see Ringer 1992, 265–82; Revel 2007; Leroux [1998] 2018, 119–35.

philosophies of history stemming from German idealism²⁰ and, on the other hand, versions of positivistic philosophy of history, prototypically Auguste Comte's (1798-1857) law of the three stages²¹. "Philosophy of history" thus designated an ensemble of approaches to human history that started from *a priori* principles, far-reaching generalisations or supposed general historical tendencies (such as "progress") and then built "systems" via deduction from these general principles. This approach to history had already been the target of the "École méthodique" since the 1870s.²² Berr saw this reaction as important and necessary. He argued that the philosophy of history was mistaken when trying to reach generalities via non-empirical, speculative *a priori* procedures (Berr 1899, 418). But contrary to the historians of the "École méthodique", he thought that philosophy of history's search for generalities was legitimate. It hence became Berr's task to distinguish his project of scientific "historical synthesis" – the search for generalities in history based on methodically established empirical facts – from speculative philosophy of history.²³

Although Berr was closer to the likes of Monod and Langlois than to older philosophy of history, his strategy consisted in refusing both these extremes. They epitomized for him the excesses of "analysis" and "synthesis". Against the one-sided emphasis on one of these two procedures, he insisted on the fact that analysis and synthesis were logically intertwined:

²⁰ Berr's prototype for this type of *a priori* philosophy of history was Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762-1814). Berr cited at various places (Berr 1899, 46, 418; 1911, 22) a statement of Fichte's from his *Die Grundzüge des gegenwärtigen Zeitalters*: "Der Philosoph, der als Philosoph sich mit der Geschichte befasst, geht jenem *a priori* fortlaufenden Faden des Weltplanes nach, der ihm klar ist ohne alle Geschichte; und sein Gebrauch der Geschichte ist keinesweges, um durch sie etwas zu erweisen, da seine Sätze schon früher und unabhängig von aller Geschichte erwiesen sind: sondern dieser sein Gebrauch der Geschichte ist nur erläuternd, und in der Geschichte darlegend im lebendigen Leben, was auch ohne die Geschichte sich versteht." (Fichte [1804-1805] 1846, 138-39) Berr commented: "Voilà, poussée à l'absurde, la philosophie de l'histoire: elle se passe de l'analyse ou elle la domine." (Berr 1911, 22) As we shall see, also Bouvier referred to this statement of Fichte's in his account of the use of "*a priori*" in history (Bouvier 1929a, 27).

²¹ Berr saw in Comte's sociology primarily another form of "philosophy of history": "La sociologie d'Auguste Comte ne s'est guère trouvée être qu'une histoire, à grands traits et à loi générale, de l'humanité, où le fait de la sociabilité et son importance apparaissent en relief: c'était, en somme, une tentative pour renouveler la philosophie de l'histoire sous un nom différent, avec un aspect plus scientifique." (Berr 1899, 424)

²² See, for example, Monod's refusal of "*a priori* systems" in his opening article for the *Revue historique* (Monod 1876, 33), cited in Berr's opening article for the *Revue de Synthèse historique* (Berr 1900, 3), and Langlois and Seignobos's assurance that their methodological treaty will exclude "philosophie de l'histoire" (Langlois and Seignobos 1898, V-VI). In the same sense, Langlois and Seignobos had criticized the positivist conception of progress as metaphysical: "De la même conception optimiste d'une direction rationnelle du monde découle la théorie du progrès continu et nécessaire de l'humanité. Bien qu'adoptée par les positivistes, elle n'est qu'une hypothèse métaphysique." (Langlois and Seignobos 1898, 248-49) Berr adopted a similarly critical view of "progress" (Berr 1899, 418).

²³ "Que personne ne craigne un retour de la philosophie de l'histoire, c'est-à-dire – car le mot, en lui-même, n'a rien de mauvais – de l'*a priori*, de la métaphysique, des nuées en théorie et, par suite, des utopies en pratique. Il serait fâcheux de confondre avec les généralités issues de la fantaisie ou du raisonnement les généralisations fondées sur le savoir acquis. C'est de la science qu'on veut faire ici, de la science vraie, et de la science pleine. Nul n'entrera ici, pourrait-on dire, s'il n'est muni de la bonne méthode." (Berr 1900, 7-8)

analysis needed synthesis, synthesis needed analysis.²⁴ In the context of academic history in France in 1900, with the predominance of the “École méthodique”, this meant emphasizing the aspect of synthesis against the analytic tendencies of the historians of the *Revue historique*.²⁵ Berr’s position also implied a peculiar ambivalence regarding disciplinary specialization (“analysis”). On the one hand, he saw specialization and division of labour as necessary for scientific progress. On the other hand, specialized knowledge needed “unification” or “synthesis” in order to organize this division of labour (Berr 1900, 6, 7).

Importantly, Berr’s ideas took in this respect inspiration from sociology as promoted at the time by Émile Durkheim and the group around *L’Année sociologique* (1898).²⁶ In fact, Berr explained the recent success of the newly emerging domain of sociology precisely by the need for more general perspectives in history. Sociology, in a way, had continued the ambitions of the philosophy of history.²⁷ In the case of Durkheimian sociology, it tried to formulate, based in particular on the method of comparison, some of those empirically-grounded generalizations that Berr also aimed at with “historical synthesis”. Yet, Berr was not uncritical of Durkheimian sociology. He insisted on the importance of the role of individuality (particular individuals, whole peoples, epochs, institutions) and on the “history of ideas”, which should be studied rather in the framework of a “historical psychology” (Berr 1900, 3–5).²⁸ What Berr envisioned eventually was a close collaboration between history and sociology – but without a

²⁴ “Des pages profondes montreront ici que l’analyse et la synthèse sont logiquement inséparables. En fait, l’une ou l’autre domine. On généralise prématurément: de là des réactions d’analyse. On se perd dans l’analyse: de là des réactions de synthèse. Les retours de synthèse ont l’avantage de rappeler le savant à la conscience de son rôle. Si la science n’était que la satisfaction d’une curiosité de reportage rétrospectif, elle serait singulièrement vaine. Le collectionneur de faits n’est pas plus estimable que le collectionneur de timbres-poste ou de coquillages. La synthèse est utile, même moralement, en faisant concevoir la dignité de la science.” (Berr 1900, 7) For a similar view, see Boutroux 1900, 11–12.

²⁵ Berr himself offered this vision of the positioning of the *Revue de Synthèse historique* in a retrospective account: “Ce qu’on entendait par cette tâche, le voici. C’était, avant tout, réagir contre les abus d’analyse et de spécialisation qu’avaient entraînés en France, depuis les environs de 1870, la hantise des méthodes érudites et le culte de la philologie germanique. C’était éviter, cependant, le retour de la philosophie de l’histoire qui avait sévi jadis, surtout en Allemagne, et qui avait rendu la synthèse suspecte. Et c’était réaliser la synthèse scientifique, qui met à profit l’analyse, qui procède du particulier au général, mais qui tend résolument aux généralisations. Il fallait trouver ce point d’équilibre où les historiens allemands n’avaient pas su se tenir, balottés jusqu’ici des excès du philosophisme à ceux de l’érudition.” (Berr 1910, 2) Thus, curiously enough, both extremes described by Berr referred to German sources. This is obviously another chapter of the intellectual power relations between France and Germany at the time, described by Claude Digeon as “la crise allemande de la pensée française” (Digeon 1959).

²⁶ Prochasson spoke of “le rôle central des thèses durkheimiennes dans la dynamique intellectuelle de la revue lancée par Berr au début du siècle” (Prochasson 1996, 78).

²⁷ “Mais il semble que, pour bien des gens, la sociologie avait surtout le mérite de répondre au goût permanent des idées générales: elle réintroduisait de la philosophie dans l’histoire” (Berr 1900, 4).

²⁸ “Si légitime et si importante que soit la sociologie, épuise-t-elle toute l’histoire? Nous ne le croyons pas. Mais, quelles que soient nos convictions, on reconnaîtra qu’il y a là, tout au moins, un problème. La sociologie est l’étude de ce qui est social dans l’histoire: mais tout y est-il social? Le rôle des individus, le rôle des grandes individualités historiques, dont la sociologie comparative n’a pas à tenir compte, – si faible qu’on le suppose, – est-il absolument négligeable?” (Berr 1900, 4–5)

predominance of the latter. He conceived both disciplines as necessary “points of view” – the sociological point of view focussing on comparisons, the historical point of view on individualities – that should be reunited in the framework of “historical synthesis”.²⁹ This collaboration became – at least to some extent – a concrete reality with the already mentioned contributions of members of the network of *L'Année sociologique* to Berr's projects (Prochasson 1996, 70–74).³⁰ Durkheim himself, for example, pre-published in the *Revue de Synthèse* his important preface to the 1902 second edition of his *Règles de la méthode sociologique* (Durkheim 1901).

Through the idea of synthesis Berr promoted not only a form of “interdisciplinarity” *avant la lettre*³¹ under the heading of “interscience”.³² With its international pool of contributors the *Revue de Synthèse* also displayed a form of internationalism. Berr was especially committed to importing the German debate on methods among historians and social scientists (*Methodenstreit*) into France, including for example an article of German historian Karl Lamprecht (1856-1915) in the *Revue*'s first issue (Lamprecht 1900).³³ Indeed, the *Revue de Synthèse historique* succeeded in attracting in the first 25 years of its existence (until the creation of the CIS) several prominent contributors from different disciplines and nationalities such as the already mentioned Émile Boutroux, Émile Durkheim, François Simiand, Lucien Febvre, Marc Bloch and Karl Lamprecht, but also French historian Paul Lacombe (1834-1919), German philosophers Wilhelm Windelband (1848-1915) and Heinrich Rickert (1863-1936) (see also Leblanc 2023) and Italian philosophers Benedetto Croce (1866-1952) and Giovanni Gentile (1875-1944).

²⁹ “Et maintenant qui ne le voit? par la sociologie seule l'histoire s'éclaire et trouve sa raison d'être; mais par l'histoire seule la sociologie se vérifie et devient efficace. Ou plutôt, ni sociologie ni histoire ne sont des sciences véritables, des tous satisfaisants: ce ne sont que des *points de vue*. Ce sont les deux aspects complémentaires d'une science plénière, à la fois spéculative et pratique, rétrospective et idéale, qui doit remplacer, corriger, parfaire cette philosophie de l'histoire aujourd'hui condamnée. [Paragraph] *Synthèse historique*, – ainsi proposons-nous d'appeler la science plénière: anthropologie aurait convenu assez bien, si le mot n'avait pris un sens restreint et, par suite, n'était équivoque.” (Berr 1899, 431) Also: “Pour moi, la sociologie, bien loin d'être mise à part, doit être intégrée dans l'histoire scientifique, dans la synthèse.” (Berr 1921, 6–7)

³⁰ For Berr, Durkheimian sociology was indeed a sort of “family affair”: One of Berr's wife's brothers, Jacques Halphen (1880-1964) was married to Durkheim's daughter, Marie Belle Durkheim (1888-1953) (Gemelli 1987, 235). As the draft of a letter by Berr to Durkheim shows, Berr addressed himself to Durkheim using the familiar “*tu*” (Prochasson 1996, 65–66).

³¹ The anachronistic words “interdisciplinary” and “interdisciplinarity” must be used with caution, of course. For the history of the word and the concept “interdisciplinarity”, see recently Feuerhahn and Mandressi 2025.

³² Berr defined “interscience” as “l'étude des idées maîtresses des grandes disciplines, celle des diverses méthodes d'investigation et des grandes hypothèses” (Berr 1931b, 129).

³³ For Berr's life-long obsessive relationship with Germany, see Schöttler 1996.

The Centre international de Synthèse

Berr's already ambitious project of "synthesis" became even more comprehensive with the foundation of the Centre international de Synthèse in late 1925 (Gemelli 1987), created with the support of Berr's friend, politician and later *président de la République* Paul Doumer (1857-1932). The official goal of the Centre was "de développer et coordonner les recherches de science pure, de remédier ainsi à l'inconvénient des spécialisations trop étroites et des préoccupations exclusivement utilitaires" (Berr 1925a, 13). "Synthèse" now referred not only to history, but to all sciences – mathematical, physical, biological, historical, psychological and sociological. This is also the reason why the *Revue de Synthèse historique* now became simply the *Revue de Synthèse* (Schöttler 2005, 193). Berr's "synthesis" became a project for the "unification of all sciences" within a sort of encyclopaedic framework. The idea of a "unity" and "fundamental connection" of all sciences was for Berr no less than a "postulate" of the activities of the Centre.³⁴

The extension of Berr's programme is also reflected in the division of the Centre into four sections created over the following years (the director of the Centre as a whole was Berr with Febvre acting as the deputy director): the section "Synthèse historique", founded in 1926 and directed by Berr and Febvre; the section "Sciences de la nature"³⁵, founded in 1926, directed first by philosopher of science Abel Rey and then physicist Paul Langevin (1872-1946); the section "Histoire des sciences", founded in 1929 and directed by Italian historian of science Aldo Mieli; and the section "Synthèse générale", founded in 1931 and directed by Abel Rey. Thus, there was now a section on synthesis in the natural sciences while what was initially the whole project of the *Revue de Synthèse historique* – "synthesis in history" – became a subsection of the CIS, the section entitled "Synthèse historique" (Berr 1931a, 5).

When we look at the profiles of the members of Berr's network, we see indeed natural scientists, philosophers, historians and sociologists working together, or at least side by side. Berr's international network included – in different functions at the CIS or in one of its sections – such eminent figures as philosopher and sociologist Lucien Lévy-Bruhl (1857-1939), philosophers André Lalande (1867-1964), Léon Brunschvicg (1869-1944) and Gaston Bachelard

³⁴ "Y a-t-il unité foncière ou dualisme irréductible dans la Science? – A vrai dire, l'existence même de notre Centre est une réponse en acte – en acte de foi – à la question posée. Nous postulons l'unité. Tout notre effort tend à éprouver cette hypothèse, à la prouver peu à peu." (Berr 1931a, 6) And: "La liaison fondamentale des sciences de la nature (mathématique, physique, biologie) et des sciences de l'homme (histoire, psychologie, sociologie) est considérée ici comme un ressort essentiel pour l'exercice de la pensée. C'est à en dégager toute la puissance que nous voulons surtout nous appliquer, et c'est dire suffisamment que cette liaison constitue pour nous, plutôt qu'un problème, un postulat." (Berr 1931b, 129)

³⁵ The initial candidate for the title of this section was "Synthèse des Sciences de la nature". It was dismissed as being too long (Berr 1925b, 11, n. 1) but remained more precise.

(1884-1962), historians of science Hélène Metzger (1889-1944), Alexandre Koyré (1892-1964) and George Sarton (1884-1956), sociologists Marcel Mauss (1872-1950), Maurice Halbwachs (1877-1945) and Marcel Granet (1884-1940), eminent ethnologist James George Frazer (1854-1941), Dutch historian Johan Huizinga (1872-1945), German philosopher Ernst Cassirer (1874-1945) (see also Cassirer 1937) and physicists Albert Einstein (1879-1955), Ernest Rutherford (1871-1939) and Vito Volterra (1860-1940).³⁶

The Vocabulaire historique

One of the first tasks of the section “Synthèse historique” – the part of the Centre that continued Berr’s initial project – was the work on a so-called *Vocabulaire historique*, a dictionary of terms used in the historical sciences.³⁷ This project was indeed a sort of failed precursor of later efforts in Germany for a “historical semantics” of notions used in the historical and social sciences, most prominently Otto Brunner, Werner Conze and Reinhart Koselleck’s *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe* (Brunner, Conze, and Koselleck 1972-1997) – but on the basis of sensibly different philosophical and epistemological presuppositions (Schöttler 2017, 99, see below).³⁸ Until today, Berr’s extensive collective enterprise remains – apart from a few exceptions (Platania 1996; 2000b; Schöttler 2005, 193; 2006, 108; 2017, 97–99; Dufoix 2014, 29) – largely forgotten.³⁹

The aim of the *Vocabulaire historique* was, put in a nutshell, to establish a “unity of scientific conception” in history and the social sciences through a “unity of language” – “unifier, par le langage, la pensée même des historiens” (Berr 1930a, 26). The initial task was

à définir rigoureusement les termes dont se servent les historiens et à fixer, autant que possible, les notions fondamentales de leur science, en donnant l’état des problèmes théoriques et la bibliographie correspondante. Ce Vocabulaire, élaboré par les soins du Centre, sera discuté dans les réunions prévues ci-dessus, de façon que soit assurée entre les historiens, aussi largement que possible, l’unité de conception scientifique. (Berr 1925b, 11)

In Berr’s words, the *Vocabulaire* “tendra, en précisant le sens des termes les plus généraux employés par les historiens de toutes catégories, à faire régner parmi eux l’unité de langage et

³⁶ See the list of members of the “Conseil d’administration” of the CIS and the members of the section “Synthèse historique” published in the first *Bulletin du Centre international de Synthèse* (Centre international de Synthèse 1926a; 1926b).

³⁷ For the project of the *Vocabulaire historique*, see especially the works of Italian historian Margherita Platania who has published a selection of articles from this project (Platania 1996; 2000b).

³⁸ For a comparison with more recent French projects such as the *Vocabulaire historique et critique des relations inter-ethniques*, see Dufoix 2014, 26–29.

³⁹ A recent comprehensive German textbook on *Begriffsgeschichte* and historical semantics mentions Berr’s *Vocabulaire historique* only in passing (Müller and Schmieder 2016, 239–40).

– il faut l’espérer – de conception scientifique” (Berr 1927, 48). This overall goal had, in fact, two sides. On the one hand, the *Vocabulaire* had a descriptive ambition. It should retrace the evolution of words and ideas and thus contribute to the history of ideas, the history of science, the “history of history” and the “history of the theory of history”. On the other hand, description should serve a more normative ambition. The *Vocabulaire* aimed at establishing agreement among researchers on the most appropriate or useful meaning of peculiar words. In Berr’s mind, it should eventually facilitate the solution of specific problems in history.⁴⁰

The project was organized primarily by Berr and the secretary of the section “Synthèse historique”, philosopher and orientalist Paul Masson-Oursel (1882-1956) (Platania 2000b, 32). The working method was elaborate. It consisted primarily in collective discussions at regular meetings at the CIS. These discussions concerned the selection of words to be covered in various “commissions”, the general structure of the entries – finally established by Masson-Oursel (Masson-Oursel 1926)⁴¹ –, as well as sketches of articles and the final entries.⁴² These debates showed soon that widely used terms with a seemingly clear sense were in fact problematic. They had several different meanings and needed clarification.⁴³ Retracing the historical evolution of words and concepts was the main instrument for this “critique” of meaning. Moreover,

⁴⁰ “Notre Vocabulaire, tel que nous l’avons conçu, doit présenter une double utilité. Il apportera une contribution importante à l’histoire des idées. La vie des mots, quand il s’agit des termes scientifiques, ou dont il est fait un emploi scientifique, reflète l’évolution de la science: l’histoire de l’histoire et de la théorie de l’histoire se trouvera donc singulièrement éclairée par ce Vocabulaire historique. [Paragraph] À la science même, d’autre part, il fournira des thèmes de réflexion. Mieux encore, il ménagera l’accord des travailleurs et facilitera, par suite, la solution des problèmes dans le domaine de l’histoire – aussi largement compris qu’il est possible et légitime.” (Berr 1930b)

⁴¹ This text communicating the “Instructions pour la rédaction des articles du Vocabulaire” is not signed by Masson-Oursel, but the reports of the activities of the section “Synthèse historique” make it clear that it was Masson-Oursel who worked on these instructions, presented them in sessions at the CIS and reworked them for the final publication (Centre international de Synthèse 1926d). The instructions were republished at the end of later issues of the *Bulletin* (e.g. Centre international de Synthèse 1926c).

⁴² For the details on the working method, see Platania 2000, 31–35. In 1927, Berr resumed the working method as follows: “Je vous avais renseignés, dans mon premier rapport, sur la méthode que nous nous proposons de suivre pour le [the *Vocabulaire historique*] constituer. La voici, brièvement rappelée et avec les perfectionnements qu’y a apportés la pratique: établissement de sept commissions entre lesquelles sont répartis les cinq cents mots – environ – de notre liste totale; groupement des mots, dans les sept listes particulières, sous des rubriques qui répondent à des problèmes essentiels; discussions préalables de ces problèmes, pour projeter la lumière sur un ensemble de mots et éclairer leur rédaction. Le rapporteur qui s’est offert ou a été sollicité pour un terme, avant de rédiger son article – sur un plan que des instructions ont précisé – fait en séance hebdomadaire de commission (un mercredi après-midi) un exposé oral destiné à provoquer des renseignements complémentaires, des suggestions, des critiques. C’est après ce débat fécond que le rapporteur passe à la rédaction de l’article, et il le soumet à une séance plénière mensuelle (un dimanche matin). Amendé encore, s’il y a lieu, le texte est inséré dans ce *Bulletin* du Centre [...]. Un large public se trouve, à l’aide du *Bulletin*, appelé à connaître nos travaux et à s’y associer. Nous ferons naître, d’ailleurs, des occasions de discuter avec des savants étrangers, de vive voix, les principaux, au moins, de ces articles, avant de les adopter définitivement et de les publier, par fascicules, dans l’ordre alphabétique.” (Berr 1927, 48–49) This complex method was, of course, time-consuming: “En quinze ans on était arrivé à la lettre D.” (Bouvier 1964, 50)

⁴³ “Chacune de nos séances nous prouve à nouveau combien les termes les plus usités et dont le sens paraissent le plus transparent sont, en réalité, troubles dans les esprits, chargés de significations diverses; et l’effort que nous faisons, dans une étroite et cordiale collaboration, pour préciser l’historique et orienter l’emploi de ces mots, nous donne, en plus d’un profit certain, de très vives satisfactions intellectuelles.” (Berr 1927, 49)

it was the basis for normative recommendations concerning the future use of the word concerned.⁴⁴ Importantly, emphasis was also shifted from individual author's contributions to the results of collective discussions. The latter were thought to be a guarantee for the soundness and objectivity of the final entries.⁴⁵

Regarding this working method, the *Vocabulaire historique* displayed striking similarities with other collective terminological projects at the time in philosophy (Lalande [1902–1923] 2010b), in law (Capitant 1936) or in aesthetics (Souriau [1990] 2010; Guibet-Lafaye 2000). In fact, the procedure for establishing the entries seems to have been modelled after rationalist philosopher André Lalande's (1867–1964) *Vocabulaire technique et critique de la philosophie*.⁴⁶ This dictionary was the result of a collective work within the Société française de philosophie (founded in 1901) of which Lalande was a founding member and general secretary (Charle 1986).⁴⁷ For more than twenty years, its members had discussed entries in regular meetings of the Société and published them – including their discussions and remarks by international advisors such as Ferdinand Tönnies (1855–1936) and Rudolf Eucken (1846–1926) – in the *Bulletin de la Société française de philosophie* (Lalande 1901; Société française de philosophie 1902a). The end result was then issued in 1926 as *Vocabulaire technique et critique de philosophie* (Lalande [1902–1923] 1926; [1902–1923] 2010b) – a dictionary still widely used today. The idea behind Lalande's project (Lalande 1898; 1900) was that we needed a “critique of language” in order to create what he called a “mental community”. Only under these conditions could we ascertain something like “truth”.⁴⁸ In the aftermath of the First World War, also the political implications of Lalande's project of mutual understanding – a “programme of reason” – were evident (Lalande [1902–1923] 2010, XVIII).

⁴⁴ “L'étude de l'évolution historique du mot, fait, bien entendu, avec la préoccupation spéciale de la technique de l'histoire et sans luxe d'érudition linguistique, permet la critique des divers sens, différencie l'essentiel de l'accidentel et permet de recommander l'acception la plus constante ou la plus logique, sous réserve de considérations pratiques.” (Masson-Oursel 1926, 28)

⁴⁵ Authors were invited to submit quickly first drafts of their articles to nourish the collective discussion: “Les collaborateurs sont priés d'ébaucher assez promptement une première rédaction qui puisse servir de base. La préoccupation de livrer un travail à peu près définitif rendrait la tâche souvent lourde pour eux et retarderait la réalisation du vocabulaire. L'œuvre étant collective, c'est la discussion qui lui permettra d'aboutir à un résultat aussi solide et objectif que possible.” (Masson-Oursel 1926, 29)

⁴⁶ On the background of Lalande's enterprise and its ambiguous position – continued, it seems, in Berr's *Vocabulaire historique* – between descriptive lexicography and normative terminography, see Savatovsky 2007.

⁴⁷ On the history of the Société française de philosophie and the *Revue de métaphysique et de morale*, see Soulié 2009.

⁴⁸ “C'est en poussant à fond la critique du langage, et sous toutes ses formes, qu'on peut savoir vraiment ce qu'on pense, se débarrasser de ce qui n'a point de signification réalisable, comprendre ce qu'on lit sans glisser des idées préconçues à la place de celles que voulait exprimer l'auteur, et réduire ainsi la part de ce qui reste toujours incertain dans cet acte si immédiat en apparence, si complexe et si difficile en réalité: la transmission d'une idée d'un cerveau à l'autre. Et cependant telle est la condition nécessaire d'une communauté mentale, sans laquelle il n'y a pas de vérité.” (Lalande [1902–1923] 2010b, XVII)

This programme, in turn, was rooted in a wider international movement of terminological research at the time, a movement that might be described as “terminological reformism” (Savatsky 2007, 40–41).⁴⁹ It involved figures such as British philosopher of language Victoria Welby (1837-1912) (Welby 1896a; 1896b; 1903; 1911), American philosopher Charles S. Peirce (1839-1914) (e.g. Peirce [1903] 1998; [1906–1908] 1998), already mentioned German philosopher and Nobel laureate Rudolf Eucken (Eucken 1878b; 1879) and philosopher and sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies (Tönnies 1899a; 1899b; 1900; [1897] 1906), Austrian philosopher and sociologist Rudolf Eisler (1873-1926) (Eisler 1899b; 1927b), Italian historian and philosopher of science Giovanni Vailati (1863-1909) (Vailati 1899) and American psychologist and philosopher James Mark Baldwin (1861-1934), who assembled for his interdisciplinary *Dictionary of Philosophy and Psychology* some of the most prominent protagonists of American “pragmatism” (Baldwin 1901–1905). Furthermore, there existed also connections with contemporaneous efforts – such as Louis Couturat’s (1868-1914) (Couturat and Léau 1903; Couturat 1906) – to develop a “universal language” (Tönnies 1906). These various projects – notably Tönnies’s terminology (Schmitz 1985, 382–84) – were, in turn, taken up and later continued by members of the so-called “Vienna Circle”, especially Rudolf Carnap (1891-1970) and Otto Neurath (1882-1945) (see below). The background ideas of Berr’s *Vocabulaire* were markedly similar to Lalande’s, with the main difference that the *Vocabulaire historique* was specifically devoted to the historical and social sciences.⁵⁰

The *Vocabulaire historique* was intensely pursued between 1925 and 1939 – also in connection with the Semaines internationales de synthèse (Platania 2000b, 29–30) which were often dedicated to specific words and concepts such as “civilisation” (Berr and Centre international

⁴⁹ Lalande himself referred to this international “mouvement terminologiste” and its representatives in his lecture at the first Congrès international de philosophie in 1900 (Lalande 1900, 258, n. 1).

⁵⁰ As far as I see, the parallel with Lalande’s enterprise – especially concerning the working method – has not been exploited so far (there is no mention of it in Platania 1996; 2000a; Dufoix 2014; Schöttler 2006, 108 only mentions it). I am not aware of any statement of Berr himself establishing this parallel. However, the analogy was clearly perceived at the time, not only by outside observers such as Isaak Benrubi (Benrubi 1933, 258), but also by close collaborators of the project such as Bouvier: “On a tenu au Centre nombre de ‘séances de Vocabulaire’; il s’agissait d’admettre ou non tel mot. Puis, quelqu’un présentait un projet d’article, que l’on discutait, comme la Société française de Philosophie avait discuté les mots du célèbre *Vocabulaire* de Lalande.” (Bouvier 1964, 50) What is more, Lalande himself participated as a sort of advisor in the sessions of the CIS’s section “Synthèse générale” in 1931/32 concerning the project for a *Dictionnaire historique des sciences dans leur rapport avec la philosophie* launched by Abel Rey. In the meeting on November 25, 1931 Rey emphasized, after an account of the working method of the *Vocabulaire historique* by Berr, the proximity with Lalande’s *Vocabulaire*: “Cette méthode [of the *Vocabulaire historique*], dans ses traits essentiels, n’est pas très étrangère à la façon dont Xavier Léon et Lalande ont procédé pour édifier leur vocabulaire philosophique. Il faut leur rendre ici un hommage illimité.” (Centre international de Synthèse 1932, 47) After the Second World War, from the first issue in 1945 on, Lalande appeared even among the directors of the *Centre international de Synthèse*, featuring from 1947 onwards as a “directeur de section”.

de Synthèse 1930), “progress”, “matter”, “sensitivity” or “individual”.⁵¹ The enterprise continued with great difficulties and some adaptations through the Second World War (Platania 2000b, 38–39), focussing henceforth on the terms beginning with A in order to start publication as soon as possible. After the war, the project had problems restarting (Schöttler 2017, 99). In 1950, Berr still hoped to be able to publish the first fascicule in the same year.⁵² However, the project stalled and was finally abandoned in 1954 after Berr’s death.

Of the 852 articles projected around 200 entries were at least half-finished (Platania 2000, 36) and partly published in the *Bulletin du Centre international de Synthèse* and later in the *Revue de Synthèse*. The list of the around 90 contributors of the *Vocabulaire* (Platania 2000b, 481–84) included such prominent scholars as historians of science Alexandre Koyré (*Agnosticisme*) and Hélène Metzger (*Alchimie*), philosopher of science Gaston Bachelard (*Causalité*), historians Marc Bloch (*Comparaison*) and Lucien Febvre (*Frontière, Génération*) and sociologist of law Henri Lévy-Bruhl (1884-1964) (*Fait historique, Révolution*, etc.). Implied in the discussions on the entries were also the other members of the section “Synthèse historique” and of the CIS more generally,⁵³ such as Abel Rey, Aldo Mieli, Marcel Mauss, François Simiand, Marcel Granet or ethnologist Paul Rivet (1876-1958).⁵⁴

3. Robert Bouvier as a mediator between France and the German-speaking world

A Swiss philosopher at the Centre international de Synthèse

Swiss philosopher Robert Bouvier (1886-1978), author of the article project on “*a priori*” presented and discussed on February 27, 1929, was one of the many collaborators of the

⁵¹ Berr himself insisted on the connection between the Semaines internationales de Synthèse and the *Vocabulaire historique* in his “Avant-propos” to the second part of the first Semaine de Synthèse on the topic of “civilisation” (Berr 1930b). For the “rendez-vous manqué” with German sociologist Norbert Elias’s (1897-1990) contemporaneous work on the opposition between “*Zivilisation*” and “*Kultur*” (Elias [1939] 1997a), see Bert 2010.

⁵² In his account of the first 25 years of the *Centre international de Synthèse* in 1950, Berr retraced the work on the *Vocabulaire historique*: “[N]ous avons fait le plan [...] d’un *Vocabulaire historique* et, avant tout, discuté en séances les candidatures, en quelque sorte, des mots à y admettre. Ensuite, ce sont les mots eux-mêmes, traités par des collaborateurs qualifiés, qui ont été étudiés en des séances d’un intérêt très vif: l’étymologie de ces mots, l’évolution de leur sens ont donné lieu souvent à de curieuses remarques de psychologie collective. Après nous être attaqués, pour orienter l’ensemble du travail, à un certain nombre de termes importants, nous avons adopté l’ordre alphabétique pour hâter la publication d’un premier fascicule. Avant la guerre, nous tenions des séances tous les mercredis. Avec la guerre, l’occupation et ses suites, le travail est devenu plus intime: mes collaborateurs réguliers et moi, nous comptons bien que ce premier fascicule paraîtra avant la fin de la présente année.” (Berr 1950, 72)

⁵³ Berr emphasized that the *Vocabulaire historique* involved not only the section “Synthèse historique” but the whole CIS: “Et, en effet, si, pour suivre le progrès des connaissances dans les divers domaines, nous avons constitué des Sections distinctes, leur collaboration était constante. Le *Vocabulaire historique*, par exemple, qui comporte une grande variété de termes, faisait appel au concours de tous nos membres.” (Berr 1950, 73)

⁵⁴ For a complete list of projected entries, half-finished or finished entries and authors, see Platania 2000, 467–97.

Vocabulaire historique and, more generally, of Berr's Centre.⁵⁵ Biographical information on Bouvier is rare. Several articles by German historian Peter Schöttler provide, however, some starting points (Schöttler 2005, 194; 2006, 114–15; 2015b, 215–16; 2016, 206–7). Apart from his authorship of the article on “*a priori*”, Bouvier is a remarkable agent insofar as he mediated through his activity from the 1920s on between scholars in the German-speaking world and France.

As far as we know, Bouvier studied both philosophy and physical and chemical sciences at the University of Geneva in 1900s and 1910s.⁵⁶ His main teachers there were philosopher of science Adrien Naville (1845-1930), who worked on questions concerning the classification of the sciences, and physician, psychologist and philosopher Théodore Flournoy (1854-1920), who worked on parapsychology as well as psychoanalysis and published one of the first books on American pragmatist philosopher William James (1842-1910) in French in 1911 (Flournoy 1911).⁵⁷ Flournoy founded, together with his younger cousin, physician, psychologist and philosopher Édouard Claparède (1873-1940) the journal *Archives de psychologie* in 1901. Claparède was also one of the three examiners of Bouvier's thesis – the other two being philosophers Charles Werner (1878-1969) and Frank Grandjean (1879-1934).⁵⁸ Besides, Bouvier also studied in Berlin, Leipzig and Paris with some of the most prominent protagonists of German and French academic philosophy at the time: in Berlin with Austrian-German neo-Kantian philosopher Alois Riehl (1844-1924) and philosopher and sociologist Georg Simmel (1858-1918), in Leipzig with psychologist and philosopher Wilhelm Wundt (1832-1920), and in Paris with historian of philosophy specializing in Spinoza and Kant Victor Delbos (1862-1916), with critical idealist philosopher Léon Brunschvicg (1869-1944), with already mentioned rationalist philosopher of science André Lalande (1867-1964) and with broadly Kantian philosopher and historian of science Gaston Milhaud (1858-1918), who held the Sorbonne chair “Histoire de la philosophie dans ses rapports avec les Sciences” created for him in 1909 (Nadal 1959, 107).

⁵⁵ For Bouvier's own account of his work at the Centre, see Bouvier 1964.

⁵⁶ His thesis in 1922 (Bouvier 1922) presents him as both “Bachelier ès lettres” and “Bachelier ès sciences physiques et chimiques” (see also Schaerer 1976 according to whom Bouvier finished these first studies in 1909). For the list of his teachers in Geneva and elsewhere, see Bouvier's acknowledgments in his thesis (Bouvier 1922, XIV).

⁵⁷ Bouvier should write at the death of Flournoy in 1920 an enthusiastic portrait of him as a teacher for the *Journal de Genève* (Bouvier 1920).

⁵⁸ Claparède was a follower of “psycho-physical parallelism” and interested in experimental psychology, child psychology and pedagogics. He was the general secretary of the second International Congress of Philosophy in Geneva in 1904 and founded, together with psychologist and educationalist Pierre Bovet (1878-1965), the Institut Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1912) in Geneva, a research centre specializing in experimental psychology, pedagogics and child psychology. Later, in 1921, Claparède appointed developmental psychologist Jean Piaget (1896-1980) who should become an important member of this Institut. On Claparède, Bovet and Piaget, see Benrubi 1933, 92–109.

In 1912, Bouvier discovered the writings of Austrian physicist and historian and philosopher of science Ernst Mach (1838-1916) through their first French translations and chose them as the topic of his doctoral dissertation.⁵⁹ From 1915 on, Bouvier contributed regularly to the French Swiss Protestant journal *Revue de théologie et de philosophie*, starting with a review on the development of scientific psychology in Germany – focussing on Johann Friedrich Herbart (1776-1841), Gustav Fechner (1801-1887) and Hermann von Helmholtz (1821-1894) – a review that resulted already from his work on Mach (Bouvier 1915, 82, n. 1). Bouvier also published in this journal a short obituary on Mach in 1916 (Bouvier 1916) where he acknowledged Mach as “un des principaux représentants de la ‘philosophie scientifique’ contemporaine” – not without remarking on Mach’s lack of interest in moral and sociological questions.⁶⁰ In 1922, he defended his thesis in Geneva – the first thesis and book-length study on Mach in French – under the title *La Pensée d’Ernst Mach. Essai de biographie intellectuelle et de critique*, published in 1923 in Paris (Bouvier 1923). The declared aim of the book was to introduce Mach to the French public where his work was still relatively little known (Bouvier 1922, X). After a meticulous but neutral presentation of Mach’s works, Bouvier concluded with a critical discussion of his phenomenalism in the form of an imaginary dialogue between three parties called Machistès, Philalèthe and Hilarion (Bouvier 1922, 328–62). After his thesis, Bouvier applied in 1924/1925 apparently for a professorship in Neuchâtel, but lost it in competition with Jean Piaget (Perret-Clermont and Barrelet 2008, 67–68).

Bouvier then moved to Paris (Salis 1975, 261) and entered the CIS at the moment of its foundation via his friend André D. Tolédano, the *secrétaire général* of the Centre (Bouvier 1964, 44). For some 25 years he pursued numerous activities in the “Berr galaxy”. He contributed many articles and reviews to the *Revue de Synthèse*; from 1931 on, he was secretary of the CIS section “Synthèse générale”; and he worked intensely for the *Vocabulaire historique*, authoring no less than eight articles (*Abstraction*, *Abstrait*; *Accident*, *Accidentel*; *Acte*, *Action*, *Activité*, *Agent*; *Adventice*; *Antécédent*; *A priori*, *A posteriori*; *Comparaison*; *Loi*; see Platania 2000, 481).⁶¹ Besides, Bouvier seems to have lived of teaching in secondary education⁶² and translations from German and English to French. At the end of his career, he became

⁵⁹ In 1936, Bouvier wrote to Otto Neurath: “Mon attention avait été attirée sur Mach, en 1912, quand je cherchais un sujet de thèse de doctorat, par la première traduction française d’une œuvre de lui: *La Connaissance et l’Erreur*, qui avait paru peu auparavant.” (Bouvier to Neurath, 29/02/1936, Vienna Circle Institute, Vienna, Neurath archives, number 216) For the reference to this correspondence, see below.

⁶⁰ “Bien qu’il ait récusé le titre de philosophe, Mach est un des principaux représentants de la ‘philosophie scientifique’ contemporaine. Seulement, il s’est occupé presque exclusivement de la connaissance positive de la nature; les problèmes moraux et sociologiques lui sont demeurés étrangers.” (Bouvier 1916, 77)

⁶¹ For these informations, see Bouvier 1964.

⁶² Bouvier to Neurath, 29/02/1936.

Privatdozent at the University of Geneva (Schöttler 2015b, 216, n. 27), giving his inaugural lecture there on “La philosophie et la mentalité primitive” in 1951 (H. R. B. 1951).⁶³

Bouvier between the Centre international de Synthèse and the Vienna Circle

One of the most interesting aspects of Bouvier’s activities is that he was for some time in the 1930s probably the most important *agent de liaison* between Berr’s Centre international de Synthèse and the group of philosophers and scientists known since 1929 publicly as the “Wiener Kreis” (Verein Ernst Mach et al. [1929] 2006; Stadler [1997] 2015) or, in France, as the “École de Vienne” (Brunet and Bouvier 1936).

In fact, the CIS and the *Revue de Synthèse* were among the main platforms for the reception of the Vienna Circle in France, as Peter Schöttler has convincingly shown against the established narrative focussing on philosopher Louis Rougier (1889-1982) (Schöttler 2015b). Between 1932 and 1939 the *Revue* contained not only reviews of works connected with the Vienna Circle and reports on the congresses involving or organized by Vienna Circle members. It also published French translations of articles by some of the central members of the group: Moritz Schlick (1882-1936), Philipp Frank (1884-1966), Rudolf Carnap (1891-1970), Otto Neurath (1882-1945), Carl Gustav Hempel (1905-1997) and Béla Juhos (1901-1971).⁶⁴ Bouvier served here as the main reviewer and translator of works of the Vienna Circle.⁶⁵

What is more, the CIS featured as one of the local co-organizers of the 1935 Paris International Congress of Scientific Philosophy, i.e. the first International Congress for the Unity of Science – just as the IICI (Neurath 1935b, 378).⁶⁶ At this occasion, already mentioned economist and philosopher Otto Neurath – the main organizer of the activities of the Vienna Circle –

⁶³ Bouvier’s private life seems to have been difficult. In 1914, he lost his young wife Geneviève Teissier du Cros (1890-1914) (see the dedication in Bouvier 1922). In the correspondence with Neurath, he speaks of health problems and financial difficulties that impeded his work and also prevented his participation in the international congresses organized at the time: “Malheureusement des raisons de santé, puis des raisons pécuniaires m’ont empêché ensuite de cultiver la philosophie aussi activement que je le voudrais, et de composer un autre ouvrage après ma thèse.” (Bouvier to Neurath, 29/02/1936, Institute Vienna Circle, Vienna, Neurath archives, number 216, see below) For further details on Bouvier’s life and career, see Schaerer 1976.

⁶⁴ For a complete list of Vienna Circle related publications in the *Revue de Synthèse*, see Schöttler 2006, 111–13.

⁶⁵ “Bouvier was going to play an important role as an intermediary between Berr and the Viennese and became Neurath’s main translator into French.” (Schöttler 2015b, 215; see also 2006, 114–15)

⁶⁶ In his account of the Congress, Neurath acknowledged the importance of the *Revue de Synthèse* in diffusing the works of “logical empiricism” – as Neurath called it (on the history of the label, see Uebel 2013) – organized around the journal *Erkenntnis*: “Frankreich hat einen wesentlichen Einfluß auf die Entwicklung des logischen Empirismus in vielen Ländern ausgeübt. Die Leistungen des logischen Empirismus sind durch einzelne französische Gelehrte, Zeitschriften und Verlage, wie während des Kongresses mehrmals mit Dank hervorgehoben wurde, in Frankreich bekannt gemacht worden. Besonders die Kreise, die mit der ERKENNTNIS in näherem Kontakt stehen, sind durch die Bemühungen von MARCELL [sic] BOLL, LOUIS ROUGIER, General VOUILLEMIN und anderen den Franzosen näher gebracht worden. Wie viel haben ABEL REY, BOUVIER und andere in der REVUE DE SYNTHESE in diesem Sinne geleistet.” (Neurath 1935b, 378) Neurath sent this review of the Paris congress to Bouvier (Neurath to Bouvier, 25/02/1936 and Bouvier to Neurath, 29/02/1936, Institute Vienna Circle, Neurath archives, no. 216).

met Berr (Schöttler 2006, 114, n. 50) and, most certainly, also Bouvier, who assisted to the Congress and wrote a report of it for the *Revue de Synthèse* (Bouvier 1935).

Following the Paris congress, Neurath began a correspondence with Bouvier of which around 20 letters between January 1936 and June 1938 are preserved.⁶⁷ The starting point for the exchange was Neurath's attempt to coordinate the second Congress for the Unity of Science in Copenhagen in 1937 with that year's *Semaine internationale de Synthèse* – an attempt that testified already to the importance that Neurath accorded to the participation of the group gathered around the *Revue de Synthèse*.⁶⁸ The correspondence then shows that Bouvier functioned for Neurath not only as a translator engaged in translating into French, among other things, Neurath's article on encyclopaedia as “model” (Neurath 1936). Neurath asked Bouvier also to inform him on the reception of the Vienna Circle in France, especially among those groups most inclined to receive it positively, that is among potential allies, and especially the members of the CIS.⁶⁹ In response, Bouvier sent critical reviews on works of members of the Vienna Circle from *Archeion* – which had by the time become the official outlet of the CIS's section “Histoire des sciences” – and, later, from the *Revue de Synthèse*.⁷⁰

Also the common reference to Mach – the group that presented itself as “Vienna Circle” in 1929 promoted Mach's legacy through the Verein Ernst Mach (Verein Ernst Mach et al. [1929] 2006; Stadler [1997] 2015, 33–43, 150–58) – interested Neurath and provoked some reflections on ongoing transfers between France and Austria. Neurath saw in this reference – apparently he knew of Bouvier's thesis on Mach – one of the sources of the “affinity” between the efforts

⁶⁷ Microfiche copies of these letters – the preserved correspondence is incomplete – are kept at the Institute Vienna Circle (IVC), Vienna, archives Otto Neurath, number 216. Again, I thank Elisabeth Nemeth for having sent me a copy of this correspondence.

⁶⁸ “Nun schreibt mir ROUGIER, dass der Kreis der SYNTHESE im Juni eine Tagung hätte und daher nicht daran teilnehmen könnte. Da wir natürlich grösstes Gewicht auf die Teilnahme Ihres Kreises legen, bitte ich Sie mir mitzuteilen, wie Ihre eigene Tagung liegt, und ob es sich nicht so einrichten liesse, dass Ihre Tagung nicht mit unserer von 21. bis 25. Juni kollidiert.” (Neurath to Bouvier, 11/01/1936, IVC, Neurath archives, no. 216).

⁶⁹ In March 1936, for example, Neurath wrote: “Ich werde Ihnen sehr dankbar sein, wenn Sie mir gelegentlich mitteilten, in welchen Revuen Artikel über den Pariser Kongress und den Wiener Kreis erscheinen. [...] Ich hätte ein grosses Interesse daran, die *groben* Gruppen zu kennen, die sich in Verhältnis zu uns bilden. [Paragraph] Es ist nicht leicht, wenn man nicht die ganze Entwicklung mitlebt die Haltung richtig zu deuten. Es ist mir z.B. gar nicht deutlich, wie etwa Abel Rey, Langevin, Boll zu uns eigentlich stehn. [...] Mich interessiert besonders näheres [sic] über den Widerstand derer zu hören, die uns relativ nahestehen. Dass Bergson sich nicht über uns freut, liegt auf der Hand.” (Neurath to Bouvier, 13/03/1936, IVC, Neurath archives, no. 216).

⁷⁰ Bouvier avoided replying directly to Neurath's question about the reception of the Vienna Circle in France, emphasizing that there was no such thing as a “group attitude”: “Les Français sont toujours très individualistes en philosophie. Il n'y a certainement pas en France une ‘attitude de groupe’ vis-à-vis du Cercle de Vienne.” (Bouvier to Neurath, 03/04/1936, IVC, Neurath archives, no. 216) But Neurath insisted: “Ich verstehe gut, was Sie über die individualistische Haltung französischer Philosophen sagen. Aber man kann doch gewisse Gruppierungen sozusagen theoretisch konstruieren, um eine in gewissem Sinne gemeinsame Reaktion auf den ‘Wiener Kreis’ und den logischen Empirismus festzustellen. Mich würde natürlich vor allem interessieren, wie weit wir sozusagen unter benachbarten Anschauungen auf prinzipiellen Widerstand stossen. Aber auch in welchem Masse, wir wesentlich Zustimmung vor allem unter der jüngeren Generation finden und wie viele ähnliche [sic] gerichtete Menschen wohl in Frankreich sind, von denen wir noch nichts wissen.” (Neurath to Bouvier, 06/05/1936, IVC, Neurath archives, no. 216).

of the Vienna Circle and the CIS.⁷¹ What is more, the Centre's *Vocabulaire historique* attracted specifically Neurath's attention – Neurath who established at around the same time the *International Encyclopedia of Unified Science* (1938-1969).⁷² In a letter with a list of his latest publications, Bouvier had mentioned his articles for the *Vocabulaire historique* including his article on “*a priori*”.⁷³ When preparing the fourth Congress of the Unity of Science in Cambridge in 1938, Neurath proposed indeed that the CIS should participate with an account of their experiences with this terminological project.⁷⁴

Not all contacts between the Vienna Circle and the CIS, however, passed through Bouvier. In fact, it was physicist and philosopher Philipp Frank (1884-1966) who had encouraged Neurath already in 1935 to involve Bouvier and Bachelard – who at the time was also engaged in several of Berr's enterprises – in the first Congress for the Unity of Science in Paris (Nemeth 2007, 211).⁷⁵ Before the third congress 1937 – held once more in Paris – Frank urged Neurath again to enter into direct contact with Berr, judging Bouvier in passing as “not very active”.⁷⁶ In fact, Neurath had written to Bouvier little before, announcing his trip to Paris for the congress, and sought to organize a meeting with members of the CIS.⁷⁷ As Bouvier did not answer

⁷¹ “Die Verwandtschaft unserer Bemühungen beruht ja zum Teil darauf, dass wir verhältnismässig stark durch Frankreich beeinflusst wurden, umgekehrt hat ja Mach in Frankreich durch die Bemühung verschiedener Gruppen auch eine [sic] gewissen Einfluss ausgeübt. Auf welchem Wege wurden Sie selbst mit Machs Arbeiten bekannt? Ich freue mich aufrichtig mit Ihnen zusammengekommen zu sein und so fortzusetzen, was ich immer so geschätzt habe, den Kontakt mit der Wissenschaftsanalyse Frankreichs.” (Neurath to Bouvier, 25/02/1936, IVC, Neurath archives, no. 216)

⁷² Neurath tells Bouvier in May 1937 about the agreement with the University of Chicago Press concerning the *International Encyclopedia of Unified Science* and the publication of the first volumes. He also seeks Bouvier's collaboration for this project: “Ich konnte mit der UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS die nötigen Vereinbarungen über die Herausgabe unserer internationalen Enzyklopädie treffen, deren erste zwei Bände 1939 erscheinen sollen. Ich hoffe mit Ihnen bald im Einzelnen darüber sprechen zu können, in welchem Ausmass wir Sie um Ihre freundliche Mitarbeit bitten können.” (Neurath to Bouvier, 07/05/1937, IVC, Neurath archives, no. 216)

⁷³ “Voici une courte liste des articles de revue que j'ai publiés depuis mon ouvrage sur la *Pensée d'Ernst Mach* (1923) [Paragraph] *La notion de Loi*. – *Sur la Psychanalyse*, à propos d'ouvrages récents [Paragraph] *Les femmes et la science*. – *La civilisation*, le mot et l'idée. – Articles pour le *Vocabulaire historique* de M. Berr: *Abstraction*, *A priori*, *Accident*, *Acte*, *activité*.” (Bouvier to Neurath, 15/07/1937, IVC, Neurath archives, no. 216) Neurath replied by asking for a copy of Bouvier's article on women in science (Bouvier 1929b) (Neurath to Bouvier, 13/01/1938, IVC, Neurath archives, no. 216).

⁷⁴ “Es wäre sehr erfreulich, wenn Ihre Gruppe dort vertreten wäre. Es wäre z.B. auch sehr interessant terminologische Erfahrungen kennen zu lernen, die bei der Anfertigung des *Vocabulaire Historique* gesammelt wurden.” (Neurath to Bouvier, 13/01/1938, IVC, Neurath archives, no. 216)

⁷⁵ For details on the organization of this first congress in 1935, especially the relationship between Neurath and Rougier, see Bourdeau 2018.

⁷⁶ “Ich würde sehr raten, das ‘centre de synthèse’ für unseren Enzyklopädiekongress zu interessieren. Dabei dürfen Sie auf Rougier nicht rechnen, der immer sucht, uns in Paris zu isolieren und für sich zu monopolisieren. [...] Dieses ‘centre’ hat ja in mancher Hinsicht ähnliche enzyklopädische Tendenzen. [...] Schreiben Sie an Bouvier, der aber nicht sehr aktiv ist. Die eigentliche Seele des ‘centre’ ist Henri Berr, ein Historiker und Soziologe, mit dem Sie sich leicht verständigen werden. Laden Sie ihn direkt ein! Sie können ihm an die Adresse des ‘centre’ schreiben. Schreiben Sie ruhig in den Briefen, dass Sie auch in meinem Namen einladen. Von Henri Berr habe ich gehört, dass er neuen Ideen sehr zugänglich ist, und nach einem Anschluss der Soziologie an die Wissenschaft sehr sucht. Er ist ‘*directeur de la revue de synthèse*’ und außerdem ‘*directeur*’ einer ‘*revue de synthèse historique*’.” (Frank to Neurath, 29/05/1937, cited after Nemeth 2007, 214)

⁷⁷ Neurath to Bouvier, 07/05/1937, IVC, Neurath archives, no. 216.

until mid-July and Frank insisted, Neurath contacted Berr directly in early June and invited him to a meeting in Paris.⁷⁸ Whether this meeting between Neurath, the organizer of the Vienna Circle, and Berr, the organizer of the “galaxy” of “Synthèse”, took effectively place and, if so, which were the results, is not clear.⁷⁹ Further explorations of the correspondences of Neurath, Berr and other agents involved such as Rey and Langevin (both were members of the international committee for the Congresses for the Unity of Science, see Neurath 1935, 407–8) could provide answers and shed thus further light on this important episode in the reception of the Vienna Circle in France.⁸⁰

A convergence around encyclopaedism and Enlightenment values

In any case, it is clear that the contacts between the “Berr galaxy” and the Vienna Circle were not fortuitous. They were based on a genuine convergence of intellectual projects, such as the commitment to some kind of “unity”, or rather “unification” of the sciences as a collective and collectively organized task.⁸¹ In fact, Neurath himself – in the article translated by Bouvier and published in the *Revue de Synthèse* in 1936 – referred to the similarity between his project of the encyclopaedia as “model” and the collective endeavours towards “synthèse” by Berr and Rey.⁸² Convergence existed also, as we have seen, regarding the idea that unification is reached through a “critique of language” and terminology – an idea epitomized by the project of the *Vocabulaire historique*.⁸³ Arguably, both proponents of the Vienna Circle and of Berr’s Centre

⁷⁸ “Dans une lettre à Berr, datée du 4 juin 1937, Neurath évoque leur première rencontre en 1935 et l’invite à une réunion du comité de l’Encyclopédie de la Science Unifiée’ devant se tenir à Paris (IMEC, Paris/Caen, Fonds Henri Berr, A 40-03.11).” (Schöttler 2006, 114, n. 50; see also Nemeth 2007, 214)

⁷⁹ “Diesmal hat Neurath offenbar sofort reagiert und ein Treffen mit den ‘Syntheseleuten’ vereinbart. Ob es zustande gekommen ist und, wenn ja, mit welchen Ergebnissen, geht aus dem Briefwechsel nicht hervor.” (Nemeth 2007, 214)

⁸⁰ I cannot go further into this topic here. For more details, see the already mentioned articles by Peter Schöttler as well as Elisabeth Nemeth’s account of the role played by Philipp Frank for the Vienna Circle’s connections to French scholars (Nemeth 2007).

⁸¹ In this sense, one of Neurath’s articles preparing the Paris congress in 1935 was entitled “Einheit der Wissenschaft als Aufgabe” and claimed that the unification of science must conceived as a “*historisches Faktum* im soziologischen Sinne” (Neurath 1935a, 16), a fact to be collectively established, i.e. organized. By the way, both Neurath and Berr claimed for this attitude the label “scientism” (Neurath 1935a, 16, 22; Berr 1937; Schöttler 2012b; 2013).

⁸² “C’est donc sur cette base commune du langage vulgaire que s’est formée toute la bigarrure des sciences, que seule l’histoire peut nous faire comprendre. Quelle variété de ‘découpages’, quelle richesse en différenciations! C’est pas à pas seulement que l’on commence à mettre de l’unité entre les sciences particulières, début que nous pouvons considérer comme le ‘prologue nécessaire de l’unification de la science’ (Marcel Boll, *La science et l’esprit positif chez les penseurs contemporains*, Paris 1921, p. 83). Que ce processus d’unification doive se poursuivre, pour ainsi dire, à tous les échelons de la formulation scientifique, et que de plus le *travail collectif* seul rende possible cette œuvre de *synthèse*, semblable à celle qu’Henri Berr, Abel Rey et d’autres préconisent, c’est justement ce que nous cherchons à montrer ici.” (Neurath 1936, 198–99; for the German translation, see [1936] 2006, 391–92; for the reference to Boll, see Schöttler 2015b)

⁸³ “Berr’s Wissenschaftsauffassung, sein Konzept der Synthese sowie auch sein Projekt, die Sprache der Geschichtswissenschaft mit Hilfe eines Begriffslexikons – des sogenannten *Vocabulaire historique* – zu vereinheitlichen, kamen den Vorstellungen des Wiener Kreises entgegen.” (Schöttler 2005, 139) For further

participated in the larger movement of “terminological reformism” (Savatovsky 2007, 40–41) and renewed “encyclopaedism” (Gemelli 1997, 271) that expressed itself, especially in the interwar period, in numerous dictionaries, *vocabulaires* and encyclopaedias.

The specific efforts of both the Vienna Circle and the CIS attempted not less than reviving ideals of Enlightenment rationalism.⁸⁴ In this respect, they contrast markedly with later prominent efforts towards *Begriffsgeschichte* and historical semantics in Germany (Schöttler 2017, 99) – such as philosopher Erich Rothacker’s (1888-1965) journal *Archiv für Begriffsgeschichte* (1955-), philosopher Joachim Ritter’s (1903-1974) *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie* (1971-2007) and, most prominently, historians Otto Brunner (1898-1982), Werner Conze (1910-1986) and Reinhart Koselleck’s (1923-2006) *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe* (1972-1997). These enterprises stood much more in the tradition of the romantic critique of Enlightenment, of historicism and hermeneutics, with crucial references being Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911), Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), Carl Schmitt (1888-1985) and Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900-2002).⁸⁵ The opposition between these two different lineages in conceptual history – between reformist and historicist or, in sociologist Karl Mannheim’s (1893-1947) sense (Mannheim 1927), “conservative” approaches – seems to remain active, at least to some extent, to this day.⁸⁶

elements allowing for a comparison between encyclopaedic projects on both sides, see Gemelli 1997; Nemeth and Roudet 2005; Nemeth 2016.

⁸⁴ One important common source of the encyclopaedic and terminological efforts of both the Vienna Circle and the CIS seems to be – mediated in the case of the CIS by Lalande’s *Vocabulaire* (Lalande 1900, 258, n. 1) – Tönnies’s *Philosophische Terminologie in psychologisch-soziologischer Ansicht* (Tönnies [1897] 1906; Schmitz 1985). Like later members of the Vienna Circle and members of the CIS, Tönnies had already insisted on the fact that a reform of terminology can only be achieved through a collective, international and interdisciplinary organization – he thought of a sort of “International Academy of the Human and Social Sciences” (Tönnies [1897] 1906, 79–88).

⁸⁵ For Austrian historian Otto Brunner’s (1898-1982) involvement with Schmitt, Nazism and *Begriffsgeschichte*, see Oexle 2009; 2011, 14–17; Kortüm 2021. For Koselleck’s relationship with Heidegger, Schmitt and Gadamer, see Hettling and Schieder 2021; Koselleck and Schmitt 2019; Feuerhahn 2021. For the anti-Enlightenment impetus of this tradition, see for example Gadamer’s characteristic critique of the Enlightenment “prejudice against prejudices” (Gadamer [1960] 1986, 275).

⁸⁶ The debate has become more complex, of course. As Mannheim noted already in 1927, “conservative thought-styles” have become to some extent – not always, as illustrate the examples of Heidegger and Schmitt – independent of political orientation. The same holds obviously for “rationalist” and “reformist” approaches. French sociologist Stéphane Dufoix’s recent proposal for a “socio-sémantique historique” might serve as an example for the complexity of current debates. Dufoix sets as first “principle” of his approach a “principle of impartiality” that implies abandoning all normative ambitions: “Le premier est le principe d’impartialité, à savoir le refus de prendre position sur le sens ‘réel’ du mot en question pour se donner les moyens de saisir l’horizon le plus large possible des usages sans postuler que certains d’entre eux seraient légitimes tandis que d’autres seraient aberrants ou incorrects.” (Dufoix 2014, 18) At the same time, Dufoix seems to allow for “historical socio-semantics” to become the basis for later reform: “Il me semble avoir montré l’impossibilité structurelle d’une rectification des concepts désireuse, dans le même temps, d’être attentive à la diversité des usages. Bien sûr, il est toujours possible de partir de la seconde pour finalement déboucher sur la première.” (Dufoix 2014, 28) The tension between reformist and descriptive approaches in historical semantics seems to be overdetermined by the broader debate between “presentism”, “historicism” and reflexivity in the history of the social and human sciences (Stocking 1965; Jones 1974; 1977; Camic 1981; Seidman 1985; Heilbron 2017b; Heilbron and Zerilli 2022). On the latter debate, see Chapter 2.

4. “*A priori*” and “*a posteriori*” at the Centre international de Synthèse

Bouvier’s history of “a priori” and “a posteriori”

Against this rich background, we can now come back to that Wednesday afternoon in February 1929 at the Palais-Royal and have a closer look at Bouvier’s article project on the notions of “*a priori*” and “*a posteriori*” (Bouvier 1929a) which was discussed at this meeting.

As to its form, Bouvier’s article displays some remarkable features that stem from the working method and the instructions for the entries of the *Vocabulaire historique* (Masson-Oursel 1926).⁸⁷ First, Bouvier made a neat distinction between a short first part on the “History of the word” (“Histoire du mot”, Bouvier 1929b, 23–24) – including its etymology, its first appearance and its occurrence in dictionaries – and a second part on the “Life of the idea” (“La vie de l’idée”, Bouvier 1929b, 24–27) concerning the evolution of the meaning of the word. This distinction between the “word” – i.e. the material linguistic sign, the “signifier” (*signifiant*) in Ferdinand de Saussure’s (1857-1913) or the “symbol” in C. K. Ogden (1889-1957) and I. A. Richards’s (1893-1979) terminology (Ogden and Richards [1923] 1946, 11) –, and the “idea” – i.e. the “signified” (*signifié*), the “reference” or “*Sinn*” in Gottlob Frege (1848-1925) (Frege [1892] 1962) –, is innovative for the time, as we can see through the comparison with contemporary philosophical dictionaries treating the term “*a priori*” (see below). Second, in accordance with the instructions, Bouvier described the historical evolution of the meaning of “*a priori*” and “*a posteriori*” since their first occurrence in order to isolate different distinct meanings of the opposition. Connected with this, third, he adumbrated – although quite timidly – a recommendation for using “*a priori*” in a specific sense, namely that of “preconceived idea” (Bouvier 1929a, 27–28). Fourth and finally, Bouvier’s article was continued in the collective discussion at the CIS in which participants added remarks to all three of the above aspects.

What about the content of Bouvier’s article? As said, Bouvier began by establishing some basic facts regarding the “history of the word”, i.e. of the syntagmata “*a priori*” and “*a posteriori*”. He set off from linguistic observations concerning the spelling of “*a priori*” based on other general French dictionaries such as the *Dictionnaire de l’Académie française* – where “*a*

⁸⁷ According to these instructions, articles should have four parts: “I. Historique”, “II. Remarques critiques et emploi proposé”, “III. Remarques additionnelles” and “IV. Bibliographie”. Part I consisted of four aspects: “1. *Étymologie*. [Paragraph] 2. *La vie du mot*; ses différents sens, successifs ou simultanés. [Paragraph] 3. *La vie de l’idée*; termes synonymes, équivalents ou voisins (des mots divers peuvent exprimer des aspects divers d’une même idée, et la confrontation de ces termes a une utilité évidente). [Paragraph] 4. *Rapprochements* avec des mots correspondants de langues anciennes et modernes.” (Masson-Oursel 1926, 28) The arguably most interesting part of the instructions concerns part II. Retracing the historical evolution of the word was thought to allow for isolating different meanings and for recommending, on this basis, a future use of the word: “L’étude de l’évolution historique du mot, fait, bien entendu, avec la préoccupation spéciale de la technique de l’histoire et sans luxe d’érudition linguistique, permet la critique des divers sens, différencie l’essentiel de l’accidentel et permet de recommander l’acception la plus constante ou la plus logique, sous réserve de considérations pratiques.” (Masson-Oursel 1926, 28)

priori” occurs for the first time in 1835 – and positivist philosopher Émile Littré’s (1801-1881) *Dictionnaire de la langue française* (1863-1872). The question was whether “*a priori*” and “*a posteriori*” should be written *à la française*, i.e. with accents (“*à priori*”, “*à postérieur*”), or *à la latine*, i.e. without accents (“*a priori*”, “*a posteriori*”). Bouvier cited in this context also the entries on “*a priori*” in specialized philosophical dictionaries: the *Dictionnaire des sciences philosophiques* by eclectic spiritualist philosopher Adolphe Franck (1810-1893) (Franck 1844; [1844] 1875), the *Vocabulaire philosophique* by philosopher, logician and sociologist Edmond Goblot (1858-1935) (Goblot 1901a) – another collaborator of the *Revue de Synthèse* and friend of Berr’s (Berr 1947, 6) – and the already discussed *Vocabulaire* by André Lalande (Société française de philosophie 1902b; Lalande [1902–1923] 2010a). These references served Bouvier to insist on the Latin spelling “*a priori*” and “*a posteriori*” (without accent) and provide a quick grammatical analysis of the two syntagmata. This led then directly to the question of the origin of these expressions. For while “*a priori*” and “*a posteriori*” are “purely Latin” expressions, they do not occur in classical Latin but only in later scholastic Latin.⁸⁸

Bouvier identified the first occurrence of the word couple “*a priori*” and “*a posteriori*” in the 14th century in scholastic philosopher Albert of Saxony (ca. 1320-1390). In Albert, they designated two different modes of demonstration, from causes to effects (*demonstratio a priori*) and from effects to causes (*demonstratio a posteriori*).⁸⁹ Bouvier then observed that from Albert of Saxony onwards, “*a priori*” and “*a posteriori*” were used by scholastic philosophers, and then throughout the 16th and 17th century in Francisco Suárez (1548-1617), René Descartes (1596-1650), Arnold Geulinx (1624-1669) and Baruch de Spinoza (1632-1677). Descartes seems, according to Bouvier, to be the first to use the terms occasionally in French, followed

⁸⁸ “Les expressions *a priori* et *a posteriori* sont en effet purement latines et régulièrement formées de la préposition *a* (à partir de) et de l’ablatif des adjectifs *prior* (premier, antérieur, antécédent) et *posterior* (ultérieur, suivant, dernier).” (Bouvier 1929a, 23)

⁸⁹ “Elles [the expressions ‘*a priori*’ and ‘*a posteriori*’, MS] n’apparaissent que dans le latin scolastique et pour la première fois chez un docteur du XIV^e siècle, Albert de Saxe, en cette définition très nette: ‘*Demonstratio quaedam procedens ex causis ad effectum vocatur de monstraio [sic, read: demonstratio, MS] a priori et demonstratio propter quid... alia est demonstratio ab affectibus [sic] ad causas, et talis vocatur demonstratio a posteriori et demonstratio quia*’.” (Bouvier 1929a, 23–24) For similar references to the definition of “*a priori*” and “*a posteriori*” in Albert of Saxony – possibly Bouvier’s sources of information (he cites the same passage from Albert) –, see Eucken 1878a, 69, who, in turn, referred to philosopher Carl Prantl’s (1820-1888) important *Geschichte der Logik im Abendlande* (1855-1870). Commenting on Albert’s commentary on Aristotle’s *Analytica Posteriora*, Prantl wrote: “Den Inhalt der zweiten Analytik nahm Albert in sein Compendium nicht auf [...]; wohl hingegen müssen wir aus dem Commentare, welchen er zu derselben verfasste, erwähnen, [...] dass er für die *demonstratio propter quid* und die *demonstratio quia* die Ausdrücke ‘*a priori*’ und ‘*a posteriori*’ und entsprechend das Adjectiv ‘*posterioristicus*’ gebraucht und somit die unseres Wissens älteste Auctorität ist, auf welche sich dieser philosophische Sprachgebrauch in seiner dualistischen Bedeutung berufen kann.” (Prantl 1870, 78) The originality of Albert would thus consist not in using the words “*a priori*” and “*a posteriori*” independently of each other, but in using them as a couple of opposites. Incidentally, there is another Vienna connection here: Albert of Saxony was the first *Rektor* of the newly founded University of Vienna in 1365.

later by Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz's (1646-1716) French writings, which are, in turn, parodied in Voltaire's (1694-1778) use of "*a priori*".

But the most decisive role concerning the diffusion of the couple "*a priori*" and "*a posteriori*" in the 18th and 19th century is played by Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) and "the universal influence of Kantianism": "Kant ayant transformé le sens de la notion d'*a priori* lui a fait une place énorme dans son système. L'influence universelle du kantisme a rendu dès lors très fréquent l'emploi de *a priori* et *a posteriori* dans toutes les littératures philosophiques." (Bouvier 1929a, 24) From there on, Bouvier observed that "*a priori*" started to be used not only in philosophy, logic and mathematics, but in all sciences, including history. "*A priori*" also entered the language of politicians, journalists and even everyday French.⁹⁰

The diffusion of the word "*a priori*" went hand in hand with changes in its meaning. This is what Bouvier analysed in the second section of his article on "La vie de l'idée". Focusing on the "idea", he now went beyond the "word" and looked for earlier and later occurrences of ideas connected in some way with the word. Bouvier thus followed Masson-Oursel's instructions according to which "des mots divers peuvent exprimer des aspects divers d'une même idée, et la confrontation de ces termes a une utilité évidente" (Masson-Oursel 1926, 28). Bouvier distinguished here – following closely the entry in Lalande's *Vocabulaire* (Lalande [1902–1923] 2010a) – two meanings of "*a priori*" and "*a posteriori*": a "gnoseological" and a "methodological" sense.⁹¹ What is more, he also developed a historical narrative on the transitions between these two meanings from the first occurrence of the terms to the present.

⁹⁰ "En français ces termes [*a priori* and *a posteriori*], MS] sont devenus de plus en plus courants, d'abord dans des emplois techniques, chez les philosophes, les logiciens et les mathématiciens, puis dans le langage de toutes les sciences, y compris l'histoire, enfin dans le parler commun et quotidien des politiciens et des journalistes." (Bouvier 1929a, 24) Contrary to German and English, "*a priori*" has become part of French vernacular. See the entry "*a priori*" in the latest edition of the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie Française*: https://academie.atilf.fr/9/consulter/?options=rechercheID&page=1&id=%23ACA9_2299 (accessed 31/01/2023). The same is the case in present-day Italian (Ferrari 2003, 7–8).

⁹¹ This important distinction in Lalande's *Vocabulaire* went as follows: "A. Au point de vue gnoséologique, on appelle *a posteriori* les connaissances qui viennent de l'expérience ou qui en dépendent; *a priori* celles que l'expérience suppose, et ne suffit pas à expliquer, alors même qu'elles n'ont d'application que dans l'expérience. *A priori* ne désigne donc pas une antériorité chronologique (psychologique), mais une antériorité logique. – Ce sens, qui est aujourd'hui le plus usuel, se trouve déjà chez LEIBNIZ: '... connaître *a priori* et non par expérience'. *Discours de Métaphysique*, § 8. Mais il a été surtout répandu par KANT, qui signale aussi l'existence du sens B dans la langue courante: voir particulièrement l'Introduction à la *Critique de la Raison pure*, B, § 1. [Paragraph] B. Au point de vue méthodologique, on appelle *a priori* toute idée ou connaissance antérieure à telle expérience ou série d'expériences spéciale. Ainsi, chez Claude BERNARD, une 'idée *a priori*' est une hypothèse. (*Introduction à l'étude de la médecine expérimentale*, 1re partie, ch. 2)" (Lalande [1902–1923] 2010a, 73–74) We should note that Lalande's *Vocabulaire* thus interpreted "*a priori*" in Kant very much in the sense of "transcendental" (the *a priori* insofar as it makes experience possible) – two meanings that Kant himself sought to keep apart (e.g. Kant [1781/1787] 1974, 101, A56/B80). The *Vocabulaire* also blamed Kant for oscillating between a logical and a psychological meaning of "*a priori*" and insisted on the purely logical sense. In any case, the *Vocabulaire*'s recommendation was to limit the use of "*a priori*" in philosophy to thegnoseological sense. We shall see that, in the universe of the Centre international de synthèse, on the contrary, the methodological sense prevailed.

The chronologically first sense of “*a priori*” and “*a posteriori*”, according to Bouvier, was “methodological”: “*A priori*” and “*a posteriori*” designated two different methods of deductive reasoning or modes of demonstration between causes and effects. Inferences from causes to effects were called “*a priori*”, inferences from effects to causes “*a posteriori*”. This meaning went back to Aristotle’s (384-322 BC) *Analytica Posteriora* (Aristoteles 2014) and passed through Albert of Saxony and, later, the rationalist tradition (Descartes⁹², Spinoza) to Antoine Arnauld’s (1612-1694) and Pierre Nicole’s (1625-1695) *Logique de Port-Royal* (Arnauld and Nicole [1662] 1992, 281).⁹³

Leibniz then marked a turning point in the meaning of “*a priori*” and “*a posteriori*”. In his *Nouveaux essais sur l’entendement humain* (Leibniz [1704] 1882), he used these expressions, on the one hand, in “the traditional sense”, i.e. in the methodological sense. On the other hand, Leibniz’s use of “*a priori*” and “*a posteriori*” evolved towards the “gnoseological” (or “epistemological”, as we might say) sense. “*A priori*” and “*a posteriori*” came to denote not two modes of reasoning, but two sources of knowledge, reason (*vérités de raison*) and experience (*vérités de fait*). Bouvier called this change in meaning in Leibniz a “transfert [...] de la méthodologie à la gnoseologie” (Bouvier 1929a, 26):

Mais petit à petit il se produit un glissement de sens. *A priori* et *a posteriori* ne désignent plus exclusivement deux méthodes de démonstration, deux trajets opposés de la pensée dans le raisonnement déductif, mais plutôt les deux sources, les deux points d’appui opposés de ces raisonnements, c’est-à-dire d’une part la raison, de l’autre l’expérience. [...] On en vient donc à appeler vérité *a priori* non plus celle qui est déduite d’un principe rationnel antérieur, mais ce principe rationnel lui-même. (Bouvier 1929a, 25–26)

The second gnoseological sense of “*a priori*” and “*a posteriori*” was then, according to Bouvier, firmly established by Kant, especially in his *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (Kant [1781/1787] 1974). According to Kant, experience involved necessarily both sensible intuition (*Anschauung*) and understanding (*Verstand*). Both intuition and understanding had their formal framework which they imposed on perception – the “pure forms of intuition” (*reine Anschauungsformen*), space and time, in the case of sensible intuition, and the “categories” or “pure concepts of understanding” (*reine Verstandesbegriffe*) and “principles” (*Grundsätze*) in the

⁹² Bouvier remarked that Descartes used “*a priori*” with precaution, referring to it – apparently negatively – as a “terme de l’École”: “Il faut remarquer la précaution de style: ‘pour m’expliquer en termes de l’École’. Descartes, qui veut que l’on déduise (*a priori*) toute la physique de certains principes nécessaires, n’introduit qu’avec une réserve le vocable d’*a priori*, d’allure trop scolastique. C’est qu’il en possède des équivalents français: *déduction* à partir des *vérités innées*, de la *lumière naturelle*, etc.” (Bouvier 1929a, 25)

⁹³ As an example for this methodological sense of “*a priori*” and “*a posteriori*”, Bouvier cited the difference between ontological (*a priori*) and teleological (*a posteriori*) proofs of the existence of God (Bouvier 1929a, 25; cp. also Goblot 1901a).

case of understanding. According to Bouvier, this framework of experience formed together the domain of the *a priori*. “*A priori*” meant in Kant thus “independent of perception”, but nevertheless “indispensable for making experience possible”. “*A posteriori*”, on the other hand, then designated knowledge through sensible experience. According to Bouvier’s account of Kant, both “*a priori*” and “*a posteriori*” elements were necessary for knowledge. Bouvier emphasized that this use of “*a priori*” and “*a posteriori*” following Kant was still the most widely shared use in philosophy.⁹⁴

But importantly, Bouvier’s story did not end here. Perhaps the most interesting part of Bouvier’s article concerns the evolution of the meaning of “*a priori*” and “*a posteriori*” after Kant, in the 19th century. Bouvier observed here two tendencies. First, there was a tendency to return to the methodological sense of “*a priori*” and “*a posteriori*”. In this sense, Bouvier referred to talk of “*a priori* method” and “*a posteriori* method” where the first meant a speculative or conceptual procedure and the second an experimental or historical one.⁹⁵ Second, there was a tendency to invert the “relative value” attributed to “*a priori*” and “*a posteriori*” elements. While Kant positively emphasized “*a priori*” elements as guaranteeing “apodictic certainty”, in the 19th century “*a posteriori*” elements were valorized – in connection with what Bouvier called the “rather realist and empiricist spirit” of the time – as being in a way more fundamental.⁹⁶

As an example of both tendencies, Bouvier discussed physician, physiologist and founder of experimental medicine in France Claude Bernard’s (1813-1878) experimental method (Bernard

⁹⁴ Bouvier’s account of Kant: “Ce transfert, de la méthodologie à la gnoséologie, s’achève avec ampleur et insistance chez Kant. La partie principale de la *Critique de la raison pure* pourrait aussi bien s’intituler ‘théorie des éléments *a priori* de la connaissance’. En effet, pour Kant, connaissance théorique suppose à la fois deux conditions: *intuition* et *liaison nécessaire*. Les données des sens, tout le matériel fourni par nos perceptions, telle est la part de l’intuition; mais la liaison nécessaire c’est l’activité unificatrice de l’esprit, ou la raison qui l’opère, en imposant ses cadres formels à la matière sensible. Ces cadres sont précisément l’*a priori*: Formes *a priori* de l’espace et du temps, pour les sensations, catégories et principes *a priori* de l’entendement pour les jugements, axiomes *a priori* de la mathématique et de la physique pure. L’*a priori* kantien est donc, dans la connaissance, l’élément indépendant de la perception, celui qui a sa source dans la raison, mais qui est indispensable pourtant pour rendre l’expérience elle-même possible. [Paragraphe] Au contraire, Kant appelle connaissances *a posteriori* celles qui viennent de l’expérience sensible ou qui en dépendent. Cette acception des deux termes est restée la plus usuelle en philosophie.” (Bouvier 1929a, 26) Bouvier illustrates the last sentence with a quotation from Lalande (Lalande 1893, 371). Later, Bouvier added to his account of Kant: “Chez Kant l’*a priori* et l’*a posteriori* sont les deux éléments indispensables de toute connaissance: la raison et l’expérience sensible.” (Bouvier 1929a, 28)

⁹⁵ “Il y a toutefois au XIX^e siècle une tendance à prendre de nouveau *a priori* et *a posteriori* dans un sens méthodologique. On parle de nouveau, de manière un peu vague, de méthode *a priori*, entendant par là toute méthode spéculative ou conceptuelle où prédomine le raisonnement; on l’oppose à la méthode *a posteriori*, c’est-à-dire la méthode expérimentale ou la méthode historique.” (Bouvier 1929a, 26) An instance of “méthode à posteriori” can be found in later mentioned Claude Bernard (Bernard 1865, 48).

⁹⁶ “En outre, comme un esprit plutôt réaliste et empiriste a succédé à l’idéalisme et au rationalisme kantien, il s’est produit un renversement dans la valeur relative de l’*a priori* et de l’*a posteriori*. De ces deux éléments également indispensables de la connaissance, Kant avantageait le premier comme seul capable de donner la certitude apodictique. Nos contemporains, au contraire, accordent la primauté aux vérités *a posteriori* ou de fait.” (Bouvier 1929a, 27)

[1865] 2008) and his account of “*a priori* ideas”. The expression designated the “preconceived ideas” and “anticipations” of the experimenter who started to investigate his object – theories and notions which are to be confirmed or infirmed by experience. In Bernard, “*idée a priori*” thus came to mean simply “experimental hypothesis”.⁹⁷ At the end of this evolution of the meaning of “*a priori*” in the 19th century, “*a priori*”, according to Bouvier, did no longer denote elements that were necessary and certain such as in Kant. Quite to the contrary, the *a priori* became “the problematic and revisable element of scientific research”.⁹⁸

Now, what about the use of “*a priori*” and “*a posteriori*” in the historical and social sciences whose language is the proper object of the *Vocabulaire historique*? In fact, Bouvier made only a few short and general remarks on this issue. First, he started off with emphasizing that there were *a priori* and *a posteriori* elements in historical knowledge, just as in all other forms of knowledge and sciences. *A priori* elements are “guiding principles [...] above the reach of facts”, whereas *a posteriori* elements corresponded to the “the material of facts”.⁹⁹ Having said that, Bouvier was wary – strictly in accordance with Berr’s position – to distinguish these *a priori* elements in history from a sort of *a priori* procedure in the “philosophy of history”. This method was exemplified – as in Berr – by German idealist philosopher Johann Gottlieb Fichte who claimed that the philosopher of history would be able to follow “*jenem a priori*

⁹⁷ “Claude Bernard, analysant en détail la méthode expérimentale ou *a posteriori*, y marque la place de l’*idée a priori*. Il désigne ainsi la notion préconçue que l’expérimentateur se forme de prime abord sur ce qu’il observe, l’interprétation anticipée et conjecturale, l’hypothèse expérimentale, que la confrontation avec la réalité doit confirmer ou infirmer.” (Bouvier 1929a, 27) For Bernard’s account of “*idée à priori*” as “*idée préconçue*” and as “*hypothesis*”, see Bernard 1865, 44, 48, 49, 80–81, 85, 92. Most characteristically: “Chaque homme se fait de prime abord des idées sur ce qu’il voit, et il est porté à interpréter les phénomènes de la nature par anticipation, avant de les connaître par expérience. Cette tendance est spontanée; une idée préconçue a toujours été et sera toujours le premier élan d’un esprit investigateur. Mais la méthode expérimentale a pour objet de transformer cette conception *à priori*, fondée sur une intuition ou un sentiment vague des choses, en une interprétation *à posteriori* établie sur l’étude expérimentale des phénomènes. C’est pourquoi on a aussi appelé la méthode expérimentale, la *méthode à posteriori*.” (Bernard 1865, 48; [1865] 2008, 72) Bernard was also an important reference for Berr, who cited the preceding passage affirmatively in his *La Synthèse en histoire* (Berr [1911] 1953, 35–36). See also the numerous admiring references to Bernard in Berr’s thesis, especially the following one: “[A]u fond, l’invention scientifique procède toujours de même: les faits d’abord inquiètent l’esprit parce qu’ils lui sont étrangers; l’esprit s’ingénie pour se les annexer, en quelque sorte, et il fait ratifier aux faits eux-mêmes l’extension qu’il tente à leur égard de son principe d’unité. Nul sur ce point n’a vu plus clair que Claude Bernard. Il faut toujours, quand on traite de la découverte scientifique, en revenir à cette admirable *Introduction à la médecine expérimentale*. L’idée s’intercale entre les faits et les faits; elle naît à propos des faits, mais elle naît de la raison; et elle se soumet aux faits pour les soumettre à la raison: voilà ce qu’avec une merveilleuse évidence a établi ce penseur ignorant qui ne savait rien que son génie” (Berr 1899, 330).

⁹⁸ “Loin d’être comme chez Kant porteur de nécessité et de certitude, l’*a priori* est devenu ainsi l’élément problématique et révisable de la recherche scientifique.” (Bouvier 1929a, 27)

⁹⁹ “La connaissance historique, comme toute autre connaissance, et surtout la ‘construction’ historique comportent un élément *a priori*: les principes directeurs que l’historien place au-dessus de l’atteinte des fait, et un élément *a posteriori*: le matériel de faits.” (Bouvier 1929a, 27) The talk of “historical construction” might be a reference to Langlois and Seignobos’s above mentioned *Introduction*. Its third book discussed under the heading of “synthetic operations” the methods of “historical construction” (Langlois and Seignobos 1898, 181–99).

fortlaufenden Faden des Weltplanes” (Fichte [1804–1805] 1846, 138) without much consideration for empirical history.¹⁰⁰ Bouvier insisted that this *a priori* method in history no longer corresponded to contemporary historians’ practices.¹⁰¹ Their empirical orientation was also the reason why “*a priori*” had taken on a largely negative and polemical sense in history, namely the meaning of an unjustified preconceived idea.¹⁰² As an example Bouvier cited, interestingly, from a recent passage where French historian of religion Charles Guignebert (1867-1939) – another member of the CIS’s section “Synthèse historique” and contributor to the *Vocabulaire historique* – had accused German pastor, philosopher and first chairman of the *Deutscher Monistenbund* Albert Kalthoff (1850-1906) of entertaining “*a prioris*” stemming from the materialist conception of history (Guignebert 1914, 129–30).

Bouvier concluded his article by stating that “*a priori*” – in present-day vernacular – has a “confused meaning”, which is derived from its different earlier meanings.¹⁰³ The two meanings Bouvier had isolated – the methodological sense going back to scholastic philosophy and the gnoseological sense going back to Kant – had been “combined” and “corrupted”. The result was that “*a priori*”, in 1929, took on primarily the sense of “preconceived idea”¹⁰⁴ – a sort of combination of the meanings going back respectively to Kant and to Claude Bernard.

The discussion at the Centre international de Synthèse

How did Bouvier’s colleagues at the Centre international de Synthèse react to his article project on “*a priori*” and “*a posteriori*”? We can reconstruct their exchanges on the basis of the discussion published in the *Bulletin du Centre international de synthèse* (Bouvier et al. 1929). Who were, to begin with, the participants in the meeting on 27 February 1929 in the rooms of the Institut international de coopération intellectuelle in the Palais-Royal’s Montpensier wing? Present at the session were according to the *Bulletin* (Bouvier et al. 1929, 20, n. 1) – besides Bouvier and Berr – seven other members of the Centre. Those already mentioned were secretary of the section “Synthèse historique”, French philosopher, orientalist and specialist of Indian

¹⁰⁰ See the above discussion of Berr’s criticism of philosophy of history and his references to Fichte.

¹⁰¹ “Le philosophe Fichte se flattait de ‘suivre le cours *a priori* du plan du monde, sans avoir aucun besoin du secours de l’histoire’. Mais cette manière n’est pas celle des historiens contemporains.” (Bouvier 1929a, 27)

¹⁰² “Leur [contemporary historians’, MS] attachement aux méthodes scientifiques leur fait employer au contraire le terme d’*a priori* surtout dans la polémique et avec le sens péjoratif d’*idée préconçue* qu’on met, sans la justifier, à la base d’un raisonnement: ‘la conception de mon adversaire repose sur un *a priori* implicite’; et après l’avoir dévoilé, on le réfute.” (Bouvier 1929a, 27)

¹⁰³ “Dans le langage courant d’aujourd’hui, *a priori* (plus usité que *a posteriori*) n’a plus qu’un sens confus, dérivé des sens stricts définis plus haut. On l’emploie surtout adverbiallement et comme synonyme de: à première vue, avant d’avoir examiné la chose de plus près, sans pouvoir apporter de preuves, etc.” (Bouvier 1929a, 27)

¹⁰⁴ “De nos jours, ces deux sens [methodological and gnoseological] s’étant combinés et corrompus, un *a priori* signifie surtout: une *idée préconçue*.” (Bouvier 1929a, 28)

philosophy and religion Paul Masson-Oursel (1882-1956)¹⁰⁵, the “secrétaire général” of the CIS André D. Tolédano (1888-1972)¹⁰⁶ and Italian chemist, historian of science, director of *Archeion* and later director of the Centre’s section “Histoire des sciences” Aldo Mieli (1879-1950)¹⁰⁷. Further participated in the meeting Austrian economist, art historian, historian of

¹⁰⁵ Masson-Oursel was *agrégé* in philosophy (1906), *docteur ès lettres* (1923), *directeur d’études* (“Religions de l’Inde”) at École pratique des hautes études (1927-1955) and from 1939 on director, together with philosopher and fellow member of the “Berr galaxy” Émile Bréhier (1876-1952), of the *Revue philosophique de la France et de l’Étranger*. A faithful student of philosopher and sociologist Lucien Lévy-Bruhl (1857-1939) (with whom he collaborated at the *Revue philosophique* for twenty years before becoming his successor, see Masson-Oursel 1939), Masson-Oursel also cited as his teachers sociologists Émile Durkheim and Marcel Mauss, philosopher Henri Bergson (1859-1941), psychologist Pierre Janet (1859-1947), indologists Alfred Foucher (1865-1952) and Sylvain Lévi (1863-1935) and sinologist Édouard Chavannes (1865-1918) (Lacombe 1956; Schuhl 1956). Masson-Oursel was the author of an ambitious thesis on *La philosophie comparée* (Masson-Oursel 1923) and specialized in Indian philosophy and religion. In his work, he sought to establish through his comparative method points of contact with sociology and promoted “positive philosophy” in the tradition of Comte and Lévy-Bruhl. Corresponding to his expertise, Masson-Oursel contributed a volume on ancient India and Indian civilization to Berr’s “L’Évolution de l’Humanité” (Masson-Oursel et al. 1933). Pluet-Despatin has called him “le relais d’Henri Berr pour l’orient” (Pluet-Despatin 1996, 261). As secretary of the section “Synthèse historique”, Masson-Oursel played an important role in the *Vocabulaire historique* by drafting the instructions for the authors (Masson-Oursel 1926) and contributing some four articles (*Aryen*, *Canon*, *Centrisme*, *Orient-Occident*). In 1935, he participated in the Paris congress on scientific philosophy organized by members of the Vienna Circle with a lecture on “Les préfixes verbaux en indo-européen et leur influence sur la logique” in the section “Langage et pseudo-problèmes” (Masson-Oursel 1936). Masson-Oursel was the only member of the “Berr galaxy” to contribute actively to the congress – besides Paul Schrecker (1889-1963), Austrian-born philosopher and historian of science, specialist of Leibniz and translator of Cassirer for the *Revue de Synthèse* (Cassirer 1937) (Schöttler 2006, 110–11). For Masson-Oursel’s biography and career, see also his entry in the online *Dictionnaire prosopographique de l’EPHE*: <https://prosopo.ephe.psl.eu/paul-masson-oursel> (accessed 28/02/2023).

¹⁰⁶ Tolédano had entered the CIS through the IICI and the League of Nations, situated first in Geneva: “André-D. Tolédano, déjà collaborateur du Secrétariat de la Société des Nations, rencontra Berr en 1924, et, nommé secrétaire du Centre, il devint son bras droit.” (Platanía 2000a, 28) Tolédano remained in the position of “secrétaire général” of the CIS for 18 years (Tolédano 1964), managing also the *Revue* and “L’Évolution de l’humanité”. He contributed to the *Revue*, for example with a programmatic article on “collective ethology” (Tolédano 1925; see also Mucchielli 1996), and aside published historical works such as on the history of family life during the Restoration (Tolédano 1943). Importantly, Tolédano was the most prolific author of the *Vocabulaire historique*, contributing not less than 27 articles (such as *Anachronisme*, *Démocratie*, *Dictature*, *État*, *Nation*, *Nationalité* and *Peuple*) – the fact that most of them start on A indicate that they were written probably during the war when Berr relied on his closest collaborators for furthering the *Vocabulaire historique*. However, the person (he was a catholic, see Bedel et al. 1964, 140) and work of Tolédano were also the object of internal tensions between Febvre – who despised Tolédano and made him responsible for difficulties within the Centre – and Berr (Müller 1996, 52). For Tolédano’s file in the archives of the IICI at UNESCO, see <https://atom.archives.unesco.org/personnel-de-linstitut-toledano-andre> (accessed 27/02/2023).

¹⁰⁷ Mieli, coming from a wealthy Italian Jewish family, was, in terms of education, a full-blown chemist and historian of chemistry, having studied in Pisa and in Leipzig in 1904/1905 with Wilhelm Ostwald (1853-1932). Ostwald and Ernst Mach sparked his interest in the history and philosophy of science (Chimisso 2011, 35–36). Between 1919 and 1928 Mieli taught courses on the history of chemistry at the University of Rome. Defining himself as an “evangelical socialist” (Chimisso 2008, 101, n. 72), being openly homosexual and participating in early sexology (Chimisso 2011, 38–46), Mieli had to flee fascism in Italy to Paris in 1928. In Paris, he intensified the cooperation with Berr and his “galaxy”. Already in 1919, he had founded the journal *Archeion* (initially *Archivio di storia della scienza*, after the Second World War *Archives internationales d’histoire des sciences*). This journal became the official publication outlet for the Comité international d’histoire des sciences (founded by Mieli in 1928 with the participation of Berr and others at the Sixth International Congress of Historical Sciences in Oslo, from 1932 onwards Académie internationale d’histoire des sciences) and later the CIS’s section “Histoire des sciences”. As director of the section, Mieli collaborated closely with historian and philosopher of science Hélène Metzger and was in regular contact with Belgian historian of science and founder of *Isis* (1913) George Sarton (1884-1956). In 1939, Mieli moved to Argentina where he retired after

religion, and for a short time deputy director of the IICI Robert Eisler (1882-1949)¹⁰⁸, Swiss journalist and at the time doctoral student of Charles Seignobos at Sorbonne Jean-Rodolphe de Salis (1901-1996)¹⁰⁹, French philosopher and contributor of both the *Revue de Synthèse* and *L'Année sociologique* Raymond Lenoir (1890-1972)¹¹⁰ and French philosopher, historian of

losing his university position in 1943 due to the military *coup d'état*. For Mieli's complex biography, see Mieli 1947; Chimisso 2008, 100–107; 2011.

¹⁰⁸ Robert Eisler – he was the cousin of already mentioned Viennese philosopher, sociologist and author of several important philosophical dictionaries Rudolf Eisler (1873-1926) (Selow 1959) – was born into a family of wealthy bankers with Jewish background and educated as an art historian, philosopher and economist in Vienna. His earliest book in 1902, *Studien zur Werttheorie* (possibly his doctoral dissertation in economics), was dedicated partly to Ernst Mach and Viennese philosopher Alois Höfler (1853-1922) whom Eisler himself called his teacher (Eisler 1902, VI). Eisler then turned increasingly to art history and history of religion. In the 1920s, Eisler was involved in the activities of the Kulturwissenschaftliche Bibliothek Warburg in Hamburg (Eisler 1925; Collins 2021, 50–53), having contacts – though strained ones – with fellow Austrian art historian and director of the library Fritz Saxl (1890-1948) and its founder Aby Warburg (1866-1929). Apparently, Eisler also met in this context philosopher Ernst Cassirer (1874-1945), who was to be a member of the CIS's section "Synthèse historique". In 1925, Eisler accepted an important position as deputy secretary at the IICI in Paris – which he soon lost, however, because he had failed to inform the Austrian government (Scholem 1975, 164–66). It is via the IICI that Eisler entered the CIS and soon became an active member of the "Berr galaxy": "L'exemple le plus frappant [of members of the CIS linked to the IICI, MS] est l'historien autrichien Robert Eisler (1882-1949), ancien élève de l'*Institut für österreichische Geschichtsforschung* – l'équivalent viennois de l'École des Chartes –, qui arrive à Paris en 1925 pour diriger un département de l'Institut de coopération intellectuelle et qui rejoint à ce titre le Conseil d'administration du Centre de Synthèse. Quand un an plus tard, il perd son poste et devient 'free lance', sa collaboration au Centre n'est est [sic] que renforcée. Il y présentera notamment un exposé sur Spengler, écrira plusieurs articles pour la *Revue* et le *Vocabulaire historique* – sur la 'division de l'histoire en périodes', sur 'messianisme', 'nation' et 'valeurs' –, avant de partir en Angleterre." (Schöttler 2006, 109) On a trip back from England to Austria, Eisler was arrested in May 1938 and deported to concentration camps Dachau and Buchenwald. He was held there for fifteen month (Collins 2021, 97–104) before he was able to return – with severely damaged health – to England where his maybe most famous book *Man into Wolf* (Eisler 1951) was published posthumously. For further information on Eisler's extraordinary personality and trajectory, see the recent biography by Brian Collins (Collins 2021) – which, however, does not even mention Eisler's activities in the "Berr galaxy" during his time in Paris. For Eisler's file in the archives of the IICI at UNESCO, see <https://atom.archives.unesco.org/personnel-de-linstitut-eisler-robert> (accessed 27/02/2023).

¹⁰⁹ De Salis, known also as Jean-R. de Salis and Jean Rudolf von Salis, came from a centuries-old Swiss aristocratic family and had studied history in Montpellier, Bern and Berlin, notably with German historians Ernst Troeltsch (1865-1923) and Friedrich Meinecke (1862-1954). In 1925, he came to Paris – apparently on the recommendation of Austrian poet and family friend Rainer Maria Rilke (1875-1926) (Salis 1975, 213) – where he started his doctoral dissertation on the Swiss economist Sismondi (1773-1842) with Charles Seignobos and defended it in 1932 (*docteur ès lettres*) (Salis 1932a; 1932b). Besides, he worked as a correspondent for Swiss papers. Probably through the IICI, de Salis came into contact with Berr and developed a lasting mentorship relation and friendship with him, calling him – together with Meinecke – his "Lehrmeister" (Salis 1978, 355) and a determining influence for his own conception of "*Weltgeschichte*" or "universal history". De Salis was active in several of Berr's enterprises, especially between 1925 and 1930. He contributed to the *Revue de Synthèse* – especially on German social and historical sciences (Salis 1930) –, to the *Semaines internationales de Synthèse* and to the *Vocabulaire historique* (articles on *Alliance, Fédération-Confédération-Fédéralisme, Hasard, Nord-Sud*). According to his own account, he was appointed in November 1928 assistant of the general secretary of the CIS – with the peculiar task of maintaining the contacts with the IICI – and assisted also Lucien Febvre (Salis 1975, 257–58). In 1935, Salis was appointed professor of history at ETH Zurich (1935-1968), gaining some notoriety in Switzerland during the Second World War as a radio commentator (Menges 2005). For his biography, including a vivid description of his experiences at the CIS, see his two-volume memoirs (Salis 1975; 1978).

¹¹⁰ Lenoir was *agrégé* in philosophy (1920), active member of the Société française de philosophie and author of a considerable number of articles in the most respected French journals of philosophy at the time (*Revue de métaphysique et de morale*, *Revue philosophique de la France et de l'Étranger*). He published mostly on authors in the French "empiricist" or "positivist" tradition, such as Taine, Renan, Destutt de Tracy, Claude Bernard, Ribot, Comte, Saint-Simon, and others (later also critically on Bergson, see Lenoir 1938). In the

religion and later professor at the Collège de France on the chair for “Histoire des religions” Henri-Charles Puech (1902-1986)¹¹¹.

In sum, the audience at the meeting can be described as follows:

(1) In terms of nationality, it consisted of five Frenchmen (Berr, Lenoir, Masson-Oursel, Puech, Tolédano), two Swiss (Bouvier, de Salis), one Italian (Mieli) and one Austrian (Eisler). Almost half of the attendees were thus “internationals”.

(2) In terms of disciplinary education, we count seven historical backgrounds (Berr, Eisler, Masson-Oursel, Mieli, Puech, de Salis, Tolédano), six philosophical backgrounds (Berr, Bouvier, Eisler, Lenoir, Masson-Oursel, Puech) – of which two *normaliens* (Berr, Puech), three *agrégés de philosophie* (Lenoir, Masson-Oursel, Puech) and one *agrégé de lettres* (Berr) –, two scientific backgrounds (Mieli, Bouvier) and one economic background (Eisler). The high number of double counts in educational backgrounds indicates already that most of the participants had an education in more than one discipline.

(3) In terms of disciplinary identities, we encounter – little surprisingly – almost exclusively “interdisciplinary” profiles, situated most of the time between philosophy, history and the social

1920s, Lenoir published a book on French “sensualist” philosopher Étienne Bonnot de Condillac (1714-1780) (Lenoir 1924) and edited simultaneously the latter’s *Essai sur l’origine des connaissances humaines* (Condillac [1746] 1924). Lenoir had known Berr soon after the First World War and contributed between 1923 and 1939 numerous articles and reviews to the *Revue de Synthèse historique*, then the *Revue de Synthèse* (Chalus and Davidovitch 1971, 7–8). Moreover, he contributed to the first Semaine internationale de Synthèse in 1929 (Lenoir 1930). Besides, Lenoir had a keen interest in sociology and held the Durkheimian “École française de sociologie” in high esteem. He contributed to *L’Année sociologique* from the interwar period onwards and specialized in the wake of Lucien Lévy-Bruhl’s works in issues of “primitive mentality” and Mexican sociology, publishing several articles in Mexican sociological journals. He later also wrote obituaries for both Lévy-Bruhl and Marcel Mauss, all while entertaining relationships with scholars connected to both the Berr group and *L’Année sociologique*, such as Henri Lévy-Bruhl and Louis Gernet (Chalus and Davidovitch 1971, 8–9).

¹¹¹ Puech, coming from a catholic family of medical doctors around Montpellier, studied at École normale supérieure (1921-1924) and obtained the *agrégation* in philosophy in 1924. His teachers were professor for ancient philosophy at Sorbonne Léon Robin (1866-1947) and – connected to Berr’s enterprises – Émile Bréhier (1876-1952) (Guillaumont 1988, 765). Puech’s first publication in 1927 was a lengthy exposition of the philosophical system, especially the theory of categories, of neo-criticist philosopher Octave Hamelin (1856-1907) (Puech 1927) – a close friend of Durkheim’s (Durkheim 1911; Némédi and Pickering 1995). Puech continued his studies with a scholarship of the Fondation Thiers at the École pratique des hautes études (EPHE) and obtained there in 1928 the school’s diploma with a work on Plotinus and the Gnostics. He thus became a specialist in the history of religion, especially manichaeism and gnosis, and had a high-profile career in this area. In 1929, only a few weeks after the Bouvier meeting at the CIS, he was elected *directeur d’études* at the EPHE in the section “Sciences religieuses” for a chair of “Littérature chrétienne et histoire de l’Église” (he changed the title in 1943 into “Histoire de l’ancienne Église et patristique”) and educated in this position until 1972 several scholars who should, in turn, become professors at EPHE (Tardieu 1985, 31). Puech’s relationship with the activities of Berr and his collaborators seems to have been distant – his name features rarely ever in the *Revue de Synthèse* or the *Bulletin du Centre international de Synthèse*. He co-founded and edited, however, with another member of the “Berr galaxy”, Alexandre Koyré (see Redondi 1996), the short-lived journal *Recherches philosophiques* (1931-1937). In 1951, Puech was elected professor at the Collège de France on the chair “Histoire des religions” (1952-1972), in 1962, he became a member of the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres at the Institut de France. Between 1970 and 1976, he edited a three-volume *Histoire des religions* for the prestigious “Encyclopédie de la Pléiade” (Puech 1970). Having never written a monograph, he published towards the end of his life a collection of his scholarly articles (Puech 1978). For Puech’s biography and career, see Tardieu 1985; Guillaumont 1988 as well as his entry in the online *Dictionnaire prosopographique de l’EPHE*: <https://prosopo.ephe.psl.eu/henri-charles-puech> (accessed 27/02/2023).

sciences: Berr navigated between philosophy, history and sociology, Bouvier between philosophy and history of science, Eisler between history of art, history of religion and philosophy, Lenoir between philosophy and sociology, Masson-Oursel between philosophy and indology, Mieli between chemistry and history and philosophy of science, Puech between philosophy and history of religion, de Salis between history, economics and philosophy and Tolédano – who among those present had the least scientific profile – apparently between history and literature. It also deserves notice that at least four of the nine attendants engaged closely with emerging sociology, especially in the Durkheimian tradition (Berr, Lenoir, Masson-Oursel, de Salis).

(4) In terms of institutional affiliation, except for Puech, all of the participants were highly involved in the activities of the CIS. Three of those (Eisler, de Salis, Tolédano) were at the same time either former employees (Eisler, Tolédano) or had close contacts with the IICI – in whose locations the meeting took place. Moreover, two participants (Masson-Oursel, Puech) were connected to the section “Sciences religieuses” of the École pratique des hautes études (EPHE) – in which taught also Marcel Mauss, another member of the CIS’s section “Synthèse historique”.

(5) Fifth and finally, in terms of activities within the “Berr galaxy”, six of the nine attendees had (or would have later) a specific institutional function within the CIS (Berr, Bouvier, Masson-Oursel, Mieli, Salis, Tolédano), eight of nine (except for Puech) contributed to the *Revue de Synthèse* or *Archeion*, and six of nine (Berr, Bouvier, Eisler, Masson-Oursel, de Salis, Tolédano) contributed articles to the *Vocabulaire historique*. Remarkably, five of the nine participants at the discussion of Bouvier’s article in February 1929 contributed also actively to the first Semaine internationale de Synthèse on the word and idea “civilisation”, held from May 20 to 25 in that same year 1929 (Tolédano 1929; Berr and Centre international de Synthèse 1930).¹¹² This Semaine de Synthèse continued directly, as Berr emphasized in his “Avant-propos” (Berr 1930b), the project of the *Vocabulaire historique*.

All in all, the group of participants in the meeting on February 27, 1929 was thus international, interdisciplinary *avant la lettre* – with a strong dominance of backgrounds in philosophy and history – and closely connected to the activities of the CIS – so closely indeed that we might speak of an “internal meeting”.

Now, what shape did the discussion take under these circumstances? In fact, except for Mieli and Tolédano, all the attendees reacted to Bouvier’s lecture of his article on “*a priori*” and “*a posteriori*”. We can isolate at least three issues among the topics of the debate.

¹¹² Berr wrote the “Avant-propos”, Masson-Oursel contributed a note on “Indian civilisation”, Lenoir another note on the “aires de civilisation”, and Bouvier and de Salis took the notes during the sessions and discussions (Berr 1930b; Masson-Oursel 1930; Lenoir 1930).

(1) A first cluster of questions concerned the use of “*a priori*” and the status of *a priori* elements in history – and, connected with it, the question whether an article on these philosophical terms had actually its place in the *Vocabulaire historique* which was supposed to focus on the historical sciences. Berr started the discussion by saying straight away that Bouvier’s reconstruction of the use of “*a priori*” in philosophy was interesting, but that there was not enough material on the specific use of “*a priori*” in history in the article.¹¹³ De Salis – in accordance with his primarily historical education, we might suppose – even asked whether a *Vocabulaire historique* actually needed an article on a technical philosophical term such as “*a priori*”. Furthermore, he also asked Bouvier to provide clear definitions of these terms.¹¹⁴ Eisler, for his part, tried to think about examples for “necessary *a prioris* in history”. Working at the time on a historical account of Jesus of Nazareth (ca. 4 BC-30 AD) after sources in Flavius Josephus (37-100) (Eisler 1929; see also Scholem 1975, 165–66), Eisler came up with the example of the *a priori* of negating miracles in any genuinely historical account of the Ancient Testament. Another example of an *a priori* in history would be the logical principle of identity.¹¹⁵ Importantly, Berr formulated in this context also his own position regarding *a priori* elements in history: In “historical synthesis”, according to Berr, there was a “legitimate *a priori*”, namely in the sense of “hypothesis controlled by facts”.¹¹⁶ This was precisely the notion of “*a priori*” Bouvier had characterized as going back to Claude Bernard.

(2) A second cluster of questions and remarks concerned the proper meaning of “*a priori*” and “*a posteriori*”, the historical evolution of their meaning and the issue of possible confusions. Lenoir proposed to introduce a distinction between a vague and a precise sense of “*a priori*”. According to Lenoir, there was a continuity of meaning from Aristotle up to Descartes. A decisive break in meaning came with Kant who reacted to Newtonian physics. Only then “*a priori*” came to mean “outside of experience”, while “*a posteriori*” meant “inside experience”. Lenoir also suggested that with the progress of the sciences in the 19th century the meaning of

¹¹³ “M. BERR estime que le développement donné par M. Bouvier à l’histoire des mots *a priori* et *a posteriori*, en philosophie, malgré tout l’intérêt qu’il présente, est trop considérable; pour ce qui concerne par contre l’emploi de ces mots en histoire, ce développement apparaît insuffisant.” (Bouvier et al. 1929, 20)

¹¹⁴ “M. de SALIS ne voit pas bien la portée que peut avoir, pour un *Vocabulaire historique*, un exposé technique de termes philosophiques. Il souhaite que M. Bouvier dégage d’une façon plus nette le sens historique des deux mots et en propose des définitions.” (Bouvier et al. 1929, 21)

¹¹⁵ “M. EISLER se demande si la connaissance historique postule des *a priori* nécessaires. Un de ces *a priori* serait peut-être la négation du miracle pour les exégètes de l’Ancien Testament. Le principe d’identité est un *a priori*.” (Bouvier et al. 1929, 21)

¹¹⁶ “M. BERR estime que ce qui doit préoccuper la Section, c’est l’application du mot *a priori* en histoire. Quand les historiens faisaient de l’histoire *a priori*, s’en rendaient-ils compte? L’idée d’analyse en histoire est relativement récente, récente aussi la conception de la synthèse scientifique. Dans la synthèse, il y a un *a priori* légitime, qui consiste dans l’hypothèse soumise au contrôle des faits.” (Bouvier et al. 1929, 22)

“*a priori*” and “*a posteriori*” had to change as well, “*a priori*” taking on a negative sense.¹¹⁷ Puech, for his part, observed – similar to Bouvier – that “the meaning of the words *a priori* and *a posteriori* has become confused”. Regarding its history in philosophy, he proposed to take a closer look at Leibniz and at Kant’s early lectures on logic (Kant [1800] 1923). In the 19th century, Puech observed something like a “historicization” or “temporalization” of the *a priori*. The notion had been “temporalized”, it had taken on a “chronological” instead of a “logical” sense. The historical dimension had thus replaced the theoretical dimension of “*a priori*”. In the present – in 1929 – “*a priori*” was again connected to “deductive reasoning in general”.¹¹⁸ Masson-Oursel, finally, also asked for the use of “*a priori*” by German idealist philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831) and raised in passing the question of the relationship between “*a priori*” and the connected notion “transcendental”.¹¹⁹

(3) Finally, a third cluster – perhaps the most interesting one because closest to the interdisciplinary “synthetic” vision suggested by Berr – concerned the relationship between the uses of “*a priori*” in the natural sciences, in philosophy and in history. Lenoir, as already mentioned, had pointed to the connection between Kant’s notion of “*a priori*” and Newtonian physics. Masson-Oursel went further and proposed the strategy of comparing systematically uses of “*a priori*” in the natural sciences and in history in order to isolate the specific meaning of “*a priori*” in history. In both domains – in the natural sciences as well as the historical sciences – he saw explicitly a “relative *a priori*” at work.¹²⁰ He also suggested to examine the idea that “the

¹¹⁷ “Kant marque une rupture de la tradition; *a priori* pour lui signifie: ce qui est hors de l’expérience, et *a posteriori*: ce qui est dans l’expérience. Cette altération de sens correspond à la révolution que la science newtonienne a opérée dans la conception du monde. Nouveau changement de sens au XIX^e siècle: Claude Bernard et Taine, par exemple, marquent une profonde aversion pour tout ce qui n’est pas connaissance immédiate.” (Bouvier et al. 1929, 20-21)

¹¹⁸ “M. PUECH dit que le sens des mots *a priori* et *a posteriori* est devenu confus. [...] Au XIX^e siècle, *a priori* a pris un sens temporel; il désigne l’antériorité chronologique (et non plus logique) d’un concept par rapport à l’expérience. C’est l’historique se substituant au théorique. Actuellement on revient pour *a priori* au sens de raisonnement déductif en général.” (Bouvier et al. 1929, 21) Puech might have thought here of recent developments in philosophy of language and of science – such as British philosopher and logician Bertrand Russell’s (1872-1970) proof that arithmetic was purely analytic and, contrary to Kant, did not involve synthetic *a prioris* – summarized a few years later in German physicist and philosopher Hans Reichenbach’s (1891-1953) lecture at the 1935 Paris congress on scientific philosophy on “L’Empirisme logique et la désagrégation de l’*a priori*” (Reichenbach 1936). We shall come back to this lecture below. In any case, Puech’s statement illustrates the difference between Berr’s *Vocabulaire historique* and Lalande’s *Vocabulaire*: While Lalande simply stipulated that “*a priori*” meant logical, not chronological anteriority (Lalande [1902–1923] 2010a, 74), Puech – as well as Bouvier and the other CIS members – adopted a historical perspective on changes in the meaning of “*a priori*” – without partiality for a specifically neo-Kantian “logical” reinterpretation of the Kantian *a priori* (for the purification of the *a priori* from psychological components in the work of Hermann Cohen, see e.g. Pinto 1995).

¹¹⁹ “M. MASSON-OURSSEL demande à M. Bouvier si Hegel emploie à sa connaissance le terme *a priori*. Il se servait sans doute de Transcendental, qui a un sens analogue.” (Bouvier et al. 1929, 22)

¹²⁰ “Il faudrait étudier s’il existe un parallélisme complet dans l’usage d’*a priori* en histoire et dans les sciences de la nature. On pourrait sans doute retrouver ainsi et isoler le sens proprement historique d’*a priori*. [Paragraphe] Même dans les sciences de la nature, on trouve un *a priori* relatif. Des études historiques nous feraient voir qu’il y a un *a priori* pour chaque historien ou groupe d’historiens.” (Bouvier et al. 1929, 22) It would, of

historical evolution of *a priori* depends on its scientific evolution”. Furthermore, he suggested to link the article on “*a priori*” to the more general article on “reason” in the *Vocabulaire historique*.¹²¹ Finally, Berr proposed to reduce the parts concerning philosophy prior to Kant and – taking up Masson-Oursel’s suggestion – he asked Bouvier to supplement the article with “a parallel history of the *a priori* in the sciences of nature and the sciences of man”.¹²²

At the end of the discussion, Bouvier replied quickly to these various remarks. First, he emphasized once more – as he had already done in his article (Bouvier 1929a, 27) – that “all sciences”, natural or historical, use forms of *a priori* reasoning. He thus positioned himself in accordance with Berr’s vision of the “unity” or “unification” of the sciences. Second, Bouvier insisted again on the decisive historical transformations in the use of “*a priori*”. He emphasized above all the “reversal of scientific thought” in the early 19th century and underlined the fact that these transformations in science had had an important impact on history – regarding especially the use and meaning of “*a priori*”.¹²³ Bouvier thus underscored once more the need for writing the history of “*a priori*” in a “long” interdisciplinary perspective.¹²⁴

The aftermath: Valentin Feldman’s additional note

What was the result of the meeting in 1929? We know from Margherita Platania’s research on the documents concerning the *Vocabulaire historique* in Henri Berr’s papers that Bouvier’s article on “*a priori*” and “*a posteriori*” – in spite of the criticisms and doubts voiced at the meeting as to its place in a dictionary on the historical sciences – was kept in the *Vocabulaire*.¹²⁵

course, be tempting to establish here a connection with today’s debates in the history and philosophy of science on a “relativized *a priori*” (Friedman [1994] 1999; 2001; Suárez and Uebel 2012). Also Masson-Oursel’s remark that *a prioris* might depend on groups deserves notice in connection with the discussions on “thought collectives” (Fleck [1935] 1980).

¹²¹ “M. MASSON-OURSSEL voudrait qu’*a priori* fût lié à Raison et qu’on examinât si l’évolution historique d’*a priori* est en fonction de son évolution scientifique. La chose est probable, car dans l’emploi d’un terme philosophique, les historiens ont dû suivre les philosophes.” (Bouvier et al. 1929, 22)

¹²² “M. BERR demande à M. Bouvier d’abrégier la partie de sa communication relative aux philosophes antérieurs à Kant, et de développer davantage ce qui concerne le XVIII^e et le XIX^e siècle. Les études vraiment historiques ne datent guère que de la Renaissance. [Paragraph] En outre, un historique parallèle sur l’*a priori* dans les sciences de la nature et les sciences de l’homme compléterait utilement l’exposé.” (Bouvier et al. 1929, 22)

¹²³ “M. BOUVIER dit que toutes les sciences ont, comme l’histoire, procédé *a priori*. Le renversement de la pensée scientifique au début du XIX^e siècle, a eu sa répercussion chez les historiens.” (Bouvier et al. 1929, 22)

¹²⁴ The *Bulletin* resumed the whole session on February 27, 1929 as follows: “Le 27 février, M. R. Bouvier a fait une communication sur les termes *A priori* et *A posteriori*. Ces deux termes désignaient chez les scolastiques deux modes de démonstration. On prouve une proposition *a priori* en la déduisant d’un principe logiquement antérieur; la preuve *a posteriori* établit au contraire la vérité d’un principe par la vérité de ses conséquences. *A priori* a pris un sens plus complexe dans la philosophie de Kant. Aujourd’hui *A priori* et *A posteriori* désignent respectivement ce qui ne dépend pas de l’expérience et ce qui en dépend. A la discussion ont pris part: MM. H. Berr, R. Lenoir, H.-Ch. Puech, R. Eisler, J.-R. de Salis et M. Masson-Oursel.” (Centre international de Synthèse 1929, 6)

¹²⁵ Platania’s list of entries contains the following note: “51. *A priori* et *A posteriori*, Robert Bouvier; dans *Bulletin* n. 7, RSH, XLVII, 1929, p. 23-28. Discussion, *ibid.*, p. 20-22; note additionnelle inédite; texte refait dans 1941 par l’auteur. DEFINITIF.” (Platania 2000b, 469)

Apparently, Bouvier himself reworked the article in 1941, incorporating probably suggestions from the discussion. The article was then classified as “definitive” in the Fonds Henri Berr. These archives are today located at the Institut Mémoires de l’édition contemporaine (IMEC) in Saint-Germain-la-Blanche-Herbe, close to Caen. However, the corresponding documents contain only a reprint of Bouvier’s article and the discussion from the *Bulletin* (without any significant annotation).¹²⁶ Bouvier’s reworked article of 1941 – announced by the title on the file as “article refait en 1941 par R. Bouvier dactylographié (à M. Berr) [Paragraph] définitif le 25 nov. 1941” – is not among the papers collected in the folder on Bouvier’s article on “*a priori*”. It might yet be found among Berr’s correspondence, as indicated by the remark “dactylographié (à M. Berr)”.¹²⁷

Meanwhile, the file contains another valuable document that complements and continues, as it were, the discussion in February 1929. This is an undated two-page “note additionnelle” on Bouvier’s article by Russian-French philosopher, member of the CIS and *résistant* Valentin Feldman (1909-1942)¹²⁸. Why did Feldman write these notes, and which purpose did they

¹²⁶ I am grateful to the archivists of the Institut Mémoires de l’édition contemporaine (IMEC), Elisa Martos and Allison Demailly, for sending me a copy of the documents indicated by Platania as well as to Éric Brian for supporting my request. The documents come from a folder in the Fonds Henri Berr, in the section concerning documents on the *Vocabulaire historique*. The title of the folder says: “A priori (R. Bouvier) [Paragraph] 1. article imprimé [Paragraph] 2. note additionnelle (V. Feldman) [Paragraph] Article refait en 1941 par R. Bouvier [Paragraph] dactylographié (à M. Berr) [Paragraph] définitif le 25 nov. 1941”. Unfortunately, I could not engage for the present work in full-blown archival research on the *Vocabulaire historique* and Berr’s correspondence at IMEC – something to be done in the future.

¹²⁷ As Platania suggested already in 2000 (Platania 2000b, 35, n. 53), it seems that Berr’s correspondence still needs to be analysed with regard to the *Vocabulaire historique*.

¹²⁸ Feldman was born in 1909 in Saint Petersburg into a bourgeois Russian family of Jewish background. His father died in the First World War, and he moved with his mother, a Piano teacher, to Paris in 1922 (he obtained the French nationality in 1931). There he went from the age of thirteen to the Lycée Henri-IV. After graduating in 1927, he studied philosophy at Sorbonne, especially with Austro-Hungarian-French philosopher specializing in aesthetics, German scholar and socialist intellectual Victor Basch (1863-1944) – the father-in-law of sociologist Maurice Halbwachs (1877-1945). From December 1929 on, Feldman contributed regularly to the *Revue de Synthèse*, especially with reviews (Charpentier 2021, 78) (he might have met Berr already in the 1920s at the Lycée Henri-IV where Berr taught until 1925; another hypothesis is that he was introduced to Berr by Raymond Lenoir, see Febvre 1997, 428, n. 34). From October 1931 to the last issue of the *Revue* before the Second World War in 1939 – and probably up to his arrest (Berr 1945, 8) –, he was part of the editorial staff in the section “Synthèse historique”, serving apparently as Masson-Oursel’s assistant. Feldman contributed himself at least two articles to the *Vocabulaire historique* (*Anthropomorphisme*, *Bolchevisme*, see Platania 2000, 482). At the CIS, Feldman was also close to Jean Rudolf von Salis – one of the participants in the discussion on Bouvier’s article in February 1929 – who remembered Feldman as “einer meiner besten Pariser Studienfreunde” (Salis 1978, 151). In 1936, Feldman published a little book on *L’Esthétique française contemporaine* (Feldman 1936) for the book series “Nouvelle Encyclopédie philosophique” created recently by philosopher and psychologist Henri Delacroix (1873-1937) and continued later by Émile Bréhier. In the same series had appeared Gaston Bachelard’s *Le nouvel esprit scientifique* in 1934 (Bachelard [1934] 2017) – Feldman, in fact, reviewed several of Bachelard’s works for the *Revue de Synthèse* – as well as Raymond Aron’s *La sociologie allemande contemporaine* in 1935 (Aron [1935] 2007), further authors of the series being Léon Brunschvicg, Paul Masson-Oursel, Célestin Bouglé, Dominique Parodi and, of the younger generation, Georges Gurvitch (Gurvitch 1937), Henri Lefebvre, Jean-Paul Sartre and Lucien Goldmann. Feldman, in his book, took position between, on the one hand, the more idealist and individualist positions of Basch, but also Berr, and, on the other hand, the sociological positions of Durkheim and philosopher and early sociologist of art Charles Lalo (1877-1953) – who himself reviewed Feldman’s book favourably in three different journals

serve? In fact, Feldman had contributed from 1929 onwards to the *Revue de Synthèse historique* and featured from October 1931 until the last issue of the *Revue de Synthèse* before the Second World War in 1939 as second member of the editorial staff (*rédaction*) of the section “Synthèse historique” besides Masson-Oursel.¹²⁹ He served probably as the latter’s assistant and was thus directly involved in the organization of the section’s *Vocabulaire historique*, contributing himself two articles to the project (*Anthropomorphisme*, *Bolchevisme*, see Platania 2000, 482). Naturally, he would thus be involved in the revision of the articles for the *Vocabulaire* at a time when the articles starting on the letter A were prepared for publication.

As to the purpose of Feldman’s “note additionnelle”, we cannot be entirely sure. Sometimes, reworking the articles for the *Vocabulaire historique* became a complex matter, involving for example another member of the CIS writing a second article on the same subject.¹³⁰ We can pretty much exclude this scenario in this case since Bouvier himself apparently rewrote his article, which was then classified in 1941 as definitive. Did Feldman’s notes serve perhaps as suggestions for Bouvier in rewriting his article? Indeed, Feldman’s remarks – as we shall see – elaborate on points that were requested in the discussion or part of the instructions for authors. However, without Bouvier’s “final draft” at hand, it is difficult to decide. At our current state of knowledge, Feldman’s “note additionnelle” was most probably one of the “remarques additionnelles” that were envisioned in the article instructions to be part of the final entry.¹³¹ Such remarks were planned to enter the final publication – probably just in the same way as Lalande’s

(Trautmann-Waller 2002, 235–36, 239; Charpentier 2021, 119–21). Feldman conceived the “science of aesthetics” apparently as a way of rejoining sociology all while avoiding “sociologism” (Feldman 1938; Bouglé 1938, 94). His notes, in any case, show that he considered Durkheim’s *Formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse* (1912) as “le chef-d’œuvre du 20^e siècle” (Charpentier 2021, 73). Teaching in secondary schools, Feldman obtained, after multiple failed attempts, the *agrégation de philosophie* in 1939. Politically, Feldman was an engaged communist since the 1930s and a member of the Parti communiste français since 1937. After having participated as a volunteer in the “drôle de guerre”, Feldman taught again in a lycée in Dieppe until the racial laws forced him to leave in summer 1941. He entered the *résistance* and was an active member of the network in Normandy. In February 1942, Feldman was denounced and arrested – mistaken for somebody else – for sabotage. He was tortured, convicted in a German military trial, and executed at Mont-Valérien fortress on July 27, 1942. Feldman was later remembered primarily for his engagement in the *résistance* and his last words, directed at his executioners: “Imbéciles, c’est pour vous que je meurs!” On Feldman’s life, work and death, see Berr 1945; Feldman 2006; Trebitsch 2009; Charpentier 2021.

¹²⁹ Febvre referred critically to this constellation in a complaint to Berr on October 29, 1934: “Mais voyez la liste pour la section historique: secrétaire Masson-Oursel, avec qui je n’ai rien de commun et que je ne puis considérer comme un secrétaire. Feldmann [sic], que je ne connais que par des comptes rendus de séance nettement insuffisants. Et Tolédano, je n’y reviens pas; je pense, comme tout le monde, qu’il est au cœur de la place de désagrégation admirable de toutes vos entreprises.” (Febvre 1997, 510; cited after Müller 1996, 52, n. 33)

¹³⁰ This is what happened, most notably, to Marc Bloch’s article on “*comparaison*” (Bloch 1930) which – thought to focus too much on comparison in history – was complemented by a second, more general article on the same topic by Bouvier (Bouvier 1931). The same happened to Febvre’s article on “*frontière*”. On the Bloch episode, see Schöttler 2017, 98–99.

¹³¹ According to Masson-Oursel’s instructions, “Remarques additionnelles” was the title of the third section of the entries of the *Vocabulaire historique*: “La rédaction proposée peut donner lieu, soit par correspondance, soit par discussion orales dans les réunions – aux divers degrés – du Centre, à des remarques utiles qui entreront, sous cette rubrique, dans l’article définitif.” (Masson-Oursel 1926, 28)

Vocabulaire included in footnotes remarks by other members of the Société française de philosophie and by international advisors. Whatever the precise function of Feldman's remarks, they can be read as yet another contribution to the discussion on "*a priori*" and "*a posteriori*" at the CIS, this time by a younger member of Berr's group.¹³²

The content of Feldman's notes is interesting for several reasons. First, Feldman elaborated – as Berr and others had asked for in the discussion in February 1929 – the question of the *a priori* in the historical sciences, including the transition from "*a priori*" to "preconceived idea" and "dogma". Second, Feldman expanded on the relationship between "*a priori*" and "hypothesis", an issue that had already been adumbrated by Berr in the discussion with Bouvier (Bouvier et al. 1929, 22). Feldman arrived here at an interesting conception of a sort of "functional" *a priori* that can be identified only retrospectively. And third, Feldman provided – contrary to Bouvier, but in accordance with the instructions of Masson-Oursel – some relatively clear recommendations for using "*a priori*" and handling *a prioris* in the historical sciences.

Feldman's notes started¹³³ by distinguishing clearly between a "methodological sense" of "*a priori*" – "Sens méthodologique: procédé qui va du principe au fait" – and a "Kantian sense" of "*a priori*" – "Sens Kantien: ce qui est en dehors de l'expérience – parce que l'*a priori* est la condition de l'expérience".¹³⁴ We recognize here the two meanings identified already in Bouvier's article and, earlier, in Lalande's *Vocabulaire*: the "methodological" and what Bouvier had called with Lalande the "gnoseological" sense. However, it seems that Feldman distinguished within the second Kantian sense a further meaning, derived from the Kantian sense. In this "derived sense", "*a priori*" meant "that with which one judges".¹³⁵

These distinctions being established, Feldman switched directly to the issue of the *a priori* in history. He stated that the "problem" in history was exclusively "methodological". However, he remarked immediately that, in history, the methodological sense mixed up with the sense "derived" from the Kantian sense: "En histoire: le problème est uniquement un problème méthodologique, mais les 2 sens se confondent: est *a priori* le principe au nom duquel on juge

¹³² Feldman was part of a generation of philosophers (Sirinelli 1988) – other members being, for example, Georges Politzer (1903-1942), Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980), Raymond Aron (1905-1983), Paul Nizan (1905-1940) or Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961) – which, under the common impact of the First World War, Marxism and German philosophy, especially phenomenology, would turn away from broadly Kantian academic philosophy epitomized at the time by Léon Brunschvicg or Émile Boutroux. Nizan's *Les chiens de garde* (Nizan 1932) is probably the most vivid expression of this impetus.

¹³³ The two pages of Feldman's notes are not numbered. Contrary to the indications of the archivists, I take them to begin on the page starting with "D'après la communication de R. Bouvier".

¹³⁴ All of the following direct quotes are from Valentin Feldman, undated, "Note additionnelle" to Robert Bouvier's article "*a priori*", Fonds Henri Berr, IMEC, documents on the *Vocabulaire historique* project.

¹³⁵ "D'où – sens dérivé – ce avec quoi on juge." (Feldman, "Note additionnelle") Feldman's framing of the whole issue of the *a priori* in terms of "judgment" might be indebted to Brunschvicg (especially Brunschvicg 1897) with whom Feldman had done part of his studies at the Sorbonne (Charpentier 2021, 59). As many in his generation, Feldman judged Brunschvicg severely, though (Charpentier 2021, 75).

l'expérience." In history, "*a priori*" means "the principle in the name of which one judges experience". The "blending" of the two meanings may be understood as follows: The methodological element consists in the idea that the *a priori* is a "principle" from which we infer to or "judge" facts, as it were. The Kantian element consists in the idea that the *a priori* is "the condition of experience" and thus "outside of experience". The question that then seems to dominate Feldman's subsequent discussion is whether the *a priori* – "that with which we judge experience" – must be, by this very fact, outside or beyond experience.

Continuing from the conception of "*a priori*" as "the principle in the name of which one judges experience", Feldman engaged in a reflection on the relationship between "*a priori*" and "hypothesis" – considerations that clearly followed the path of Bernard's notion of "*a priori* ideas" as "hypotheses" (Bernard [1865] 2008, 73). According to Feldman, hypotheses could be both *a posteriori* and *a priori*, depending on their function in reasoning, i.e. depending on whether they were "suggested by experience" or whether they "precede judgments of experience": "En ce sens [*a priori*] as 'the principle in the name of which we judge experience', MS], toute hypothèse, a posteriori dans la mesure où elle est suggérée par l'expérience – devient a priori dans la mesure où elle précède les jug-ts [jugements, MS] d'expérience au lieu d'être fondée par eux." Whether a hypothesis must be considered "*a priori*" or "*a posteriori*" depended on its role and position in a judgment of experience. Feldman thus came to formulate a position that might be called a "functional view" of the *a priori* in history.¹³⁶ The *a priori-a posteriori* distinction concerned not the "nature", "essence" or "substance" of concepts, statements or pieces of knowledge, but their functional relation with other concepts or statements in the context of judgments.

From there, Feldman also explained the transition from "*a priori*" to "preconceived idea" and "dogma". For in history, according to Feldman, "historical laws" – Feldman put the expression systematically under quotation marks signalling a certain distance – "want to be judged

¹³⁶ Feldman's account reminds indeed of pragmatist theories of the *a priori* as in the works of pragmatist philosopher Clarence Irving Lewis (1883-1964) (Lewis 1923; 1929) and, later, Swiss-American philosopher of science connected to the logical-empiricist movement Arthur Pap (1921-1959) (Pap 1944; 1946) – also a former student of Ernst Cassirer in Yale (Pap 1946, vii). Pap characterized his "functional theory of the *a priori*" as follows: "The theory of the *a priori* which will, in this essay, be presented and applied to physical principles, may be called *functional* in so far as the *a priori* is characterized in terms of functions which propositions may perform in existential inquiry, no matter whether they be, on formal grounds, classified as analytic or as synthetic. It may also be called *contextual*; for statements of the form 'x is a priori' or 'x is a posteriori' (where the admissible values of x are propositions) will be treated as elliptical or incomplete. A proposition which is a priori in one context of inquiry, may be a posteriori in another context." (Pap 1946, viii) For more on this tradition, see Stump 2011; 2015. It is perhaps no coincidence that Pap – who was inspired by mathematician, physicist and philosopher Henri Poincaré's (1854-1912) conventionalism (Poincaré 1902) – converged with Feldman precisely in the latter's discussion of the relationship between "*a priori*" and "hypothesis". Contrary to Pap, who focussed exclusively on the physical sciences, Feldman, of course, was talking about the *a priori* in the historical and social sciences.

a priori”, i.e. as principles that precede historical experience, structure it and make it in this sense “possible”: “Une loi historique veut être jugée a priori.” From here, we arrive at the sense of “*a priori*” as “preconceived idea” and as “dogma”, which is for Feldman a third distinct meaning of “*a priori*”: “D’où 3e sens (péjoratif): l’apriori = le préconçu = le dogme”. In history, when a hypothesis is taken to express a “historical law”, it “founds judgments of experience instead of being founded in them”. It can thus be said to be “*a priori*” in the pejorative sense: “Dans la mesure où l’hypothèse, élevée au rang de la ‘loi historique’, fonde des jugements d’expérience au lieu d’être fondée par eux elle peut être considérée comme étant a priori.”¹³⁷

Interestingly, Feldman’s example here is – as in Bouvier’s article (Bouvier 1929a, 27) and certainly also in connection with Feldman’s own Marxist convictions – historical materialism: “Ainsi le matérialisme historique est pour les uns l’expression [insertion] la plus fidèle [end of insertion] de la loi, pour d’autres – une hypoth. *a priori*.” It seems that Feldman would situate himself here on the side of the first group of people for whom historical materialism is the “highest expression of the law”, i.e. – we might interpret – the most general formula of the laws of empirically observed phenomena, the “highest expression” of a law founded in experience, not founding experience. For it is the second sense – historical materialism as an “*a priori* hypothesis” – that leads according to Feldman directly to “*a priori*” meaning “dogma”: “L’a priori semble désigner alors le dogme – l’homme qui juge *a priori* semble être l’homme imperméable à l’expérience”. “*A priori*” in the sense of “dogma” can thus become opposed to experience. It can indicate something like an “impermeability” to experience – Feldman used the same words as Lévy-Bruhl in his description of “primitive mentality”.¹³⁸ In passing, these few remarks seem to suggest not less than Feldman’s – in the literal sense – “undogmatic” Marxist stance regarding the doctrine of historical materialism.

Finally, Feldman’s notes also formulate – in accordance with the instructions for the articles for the *Vocabulaire historique* (Masson-Oursel 1926) and more explicitly than Bouvier himself

¹³⁷ Again, we can think here of Brunschvicg who had pointed in a similar way to this negative sense of “*a priori*”: “Ce sont les préjugés qui font le danger de l’*a priori*. Or, tel que nous le concevons ici, le procédé *a priori* marquerait l’effort de l’esprit pour renoncer à tout préjugé, pour ne rien supposer que lui-même en tant que faculté critique.” (Brunschvicg 1897, 79)

¹³⁸ Feldman’s expression “imperméable à l’expérience” was identical to Lévy-Bruhl’s qualification of “primitive mentality” as being “imperméable à l’expérience” (Lévy-Bruhl 1910, 61–67): “Par conséquent [in ‘primitive mentality’, MS], ce que nous appelons l’expérience, et qui décide, à nos yeux, de ce qu’il faut admettre ou ne pas admettre comme réel, est sans force contre les représentations collectives. Les primitifs n’ont pas besoin de cette expérience pour leur attester les propriétés mystiques des êtres et des objets: et, pour la même raison, ils restent indifférents aux démentis qu’elle leur donne.” (Lévy-Bruhl 1910, 61) The increasing “permeability” to experience is then a crucial moment in the transition from “primitive mentality” to “our mentality” (Lévy-Bruhl 1910, 440–47). In other words, clinching to *a prioris* as “dogmas” means remaining on the level of “primitive mentality” or, in maybe more acceptable terms, on the level of pre-scientific fetishism and mysticism (Lévy-Bruhl 1910, 62–63). We shall encounter the risk of the *a priori* making “impermeable to experience” also in the discussion on Metzger below.

– a recommendation for handling *a prioris* in history. In order to avoid *a prioris* in the negative sense of “dogmas”, according to Feldman, hypotheses must be continuously controlled by historical experiences: “Pour éviter l’a priori dans l’histoire il faut soumettre les hypothèses + [?] les ‘lois’ au contrôle de l’histoire.” But this view – in connection with the “functional” account of the *a priori* – then also limits the sense of “*a priori*” in history. What is “*a priori*” – that which is involved in the judgement of experience – can only be “considered *a priori*”, identified as “*a priori*” retrospectively, i.e. after having judged experience: “Dès lors, l’a priori étant ‘ce avec quoi on juge l’expérience’ – ne peut être considéré comme apriori [sic] – que retrospectivement [sic].” This “retrospective *a priori*” seems to indicate that what is engaged in the act of judging experience (without being itself a judgment of experience) can be isolated only after the fact, *ex post*, after the judgment of experience has been performed.¹³⁹ Arguably, this amounts at the same time to saying that, in history, there is – and should be – no *a priori* independent of judgments of experience.

In sum, in Feldman’s account, the notions “*a priori*” and “*a posteriori*” were terms that designated two different functions of hypotheses in judgements of experience. Feldman’s remarks thus echoed and elaborated Berr’s view – voiced already in the discussion of Bouvier’s article – according to which the “legitimate *a priori*” in “synthesis” is “hypothesis controlled by facts” (Bouvier et al. 1929, 22). This was again Claude Bernard’s conception of “*a priori* ideas”, which was favourably cited by Berr and discussed by Bouvier. “*A priori* ideas” or *a prioris* were, according to Bernard, indeed common to the theologian, the metaphysician and the scientist. They were hypotheses that functioned as “preconceived ideas” and “anticipations of nature” and, from there, might become outright “dogmas”, “impermeable to experience”, as described by Feldman. The difference was, however, that the scientist subjected these *a prioris* to the control of experience.¹⁴⁰ And in this methodological sense – shared by Bernard, Berr and Feldman –, the use of *a prioris* in history and elsewhere was “legitimate”.

¹³⁹ Again, this was in line, it seems, with Brunschvicg’s critique of Kant: “Kant avait commencé par poser le jugement comme l’acte essentiel et primitif de l’esprit: penser, c’est juger. Seulement il a fait consister le jugement dans un rapport, et il a considéré ce rapport comme lui-même relatif à la nature des concepts dont il marque l’unité. La distinction des jugements analytiques et des jugements synthétiques en arrive donc à contredire la notion du jugement considéré comme opération primitive de l’esprit.” (Brunschvicg 1897, 26) Considering judgment as truly “primitive” – i.e. as logically more fundamental than the *a priori* or *a posteriori* nature of concepts – would make the *a priori*-*a posteriori* distinction a function of judgment and not – as Brunschvicg reproached Kant – judgment a function of the *a priori*-*a posteriori* distinction. What is *a priori* and what is *a posteriori* would depend on the function of an element in judgment: “that with which one judges” (*a priori*) vs. that which is judged, in Feldman’s terms.

¹⁴⁰ “Le métaphysicien, le scolastique et l’expérimentateur procèdent tous par une idée *a priori*. La différence consiste en ce que le scolastique impose son idée comme une vérité absolue qu’il a trouvée, et dont il déduit ensuite par la logique seule toutes les conséquences. L’expérimentateur, plus modeste, pose au contraire son idée comme une question, comme une interprétation anticipée de la nature, plus ou moins probable, dont il déduit logiquement des conséquences qu’il confronte à chaque instant avec la réalité au moyen de l’expérience.” (Bernard 1865, 49; [1865] 2008, 73)

Whatever the precise status of Feldman's "note additionnelle", Bouvier's article on "*a priori*" and "*a posteriori*" was retained for the *Vocabulaire historique*. This amounted to acknowledging the notion of "*a priori*" as a term in the language of historians that was both important and at the same time in need of collective clarification. What Bouvier's article required in the eyes of the scholars at the CIS, including Feldman, was supplements in various directions: a more comprehensive account of the use of "*a priori*" in the historical and social sciences, possibly through a comparison with the use of "*a priori*" in other sciences; a more thoroughgoing reflection on the relationship between "*a priori*" and "hypothesis", including the difference between legitimate *a prioris* and "dogmas"; and, finally, a stronger recommendation for the future use of "*a priori*" in the historical sciences in order to accomplish the *Vocabulaire*'s ultimate task of unifying the language and thus the "scientific conception" of historians.

Peculiarities of the CIS account of the a priori

Bouvier's article on "*a priori*" and the ensuing discussion among members of the Centre, including Feldman's notes, might be called collectively "the CIS account". This perspective displayed some quite original features. It suffices to compare it with the available contemporary terminological articles on "*a priori*", for example those that formed evidently the basis of Bouvier's article: the entries in Adolphe Franck's 1844/1875 *Dictionnaire des sciences philosophiques* (Franck 1844; [1844] 1875), in Rudolf Eucken's 1878 *Geschichte und Kritik der Grundbegriffe der Gegenwart* (Eucken 1878a), in Edmond Goblots's 1901 *Vocabulaire philosophique* (Goblots 1901a), in Lalande's *Vocabulaire technique et critique de la philosophie* (Lalande [1902–1923] 2010a) and in Rudolf Eisler's *Wörterbuch der philosophischen Begriffe* (Eisler 1899a; 1927a). The CIS account stood here out in several respects:

(1) First, Bouvier offered what I should like to call a "long history" of the *a priori*, i.e. a history of the term and the problems associated with it that went beyond Kant – looking at uses of the term both prior and posterior to the terminological fixation introduced by the latter. Bouvier thus avoided one of the main obstacles for a history of "*a priori*": the fixation on the Kantian sense of the term.¹⁴¹ We encounter here indeed a social mechanism that American

¹⁴¹ The problem is well-expressed in the later entry on "*a priori*" in Ritter's *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, itself based on Rudolf Eisler's *Wörterbuch der philosophischen Begriffe* (Eisler 1927a): "Die Ausdrücke 'a priori' und 'a posteriori' sind durch KANTS Terminologie so nachhaltig fixiert worden, daß selbst die Ansätze zur Aufklärung ihrer Vorgeschichte im Bann des Merkmals 'Unabhängigkeit von der Erfahrung' stehen und kaum darüber hinausgehen einen irgendwie gearteten Apriorismus, angefangen bei Anaximander und Platon vor allem, bis hin zu Descartes, Spinoza und Leibniz, nachzuweisen. [Paragraph] Demgegenüber müßte herausgearbeitet werden, daß die Basis für dieses Bestimmungspaar eine sehr viel breitere gewesen ist und von

sociologist Robert K. Merton (1910-2003) described aptly as “obliteration by incorporation” (Merton [1967] 1968, 27–28, 35). A genuinely historical history of “*a priori*” has been most of the time the victim, it seems, of the success of the Kantian notion of “*a priori*” – a notion that has become so widespread that it is even no longer associated with Kant.¹⁴² Bouvier’s *longue durée* perspective (Braudel 1958) worked against this tendency of the Kantian notion of “*a priori*” becoming an obstacle for understanding the changing problems associated with the term. It enabled a “particularization” (Mannheim [1931] 1995, 242–44) of the Kantian understanding of the term.¹⁴³ It situated Kant’s use of the notion within broader long-term evolutions in the sciences and philosophy. Thus, going back *before* Kant enabled Bouvier also to account for transformations *after* Kant, in the 19th century, namely in terms of a return of the methodological use of the term.¹⁴⁴

(2) Second, Bouvier proposed a descriptive history of the uses of “*a priori*” with the aim of conceptual clarification. This was directed against a normative and “anachronistic” approach – the norm being Kant’s uses of “*a priori*”. According to the goals of the *Vocabulaire*, Bouvier tried to clarify the meaning of “*a priori*” through its history. This distinguished Bouvier’s account also from other lexicographic or terminological projects that focused primarily on present use such as Lalande’s *Vocabulaire*.¹⁴⁵ Yet, the historical-descriptive orientation did not exclude

anderen Voraussetzungen zu Bedeutungen geführt hat, die von Kant her unverstanden bleiben.” (Schepers et al. [1971] 2017, 461) Arguably, Bouvier worked in his article precisely in this direction.

¹⁴² This success – connected to the predominance of a certain type of “transcendental” epistemology – had, of course, its specific institutional and social conditions, depicted in particular in Randall Collins’s (1941-) analysis of the “German university revolution” at the turn of the 19th century (Collins 1998a, 618–87; see Chapter 4).

¹⁴³ Mannheim characterized this operation as follows: “Im Partikularisieren transzendiert also die wissenssoziologische Analyse die ursprüngliche Faktizitätsfeststellung, auf die sich das bloße Relationieren noch beschränkt. Jede, ihren eigenen Intentionen nachgehende wissenssoziologische Analyse erreicht jenen Punkt, wo die Wissenssoziologie mehr ist als eine soziologische Erzählung der Tatsache, wie bestimmte Einsichten aus einem bestimmten Milieu entstanden sind, sondern wo sie auch Kritik ist, weil sie die Fassungskraft und die Grenzen der Fassungskraft von Aussagen rekonstruiert.” (Mannheim [1931] 1995, 244)

¹⁴⁴ It seems that the transition to the long-term perspective was made possible precisely by the distinction – constitutive of the project of the *Vocabulaire historique* – between “word” and “idea”, together with the interest for the history of words as the material support of ideas.

¹⁴⁵ In Lalande’s *Vocabulaire*, there is – in this sense – a reference to Berr’s project, added in the 5th edition (1947) to the “Avertissement” of the second edition (1926): “En ce qui concerne l’histoire, ont été définis, sauf erreur ou omission, tous les termes qui peuvent se trouver encore sans explication dans des écrits contemporains. On n’a cité les acceptions historiques tombées en désuétude que dans la mesure où elles servaient à expliquer ou à justifier un usage actuel. Aller plus loin aurait été viser à faire, dans le premier cas, un dictionnaire d’histoire de la philosophie; dans le second, un recueil d’études sur l’histoire de chaque terme: chose impossible, alors que, pour certains d’entre eux, cette histoire demanderait un volume. Il serait à souhaiter que des monographies de ce genre fussent entreprises, au moins pour les termes les plus importants, sous une forme proprement philologique et sémantique, qui n’élargisse pas l’histoire précise du ‘mot’ sous prétexte d’y faire entrer toute l’histoire de l’‘idée’: ce seraient de précieuses contributions à l’intelligence de la langue et par suite, des problèmes philosophiques, sous leurs formes plus anciennes. [Footnote 1] On s’est ici concentré, en règle générale, sur l’état présent du vocabulaire; mais on trouvera souvent dans les ‘remarques’ ou les ‘critiques’ des indications propres à amorcer le travail plus étendu dont nous venons de parler.” (Lalande [1902–1923] 2010b, XXII–XXIII) The footnote then referred to Berr’s *Vocabulaire historique*: “Ce travail a été

the reformist aim of clarification, i.e. defining one meaning of the term as most appropriate for future use in the historical disciplines. As we have seen, this dimension was pursued further in the discussions at the Centre international de synthèse.

(3) Third, Bouvier adopted what we might call an “interdisciplinary” perspective on the history of “*a priori*”.¹⁴⁶ According to the aims of Berr’s “synthèse générale” (including the natural, historical and social sciences), he went beyond philosophical uses and looked at scientific, historical and even extra-academic uses of “*a priori*”. Also in this respect, Bouvier’s article is innovative compared to similar contemporary entries (Eucken 1878b; Eisler 1899a; 1927a; Goblot 1901b; Lalande [1902–1923] 2010b).

(4) Fourth, Bouvier’s article addressed debates in the social and human sciences on the status of *a priori* elements. This was, of course, part of the programme of the *Vocabulaire historique*. But it was unusual given that discussions on the *a priori* had focused most of the time on the natural sciences or either on the natural sciences or the social sciences. Faithful to Berr’s principles, Bouvier considered both evolutions in the natural sciences and in the social and human sciences and sought to clarify the use of “*a priori*” in history.¹⁴⁷

(5) Fifth and finally, we should also note what the CIS approach to “*a priori*” did *not* do. In fact, the sociological dimension of historical changes in the meanings of the words – e.g. the formation and transformation of social groups and conflicts between them – was *not* addressed. Despite a certain proximity with Durkheimian sociology, Berr’s *Vocabulaire historique* did not use the instruments of sociology in its effort to clarify the language of the historical and social sciences. In other words, there was no detectable attempt at what has later been called

entreprise depuis lors pour un certain nombre de mots par le ‘Centre International de Synthèse’ sous la direction de M. Henri Berr. (Note ajoutée à la cinquième édition.)” (Lalande [1902–1923] 2010b, XXIII, n. 1)

¹⁴⁶ On the necessary precautions in applying “interdisciplinary” (and cognates) anachronistically to Berr’s enterprises, see the earlier note above.

¹⁴⁷ Only Rudolf Eisler – who had himself published a Wundtian critique of the doctrine of aprioricity (Eisler 1894) and was an early proponent of sociology in the context of the Soziologische Gesellschaft in Wien (Eisler 1903; Exner 2013) – addressed in his entries on “*a priori*” in the various editions of his *Wörterbuch der philosophischen Begriffe* (1899–1927) both the function of the *a priori* in the social and human sciences and sociological accounts of the *a priori*: “Aprior. Voraussetzungen liegen nicht bloß der Mathematik und den Naturwissenschaften, sondern auch den Geisteswissenschaften zugrunde.” (Eisler 1927a, 85) In this sense, he added: “Ein A. [i.e. *a priori*, MS] der Geschichte (s. d.) gibt es nach SIMMEL, TH. LESSING u. a., der Religion nach TROELTSCH u.a., der Ästhetik nach J. COHN u. a.” (Eisler 1927a, 95) And regarding contemporary sociological “explanations” of the *a priori*, Eisler mentioned specifically Russian positivist philosopher and sociologist Eugène de Roberty (1843–1915) – Roberty had also published in Berr’s *Revue de Synthèse* (Eugène de Roberty 1907) – and Durkheim: “Soziologisch erklärt das A. [i.e. *a priori*, MS] E. DE ROBERTY. Die Anschauungs- und Denkformen sind ‘le produit de la sociabilité’, ein Produkt der ‘interaction continue des esprits’ (Rev. int. d. Sociol. 15 n. 1907, p. 685). Das A. ist eine sozial-individuelle, kollektive Erfahrung (p. 684; vgl. DURKHEIM, Les formes élément. de la vie religieuse, 1912).” (Eisler 1927a, 92–93) The reference to Durkheim was lacking in the 1910 edition (which preceded the publication of the *Formes élémentaires*), but Eisler added it apparently later. Bouvier – if he consulted Eisler’s *Wörterbuch* in the 1910 edition – could thus be aware of sociological reinterpretations of the *a priori*. Eisler’s case would certainly deserve further enquiry in the framework of studies on the sociologization of the *a priori*.

“sociological semantics” (Merton and Barber 2004; Dufoix 2014). This is not a matter of “hind-sight bias”, suggesting that the *Vocabulaire historique* should have adopted a perspective that became available only later. In fact, the intellectual resources for such a sociologized history of (social scientific) concepts would have been available at the time: both in the French context, especially in the Durkheimian tradition which emphasized the social dimension of language (Meillet 1906), of “concepts” and “symbols” (Durkheim [1912] 2013, 616–27) – a tradition which had also been present at the *Semaines internationales de Synthèse* (Mauss 1930); and in the German-speaking context where Mannheim, for example, provided in the framework of his *Wissenssoziologie* ideas for a sociological study of concepts (e.g. Mannheim [1922] 1964a, 170–71; [1925] 1964, 355–56; [1931] 1995, 234–36) – even with an explicitly reformist intention for the concepts used in the social and human sciences (Mannheim [1927] 1964, 410–11) that would have been compatible with the Berrian perspective.¹⁴⁸ How then can we explain the disregard for a sociological history of the concepts used in the social and human sciences? We shall see that it was coherent with the critical attitude regarding the sociology of knowledge that prevailed at the Centre international de Synthèse.

In any case, given the originality of the CIS account by contemporary standards, the discussions we have retraced certainly deserve attention as historical documents. They reflect the changes, modifications and problems in the meaning of “*a priori*” and “*a posteriori*” during the 19th century and the first decades of the 20th century in response to developments in the natural and social sciences. They show that the meaning of these terms had become problematic to the extent that a sort of collective clarification – in the framework of the *Vocabulaire historique* – seemed necessary, especially regarding the use of these terms in the historical and social sciences. The very fact that the terminological couple “*a priori-a posteriori*” was deemed appropriate for a *Vocabulaire historique* shows that its meaning had become a problem – not only for philosophers and natural scientists, but also for historians and social scientists. This fact itself must be understood as an expression of the concerns of the historical agents involved. And, in the perspective of a “sociological problem history” (Chapter 2), we should account for it as a historical and social fact.

¹⁴⁸ The assessment of Mannheim’s work and of German *Wissenssoziologie* more generally in the “Berr galaxy” was far from positive. Exiled German sociologist and former organizer of the Davoser Hochschultage Gottfried Salomon (1892-1964) wrote in 1936 a review of the “sociologie du savoir” for the *Revue de Synthèse* in which he judged that Mannheim ended up in a “perfect relativism” (Salomon 1936, 95; see also Kaesler 2005; Wagner 2010; Salomon-Delatour [2010] 2011). Berr himself mentioned Mannheim in passing in the 1953 appendix to his *La Synthèse en histoire* and cited him – following a recent article by Russian-French philosopher and sociologist Georges Gurvitch (1894-1965) (Gurvitch 1948) – as one of those who had used the sociology of knowledge primarily to defend a philosophical position (Berr 1953a, 270).

5. Between Durkheimian sociology of knowledge and the history and philosophy of science

Now, having reconstructed the discussion at the Centre international de Synthèse, what is precisely the relationship of Bouvier's account of "*a priori*" and "*a posteriori*" with the problem of the sociologization of the *a priori* that interests us? So far, one might say, we have encountered only a historical terminological discussion on "*a priori*" as used in the historical and social sciences, arguably with a peculiar reformist intention. But where is sociology in all of this, especially the sociology of knowledge with its sociological theory of categories, space, time, ideas or concepts? As we shall see now, the sociology of knowledge, especially Durkheimian sociology of knowledge, played indeed a crucial role in this context, however an ambiguous one in the background.

Berr's querelle with Durkheimian sociology of knowledge

There are several traces indicating relations between the CIS account of the *a priori* and Durkheimian sociology of knowledge.

To begin with, the *Vocabulaire historique* was planned to contain an article on the notions "*Catégories, classifications*", which was written in 1942 by philosopher Charles Serrus (1886-1946) (Platania 2000b, 472). Already the juxtaposition "*Catégories, classifications*" in the title of the entry indicated a proximity with or, at least, a reference to the Durkheimian perspective. This association of the problem of "categories" with the problem of "classifications" went back to Durkheim and Mauss's pathbreaking 1903 article on "primitive forms of classification" (Durkheim and Mauss [1903] 2017).¹⁴⁹ What is more, Serrus was a philosopher who had worked intensely on Kant. He was the author of a book on Kant's "transcendental aesthetics" and modern science (Serrus 1929) and wrote later an influential preface to the *Critique of Pure Reason* in the widely diffused first edition of the book at the Presses universitaires de France (Serrus [1944] 1990). Unfortunately, so far, I was not able to obtain access to these documents in the Fonds Henri Berr at the Institut Mémoires de l'édition contemporaine (IMEC). Besides, it is not even sure whether there is more in the archives than notes on the session at the CIS in

¹⁴⁹ A convergence of two contexts led to the reframing of the philosophical question of "categories" as a sociological question of "classifications" in the paradigmatic work of Durkheim and Mauss: on the one hand, philosopher and psychologist Théodule Ribot's (1839-1916) 1895 lectures at the Collège de France on *L'évolution des idées générales* where Ribot addressed in an experimental, psychological and evolutionist perspective the problem of "classifications", both scientific and "primitive" (Ribot 1897, 115–25) – lectures to which Mauss assisted (Fournier 2007, section "Un nouveau programme de recherche: les catégories de pensée"); on the other hand, the reception of English-speaking ethnographical literature on the "classes" and "classifications" in Australian indigenous tribes (Spencer and Gillen 1899; 1904; Howitt 1889; Mauss and Hubert 1900; Durkheim 1900c).

which Serrus's article project was discussed.¹⁵⁰ In any case, Serrus's entry could illuminate the CIS attitude on Durkheimian sociology of knowledge in relation with the issue of the *a priori*.

In the meanwhile, there are other relevant sources for reconstructing the relationship between Berr, his "galaxy" and Durkheimian sociology of knowledge.¹⁵¹ Indeed, Berr himself engaged repeatedly with the Durkheimian programme for sociologizing the *a priori* over a duration of almost 50 years: from his first publication on Durkheimian sociology of religion in 1906 (Berr 1906), to his major book on *La Synthèse en histoire* in 1911 (Berr 1911, 188–227), up to the 1953 appendix to the second edition of the same book (Berr 1953a, 268–73). Berr's position was – as his attitude regarding Durkheimian sociology in general (Prochasson 1996) – an ambiguous mix of acknowledgement, cooperation and criticism. It bore the marks of the genuine "collaboration-concurrence" (Prochasson 1996, 70) between these two contemporary attempts to innovate the social and human sciences.

The vital role of references to Durkheimian sociology in Berr's project of "synthesis" is well-known and has been addressed above.¹⁵² Some of the general criticisms Berr formulated regarding sociology translated indeed into his specific criticisms of the sociology of knowledge. For example, already in his 1900 programme for the *Revue de Synthèse historique*, Berr had emphasized – against sociology – the importance of (personal or collective) individuals in history, asking rhetorically: "Le rôle des individus, le rôle des grandes individualités historiques, dont la sociologie comparative n'a pas à tenir compte, – si faible qu'on le suppose, – est-il absolument négligeable?" (Berr 1900, 4–5) This insistence on the individual factor continued in Berr's critiques of Durkheimian sociology of knowledge and of religion.

Thus, already in 1904, Berr criticized Simiand's position on the role of ideas in history – Simiand who, a year earlier, had published his much-debated critique of the so-called

¹⁵⁰ Platania gives the following information on the documents on this article project in the Fonds Henri Berr (IMEC): "109. *Catégorie, Classification* (I), Charles Serrus, sans texte, 1942. Notes de séance." (Platania 2000b, 472)

¹⁵¹ I thank Éric Brian for having insisted on the significant differences between the Berrian and the Durkheimian account of the *a priori*.

¹⁵² The recent publication of the correspondence between Mauss and Hubert has revealed the surprisingly negative first reactions of Durkheimians to Berr's invitation to contribute to the *Revue de Synthèse historique*. Thus, Mauss wrote to Hubert in an undated letter, probably from February 1900: "En ce qui concerne Berr, si j'ai un conseil à te donner, bien net, c'est de ne pas marcher. En premier lieu, ces idées ont l'air plus que vagues. La synthèse historique ne veut rien dire." (Hubert and Mauss 2021, 120) And, after having referred to Berr's enterprise as "une salade pareille" (Hubert and Mauss 2021, 120): "Il vaut mieux ne pas collaborer à ces Revues éphémères dont nous ne souhaitons pas la mort mais dont nous n'avons jamais souhaité la vie." (Hubert and Mauss 2021, 121) Durkheim's opinion was not much different. In a postscript to Mauss's letter to Hubert, he wrote: "J'ai reçu une lettre de Berr; mais je refuse de collaborer même nominalement. Je n'ai pas le temps d'abord et puis je trouve l'idée bien confuse et je le lui dirai. Je sais ce que peut être une revue historique – et aussi une revue sociologique; pas assez ce que peut être une revue qui n'est ni chat ni poisson. Toute synthèse historique est sociologique, alors que Berr doit déclarer que la sociologie est une partie de son domaine, reprenant aussi l'idée d'une sociologie formelle que je combats." (Hubert and Mauss 2021, 121) Nevertheless, both Durkheim and Mauss finally participated in Berr's enterprises.

“historiens historisants” in the *Revue de Synthèse historique* (Simiand 1903). Simiand had insisted on the social character and conditions of ideas and had argued that the importance accorded in social science to the individual and its goals and intentions was simply based on an “illusion”. Berr found this position excessive and suggested that it relied – just as individualism – on another “idée préconçue”.¹⁵³ According to Berr, the “fonction intellectuelle” retained a certain “autonomy”.¹⁵⁴ And Berr connected the criticism of Simiand with other reservations he had about recent work by the Durkheimians on religion and “collective representations” – especially that they would “parfois mutiler la réalité” and “interpréter arbitrairement certains faits” (Berr 1904, 148). Berr referred here explicitly to the volume of *L’Année sociologique* which contained the 1903 *mémoire* of Durkheim and Mauss.¹⁵⁵

In 1906, Berr pursued these objections further in an article dedicated to Durkheimian sociology of religion (Berr 1906).¹⁵⁶ He discussed there not only Durkheim and Mauss’s 1903 article on “primitive forms of classification”, but also Mauss and Hubert’s important 1904 “Esquisse d’une théorie générale de la magie” (Mauss and Hubert [1904] 2013) and Hubert’s work on social time (Hubert [1905] 1909). Berr saw in Mauss and Hubert’s idea that the sacred was a “category of collective thought” a fundamental assumption of Durkheimian sociology – and a “serious problem” connected to the question of the legitimate domain of sociology itself.¹⁵⁷ Berr then discussed explicitly Durkheim and Mauss’s 1903 proposition that the categories of thought were “collective representations” and had a social origin. Berr objected to this conception by repeating his insistence on the role of the individual in history:

N’y a-t-il pas, chez l’individu, un besoin “inné” de classer, d’ordonner? Que ce besoin s’exprime au début de façon très gauche, que l’organisation sociale serve de modèle à la classification, il ne s’ensuit pas que tout ici soit social. L’établissement, dans la société, de groupes coordonnés et subordonnés, peut d’ailleurs, répondre, tout comme la classification logique, à une faculté innée. Ainsi, que “les conditions les plus indispensables de la fonction classificatrice” fassent, au début, défaut à l’humanité (p. 5), on ne le prouve pas: on l’affirme. (Berr 1906, 39)

¹⁵³ “Mais ce peut être une idée préconçue aussi que la préoccupation – à outrance – d’éliminer la pensée individuelle et la finalité de l’histoire.” (Berr 1904, 148)

¹⁵⁴ “Or, M. Simiand aurait cent fois raison s’il n’y avait pas chez lui une tendance trop marquée à dépouiller de toute autonomie cette fonction intellectuelle.” (Berr 1904, 148)

¹⁵⁵ In the same issue of the *Revue de Synthèse historique*, Edmond Goblot published a critical review of Durkheim and Mauss’s article (Goblot 1904).

¹⁵⁶ It should be noted that Berr was indeed exceptionally quick in becoming aware of the Durkheimian programme in the sociology of knowledge. Already prior to the publication of Durkheim’s *Formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse* (1912), he dedicated an extensive discussion to it in his *La Synthèse en histoire* (1911) (see below).

¹⁵⁷ “La catégorie du sacré est pour eux ‘une catégorie de la pensée collective’. La société rêve, désire et veut: de là naissent religion et magie. C’est une conviction profonde pour l’école durkheimienne que les représentations sont collectives à l’origine. Nous touchons ici un grave problème, puisque, à propos de sociologie religieuse, c’est, d’une façon générale, de l’extension légitime de la sociologie qu’il s’agit.” (Berr 1906, 30)

For Berr, what happened *in* society did not (always) happen *through* society.¹⁵⁸ Pretending, as he thought the Durkheimians did, that all representations were in all respects collective amounted for him to a form of partiality – a “parti-pris” – that put sociology at risk of falling back into a form of unscientific philosophy of history.¹⁵⁹

The Durkheimians did not fail to respond, resulting in a “querelle” – as Berr himself later called it (Berr 1911, 198) – on the sociological theory of the *a priori*. Mauss and Hubert, in their important preface to the collection of their works on the sociology of religion, replied to Berr’s objections (Hubert and Mauss [1909] 1929, XIX, XXV, XXXVII–XXXVIII). They interpreted the situation – quite accurately, it seems – as a conflict about the scope of sociology and its right to study hitherto philosophical or, in their terms, “dialectical” objects such as the categories of thought.¹⁶⁰ In reaction, they highlighted again the inescapably collective nature of “ways of thinking” (*façons de penser en commun*). Calendars, signs and notions such as the sacred, the soul, time – all of them were “institutions”. The individual received them through society. Hence, they were a legitimate object of sociology (Hubert and Mauss [1909] 1929, XXXVII–XXXVIII).¹⁶¹ Also, they dismissed the question whether this part of sociology should better be called “social psychology” as purely terminological.¹⁶² Whatever the name used, the crucial move was to always relate ideas to their social setting – in other words: to consider the links between “social psychology” and “social morphology”.¹⁶³ Importantly, for Mauss and Hubert this did not imply a systematic primacy of social structure over mental structure. Mental facts could indeed determine social morphology – for example, in the case of the caste system

¹⁵⁸ “Nous croyons que ce que nos sociologues appellent ‘idéation collective’ n’est pas toujours quelque chose de proprement social, que cette élaboration, qui s’accomplit *dans* la société ne se fait pas toujours *par* la société.” (Berr 1906, 40)

¹⁵⁹ “Malgré les réserves qu’elles impliquent, nous pensons avoir mis en évidence le mérite de M. Durkheim et de son école. Il ne leur manque à tous que de savoir éviter le parti-pris. Une bonne partie de leur oeuvre est neuve, solide, véritablement scientifique. Mais lorsqu’ils veulent introduire tous les phénomènes de l’histoire dans un même cadre, tout interpréter du même biais, ils ne font plus de la science, ils tendent à constituer une nouvelle philosophie de l’histoire.” (Berr 1906, 43)

¹⁶⁰ “En nous appliquant à l’étude des catégories, nous avons, paraît-il, outrepassé nos droits et l’on nous accuse de compromettre le bon renom de la sociologie, en l’étendant indûment jusqu’aux limites de la dialectique. [...] On a réservé tout ce qui est mental à la psychologie. Les sociologues n’auraient pour eux que les groupes et leurs pratiques traditionnelles.” (Hubert and Mauss [1909] 1929, XXXVII)

¹⁶¹ “Mais on oublie qu’il y a des façons de penser en commun aussi bien que des façons d’agir en commun. [...] Les notions de sacré, d’âme, de temps, etc., sont également des institutions puisqu’elles n’existent, en fait, dans l’esprit de l’individu, que revêtues de formes qu’elles ont prises dans des sociétés déterminées. L’individu les reçoit, par l’éducation, dans des formules traditionnelles. Elles sont donc objet de sociologie.” (Hubert and Mauss [1909] 1929, XXXVIII)

¹⁶² “Là-dessus on nous dit: vous faites de la psychologie sociale, et non de la sociologie. Peu importe l’étiquette.” (Hubert and Mauss [1909] 1929, XXXVIII)

¹⁶³ “Nous préférons celle de sociologues et voici pourquoi. C’est que nous ne considérons jamais les idées des peuples, abstraction faite des peuples. En sociologie, les faits de la psychologie sociale et les faits de la morphologie sociale sont liés par des liens intimes et indissolubles.” (Hubert and Mauss [1909] 1929, XXXVIII)

based on religious beliefs.¹⁶⁴ But in every case the relations between the social-structural and the social-mental level had to be explored empirically.¹⁶⁵

Berr, in turn, replied to Hubert and Mauss's response in his 1911 *La Synthèse en histoire* (Berr 1911, 197–203). He underlined that his intention was not to preserve the categories of thought from sociological study. The “querelle” turned in his view rather around the precise relationship between the social and the individual factor in the study of the evolution of these categories.¹⁶⁶ Indeed, his book contained a long section on the various forms of personal and collective individuality in history, resumed under the term – reminding of Berr's teacher Boutroux (Boutroux 1874) – “contingency” (Berr 1911, 55–113). In particular, Berr advanced the argument that, when the Durkheimians explained intellectual organization (conceptual classification) exclusively by social organization (division in classes), they came into troubles explaining social organization itself. For this, according to Berr, we needed to include in some way an individual factor.¹⁶⁷ Berr insisted here especially on the relative opposition between society and reason. Even if the latter had its origins in the former, the two must not be identified. According to Berr, we must maintain the idea of reason as independent of society: “il faut se garder de confondre l'autorité de la société et l'autorité de la raison” (Berr 1911, 201).¹⁶⁸

The importance of the individual-rational factor was especially clear in areas of advanced intellectual activity such as science.¹⁶⁹ Berr opposed here Durkheim's conception of science as the latter had expressed it in his review (Durkheim 1910) of Austrian philosopher, psychologist and sociologist Wilhelm Jerusalem's (1854-1923) pioneering article on the “Soziologie des

¹⁶⁴ “Mais cela ne veut pas dire que tous les phénomènes religieux n'aient que des causes morphologiques, que les états mentaux des groupes humains n'aient d'autre origine que les mouvements matériels de la masse sociale. Il se passe dans toute société des phénomènes qui ont pour conditions essentielles des faits mentaux. Ainsi, si des castes se sont cantonnées dans des quartiers spéciaux, c'était au nom de principes religieux.” (Hubert and Mauss [1909] 1929, XXXVIII)

¹⁶⁵ Remarkably, Mauss and Hubert provided here also an anticipated response to Ernst Cassirer who later objected – just as Berr in 1911, as we shall see – that the Durkheimian “sociological deduction of the categories” presupposed the primacy of social structure over mental structure – which would leave the basis of social structure unexplained. On the dialogue between Cassirer and the Durkheimians, see Strauss 2025.

¹⁶⁶ “Nous ne croyons pas du tout qu'en s'appliquant à l'étude des catégories, ils aient ‘outré-passé leurs droits’ et ‘compromis le bon renom de la sociologie’ [reference to Hubert and Mauss, MS]; mais nous sommes convaincu qu'ils ont tort, en s'y appliquant, de ne pas faire un départ rigoureux de ce qui est d'apport social et de ce qui est d'apport individuel dans l'évolution psychologique. Voilà notre querelle, et elle nous semble d'importance.” (Berr 1911, 197–98)

¹⁶⁷ “Mais si c'est l'organisation sociale qui se reflète dans l'organisation intellectuelle, il restera toujours à expliquer l'organisation sociale elle-même. Il semble bien que le seul moyen d'échapper à ces difficultés soit précisément de voir dans la raison le développement par un travail très lent, très compliqué, – en partie social, – d'un germe individuel très humble mais très fécond.” (Berr 1911, 199)

¹⁶⁸ “Ainsi la raison, pour être la raison, pour exprimer correctement, pour exprimer clairement la nature, doit se débarrasser des déterminations adventices dont la société l'affecte et la voile. Et, bien que la société ait contribué à former la raison, il faut se garder de confondre l'autorité de la société et l'autorité de la raison.” (Berr 1911, 201)

¹⁶⁹ More generally, Berr charged the Durkheimians with neglecting in their studies the activities in “civilisations avancées” (Berr [1911] 1953, 205).

Erkennens” (Jerusalem 1909). When Durkheim said there that science was “le produit d’une vaste coopération qui s’étend non seulement à tout l’espace, mais à tout le temps” (Durkheim 1910, 44), this introduced, according to Berr, unacceptable confusion. He insisted again on the difference between “social pressure” (on the part of society) and “rational cooperation” (on the part of science and reason).¹⁷⁰

Berr should not further change his position. In the appendix to the 1953 edition of *La Synthèse en histoire*, he discussed again the field of “sociologie de la connaissance” (Berr 1953a, 268, 270) along similar lines – now referring also to more recent authors such as Max Scheler (1874-1928), Mannheim, Georges Gurvitch or Merton (Berr 1953a, 268–73).¹⁷¹ Berr insisted again on the importance of the individual factor for creating progress and innovation in the domain of culture and knowledge.¹⁷² Especially in science, Berr maintained that “*la société ne pense pas*” (Berr 1953a, 272): it framed mental activity in science, but it was not itself the subject of this activity.¹⁷³ Science was “socialized”, according to Berr, but notions such as “social thought” (*pensée sociale*) were nonsense.¹⁷⁴ He extended this critique also to Halbwachs’s continuation of the Durkheimian programme in the latter’s sociology of “collective memory” (Halbwachs [1925] 1994; [1950] 1997b; see also 1938). Instead, Berr sided with a Durkheimian university scholar such as Georges Davy (1883-1976) who had pointed to the need to integrate the individual factor into sociological explanation (Berr 1953a, 271).¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁰ “Dans la mesure – très faible jusqu’ici – où Durkheim et son groupe s’occupent des civilisations avancées, ils font des confusions qu’il est important de signaler. [...] Et c’est en faire une plus grave encore que de dire: la science est chose éminemment sociale, ‘parce qu’elle est le produit d’une vaste coopération qui s’étend non seulement à tout l’espace, mais à tout le temps’ [reference to Durkheim’s review of Jerusalem, MS]; car c’est, en vérité, obscurcir à nouveau la notion spécifique de société, – cette notion qu’on avait le mérite d’avoir voulu et su préciser. La pression sociale doit être soigneusement distinguée de la coopération rationnelle qui s’établit entre individus – successifs et contemporains.” (Berr 1911, 208)

¹⁷¹ Berr presented his critique indeed as an insistence on what he had said some 40 years earlier: “Il me faut revenir et insister sur une critique que j’adressais, il y a quarante ans, à l’école durkheimienne, qui s’adresse aujourd’hui à l’*Année sociologique* et aux nombreux sociologues, américains et autres, qui s’annexent l’oeuvre de l’*esprit humain*: il s’agit de cette sociologie religieuse, de ces sociologies du langage, de la connaissance, de l’art, de la musique, de la civilisation en général, qui n’ont cessé de se développer et de s’enrichir.” (Berr 1953a, 268)

¹⁷² “Mais à l’*origine* et au cours de l’évolution, ce sont des besoins *humains* qui créent, c’est la pensée individuelle qui fait progresser, la civilisation. La société en tant que société ne crée rien en dehors de ce qui est nécessaire pour qu’elle *soit* et pour qu’elle *dure*; et le progrès même des institutions proprement sociales est lié à celui de l’intelligence humaine.” (Berr 1953a, 268)

¹⁷³ “A propos de la science surtout, qui est la plus haute manifestation du génie humain, de l’invention individuelle, nous répéterons ce que nous avons dit et redit: ‘*la société ne pense pas*’.” (Berr 1953a, 271–72)

¹⁷⁴ “On ne saurait évidemment nier que l’organisation sociale contribue puissamment à organiser la science elle-même, qu’elle serve à la transmettre et à la diffuser. La science est *socialisée*, et cette socialisation en accélère le progrès. Mais les expressions *pensée sociale*, *idéation collective*, que souvent nous avons rencontrées, sont des non-sens véritables.” (Berr 1953a, 271)

¹⁷⁵ “Il faudrait montrer comment le facteur individuel peut, à la condition de ne pas apparaître comme ce qui produit mais défie toute explication, être réintégré dans l’explication sociologique sans la ruiner, ni en exclure les causes sociales auxquelles s’associe au contraire sa propre causalité nodale, à la fois causée et causante.” (Davy 1949, 187)

In sum, Berr's critique of Durkheimian sociology of knowledge and its sociological account of the *a priori* thus had at least three interconnected dimensions: (1) First, it involved the legitimate extension of sociology within the whole of the social and human sciences. Berr argued here for an integration – in fact of form of subordination – of sociology into his own project of “historical synthesis”. This strategy can be understood against the background of the intellectual competition with the Durkheimian group (Prochasson 1996). (2) Second, it concerned the importance of the individual factor in cultural and intellectual development as it deployed itself in history. Berr did not promote here some naïve form of “individualism” against “sociologism” but argued for an integration of social and individual factors. He proposed a complex theory of the interrelations between the individual and the social level, framed in terms of the opposition between “contingency” and “necessity” (Berr 1911, 55–139). For Berr, the individual in society was both “cause” and “effect” (Berr [1911] 1953, 192). Sociology had to understand “ce jeu compliqué d'action et de réaction constantes” (Berr [1911] 1953, 193) between the individual and society. Berr called his alternative to the sociology of knowledge “social psychology”, “historical sociology” (e.g. Berr 1900, 6) or “collective psychology” (e.g. Berr and Febvre 1923, 365; Berr [1942] 2003).¹⁷⁶ (3) Third, Berr admonished the lack of a convincing Durkheimian account of science, ideas, intellectual, cultural activity and other forms of classifications and categories in modern – not “primitive” – societies. In these areas, the role of the individual factor appeared to Berr undeniable and had to be accounted for. All in all, Berr's critique of the Durkheimians contained both “rationalist” and “empiricist” elements. He insisted both on the relative independence of “reason” and cultural-intellectual production from society; and he charged Durkheimians with clinging to the “preconceived idea” (a form of *a priori*) of the dominance of society over the individual – at the expense of observation.

Berr's criticisms of the Durkheimian account of the categories might perhaps appear “retrograde” – a simple “resistance” to the new “sociological regime” in the name of individuality, rationalism and “social psychology” (Joly 2017, pt. 1). But the fact is that Berr touched indeed upon some sensitive issues of the Durkheimian framework as it had been executed in the first years of *L'Année sociologique*. For example, Mauss himself should later acknowledge that the absence of a sociological account of science posed a serious problem (Mauss 1927).¹⁷⁷ And also the question of innovation and dynamics – for example, where could change in categories

¹⁷⁶ For a contextualization of Berr's enterprise regarding other contemporary forms of collective or social psychology, see Mucchielli 1996.

¹⁷⁷ “Il faut reconnaître que le plan proposé et nos études elles-mêmes présentent sur ce point une très grave lacune, la plus grave peut-être de celles qui concernent les parties spéciales de la sociologie. Contrairement à la tradition Comtiste, nous n'étudions nulle part, pour elle-même, l'histoire naturelle et sociale des sciences.” (Mauss 1927, 120)

and concepts come from if intellectual organization simply reflected social organization? – should later be reconsidered in the Durkheimian tradition. Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002), for example, should insist with his “genetic structuralism” (Bourdieu 1987a, 24) on the individual-social level of the *habitus* – also for understanding innovation and creation in the case of “symbolic revolutions” (e.g. Bourdieu [1975] 1988; [1992] 1998; [1998–2000] 2013). In Berr’s reference to Davy’s description of individuals as “caused” and “causing” (Davy 1949, 187) we recognize easily the same duplicity as in Bourdieu’s characterization of the *habitus* as *structure structurée* and *structure structurante* – not to speak of Berr’s remarkable insistence on a sort of “relative autonomy” of the “intellectual function” (Berr 1904, 148). Of course, much of what Berr suggested as an alternative remained quite vague compared to the Durkheimians’ detailed empirical-historical studies. It was enveloped in Berr’s ecumenist attitude of “synthesis”. Nevertheless, some of Berr’s intuitions seem to have been right – at least, if we judge with hindsight.

In any case, we should retain several important aspects of the tensions between Berr and the Durkheimians regarding the role of the *a priori*:

(1) First, it is remarkable that even one of the intellectual contexts which was most receptive for the innovations of Durkheimian sociology in France – the “Berr galaxy” – was still critical of the project of sociologizing the *a priori* – both in its Durkheimian and its Lévy-Bruhlian variety. This illustrates the resistance which this programme faced on the part of established academic disciplines. It involved not only the defiance of professional philosophers – revealed, for example, at the occasion of the debates on Durkheim’s work at the Société française de philosophie (Société française de philosophie 1906a; 1906b; 1909; 1913). It also concerned historians, and even those, as Berr, who aimed at innovations taking the social sciences and sociology seriously (Prochasson 1996, 69–70). Historians were inclined, it seems, to emphasize the role of the individual – conceived in personal or collective terms. Perhaps also due to these hindrances, programmes of *psychologie collective* or *psychologie historique* – promoted by Berr, by Febvre and later reframed as a “history of mentalities” – were more successful in the after-war period than a genuine sociology of knowledge.¹⁷⁸ These programmes, it seems, were

¹⁷⁸ After 1945, only Georges Gurvitch promoted and institutionalized to some extent a *sociologie de la connaissance* in France. Developing his interest in this area during his exile in the United States (Gurvitch [1958] 1966, 11), Gurvitch lectured and published on the topic over a period of some 20 years, including several articles and his final book *Les cadres sociaux de la connaissance* (Gurvitch 1948; 1957; 1958; 1959; 1966). In his work, he sought to integrate French, German, Marxist, as well as American references. What is more, he also instigated empirical studies in this domain at the Centre d’études sociologiques (Marcel 2001a, 110–11). Gurvitch also founded in October 1957 at the Centre d’études sociologiques and at the 6th section of the École pratique des Hautes Études (EPHE) the “Groupe de recherches sur la sociologie de la connaissance et la sociologie de la vie morale”, with Roger Bastide (1898-1974), Jean Cazeneuve (1915-2005), Henri Lefebvre (1901-1991), Jean Duvignaud (1921-2007) and Albert Memmi (1920-2020) among its members (Cahiers internationaux de sociologie 1958; Revue française de sociologie 1960; Marcel 2001a, 111, n. 1). The aim of the group was to organize collective surveys and provide documentation on the sociology of knowledge, such as

more easily appropriated by philosophers (e.g. Metzger, Koyré) and historians (e.g. Febvre, Bloch) than the more “imperialist” Durkheimian project in its original form.

(2) Second, compared to the Durkheimian sociologization of the *a priori*, Berr – if we employ the distinctions used in Lalande’s *Vocabulaire* and elaborated by Bouvier and Feldman – stuck to the “methodological” sense of “*a priori*”. That is, following Claude Bernard’s experimental method, the *a priori* remained for Berr a simple starting point, an “*idée a priori*” or a “hypothesis” that was to be transformed via empirical testing into an “*idée a posteriori*” (Bernard [1865] 2008, 72). This was the only legitimate sense of “*a priori*” in science and history.¹⁷⁹ In science – and there was no doubt that Berr wanted history to become a full-blown science – there was no place for the *a priori* as an “*idée fixe*” or something more fundamental that conditioned all possible access to experience.¹⁸⁰ The *a priori* had to remain always revisable by experience. In this sense, whether a statement, belief or representation was *a priori* or *a posteriori* was simply a function of the position it had in scientific reasoning – as Feldman spelt out. There was no principal border between the *a priori* and the *a posteriori*.

The Durkheimians, on the contrary, included the “gnoseological” or “epistemological” sense of *a priori*. That is, the *a priori* – categories such as causality, substance, totality, but also time, space and forms of logical reasoning – indeed made all experience possible, at least within the perimeter of specific civilizations, societies or social groups.¹⁸¹ The condition, however, for integrating this sense of “*a priori*” was that the philosophical theory of knowledge was replaced by a “sociological theory of knowledge” (Durkheim 1909, 753; [1912] 2013, 25), i.e. a theory that could account at the same time for the generality and necessity of the *a priori*, and for its historical and social variability (Durkheim [1912] 2013, 18–28). The question had to be

an extensive bibliography (Groupe de la Sociologie de la Connaissance et de la Vie morale 1962). Gurvitch’s attempt at institutionalizing the sociology of knowledge in France, however, was fairly isolated and remained – not least due to Gurvitch’s own problematic position between sociology and philosophy – a sort of “half-failure” (Karady 1976).

¹⁷⁹ Remember Berr’s statement in the discussion on Bouvier: “Dans la synthèse, il y a un *a priori* légitime, qui consiste dans l’hypothèse soumise au contrôle des faits.” (Bouvier et al. 1929, 22)

¹⁸⁰ Bernard preferred ignorance to *idées fixes*, i.e. to *a prioris* that had lost the contact with experience: “[I]l vaut mieux ne rien savoir que d’avoir dans l’esprit des *idées fixes* appuyées sur des théories dont on cherche toujours la confirmation en négligeant tout ce qui ne s’y rapporte pas” (Bernard [1865] 2008, 88).

¹⁸¹ Durkheim addressed this transcendental sense of “*a priori*” when he said of the aprioristic view of categories – whose characteristics he wanted to integrate in his own theory – that “les catégories ne peuvent être dérivées de l’expérience; elles lui sont logiquement antérieures et la conditionnent” (Durkheim [1912] 2013, 18) or that “l’expérience elle-même n’est possible qu’à cette condition” (Durkheim [1912] 2013, 20). Durkheim maintained the dualism underlying this view: “La proposition fondamentale de l’apriorisme, c’est que la connaissance est formée de deux sortes d’éléments irréductibles l’un à l’autre et comme de deux couches distinctes et superposées. Notre hypothèse maintient intégralement ce principe.” (Durkheim [1912] 2013, 21) The point was to explain this dualism sociologically (see also Société française de philosophie 1913; Durkheim 1914).

answered where this transcendental or “enabling” power of the *a priori* came from and under which conditions it obtained.

At this point, aspects of the Bernardian methodological sense of “*a priori*” came back into the Durkheimian theory. The *a priori* in its transcendental meaning relied itself on experience. However, to avoid the blatant contradiction of a both experience-independent and experience-dependent *a priori*, the Durkheimians distinguished between individual experience and “collective experience” (Durkheim [1912] 2013, 623), between individual and “collective representations” (Durkheim [1912] 2013, 21–23).¹⁸² The *a priori* was dependent on collective experience – it was social, a “collective representation” – and it was independent of individual experiences and representations. The border between the *a priori* and the *a posteriori* thus became relatively porous. The transcendental meaning could now integrate the aspects of variability and revisability of the methodological meaning. In short, the Durkheimians proposed a combination of the Kantian gnoseological and the Bernardian methodological sense of “*a priori*”. Again, the downscaling of individual experience which the Durkheimian solution involved regarding the revision of the *a priori* was unacceptable for Berr.

(3) This leads, finally, to a third convergence-divergence between Berr and Durkheim. In fact, both referred positively to Claude Bernard’s conception of the experimental method. It informed, as we have seen, Berr’s understanding of “*a priori*” in science and the various debates on the topic at the Centre international de Synthèse. Durkheim, on the other hand, had used Bernard to some extent as a model for his own experimental method in sociology (Hirst [1975] 2011; Guillo 2015; Schmidt 2022), expressed in his *Règles de la méthode sociologique* (Durkheim [1894] 2007). But the difference between Berr’s and Durkheim’s appropriation of Bernard’s method and the role that “*a priori* ideas” played in it was the following: Berr maintained an almost purely negative view of the *a priori* in science and in history, even if he accepted its “synthetic” and “anticipatory” role in research. Durkheim agreed on this point to some extent with Berr when he insisted in the *Règles* on the role of *prénotions* and the necessity to discard them. Yet, Durkheim diverged from Berr in that he made the *a prioris* encapsulated in “prenotions” themselves into empirical objects for a sociology of knowledge: they were “collective representations” and thus “social facts” (Durkheim [1894] 2007, 17–19). In this respect, and although sociology had to discard these prenotions, they were not different in principle

¹⁸² For example: “Impersonnalité, stabilité, telles sont les deux caractéristiques de la vérité. Or la vie logique suppose évidemment que l’homme sait, tout au moins confusément, qu’il y a une vérité, distincte des apparences sensibles. [...] [I]l s’agit de savoir d’où il [this sentiment of appearance-independent truth, MS] venait, c’est-à-dire dans quelle expérience il était fondé. C’est dans l’expérience collective. C’est sous la forme de la pensée collective que la pensée impersonnelle s’est, pour la première fois, révélée à l’humanité; et on ne voit pas par quelle autre voie aurait pu se faire cette révélation.” (Durkheim [1912] 2013, 623)

from scientific representations which, finally, also needed collective support (e.g. Durkheim 1910; [1912] 2013, 625–26). Some form of *a priori* was inevitable even in science to the extent that it was a social activity. Thus, Durkheim sociologized the Bernardian *a priori* ideas that Berr tended to consider only as a necessary evil to be overcome by (individual) experience. The Durkheimian strategy created, of course, a particular self-referential or “reflexive” situation where sociology accounted sociologically for its own revisable *a prioris*.¹⁸³ In any case, what Berr and Durkheim finally seemed to share was a sort of “scientific” or “empiricist rationalism” (Durkheim [1894] 2007, VII; [1897] 1975; [1912] 2013, 26, n. 2; [1913] 1955, 26–27) – with different emphasis, however, on the empiricist (Berr) and the rationalist (Durkheim) components.¹⁸⁴

Metzger on the a priori in science, history and philosophy of science

There is still another crucial episode for understanding the relations between reflections on the *a priori* in the “Berr galaxy” and Durkheimian and other sociologizations and historicizations of the *a priori*. In fact, a few years after the presentation of Bouvier’s article project another discussion took place in the CIS section “Histoire des sciences”, directed at the time by already mentioned Aldo Mieli. At the meeting of this section on 20 November 1935, French historian and philosopher of science specializing in the history of chemistry Hélène Metzger presented a lecture on the topic “L’*a priori* dans la doctrine scientifique et l’histoire des sciences” (Metzger 1936), followed by a collective discussion (Mieli and Centre international de Synthèse 1936). This debate not only prolonged in some respects the discussions on the entry on “*a priori*” and

¹⁸³ This was an idea that went ultimately back to Auguste Comte – at least in Durkheim’s perception. In a letter to Lévy-Bruhl in April 1900 where Durkheim expressed his agreement with Lévy-Bruhl’s account of Comte (Lévy-Bruhl 1900), he wrote: “Une idée dans laquelle je me rencontre entièrement avec vous, c’est qu’au fond la philosophie positive est tout entière sociologie: celle-ci est partout. La vraie méthodologie est une branche de la science sociale, puisque la science est un phénomène social, et même pour Comte le phénomène social.” (Durkheim [1900] 1975b, 177) The underlying issue was, of course, which science would be responsible for the organization and classification of the sciences (see Chapter 4). We shall detect further traces of the resulting reflexive setting in the work of Hélène Metzger, for example when she said that the history of science employed “une méthode partiellement *a priori* pour étudier l’*a priori*” (Metzger 1936, 33).

¹⁸⁴ The peculiar combination of empiricism and rationalism in the French tradition could draw not only on Bernard – who emphasized the necessity to combine reason (ideas, hypotheses) and experience (observation, experimentation) in a sometimes even Kantian-sounding fashion (e.g. Bernard [1865] 2008, 39–40; for an anti-empiricist interpretation of Bernard, see Benrubi 1933, 326–33). It could be traced back to Auguste Comte who had – contrary to a widespread empiricist misconception of “positivism” – emphasized the need for “theory” in observation: “Car si, d’un côté, toute théorie positive doit nécessairement être fondée sur des observations, il est également sensible, d’un autre côté, que, pour se livrer à l’observation, notre esprit a besoin d’une théorie quelconque. Si, en contemplant les phénomènes, nous ne les rattachions point immédiatement à quelques principes, non seulement il nous serait impossible de combiner ces observations isolées, et, par conséquent, d’en tirer aucun fruit, mais nous serions même entièrement incapables de les retenir; et, le plus souvent, les faits resteraient inaperçus sous nos yeux.” (Comte [1830–1835] 1998, 23; see also Elias [1970] 1986, 41–43) For the relations between Comte and Bernard, see Canguilhem [1943/1966] 2013, 41–42; Petit 1978.

“*a posteriori*” for the *Vocabulaire historique*. It also included important references to the then probably most prominent sociological account of knowledge: the studies on “primitive mentalities” developed – under the impact of the Durkheimian programme – by philosopher and sociologist Lucien Lévy-Bruhl.

Hélène Metzger, née Bruhl, was indeed Lévy-Bruhl’s niece and explored some of her uncle’s ideas for the study of the history of science (Metzger 1930).¹⁸⁵ Metzger had acquired – against the resistance of her family, but encouraged by her uncle – a solid background in crystallography.¹⁸⁶ Having lost her husband, Paul Metzger, early in the First World War, she defended a thesis on the history of crystallography and presented it under the supervision of philosopher André Lalande in 1918 (Metzger 1918). At the Sorbonne, she was in contact not only with Lalande – who should remain an important supporter –, but also with critical idealist philosopher Léon Brunschvicg – whose wife, feminist politician Cécile Brunschvicg (1877-1946) was a friend of Metzger’s – and with philosopher and historian of science Gaston Milhaud. Living of the pension she received as a widow and of personal financial resources, Metzger turned to the history of chemistry. As a woman, however, she had little chance of obtaining a stable academic position (Chimisso 2019, 3) – despite the recognition she received from her supervisors and peers (she won two prizes of the Académie des sciences morales et politiques) and the contacts she entertained with eminent historians of science such as Émile Meyerson (Chimisso and Freudenthal 2003) or George Sarton. Involved in numerous activities promoting the history of science nationally and internationally, Metzger became in 1930 secretary of the recently founded section “Histoire des sciences” of the Centre international de Synthèse – and one of the section’s most active members. The CIS, together with Mieli’s journal *Archeion*, became indeed Metzger’s main intellectual network. It was in this context that she developed her vision of the history and philosophy of science and of the role of the *a priori*. Also, it was Metzger who introduced Russian-French historian of science Alexandre Koyré in 1935 into the “Histoire des sciences” section (in 1937-38, she should replace Koyré at the École pratique des hautes

¹⁸⁵ In the English-speaking world, Metzger has been known for a long time only as one of the (then) obscure references mentioned in the preface to Thomas S. Kuhn’s (1922-1996) seminal *Structure of Scientific Revolutions* – alongside Alexandre Koyré, Émile Meyerson (1859-1933), Anneliese Maier (1905-1971) and Ludwik Fleck (1896-1961) (Kuhn [1962] 1996, vii–ix; see also Freudenthal [2006] 2015, 107). To some extent, Metzger had also been recognized in the French-speaking literature as an important contributor to the activities in the history of science at the Centre international de Synthèse (Redondi 1996). In the last 30 years or so, her work has been rediscovered largely due to the efforts of Israeli-French historian of science Gad Freudenthal (1944-) (Metzger [1914–1939] 1987; Freudenthal 1990; [2006] 2015) and Italian philosopher and historian of science Cristina Chimisso (Chimisso 2001b; Chimisso and Freudenthal 2003; Chimisso 2008, 109–23; 2019). Recently, also the French journal *Zilsel* has drawn attention to Metzger and the interest of her work for contemporary history and philosophy of science (Lamy and Saint-Martin 2023; Metzger 2023).

¹⁸⁶ The following biographical sketch is based on Freudenthal [2006] 2015; Chimisso 2019; Lamy and Saint-Martin 2023.

études). With the German occupation of France starting in 1940, Metzger's situation became increasingly difficult and she retreated from Paris to Lyon. In February 1944, she was arrested, deported to Germany and died in March in Auschwitz under unclear circumstances.

Metzger's November 1935 lecture on the role of the *a priori* in science and the history of science had a noteworthy prehistory. Indeed, it was Berr who had instigated Metzger to give this lecture on the topic of the *a priori* after a previous talk of hers at the CIS on 23 January 1935, entitled "L'histoire des sciences peut-elle résoudre les problèmes soulevés par la théorie de la connaissance?" and published as "Tribunal de l'histoire et théorie de la connaissance scientifique" (Metzger 1935b; see also Fauque 2022, 303–4).¹⁸⁷ In the course of this first lecture, the topic of the *a priori* had already come up. Metzger had underlined, in fact, that the history of science should not abandon the idea of the *a priori* and that by maintaining this perspective it could become a guide for philosophers, sociologists, psychologists and scientists.¹⁸⁸ At the same time, she obviously did not understand "*a priori*" in the traditional Kantian sense, for she argued that the history of science could teach philosophers precisely to abandon the idea of definitive concepts – both *a priori* or *a posteriori*.¹⁸⁹

In the discussion of Metzger's first lecture, Berr immediately took up the question of the *a priori*. Berr understood Metzger as opposing science to philosophy – the latter operating with "*a priori* ideas" – and argued against this view. For Berr, philosophy had to be based on science and in science the *a priori* occurred only in the form of a hypothesis to be tested empirically.¹⁹⁰ Berr disagreed also on the role of the history of science for philosophy. According to Berr, current science was more important for philosophy. The history of science was rather interesting for the psychologist and for a "study of the human mind".¹⁹¹ Against Berr, Metzger insisted

¹⁸⁷ In the November lecture, Metzger referred to Berr's demand: "Mme METZGER dit qu'elle a traité ce sujet difficile sur la demande de M. Berr, car elle avait abordé l'*a priori* dans la communication de l'an dernier sans toucher à fond le problème." (Mieli and Centre international de Synthèse 1936, 75)

¹⁸⁸ "Entre les deux branches du dilemme habilement posé par une dialectique savante et sûre d'elle même, nous allons tenter découvrir la route royale ou le sentier rude qui permettra à l'histoire des sciences de montrer que si elle ne peut espérer remplacer la philosophie, si elle ne peut abandonner entièrement l'*a priori* sans devenir inconsistante et vague, elle peut du moins éclairer la méditation du philosophe construisant la théorie de la connaissance; elle peut aussi orienter l'attention du psychologue, du sociologue et du savant qui dans les divers domaines où s'exercent leur activité feront peut-être à son contact des découvertes importantes." (Metzger 1935b, 5)

¹⁸⁹ "En définitive, il semble bien que l'étude de l'histoire des sciences guérirait le philosophe (si la maladie était curable) de l'étrange manie de vouloir poser *a priori* ou *a posteriori* des concepts définitifs sur lesquels l'esprit pourrait appuyer sa soif de certitude, et que l'on pourrait appeler à juste titre des concepts de droit divin." (Metzger 1935b, 13)

¹⁹⁰ "M. Berr a été très intéressé par la communication quoiqu'un peu surpris. Pourquoi Mme Metzger oppose-t-elle la philosophie et la science, en considération que la philosophie doit s'appuyer sur des idées *a priori*? je pense personnellement que bien loin de s'opposer à la science, la philosophie repose aujourd'hui sur l'ensemble des connaissances scientifiques." (Mieli and Centre international de Synthèse 1935, 82)

¹⁹¹ "Je vais vous poser deux questions: 1) En ce qui concerne la philosophie, ne croyez-vous pas que l'étude directe de la science lui rende les plus grands services, l'histoire des sciences étant surtout utile dans la synthèse historique? 2) Qu'appellez-vous théorie de la connaissance? Je suppose que c'est l'étude de la faculté de connaître;

that *both* philosophy and science – one might also add the history of science – needed a form of *a priori* and of “hypothesis”.¹⁹² For Berr, who distinguished between “theory”, “hypothesis” and “*a priori*”, this crucial point should be discussed in more detail at a separate occasion – a remark that announced the topic of the session in November 1935.¹⁹³

The discussion in January 1935 contained some further remarkable exchanges. Alexandre Koyré – whom Metzger had introduced to the CIS section “Histoire des sciences” in the very same session – sided with Metzger against Berr and went even further than Metzger in the importance he attributed to the history of science. For Koyré, the interest of the discipline for philosophy lay in the fact that it confronted researchers with very different “mentalities” – Koyré used the same Lévy-Bruhlian term as Metzger – and thus allowed also to ask what was “permanent” in the human mind.¹⁹⁴ Moreover, Charles Serrus – who also assisted to the session – introduced the reference to the work of Brunschvicg and the notion that basic concepts or categories such as causality varied historically.¹⁹⁵

The interest in Metzger’s lecture was sufficiently strong for the discussion to be continued a week later, on 30 January 1935. And again, Berr came immediately back to the issue of the *a priori*. He insisted again on his idea that philosophy must not go beyond the sciences and that the sciences contained an *a priori* only in a limited sense.¹⁹⁶ In fact, it might be the case that the *a priori* could be dispensed with altogether. In this context, he made a remarkable reference to a certain contemporary “positive philosophy”: “Il y a un *a priori* qu’une philosophie positive rejette aujourd’hui.” (Mieli and Centre international de Synthèse 1935, 84) This was doubtlessly an allusion to the movement known in France at the time as *École de Vienne*, i.e. the

si je ne me trompe pas sur ce point, je puis dire que l’histoire des sciences apporte là des éléments très importants. Si l’histoire des sciences n’a pas une importance primordiale pour le philosophe, en général, elle fournit au psychologue, pour l’étude de l’esprit humain, des données indispensables.” (Mieli and Centre international de Synthèse 1935, 82)

¹⁹² “Je ne croyais pas avoir fait de différences entre la philosophie et la science qui ont besoin toutes deux d’hypothèses et d’*a priori*.” (Mieli and Centre international de Synthèse 1935, 82)

¹⁹³ “Nous pourrions revenir sur ce sujet; la théorie est indispensable mais elle ne saurait se confondre ni avec l’hypothèse ni avec l’*a priori*.” (Mieli and Centre international de Synthèse 1935, 82)

¹⁹⁴ “En ce qui concerne les rapports entre l’histoire des sciences et la philosophie, j’irai plus loin que M. Berr et je le contredirai peut-être. L’histoire des sciences présente pour le philosophe plus d’intérêt que la science elle-même; il se pourrait que nous soyons trop liés par le moment présent dans notre interprétation de la science; en étudiant l’histoire des sciences nous découvrons des mentalités fort différentes des nôtres; et cependant, comme notre maître Meyerson nous l’a appris, c’est par l’étude de ce qui nous choque que nous parvenons à découvrir ce qu’il y a de permanent dans l’esprit humain. L’histoire des sciences est plus importante que Mme Metzger ne le pense.” (Mieli and Centre international de Synthèse 1935, 83)

¹⁹⁵ “Voilà enfin le problème essentiel; les différents concepts, comme la notion de causalité varient continuellement; vous auriez dû parler davantage de M. Brunschvicg qui a essayé de montrer cela; les conclusions qu’il tire de l’histoire des sciences sont très importantes pour la théorie de la connaissance scientifique.” (Mieli and Centre international de Synthèse 1935, 84)

¹⁹⁶ “Il ne faut pas philosopher en dehors ou au delà de ce que comportent les sciences; le savant aurait le droit de protester. Il y a un *a priori* qu’une philosophie positive rejette aujourd’hui. L’histoire des sciences permet d’étudier le rapport de la connaissance scientifique à la philosophie, mais d’autre part le rôle et le pouvoir de l’esprit humain pour connaître.” (Mieli and Centre international de Synthèse 1935, 84)

Vienna Circle. Indeed, the Vienna Circle had made of the rejection of the Kantian “synthetic *a priori*” an official cornerstone of its philosophical orientation of “logical empiricism”¹⁹⁷. The group’s 1929 manifesto had mentioned the point explicitly.¹⁹⁸ And, as we have noted above, the *Revue de Synthèse* had published translations and reviews of the works of the Vienna Circle since 1932 – with Bouvier as the main *agent de liaison*. What is more, in 1935, the Centre was involved as a local co-organizer in the preparation of the first International Congress for Scientific Philosophy that was to be held in Paris in September. So, the discussions on the *a priori* at the Centre international de Synthèse were at least in part informed by the reception of logical empiricism in France.¹⁹⁹

The continuation of the discussion of Metzger’s paper in January 1935 also contained a hint on the sources of Berr’s own view of the *a priori* – a view which he conceived apparently as being compatible with logical empiricism. In this second discussion the reference to Claude Bernard’s notion of *a priori* ideas – already present in Bouvier’s article in 1929 and the ensuing debate – came again to play a prominent role. Berr himself introduced Bernard’s account of the *a priori*: “Chez Claude Bernard, il y a de la défiance vis à vis des *conceptions a priori*, il accepte cependant l’hypothèse à titre provisoire.” (Mieli and Centre international de Synthèse 1935, 84) Berr was assisted immediately by another participant in the discussion, Paul Mouy (1888-1946), a French philosopher of science with a background in the *néo-criticisme* of Charles Renouvier (1815-1903) and Octave Hamelin (1856-1907) (Mouy 1927; Hamelin 1927), who had been introduced by Metzger in the section “Histoire des sciences” in the preceding session (just as Koyré). Mouy not only clarified that “*a priori* idea” meant in Bernard a hypothesis in need of verification. Interestingly, he also emphasized the variable nature of the *a priori* and joined Metzger in arguing that the history of science could reveal this point.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁷ Following most literature on this movement (e.g. Stadler [1997] 2015), I prefer the both wider and more precise label “logical empiricism” over “logical positivism” or “neo-positivism” (often used with negative connotations). On the historical and conceptual issues involved in these different labels, see Uebel 2013.

¹⁹⁸ “In solcher Weise wird durch die logische Analyse nicht nur die Metaphysik im eigentlichen, klassischen Sinne des Wortes überwunden, insbesondere die scholastische Metaphysik und die der Systeme des deutschen Idealismus, sondern auch die versteckte Metaphysik des Kantischen und des modernen *Apriorismus*. Die wissenschaftliche Weltauffassung kennt keine unbedingt gültige Erkenntnis aus reiner Vernunft, keine ‘synthetischen Urteile a priori’, wie sie der Kantischen Erkenntnistheorie und erst recht aller vor- und nachkantischen Ontologie und Metaphysik zugrunde liegen. Die Urteile der Arithmetik, der Geometrie, gewisse Grundsätze der Physik, wie sie von Kant als Beispiele apriorischer Erkenntnis genommen werden, kommen nachher zur Erörterung. Gerade in der Ablehnung der Möglichkeit synthetischer Erkenntnis a priori besteht die Grundthese des modernen Empirismus. Die wissenschaftliche Weltauffassung kennt nur Erfahrungssätze über Gegenstände aller Art und die analytischen Sätze der Logik und Mathematik.” (Verein Ernst Mach et al. [1929] 2006, 14)

¹⁹⁹ In Bouvier’s 1929 article project – little surprisingly, given the chronology – nothing had been said about the radical critique of the *a priori* by Logical Empiricists. By contrast, in the debate on Metzger a few years later this position had already become an important part of the background.

²⁰⁰ “Le seul a priori qu’il [Claude Bernard, MS] admette, ce qu’il appelle l’idée a priori, c’est l’hypothèse qui doit être vérifiée. En envisageant de façon très générale les rapports de la science et de la philosophie, on pourrait

In the context of the two meetings on Metzger's "Tribunal de l'histoire" in January, Berr must have asked Metzger to elaborate the topic of the *a priori*. This is, besides the *Vocabulaire historique*, another case where Berr pushed towards clarifying the notion "*a priori*" – this time in the history of science. Metzger followed Berr's demand. She devoted her lecture in November 1935 exclusively to the question of the *a priori*. And she presented the talk as the first result of an even more comprehensive project on the role of the *a priori* in science.²⁰¹ The opening of Metzger's talk in November might be read as a hint that Berr's demand and encouragement had been important for Metzger to dare to frontally address the topic of the *a priori*.²⁰² When Metzger mentioned a "hardiesse qui m'effraye moi même" (Metzger 1936, 29), this indicated perhaps – beyond conventional tropes of humility – the inner resistance she had to surmount when speaking as a woman in a mostly masculine domain about a highly legitimate and important subject – and, what is more, proposing a conception that contrasted markedly with many established ways of understanding the *a priori*.

Between Metzger's first lecture in January and her second one in November yet another important event took place: the International Congress of Scientific Philosophy, held from 16 to 21 September 1935 at the Sorbonne in Paris (Stadler [1997] 2015, 177–83). As Bouvier, Metzger assisted to the congress and wrote a review of it for Mieli's *Archeion* (Metzger 1935a). But contrary to Bouvier – who, in fact, was quite cautious and mostly positive in his judgments (perhaps against the background of his own engagement with the work of Mach) (Bouvier 1935) – Metzger took a highly critical stance. Her review was certainly among those which Bouvier sent in 1936 to Neurath on the latter's demand to know more about potential allies in France. Bouvier felt visibly the need to take his distance from these reviews, emphasizing to Neurath that "[c]es comptes-rendus n'engagent que leurs auteurs"²⁰³.

Metzger did not hide her dislike for the *École de Vienne*, in particular its claim to novelty and its insistence on logical discipline.²⁰⁴ Most remarkably, she took issue with the logical

dire que celle-ci est la conscience de la science. Or les *a priori* changent, car les problèmes changent suivant les époques; dès lors la philosophie pour prendre conscience des *a priori* qui se sont succédés [sic] comme des *a priori* actuels, doit faire appel à l'histoire." (Mieli and Centre international de Synthèse 1935, 84)

²⁰¹ "Dans l'article ci-dessus l'auteur a apporté et livré aux historiens des sciences les premiers résultats de son enquête sur le rôle de l'*a priori* dans la formation de la doctrine scientifique. Il serait heureux si les lecteurs intéressés par son effort voulaient bien lui communiquer leurs réflexions et leurs critiques afin de l'aider à poursuivre son effort et à mener à bien le travail entrepris." (Metzger 1936, 42)

²⁰² "Avec une hardiesse qui m'effraye moi même, je vais tenter aujourd'hui d'attirer votre méditation studieuse sur un problème extrêmement vaste qu'un gros in folio d'une écriture très serrée n'arriverait pas à épuiser" (Metzger 1936, 29).

²⁰³ "Je vous envoie d'autre part des comptes-rendus critiques parus dans ARCHEION sur des ouvrages du Cercle de Vienne. D'autres suivront. Ces comptes-rendus n'engagent que leurs auteurs. Les Français sont toujours très individualistes en philosophie. Il n'y a certainement pas en France une 'attitude de groupe' vis-à-vis du Cercle de Vienne." (Bouvier to Neurath, 03/04/1936, IVC, Neurath archives, no. 216)

²⁰⁴ For example: "les membres de l'École de Vienne croient dire pour la première fois une chose qui ailleurs qu'à Vienne est un lieu commun philosophique" (Metzger 1935a, 422).

empiricists' rejection of the *a priori*. Indeed, at the congress, Hans Reichenbach – a former student of Einstein and Cassirer and leader of the Berlin group (Milkov and Peckhaus 2013; Heis 2013; Milkov 2015) – had presented one of the opening lectures on the idea of the “disaggregation of the *a priori*” (Reichenbach 1936) in the course of the history of science – a development expressed in the new philosophy of logical empiricism. As the Vienna Circle manifesto in 1929, Reichenbach defined “logical empiricism” or “l’empirisme logistique” precisely by its rejection of the Kantian synthetic *a priori*. Between the analytic, tautological statements of logic and mathematics, on the one hand, and the synthetic statements based on sense experience, on the other, there was no longer a place for a Kantian “synthetic *a priori*”.²⁰⁵ In her review, Metzger mocked Reichenbach’s idea by arguing that, despite all their insistence on the disaggregation of the *a priori*, logical empiricists entertained another disastrous *a priori*: the ignorance of original works in philosophy, the history of philosophy and the history of science.²⁰⁶ In her November lecture on the *a priori*, this opposition to logical empiricism’s “disaggregation of the *a priori*” should again play a role (Metzger 1936, 41). It served Metzger as a sort of proxy for a critique of Berr’s Bernardian methodological conception of the *a priori*.

What was then Metzger’s own position on the *a priori* in science and the history of science about? Her question was “s’il est vrai que l’*a priori* joue obligatoirement un rôle de premier plan dans l’élaboration de toute doctrine scientifique; et dans l’affirmative, [...] quel est ce rôle” (Metzger 1936, 29). Immediately, Metzger eschewed properly philosophical debates on the *a priori*.²⁰⁷ In a way, she avoided precisely what had been the goal of Bouvier’s article for the

²⁰⁵ “La science de nos jours ne croit plus aux capacités législatives d’une raison pure. Tout ce que nous savons du monde est tiré de l’expérience, et les transformations des données empiriques sont purement tautologiques, analytiques. Ce qu’on avait pris pour des lois *a priori* synthétiques ne sont que des lois empiriques très générales: les lois de l’espace et du temps, la loi de la causalité, la loi de la conservation de la substance, et toutes les autres. Et les transformations mathématiques qu’on avait cru *a priori* synthétiques ne sont qu’analytiques; le concept du nombre, avant tout, est révélé comme une construction logique qui ne fait qu’embrasser, dans une forme abrégée, des opérations tautologiques, analytiques. Pour démontrer cela, l’empirisme s’est uni à la logistique, et cet empirisme logistique est la forme contemporaine de ce courant historique de la philosophie, issue de la critique des sciences. [...] C’est cette union entre l’empirisme et la logistique qui constitue la base de ce mouvement philosophique qui nous réunit à ce Congrès et que nous appelons empirisme logistique.” (Reichenbach 1936, 32–33)

²⁰⁶ “Ce qui est inquiétant c’est aussi que les membre de l’École de Vienne qui combattent les *a priori* de toutes leurs forces, en laissent cependant subsister un à la base de leur travail; il s’agit de l’ignorance systématique, spontanée d’abord, voulue ensuite, des travaux originaux des philosophes, de l’histoire de la philosophie et de l’histoire de la science. Cette ignorance *a priori* et naïve rend très difficile de porter un jugement équitable sur l’œuvre actuelle de ces démolisseurs juvéniles, et sur les conséquences lointaines de leurs efforts; car si, parfois, ils essayent avec une violence inouïe d’enfoncer des portes largement ouvertes, si d’autres fois après avoir passé par ces portes, ils croient avoir fait tomber les murs d’une forteresse millénaire, ils nous apportent aussi des aperçus intéressants sur la sciences actuelle.” (Metzger 1935a, 422) For Metzger’s critique of the Vienna Circle, see also Chimisso 2019, 94–96.

²⁰⁷ Metzger asked her audience at the beginning “de laisser de côté pour le moment les différentes manières de concevoir l’*a priori* que les penseurs les plus grands dont l’humanité puisse s’enorgueillir ont pu exposer au cours de leurs recherches mémorables” (Metzger 1936, 29). In an enumeration of what she was not going to address, she included also “la critique Kantienne” (Metzger 1936, 29). She made it clear that, in her view, this work was not very helpful for understanding the pressing issues in the work of the historian of science: “ne

Vocabulaire historique. Metzger's own starting point was instead the practice of the historian of science, especially the historian of chemistry, confronted with texts from past science. These texts were on several levels difficult to understand and presented historians with a sort of dilemma: either project their own "current mentality" (*notre mentalité actuelle*) onto the "past mentality" (*mentalité d'autrefois*) of workers in the field – "anachronism", as one might say (Chimisso 2019, chap. 1); or accept that past science was completely incomprehensible – which would make the history of science futile, as Metzger thought.²⁰⁸

As an alternative to this unattractive dilemma, Metzger proposed the view that the history of science itself involved an *a priori* in a specific sense, a sense which, she emphasized, was stronger than the notion of *a priori* as "hypothesis". The latter meaning, of course, went back to Claude Bernard, had many adherents at the Centre and had been discussed in the sessions in January. Metzger's stronger *a priori* did not have the status of a more or less contingent hypothesis that we could choose to accept or reject. It was inevitable in the work of the historian of science. According to Metzger, historians of science found themselves in a peculiar methodological circle.²⁰⁹ They sought to understand past scientists' *a prioris* – their "mentality" as Metzger said with Lévy-Bruhl; and they did so by using a method that was itself at least in part *a priori*, i.e. that involved *a prioris* on the part of historians of science:

L'histoire de la pensée scientifique admet donc à sa base un *a priori* qui est tout autre chose qu'une vulgaire hypothèse de travail que l'on peut prendre ou qu'on peut laisser comme un instrument de menuiserie ou de laboratoire; [...] l'historien des sciences suppose qu'il peut et qu'il doit pénétrer [...] dans les mentalités des plus diverses des penseurs qui ont voulu connaître le monde; l'historien des sciences sait enfin que c'est dans son âme à lui qu'il doit parvenir à ressusciter, ou tout au moins à reconstituer, les états d'âme des savants [...] mais il sait aussi qu'il ne dispose d'aucun autre réactif que lui même; [...] il propose modestement ses conclusions, il ne cherche pas à les imposer; il demande aux autres historiens de vérifier ou de rectifier ses propres assertions ... [sic] il proclame enfin qu'il ne faut pas hésiter à employer une méthode partiellement *a priori* [in the history of science, MS] pour étudier l'*a priori* [in science, MS] (Metzger 1936, 32–33).

This stronger notion of *a priori* necessitated, Metzger acknowledged, an extension and adaptation of the usual sense of "*a priori*" – thus, as in Bouvier, there was also a terminological

nous laissons pas aller à la tentation d'étudier immédiatement toutes les théories concernant l'*a priori* car la vie est courte et que les exigences de notre labeur sont immenses" (Metzger 1936, 31).

²⁰⁸ "Pourquoi dans ce cas transporter les exigences de notre mentalité actuelle que nous sommes habitués à considérer comme allant de soi, dans une mentalité d'autrefois fort différente de la nôtre et qui vraisemblablement ignorait ces exigences?" (Metzger 1936, 31) And the alternative: "vous déclarerez en effet que la pensée de nos prédécesseurs lointains se réduisait à une douce folie dont nous ne pouvons comprendre ni les ressorts, ni les motifs; vous rendrez par cela même le labeur des historiens des sciences inutile" (Metzger 1936, 31).

²⁰⁹ Indeed, Metzger's method has been interpreted as a "hermeneutics of the history of science" (Freudenthal [2006] 2015, 134–48).

dimension to Metzger's talk. Metzger referred here explicitly to the definition of "*a priori*" in her teacher André Lalande's *Vocabulaire* (Lalande [1902–1923] 2010a) – an entry used also in 1929 by Bouvier – with its distinction between a "gnoseological" sense (epitomized by Kant) and a "methodological" sense (epitomized by Claude Bernard) of "*a priori*" (see above).²¹⁰ Metzger emphasized especially a phrase of the *Vocabulaire* which underlined the *relative* independence of experience but has disappeared from later editions: The *a priori* designated notions that were independent of experience "au moins relativement c'est à dire que l'expérience suppose et ne suffit pas à expliquer alors même qu'elles [notions, MS] n'ont d'application que dans l'expérience" (cited after Metzger 1936, 33).²¹¹

To account for the *a priori* in both science and the history of science, Metzger introduced a further meaning which was different in two important respects. On the one hand, this *a priori* was more fundamental than the "gnoseological" sense in Lalande's *Vocabulaire*: "l'*a priori* ne représentera pas seulement les notions toutes faites préalables à l'expérience et sur lesquelles la description de l'expérience s'appuie; l'*a priori* représentera encore les tendances fondamentales qui engendrent ces notions" (Metzger 1936, 33).²¹² But on the other hand, it also implied the possibility of historical variation of this fundamental level: "l'*a priori* n'est pas et ne peut être toujours et partout semblable à lui même; ou mieux qu'il n'y a pas qu'un *a priori*, mais de multiples *a priori* très différents les uns des autres parfois hétérogènes et incompatibles" (Metzger 1936, 33).²¹³ Metzger identified this new, broader and dynamic sense of "*a priori*" with the term popularized by Lévy-Bruhl: "*mentalité*". In this sense, "certaines formes de doctrines dérivent autant de l'expérience et de l'observation que de la mentalité du chercheur" (Metzger 1936, 33).

As Lévy-Bruhl, Metzger characterized mentalities in terms of their "orientations"²¹⁴ – a term Lévy-Bruhl had used to distinguish the use of concepts in "prelogical" mentalities from their

²¹⁰ "[J]e vais être obligée d'étendre le sens de l'*a priori* un peu au delà de la définition indiquée par l'admirable vocabulaire de M. Lalande" (Metzger 1936, 33) Metzger also spoke of "l'adapter" (Metzger 1936, 33).

²¹¹ I could not yet locate in which edition precisely this important phrase disappeared (at the latest, in the 5th edition of 1947). At the time of Metzger's talk, the article on "*a priori*" had already been published in four editions, the earliest being the publication in the *Bulletin* of the Société française de philosophie (Société française de philosophie 1902b) and in the first collected 1926 edition (Lalande [1902–1923] 1926).

²¹² Metzger distinguished here also terminologically between an "actual" and "potential *a priori*": "[P]our parler le langage de l'école: à l'*a priori* en *acte* qui est concrétisé par des notions premières, nous allons ajouter ajouter l'*a priori* en *puissance* et latent qui au contact de l'expérience de la vie (et non pas seulement de l'expérience scientifique) prend effectivement la forme de l'*a priori* en acte." (Metzger 1936, 33)

²¹³ Metzger seemed aware of the radicality of her claim for she added immediately: "Cette affirmation qui va peut-être exciter votre étonnement devrait être étayée d'une démonstration irréprochable et de la présentation de nombreuses pièces à conviction, car je sais bien qu'il ne suffit pas d'assurer dogmatiquement mais qu'il faudrait surtout prouver" (Metzger 1936, 33–34).

²¹⁴ Metzger spoke, for example, of "ces chercheurs qui en vertu de l'orientation de leur mentalité ne songeaient pas à se défendre contre l'erreur ou la superstition croyaient avec une bonne foi naïve non seulement tout ce

use in “logical thought” (e.g. Lévy-Bruhl [1910] 1951, 447–48).²¹⁵ Since for Metzger there was a multiplicity of sometimes incompatible *a priori*s, she distinguished two fundamental “types of *a priori*” – apparently an equivalent to “orientations” of mentalities: what she called “expansive thought” (*pensée expansive*), on the one hand, and “reflected thought” (*pensée réfléchie*), on the other. Both had their specific *a priori*s. Metzger connected expansive thought explicitly to Lévy-Bruhl’s “primitive mentality” (Metzger 1936, 36) – although she refrained from calling it “prelogical” or “mystical” (Metzger 1936, 37) – and “reflected thought” to modern logical thinking.²¹⁶ Drawing on the history of chemistry and alchemy, Metzger characterized expansive thought by thinking in “acting analogies” (*analogie agissante*) – an equivalent to Lévy-Bruhl’s “law of participation” (Lévy-Bruhl [1910] 1951, chap. 2; Metzger 1936, 36). Reflected thought, on the other hand, was characterized by its “polemical attitude”, i.e. its constant critique of error, superstition and obscurity.²¹⁷ This critical orientation was what the “modern spirit” (*l’esprit moderne*) or mentality was based on.²¹⁸ The implication was, of course, that also scientific thought had its specific, inevitable and indelible *a priori* – a view that contrasted markedly with Berr’s Bernardian belief that the *a priori* in science was only provisional and – as a “hypothesis” – could be confirmed or refuted by experience.

At the end of her lecture, Metzger situated her proposal indeed vis-à-vis this methodological conception of the *a priori* which was common at the Centre, as we have seen. She anticipated the question of her colleagues whether human thought could, in the end, dispose of these *a priori* elements.²¹⁹ However, instead of discussing directly Berr’s view, Metzger came again

que leurs collègues racontaient, mais encore tout ce qu’ils imaginaient de beau et d’inattendu” (Metzger 1936, 34).

²¹⁵ French philosopher and anthropologist Frédéric Keck (1974-) has emphasized the importance and the Kantian background of the notion of “orientation” in Lévy-Bruhl: “La notion d’orientation est centrale chez Lévy-Bruhl. Elle implique d’analyser comment l’esprit humain s’oriente dans l’expérience de façon différente en fonction des objets qui retiennent son attention. Cette notion est introduite en philosophie par Kant dans l’opuscule ‘Qu’est-ce que s’orienter dans la pensée?’, écrit en 1786 en réponse à la défense du sentiment subjectif de croyance chez Jacobi. [...] Elle est ensuite reprise dans la psychologie de T. Ribot et G. Dumas pour analyser les fonctions mentales de l’attention.” (Keck in Lévy-Bruhl [1922] 2010, 58–59, n. 2)

²¹⁶ Metzger could not entirely avoid the difficulties of Lévy-Bruhl’s negative definition of “prelogical” or “alogical” thought and the issue of the transition from prelogical to logical thought. For Metzger as well, expansive thought was simply the contrary of reflected thought: “Nous dirons plutôt que la pensée expansive est entièrement irréfléchie; mais alors comment passe-t-on de la pensée irréfléchie à la pensée réfléchie dont nous allons brièvement étudier les *a priori*?” (Metzger 1936, 37)

²¹⁷ “[L]a pensée réfléchie se caractérise tout d’abord par son attitude constamment polémique; ne mettant sa confiance que dans son propre jugement la pensée réfléchie dit ‘non’ à tout ce qui lui paraît obscur, irrecevable, incroyable; ses décrets positifs sont toujours la contrepartie d’un refus; ses *a priori* dans leur forme originelle et efficace résultent [sic] toujours d’une défense contre l’erreur et la superstition.” (Metzger 1936, 38) With hindsight, statements such as these sound, of course, very much like Bachelard’s contemporaneous characterizations of the “scientific spirit” as “polemical” (e.g. Bachelard [1934] 2017, 16; [1938] 2011, 24).

²¹⁸ Metzger used the phrase “l’esprit moderne, en se basant sur les *a priori* qui résultent d’un sage jugement négatif” (Metzger 1936, 40).

²¹⁹ “Abordons en dernier lieu la question qui vous brûle les lèvres: ‘La pensée humaine peut-elle se passer entièrement d’*a priori*?’.” (Metzger 1936, 41)

back to the *École de Vienne*'s thesis of a “disaggregation of the *a priori*” – which she put in a row with unnamed “positivists” and “nominalists” (Metzger 1936, 41). To the logical empiricist view, Metzger now objected that it neglected the productivity of expansive thought – which remained, according to Metzger, an important source of scientific activity. But by doing so, paradoxically, logical empiricists would also undermine reflected thought – which needed, as it were, expansive thought for providing the materials on which it could judge (see already the argument in Metzger 1930, 22–23). The result of all this, in Metzger's view, could only be a sort of violent dogmatism: “la plus barbare des scolastiques” (Metzger 1936, 41). “Disaggregating the *a priori*” meant for Metzger to misunderstand its productive or enabling role (besides its role in the reception of sense data). She compared human intelligence to the phosphorescent eyes of deep-sea fish:

[L]'intelligence humaine, tels les yeux phosphorescents des poissons des profondeurs est productrice de lumière en même temps qu'organe de vision; si on l'empêche d'apporter sa propre clarté elle deviendra vite aveugle. L'historien des sciences conclura qu'aucune méthode, qu'aucun procédé verbal ou industriel [sic] aussi perfectionné qu'il soit ne peut efficacement se substituer à la pensée et à l'éveil continu de l'esprit. (Metzger 1936, 41–42)

In short, Metzger opposed the logical empiricists' “disaggregation of the *a priori*” because the history of science – neglected in her view by the *École de Vienne* – indicated the crucial role of the *a priori*: both in science itself, but also – this was an original aspect of Metzger's talk – in the work of the historian of science. Measured against the results and the concrete work of the history of science, Metzger seemed to believe, the logical empiricist picture of science was descriptively false (and, as several remarks betrayed, in some way also morally wrong).²²⁰ And undoubtedly, Metzger saw a convergence between this extreme position and Berr's methodological use of “*a priori*” – the latter referring positively to the former in the January discussion, as we have seen. Her critique of the *École de Vienne* contained implicitly a critique of Berr.

Little surprisingly, the collective discussion that followed Metzger's talk revealed the divergences in conceptions of the *a priori*.²²¹ Berr immediately resumed the earlier discussion on the

²²⁰ Metzger attacked in her talk also Louis Rougier (Metzger 1936, 40–41), one of the main importers of the work of the Vienna Circle in France, who had opened the 1935 congress and edited the proceedings. Metzger's partly political critique of Rougier's anti-egalitarian tendencies – he later supported the Vichy regime (Bonnet 2006, 82–83) – indicates that Rougier, quite early on, had become a liability for the reception of the movement of logical empiricism in France.

²²¹ An audience of 32 people had assisted to Metzger's talk on 20 November 1935 (for details, see Mieli and Centre international de Synthèse 1936, 75). Four of them had already been present at the discussion of Bouvier's article in 1929: Berr, Bouvier, Mieli and Tolédano. In the discussion participated eight people: Berr, French psychiatrist Maxime Laignel-Lavastine (1875–1953), already mentioned Charles Serrus, French economic historian and professor at the Sorbonne Henri Hauser (1866–1946), Italian chemist and philosopher

a priori in January. Against Metzger, he insisted on the contrasting functions of the *a priori* in science and in the history of science. In the history of science, Berr thought that it went too far to speak of an “*a priori* of the historian” only because they needed to interpret past science with a kind of “sympathy”. In science, on the other hand, the only sense of “*a priori*” that Berr seemed to accept was again the Bernardian provisional *a priori* in the sense of “hypothesis” – even if he accepted that there might be some “absolute or primitive *a priori*” outside of science.²²² In the reformulation Berr offered, there was no place for such a thing as fundamental yet variable “mental *a prioris*”²²³ as Metzger had sketched it in her talk. Little surprisingly, Metzger did not agree with Berr and could insist in her reply only on the incompatibility of their views.²²⁴ For Metzger, both terms of Berr’s alternative between an “absolute *a priori*” outside science and a methodological one within science were unacceptable: her conception of *a prioris* implied both variability and relative independence of experience.

The rest of the discussion mostly expressed resistance to Metzger’s proposal from the point of view of a methodological conception of the *a priori*. Maxime Laignel-Lavastine – besides hinting at the possibility of a psychoanalytic interpretation of the *a priori* – reintroduced indeed Claude Bernard’s view of the *a priori* as “hypothesis” in the discussion.²²⁵ Serrus insisted in a similar fashion on the necessity of revising and correcting *a prioris* and “illusions” in science. Remarkably, he took as an example precisely Kant’s notion of stable “*a priori* forms” – what he called “la grande illusion Kantienne”. With the progress of science in the 19th century, this notion of *a priori* – based on Euclidian geometry and Newtonian physics – had itself become

Giovanni Malfitano (1872-1941), French historian of science and first director the *Revue d’histoire des sciences* in 1947 Pierre Brunet (1893-1950), French philosopher of science Jean Ullmo (1906-1980); and Metzger, of course. Present at the meeting was also her cousin, son of Lucien Lévy-Bruhl and collaborator of the Centre and the *Vocabulaire historique*, sociologist of law Henri Lévy-Bruhl. On Metzger’s lecture and the whole discussion, see also Chimisso 2001, 214–15; 2008, 119–23; 2019, 94–99.

²²² “Il faut distinguer le rôle de l’historien des sciences de celui du chercheur dans l’histoire des sciences effective. 1. L’historien des sciences doit sans doute sympathiser avec le savant qu’il étudie pour pénétrer dans son esprit; mais faut-il dire que cela implique l’*a priori* chez l’historien? Oui, si l’historien déclare que le savant envisagé a eu telle idée, sans pouvoir prouver son affirmation. 2. Dans la science qui se fait il y a de l’*a priori* dans la mesure précisément où tout n’est pas établi *a posteriori*. Il y a certes diverses sortes d’*a priori*. Dans la science positive, l’*a priori* serait l’hypothèse: tout ce qui est intuition, élan, dynamisme, donné comme hypothèse, constitue une forme d’*a priori*. Aux différentes étapes de la connaissance les *a priori* sont divers, plus ou moins larges, plus ou moins fondés; si vous voulez admettre cette distinction entre l’hypothèse et l’*a priori* absolu ou primitif nous sommes d’accord. Je vous accorde que l’*a priori* est souvent anticipation de vérité et que l’hypothèse implique l’imagination.” (Mieli and Centre international de Synthèse 1936, 75–76)

²²³ Chimisso has attributed the expression “mental *a prioris*” to Metzger (e.g. Chimisso 2001b, 214; 2019, 50, 68). Unfortunately, my attempts to locate the term in Metzger’s writings have failed so far. I have thus refrained from using the phrase.

²²⁴ “Je ne puis vous accorder ce qui est incompatible avec ma doctrine; nous ne sommes pas là pour nous faire des concessions verbales mais pour réfléchir ensemble; vous nous avez fait réfléchir; merci.” (Mieli and Centre international de Synthèse 1936, 76)

²²⁵ “Il y a aussi l’*a priori* qui est une simple hypothèse sur lequel Claude Bernard a beaucoup insisté.” (Mieli and Centre international de Synthèse 1936, 76)

an *a priori* to be corrected.²²⁶ Henri Hauser exemplified a equally negative vision of the *a priori* in history and warned that history must not become “the servant of the *a priori*” (Mieli and Centre international de Synthèse 1936, 78). Finally, also Jean Ullmo underlined the opposition between Berr’s and Metzger’s conceptions of the *a priori*. In the end, he seemed to side with Berr in distinguishing sharply between the “apriorist thinker” in theology and metaphysics and the scientist revising the *a priori* in the sense of an experimental hypothesis.²²⁷ Only Pierre Brunet and Giovanni Malfitano sought to maintain a sort of intermediate position between Berr and Metzger.²²⁸ In the face of these reactions, Metzger did not really engage in discussion. She withdrew on her initial refusal to discuss philosophical conceptions of the *a priori*.²²⁹

Remarkably, Metzger’s references to Lévy-Bruhl and – implicitly – a sociological conception of the *a priori* played only a marginal role in the discussion. Only Hauser – a former colleague of Lévy-Bruhl’s at the Sorbonne – addressed the issue and connected it with the question of the *a priori* in general history, i.e. the topic of Bouvier’s article and earlier discussions at the Centre. Hauser employed “*a priori*” in a very comprehensive sense, arguing that “nous baignons dans l’*a priori*” (Mieli and Centre international de Synthèse 1936, 77) – and even more than Lévy-Bruhl had suggested: “Que de ‘primitifs’ parmi les historiens!” (Mieli and Centre international de Synthèse 1936, 77) He defined the *a priori* in history as follows:

²²⁶ “Mme Metzger m’accordera cependant que si la croyance est le point de départ, elle est aussi l’illusion que la science a le droit et le devoir de redresser. [Paragraph] De ce point de vue elle eût pu signaler la grande illusion Kantienne [...]. La grande croyance à combattre me semble être, pour chaque époque, l’idée que la connaissance du réel s’arrête et se fixe à elle. C’est l’illusion des ‘vérités éternelles’ ou des ‘formes a priori’. On s’installe définitivement dans l’Euclidianisme, ou dans le Newtonianisme. La science a trouvé sa voie, et il n’y aura plus rien d’essentiel à y changer. [...] C’est la plus fausse idée que l’on puisse donner de l’accroissement de nos connaissances.” (Mieli and Centre international de Synthèse 1936, 76)

²²⁷ “Il me paraît qu’il y a une différence essentielle entre ces deux attitudes, celle que Mme Metzger appelle *a priori*, et celle qui correspond, pour M. Berr, à l’hypothèse scientifique générale. Le penseur *a prioriste* à la Bossuet ou à la Kant, est décidé à imposer son *a priori* aux faits, à ne jamais laisser convaincre par eux: un *a priori* théologique ou métaphysique est transcendant à l’expérience, ne peut donc reconnaître son magistère. Les faits ont tort contre lui, en tant qu’ils participent de l’infirmité humaine, des limitations de la contingence. Par contre le savant qui fait une hypothèse, aussi impérieuse qu’il la sente, aussi nécessaire qu’elle lui paraisse [sic] rationnellement, admet pourtant intimement et c’est ce qui fait sa qualité de savant le contrôle, le verdict de l’expérience: il reconnaît son arbitrage.” (Mieli and Centre international de Synthèse 1936, 78)

²²⁸ Malfitano acknowledged the opposition between Berr and Metzger and spoke of “deux manières de voir” (Mieli and Centre international de Synthèse 1936, 78). Brunet formulated a sort of methodological compromise between Metzger and Berr: “Je ne me placerais qu’au point de vue méthodologique; ce qui ressort de ce qui a été dit c’est que l’*a priori* a un certain dynamisme; l’historien a un double rôle: prendre conscience des *a priori* actuels pour les rejeter afin de pouvoir comprendre en pleine clarté les *a priori* périmés d’autrefois.” (Mieli and Centre international de Synthèse 1936, 78) According to Brunet, there were *a prioris* both in history and in science (as Metzger had claimed). In the history of science, however, they had to be surmounted – just as in science (as Berr claimed) – to obtain an accurate view of the past *a prioris* of science, i.e. of *a prioris* that had been overcome by science. Brunet thus made concessions to both Metzger and to Berr. Incidentally, he sketched a position that would aptly describe Febvre’s later *histoire-problème* approach (see Chapter 2).

²²⁹ “Ce que vous dites est fort intéressant; cependant il m’est impossible de le discuter sans sortir du programme fixé au début de ma conférence. Il y aurait trop à dire si je devais reprendre le sujet d’une manière que j’ai voulu expressément éviter pour ne pas parler trop longtemps.” (Mieli and Centre international de Synthèse 1936, 79)

“une affirmation qui dépasse, en les devançant, les résultats de l’observation et de l’expérience, une sommation adressée aux faits d’avoir à se conformer à telle ou telle théorie” (Mieli and Centre international de Synthèse 1936, 77). As an example of such an *a priori* he critically discussed – just as Bouvier in his article and Feldman in his “note additionnelle” – Marxist history.²³⁰ It thus became clear that Hauser had a purely negative notion of the *a priori* – even more than Berr. For Hauser, it was due to such *a prioris* that history risked fragmentation. If history was done under the guidance of *a prioris* – if history became “the servant of the *a priori*” – then it lost its unity and, with it, the possibility of progressing in the empirical knowledge of the past.²³¹ This vision of the *a priori*, had, of course, little to do with the way Metzger had sought to problematize the *a priori* in the history of science – nor with Lévy-Bruhl, for that matter.

In sum, we can learn several things from Metzger’s proposal and its discussion at the Centre international de Synthèse for the relation between the “CIS perspective” and sociological accounts of the *a priori*:

(1) First, the episode provides insights into the “space of possibilities” regarding the *a priori* in and around the Berr “galaxy”. Metzger defined her conception of the *a priori* in science and the history of science against several competing views. She opposed the “disaggregation of the *a priori*” promoted by logical empiricists because it neglected the enabling role of the *a priori* in science which she observed in her work on the history of chemistry. She also disagreed with Berr’s methodological view of the *a priori* informed by Bernard, a view that conceived the *a priori* as a provisional hypothesis, potentially dangerous and more or less contingent upon experience.²³² Additionally, Metzger diverged from an “*a priori* philosophy of science” (Chimisso 2019, 99–106) which maintained primarily the “gnoseological” or “transcendental” sense of *a priori* and insisted on the independence of the *a priori* from experience (since it was the *a priori* that should make experience possible in the first place). For formulating her own view, Metzger drew on the sociological account of the *a priori* offered by Lévy-Bruhl’s theory of “primitive mentality”. Contrary to Lévy-Bruhl, however, she found the characteristics of primitive

²³⁰ “De là ces conceptions rivales qui empoisonnent aujourd’hui l’histoire, que l’on écrive une histoire marxiste (il y a bien, depuis cette année, une ‘biologie marxiste’), ou raciste, ou fasciste.” (Mieli and Centre international de Synthèse 1936, 77)

²³¹ “Quand on me parle d’histoire marxiste, je me refuse à suivre les auteurs’ [sic] et je n’aime pas que Jaurès ait donné à son histoire, d’ailleurs si remarquable, le titre d’*Histoire socialiste*. Alors, des histoires royalistes, bourgeoises, catholiques, etc.? L’histoire devient ainsi la servante de l’*a priori*.” (Mieli and Centre international de Synthèse 1936, 78)

²³² Berr thus opposed Metzger’s vision not simply because he was attached to Enlightenment values (Chimisso 2001b, 214–15) or some “positivism”. More specifically, Berr’s notion of the *a priori* went back, to a methodological sense that the term “*a priori*” had taken on in the 19th century (as Bouvier explained in his entry) and that had been expressed most clearly in Claude Bernard’s experimental method.

mentality also in past science and insisted on the continuity between primitive and modern mentalities (e.g. Metzger 1930, 19). “Mentality” meant in Metzger an *a priori* that was both more fundamental than the transcendental *a priori* – it conditioned the notions making experience possible – and that could vary historically (Metzger 1936, 33). In a way, Metzger thus combined aspects of the “gnoseological” and the “methodological” meaning of “*a priori*” distinguished by Lalande and Bouvier – in a way not dissimilar to the Durkheimians.

(2) Second, Metzger and the discussion of her work continued earlier debates on the role of the *a priori* in history that had started with Bouvier’s article and its sequels. Here, the opposition between Berr’s methodological notion and Metzger’s more comprehensive and fundamental notion continued. Metzger thought that the historian – here the historian of science – used at least in part his own fundamental *a prioris* to understand the diverging *a prioris* of past science (Metzger 1936, 33). For Berr – and for most other members of the Centre, as the discussion shows – the historian’s *a priori* could only mean a Bernardian “*idée a priori*”, a provisional hypothesis that would be tested and corrected through experience.²³³ Any stronger notion of the *a priori*, any merging with the gnoseological or transcendental sense, seemed to them to compromise the unity of history and the possibility of progress in historical knowledge – most virulently expressed in Hauser’s statement that history must not become a “servant of the *a priori*”.

(3) Third, Metzger’s case opens new perspectives on the role of sociological accounts of the *a priori* in the Berr universe. Even if Metzger spoke relatively little about it, her notion of *a priori* was obviously a fact of sociology or, at least, of “collective” or “historical psychology”.²³⁴ Metzger thus reintroduced a sociological account of the *a priori* into the history of science. This was all the more remarkable as science was for Berr, as we have seen above, precisely the domain where the sociology of knowledge touched upon its limits with the increasing role of the individual factor (Berr 1953a, 268–73). Even if Berr thought that this individual factor must be understood sociologically, it was the individual that allowed a revision of *a prioris* – and thus explained the sciences’ dynamics and, in Berr’s view, their rational progress. In this perspective, Berr’s opposition to Metzger’s idea of more fundamental *a prioris* in science and history (of science) was consistent with his rejection of the Durkheimian sociological account of the *a priori*. In methodological terms, Berr’s idea of a “collective” or “historical psychology” was perhaps more compatible with Lévy-Bruhl’s theory of

²³³ This aspect was not entirely absent from Metzger’s presentation of the historian’s method. She said that “il [the historian of science, MS] propose modestement ses conclusions, il ne cherche pas à les imposer; il demande aux autres historiens de vérifier ou de rectifier ses propres assertions” (Metzger 1936, 33). It seems significant, though, that Metzger refers here rather to “other historians” than directly to “experience”.

²³⁴ At one point, Metzger called Lévy-Bruhl’s approach a “psychologie intellectuelle” (Metzger 1930, 16).

“mentalities” than with Durkheim’s “sociological theory of knowledge”. In epistemological terms, however, Berr was closer to the Durkheimians who had emphasized against Lévy-Bruhl the continuity between “prelogical” and logical thought and who had imagined a progressive autonomization of logical organization from social organization (Durkheim [1912] 2013, 624, 635).²³⁵

Metzger, on her part, displayed also both convergences and divergences with the Durkheimian programme. As the Durkheimians, she combined elements of the gnoseological and the methodological sense of “*a priori*”: the *a priori* both enabled experience in the first place and varied historically and socially. Also, Metzger’s critique of Lévy-Bruhl – her insistence on the continuity between primitive and modern mentality – went in the sense of the Durkheimians’ critique of Lévy-Bruhl’s approach.²³⁶ Mauss himself had acknowledged in 1927 the need to extend sociological studies to more advanced forms of classification, including science (Mauss 1927, 106). Metzger could be seen here as realizing what Mauss called “l’histoire naturelle et sociale des sciences” or “l’épistomologie [sic]” (Mauss 1927, 120–22).

On the other hand, Metzger remained close to Lévy-Bruhl’s largely descriptive approach of mentalities and did not enquire into or address their social conditions. This, however, should remain a major dividing line between the Durkheimians and Lévy-Bruhl – revealed, for example, at two debates on Lévy-Bruhl’s work at the Société française de philosophie in 1923 and

²³⁵ For Berr’s position on Lévy-Bruhl, see Berr [1911] 1953, 187–95. Once more, Berr insisted on the role of the individual in “logical evolution”: “En somme, on ne saurait dire que la mentalité prélogique soit la mentalité des primitifs, et la mentalité logique celle des civilisés. Il est plus juste de distinguer une mentalité inférieure où *domine* l’élément prélogique, c’est-à-dire l’affectivité, et une mentalité supérieure où *domine* la logique. Or, quelque part qu’ait la société dans la mentalité prélogique, le rôle de l’individu n’y est pas nul; et, dans l’évolution logique, il est capital.” (Berr [1911] 1953, 190–91) Berr argued that it was not clear whether the gradual emancipation of the individual described by Lévy-Bruhl was the cause of the effect of a change in mentality. For Berr, it was both, for he considered the individual to be both cause and effect in its relation with society: “Or, nous croyons que la vraie solution est celle-ci: l’individu est cause, et il est effet. Il est cause parce qu’il est une réalité, non quelque chose de vide que la société remplirait, parce qu’il est une réalité créatrice de logique. Il est effet parce que les progrès de la logique mentale, de la *pensée*, s’ils ne s’accomplissent point *par* la société, ne s’accomplissent que *dans* la société.” (Berr [1911] 1953, 192) See in this whole context also Berr’s “Avant-propos” on Febvre’s *Le problème de l’incroyance au XVI^e siècle* where Berr insisted on the progressive direction of changes in the *outillage mental* and on the role of individuals (Berr [1942] 2003, XV–XXI).

²³⁶ Compare, for example: “Nous ne croyons pas, pour notre part, qu’il y a un abîme infranchissable entre la pensée des sauvages et celle des civilisés; au lieu d’affirmer entre l’une et l’autre une différence de nature, nous admettrons bien volontiers une différence de degré.” (Metzger 1930, 19) And Durkheim’s critique of Lévy-Bruhl’s programme: “Nous estimons, au contraire, que ces deux formes de la mentalité humaine, si différentes qu’elles soient, loin de dériver de sources différentes, sont nées l’une de l’autre et sont deux moments d’une même évolution. [...] Entre ces deux stades de la vie intellectuelle de l’humanité, il n’y a pas de solution de continuité” (Durkheim 1913, 35–36). What is more, Durkheim also emphasized – as Metzger and Berr – the remnants of “primitive thought” in modern thinking (e.g. Durkheim [1912] 2013, 626). Metzger did not seem to subscribe to the evolutionist background of the Durkheimian narrative. But she was not entirely exempt of evolutionary metaphors herself. For example, when she compared the transition from expansive to reflected thought to the transition from childhood to adulthood: “Nous passons donc de la pensée *expansive* à la pensée *réfléchie* lorsque nous passons mentalement parlant de l’état d’enfance à l’état d’adulte.” (Metzger 1936, 38) Metzger referred here positively to Brunshvicg’s *Les âges de l’intelligence* (Brunshvicg 1934).

1929 (Société française de philosophie 1923; 1929). The Durkheimians insisted there not only that, before talking about whole “mentalities”, we should investigate sociologically particular “categories” (e.g. Mauss in Société française de philosophie 1923, 640). They also reproached Lévy-Bruhl with neglecting the sociological explanation of mentalities, i.e. the investigation into the relationship between social psychology (or “physiology”) and the social morphology of groups (e.g. Mauss in Société française de philosophie 1923, 641; Mauss in 1929, 681, 683).²³⁷ Following Lévy-Bruhl, Metzger did not go in this direction either. Her theory of the *a priori* of different mentalities remained finally closer to a “historical” or “collective psychology” as Berr or Febvre promoted it at the time at the Centre.

All in all, Metzger took in several respects intermediary positions: With her application of the Lévy-Bruhlian sociological account of the *a priori* to the history of science she stood between Durkheimian sociology of knowledge and Berr; and with her focus on the “primitive” within modern scientific mentality she stood between Lévy-Bruhl and both Berr and the Durkheimians. It seems that Metzger did not find many allies with these views at the Centre. Koyré – who had likewise emphasized the importance of Durkheimian sociology of knowledge for the history of science (Koyré 1936, 264; see also Zambelli 1995; Redondi 1996) – was perhaps closest to her. In any case, with her trenchant rejection of the *École de Vienne*, Metzger displayed a more radical position than Berr, Bouvier and other members of the Centre who remained largely positive on the work of logical empiricists. Interestingly, we thus encounter already in Metzger a peculiar combination of insisting on variable quasi-aprioric social elements in science and criticizing “positivism” – a combination that should become popular from the 1960s onwards with the work of Thomas Kuhn.

Continuities in history and in the philosophy and history of science

Glancing at later developments, it is not exaggerated to say that Berr’s “galaxy” and the activities of the Centre international de Synthèse were an important turntable in the history of the sociologization of the *a priori*. Via this peculiar context, basic ideas of French sociology of knowledge, especially of the Durkheimian and Lévy-Bruhl type, diffused into several domains of the social and human sciences, in France and internationally.

²³⁷ In this respect, we have to nuance the view that Lévy-Bruhl’s programme would have been “more radical” than the Durkheimian one because it rejected evolutionism and introduced “relativism” (Chimisso 2008, 70). In fact, the Durkheimians’ break with philosophical styles of work was more incisive than Lévy-Bruhl’s – which might, in part, explain why Lévy-Bruhl’s work overshadowed after the First World War the initial Durkheimian programme. The whole conflict between “continuists” – evolutionists such as Edward B. Tylor (1832-1917), James George Frazer (1854-1941) or, to some extent, the Durkheimians – and “discontinuists” such as Lévy-Bruhl, has been analysed in an illuminating way in Cassirer’s *The Myth of the State* (Cassirer 1946, chap. 1). Cassirer argued that it was necessary to go beyond this opposition.

The two areas which stand out here are history and the philosophy and history of science. In the “Berr galaxy”, we encounter agents who were instrumental in promoting in both areas intellectual traditions that were later deemed specifically “French”: in history the so-called “*Annales* school” with its founders Lucien Febvre and Marc Bloch (e.g. Burke 1990); in the philosophy and history of science so-called “historical” or simply “French epistemology” (on the label, see Gingras 2010; see also Bitbol and Gayon [2006] 2015b; Chimisso 2008; 2024) with Abel Rey, Hélène Metzger, Alexandre Koyré or Gaston Bachelard – the latter becoming mostly through the promotion and framing of his disciple Georges Canguilhem (1904-1995) (e.g. Canguilhem [1957] 2005) the founding figure of this current.²³⁸ Both of these traditions continued in a way problems that we could encounter in the discussions at the Centre international de Synthèse.

The “*Annales* school” was later – especially from the 1960s onwards – identified with a “history of mentalities”. But Febvre and Bloch continued also to some extent the terminological project of the *Vocabulaire historique*. Febvre, of course, had been closely involved in Berr’s enterprises and had contributed to the *Vocabulaire historique* as well as to the Semaines internationales de Synthèse – especially with his account of the history of the word and idea of “civilisation” (Febvre 1930). But also Bloch – whose contacts with the *Vocabulaire historique* were rather ill-fated (Schöttler 2017, 97–99) – proposed from the end of the 1920s onwards – in Berr’s *Revue de Synthèse historique* – in the framework of a “comparative history of European societies” a programme for an international terminology in history, “une réconciliation de nos terminologies et de nos questionnaires” (Bloch 1928, 47–50). He pursued this interest further in his posthumous *Apologie de l’histoire* where he recommended the study of “nomenclatures” (Bloch [1949] 2020, 216–37) and supported the idea of a “sémantique historique” (Bloch [1949] 2020, 228–29; see also earlier 1939a, 187). Bloch continued to refer positively to the project of the *Vocabulaire historique*: “On doit beaucoup en attendre.” (Bloch [1949] 2020, 236)²³⁹

“Historical epistemology”, on the other hand, continued to battle with the problem of some sort of “historical transcendental” (Cavazzini and Gualandi 2006)²⁴⁰ – a problem that we can

²³⁸ On the various senses of the “Frenchness” of “French epistemology”, see Bitbol and Gayon [2006a] 2015. As early as 1958, Georges Canguilhem had spoken of “l’originalité du style français en histoire des sciences” (Canguilhem [1958] 2019, 327), tracing it back to Auguste Comte. On the reception of this current in Germany, see Schöttler 2012a.

²³⁹ I am grateful to Peter Schöttler for drawing my attention to this aspect of Bloch’s work. See also Schöttler [2002] 2016, 256–59.

²⁴⁰ The originality of “French epistemology” has been seen precisely in the attempt to hold together the two parts of the paradoxical expression “historical transcendental”: “L’epistemologia francese deve la propria originalità appunto al tentativo di tenere assieme i due lati di questo dilemma, senza rinunciare a nessuno dei due.” (Cavazzini 2006, 5)

now perhaps understand better as a result of the fusion of “methodological” and “gnoseological” meanings of “*a priori*”. The tension with the Kantian tradition found its perhaps most interesting and influential expression in the work of Bachelard. The latter was, as we have seen, not only among the contributors of the *Vocabulaire historique* with his 1944 article on “Causalité” (Bachelard [1944] 2000). He had also been the doctoral student of both Abel Rey – who played an central role in the “Berr galaxy” – and of rationalist-idealist philosopher Léon Brunschvicg. In his work, Bachelard should engage critically with the Kantian tradition and the notion of the *a priori* – in apparent continuity with the work of Brunschvicg (Bachelard 1945; Dagognet 1965). In particular, Bachelard proposed a peculiar form of “non-kantisme” (Bachelard [1940] 2012, 15, 59–60, 78, 94, 106–8; see also Barsotti 2003). This position was not to be confused with anti-Kantianism. Bachelard’s *non-kantisme* had to be understood in analogy with the meaning of “non-Euclidean” in “non-Euclidean geometry”. It indicated a generalization that made the initial position (Euclidean geometry or Kantianism) a special case of a new, broader conception (non-Euclidean geometry, non-Kantianism). The “*non*” in Bachelard’s *non-kantisme* was inclusive. It aimed at a generalization of criticism which, at the same time, “particularized” Kant’s initial criticism.²⁴¹ It is certainly no coincidence that we could encounter strong similarities with this idea in statements in the discussions on the *a priori* at the Centre international de Synthèse.²⁴²

Finally, perhaps most important for the international circulation of ideas present in the CIS context and in “historical epistemology”, was Alexandre Koyré. As we have seen, Koyré was not only among the contributors of the *Vocabulaire historique* with his article on “Agnosticisme” (Koyré [1942] 2000). He was also introduced to the CIS section “Histoire des sciences” by Metzger and, in the discussion, supported her approach to the history of science in terms of mentalities against Berr. Through Koyré’s mobility towards the United States (Cohen 1987; Elkana 1987; Chimisso 2008, 123–37) some of the intellectual elements present at the Centre international de Synthèse circulated internationally – and resurged later especially in the work of Thomas Kuhn. If Kuhn later promoted a “post-Darwinian Kantianism” or called himself a “Kantian with moveable categories” (Kuhn [1990] 2000, 104; Kuhn et al. [1995] 2000, 264),

²⁴¹ Bachelard spoke of “un non-kantisme, c’est-à-dire [...] une philosophie d’inspiration kantienne qui déborde la doctrine classique” (Bachelard [1940] 2012, 15) or “un non-kantisme susceptible d’inclure la philosophie critique en la dépassant” (Bachelard [1940] 2012, 94). The “non” in “non-Kantianism” thus expressed the general attitude of the *philosophie du non*: “La *philosophie du non* se trouvera donc être non pas une attitude de refus, mais une attitude de conciliation.” (Bachelard [1940] 2012, 15–16)

²⁴² We can think, for example, of the statements of Charles Serrus in the two discussions with Metzger in 1935 (see above).

this was due, at least in part, to the French tradition in the history and philosophy of science with which the works of Koyré had familiarized him.²⁴³

In this perspective then, the discussions on the *a priori* at the Centre international de Synthèse appear less remote than one might initially have suspected. The CIS was a strategically important site at the crossroads where many relativizations, historicizations, sociologizations – and even “disaggregations” – of the *a priori* met, exchanged, combined and from where they diffused further into different disciplines and national contexts.

6. Conclusion: Lessons from a well-aged discussion

At the close of this chapter, I hope it has become clear that we can learn some important lessons for the sociologization of the *a priori* from Bouvier’s article project on “*a priori*” and the connected debates at the Centre international de Synthèse.

First, Bouvier’s article and the discussions and contexts surrounding it provided us with precious historical sources in a problem-historical perspective (see Chapter 2). These documents can be taken as a “symptom” that indicates a situation where the *a priori* – the word and the concept –, its relativization and even sociologization, had become problematic for social scientists and historians. Bouvier himself retraced how this situation had emerged through an evolution in the meaning of “*a priori*” which manifested itself first in philosophy and the natural sciences, but then also involved the social sciences and history. The fact that the article – after lengthy collective discussions – was retained for publication in the *Vocabulaire historique* amounts to a collective recognition of the problematic nature of the term and the concept. There was need for clarification.

More specifically, the episode enabled us to get access to historical agents’ perceptions of this problem – from the peculiar interdisciplinary, unificatory, internationalist perspective of the “Berr galaxy”. In this sense, attending to this marginal project allowed us to explore the “space of possibilities” associated at the time with the notion of the *a priori*.²⁴⁴ New, quite

²⁴³ Kuhn explicitly connected Koyré to “neo-Kantian philosophy”: “The concept of historical reconstruction that underlies it [Kuhn’s book *Black-Body Theory*, MS] has from the start been fundamental to both my historical and my philosophical work. It is by no means original: I owe it primarily to Alexandre Koyré, its ultimate sources lie in neo-Kantian philosophy.” (Kuhn [1984] 1987, 361)

²⁴⁴ What Elisabeth Nemeth said of Philipp Frank’s remarks on possible cooperations between the Vienna Circle and the “Berr galaxy”, can also be applied to discussions on the *a priori* at the CIS: “Seine [Philipp Frank’s, MS] Hinweise können uns heute vielleicht helfen, den Raum der Möglichkeiten zu rekonstruieren, in dem die Begegnungen der frühen Logischen Empiristen mit der französischen Wissenschaftsphilosophie in den 1930er Jahren stattfanden. Eine solche Rekonstruktion wäre nicht nur aus Gründen historischer Korrektheit von Bedeutung. Indem sie sichtbar machen würde, welche Möglichkeiten realisiert wurden und welche ungenutzt blieben, könnte eine solche Rekonstruktion Projekte freilegen, die im Ansatz steckengeblieben sind. Und sie würde uns erlauben, Fragestellungen und Aufgaben wieder zu gewinnen, die von der tatsächlich realisierten Geschichte des 20. Jahrhunderts beiseite gelassen und vergessen worden sind.” (Nemeth 2007, 216)

unexpected references, contributions and positions emerged here, such as those involving Claude Bernard, Henri Berr, the Vienna Circle or Hélène Metzger. We could better understand, for example, how Berr opposed the Durkheimian theory of the categories in the name of a “historical” or “collective psychology” (Berr [1942] 2003) which would put more weight on the role of the individual. On the other hand, we could better locate Metzger’s account of the *a priori* in science and the history of science which took inspiration from Lévy-Bruhl’s sociology of mentalities. With her complex theory of “mental *a prioris*” Metzger opposed both the “disaggregation” of the *a priori* promoted by logical empiricists such as Reichenbach or Neurath and the purely methodological conception of the *a priori* that Berr and other members of the CIS took from Bernard. Finally, the issues discussed at the Centre international de Synthèse on relativizing, historicizing or sociologizing the *a priori* should continue after the Second World War in the works both of *Annales* historians (Febvre, Bloch) and of proponents of French “historical epistemology” (Koyré, Bachelard).

Of course, in the perspective of a “sociological problem history” (Chapter 2), we would have to complete the present analysis of these various problem-perceptions with a more sociological analysis of the social-structural conditions of these perceptions. Our investigation indicated here at least some dimensions that should be explored further, such as the conflictual relations between sociology, history and philosophy in France or the international circulation of ideas and agents between France and German-speaking countries – from projects of terminological reformism to logical empiricism. In any case, there is also a peculiar reflexive dimension to investigating this “research site” in a problem-historical perspective. For it was precisely from the context of the “Berr galaxy” that emerged the French tradition of *histoire-problème* (Müller 1996; see also Chapter 2).

In the end, Bouvier’s article on “*a priori*” and the discussions at the Centre international de Synthèse are significant in still another respect. In fact, Bouvier’s descriptive and interdisciplinary approach to the topic – following Berr’s and Masson-Oursel’s guidelines for the *Vocabulaire historique* – deserves not only to be remembered in an “antiquarian” fashion (Nietzsche [1874] 1999). It can also be pursued further today, serving as a sort of guideline. Thus, for understanding the problem of the sociologization of the *a priori*, some of Bouvier’s intentions and ambitions deserve indeed to be revived: taking a *longue durée* perspective on the problem of the *a priori*; attending to the concrete uses of the term “*a priori*”; “functionalizing” and “particularizing” the Kantian notion of “*a priori*” (see Chapter 4) and thus avoiding anachronisms, projections and other normative presuppositions stemming from the long-term domination of Kantian (and more loosely “Kantoid”) epistemologies; engaging in an interdisciplinary perspective covering the debates in and on the natural sciences, the social sciences,

history and philosophy as well as the meta-discussions on the classification of the sciences; and, finally, doing all this with the ultimate aim of clarifying and rationalizing present-day discourse on “social” or “historical *a priori*”, “social conditions of possibility” and other forms of “socio-transcendental reasoning” (see Chapter 1). In this sense, quite unexpectedly, the present undertaking could draw important inspiration – both methodologically and substantially – from this remote episode in the history of sociologizing of the *a priori*, involving a provisional entry for an obscure, unfinished and never published French historical dictionary.

CHAPTER 6. OUTLOOK: FURTHER STUDIES ON THE SOCIOLOGIZATION OF THE *A PRIORI*

But on this point I could do no more than explode a few hopeful fireworks. (Austin [1955] 1975, 148)

1. Introduction: Looking forward

The history of the sociologization of the *a priori* offered here remains fragmentary. Accordingly, our results will resemble more to an interim report and a prospectus for future works. What we can do here is look back to the lessons we could learn so far and look forward to the many tasks that remain.

First, I will synthesize my results on the history of the problem of sociologizing the *a priori*. I will elaborate here the overall narrative sketched in the introduction and – in the sense of American sociologist Robert K. Merton’s (1910-2003) notion of “specified ignorance” (Merton 1987, 6–10) – identify the work that should be done to fill out the gaps left. I will draw mostly on research I have conducted in preparing the present dissertation, but which did not make it into this manuscript – offering a long “menu” of things to do. In this fashion, we will indicate ways in which the investigation should be pursued further.

Second, I provide a strategy for arriving at a typology or a “paradigm” (in a specific sense) of the various sociological accounts of the *a priori* which we could encounter in the course of this long history. This typology is meant to “rationalize” the variety of historical options as functions of a limited set of variables (the meaning of “*a priori*”, of “sociology”, of “relative to”, etc.). It should thus offer a unified perspective on the problem of the sociologization of the *a priori*, specifying what the different accounts share and where they differ.

Finally, as an outlook, I should like to take a different perspective on the whole issue – a perspective that particularly readers with a background in philosophy or in sociological theory might have longed for. I shall consider the sociologization of the *a priori* explicitly from a systematic, evaluative and contemporary point of view. I will seek to sketch here what I take to be the durable core of the variegated traditions of sociologizing the *a priori* – a position I shall call “symbolic instrumentalism”.

2. The trajectory of an ambivalent hybridization strategy

Filling some gaps

In the introduction, I briefly presented the general narrative that emerged from my explorations in the history of sociologizing the *a priori*. I distinguished six different periods reaching from around the 1780s to the 2020s:

- (1) the emergence of the problem in the conflict between transcendental philosophy and positive philosophy (1780s-1840s);
- (2) the variety of largely extra-academic or extra-philosophical naturalizations of the *a priori* (1840s-1880s);
- (3) the entry of the sociologized *a priori* in the university (1870s-1940s);
- (4) the transformation and eclipse of the problem under the effect of the autonomization of the social sciences (1930s-1960s);
- (5) the reemergence and proliferation of sociologized *a prioris* in reaction to various “scientific” research programmes (1960s-2000s);
- (6) the large-scale diffusion and the beginnings of historical, epistemological and methodological reflection on the sociologization of the *a priori* (1990s-present).

In the end, I could offer detailed studies only of a few selected episodes from this long story. We have thus dealt with the emergence of the problem between Kant and Comte (Chapter 4) and with some aspects of the debates during the central period between 1900 and 1945 (Chapter 5). The specific findings of these case studies as well as their general significance within the overall historical evolution of the problem should have become sufficiently clear and need no recapitulation (see the conclusions of the respective chapters).

Yet, many aspects of the long history of sociologizing the *a priori* – aspects I sometimes hinted at – remained in the dark. Several of these lacunae can be transformed into research questions for future work. Indeed, I have started to investigate some of them in preparatory studies for this thesis. I would like to indicate here how we might fill certain gaps left in the overall narrative: both by sketching investigations not contained in the manuscript and by pointing to routes for further research. As said, this should be understood in the spirit of “specifying ignorance” (Merton 1987, 6–10), i.e. indicating as clearly as possible what we do not know, but what we should know if we were to answer the question that interests us.

1840s-1910s: From Kant and Comte to academic sociologizations of the *a priori*

We ended our investigation into Kant and Comte by saying that the basic “grammar” of the problem of sociologizing the *a priori* was established through the conflict between the

classifications of science in transcendental philosophy and in positive philosophy; that the “social base” of this problem went back to different ways of reforming systems of higher education at the turn of the 19th century and to the ideologies of education accompanying it; and that the structure of the problem should play out in the course of the 19th century through tensions and conflicts between “criticism” and “positivism” (used here as ideal-typical analytical categories). This, we suggested, formed the background against which various forms of sociologizing the *a priori* should emerge.

How could we further investigate this period between the appearance of the problem in the 1830s-1840s and the rise of sociological theories of the *a priori* in early academic sociology around 1900? A promising strategy could consist in undertaking a series of studies on cases which combine in a significant way references to Kant and Comte, to criticism and positivism (including cognates and proxies), to *a priori* conditions of knowledge and to sociology. The guiding hypothesis here could be that the formulation of genuinely sociological theories of the *a priori* was prepared in France and German-speaking countries by a peculiar family of hybrid philosophical positions that were situated between the two often opposed poles of “criticism” (built around what was taken to be Kant’s philosophy) and “positivism” (built around what was taken to be Comte’s philosophy, often merging in contemporaries’ perceptions with empiricism, materialism, evolutionism, etc.), i.e. intermediate positions of “positivist criticism” and “criticist positivism”. The tension between criticism and positivism might not capture all dimensions of the genealogy of sociologizing the *a priori*. But it can function as a sort of heuristic proxy, i.e. an object that enables us to identify research sites that might reveal something important about the history of this specific problem.

In order to identify and investigate these intermediary positions of “positivist criticism” and “criticist positivism” in concrete cases, we could start from the history of the reception of both “Kant” and “Comte”. In particular, it would be fruitful to cross the two histories of the reception of Kant in France and of Comte in Germany (considering as a contrast case perhaps the peculiar reception of both Kant and Comte in Austria). This procedure would reveal the peculiar national trajectories in the reception of criticism and positivism in the context of French-German exchanges of authors, texts and ideas. It would show clearly that there was not the *one* meaning of Kant’s or Comte’s work on which other interpretations should be judged as correct or incorrect. On the contrary, it would reveal a whole variety of sometimes surprisingly unorthodox appropriations of these authors – out of which, sometimes, certain interpretations could emerge and assert themselves as a standard.

To be as specific as possible, I would like to sketch here a series of investigations on the 1840s-1900s period which I have partly started to conduct, and which might deserve to be pursued further. In overview, these enquiries would concern the following topics:

- (1) Naturalistic accounts of the *a priori* around the middle of the 19th century between positivism and early neo-Kantianism.
- (2) French neo-Kantianism and sociology? Uses and functions of Kant in France.
- (3) Germany's first positivism dispute (1859-1863): Carl Twisten, Rudolf Haym and the introduction of Comte to Germany.
- (4) The spectre of positivism: sociology in German neo-Kantian disputes on the classification of the sciences.

Let me describe these projects in some detail.

(1) Naturalistic accounts of the a priori around the middle of the 19th century between positivism and early neo-Kantianism

A first investigation should provide us with a solid overview of the various attempts at “naturalizing” the *a priori* around the middle of the 19th century (Ferrari 2003, 115–42). Indeed, later sociologizations of the *a priori* seem to have emerged in continuity with such naturalizations – as indicates, for example, Durkheim's claim of the label “naturalisme sociologique” (Durkheim [1898] 2010, 47). By “naturalizing the *a priori*” we should understand the attempt at making the *a priori* the object of various empirical scientific enterprises or “disciplines” (physiology, biology, psychology, collective psychology, political economy, etc.). We would have to focus on the relations of these attempts with the philosophical positions associated with and symbolized at the time by “Kant” and “Comte”, against the background of the international reception of “positivism” (Feichtinger, Fillafer, and Surman 2018) and of “criticism” (Ferrari [1997] 2001). The different attempts at naturalizing the *a priori* – resulting in some cases in its outright dissolution – should be put in the perspective of the reception and canonization of these two philosophers and the tensions it created. Again, I would hope to show that from this tension emerged some of the most important intellectual resources that should fuel later sociological accounts of the *a priori* around 1900.

In this perspective, a starting point in the English-speaking world would be John Stuart Mill (1806-1873) with his personal and scientific relationship with Comte as well as his radical critique of any sort of “German [...] *à priori* view of human knowledge” (Mill [1873] 1981, 233). Mill translated Comte's “positive philosophy” and his conception of “sociology” into a broadly “empiricist” framework (although he refused the term) – a reinterpretation with important long-

term consequences (Cassirer [1950] 1995, 14). Mill accorded, contrary to Comte, a central place to logic, induction and to associationist psychology (becoming later a prime reference for “psychologism”). Importantly, he engaged in polemics with British philosophers who were partly inspired by Kant, such as William Hamilton (1788-1856) or William Whewell (1794-1866) (Ferrari 2003, 115–42). Finally, Mill’s conception of the logic of the “moral sciences” (Mill [1843] 1974b) proved hugely influential in subsequent debates on the social and human sciences. Mill’s label was indeed the starting point for the German label “*Geisteswissenschaften*” (Feuerhahn 2010; 2015; 2017; 2020b).

Second, in the British context also Herbert Spencer’s (1820-1903) evolutionistic, at once biological and sociological (Linguiti 1989) account of the *a priori* would deserve attention. Spencer engaged not only in a direct debate with Comte’s classification of the sciences (Spencer [1854] 1891; 1864; Littré 1863; Roberty 1894). He also devised a peculiar “compromise strategy” for manoeuvring between empiricism and transcendentalism (epitomized in England at the time by William Hamilton). Spencer considered that what was “*a priori*” for the individual was “*a posteriori*” for the species (Spencer [1855] 1870a, § 208). This strategy – together with Spencer’s peculiar version of evolutionism – proved to be hugely influential on a global scale (Lightman 2015), especially in France (Richard 2015) and in German-speaking countries. In France, through the mediation of Alfred Espinas (1844-1922) and especially Théodule Ribot (1839-1916) it had a direct impact on the tactics adopted by Durkheim and the Durkheimians in their “sociological theory of knowledge” – not to mention the fact that Spencer later made a comeback in “evolutionary epistemology” (e.g. Popper 1972).

Third, coming back to the German context, the study would also have to cover the controversies on “materialism” (Bayertz et al. 2012b; Morel 2017) and “Darwinism” (Bayertz et al. 2012a). These debates starting in the 1840s formed the immediate background for early German neo-Kantianism, which tended in important respects rather to “positivism” than to “idealism” (Köhnke 1986). Friedrich Albert Lange’s (1828-1975) widely read *Geschichte des Materialismus* (Lange [1866] 1914a), in any case, provided both a physiological-psychological reinterpretation of the Kantian *a priori*, and a blueprint for Kantian and neo-Kantian critiques of materialism. In this context, the connections between later proponents of neo-Kantianism – Hermann Cohen (1842-1918) and Wilhelm Windelband (1848-1915) – and German *Völkerpsychologie* as formulated in the 1860s by Heymann Steinthal (1823-1899) and Moritz Lazarus (1824-1903) would deserve attention. In early works standing in this tradition, both Cohen and Windelband seemed to offer broadly sociological accounts of the *a priori* (e.g. Windelband 1875; see also Pinto 1995). The “proto-sociological” (Klautke 2013b; Kusch 2019; Damböck et al. 2020) research programme of *Völkerpsychologie* entertained again critical relations with

both Comtean “positivism” (e.g. Lazarus and Steinthal 1971, 265–68) and Kantian “criticism”, transmitted largely through the philosophy of language of Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767-1835) (Cassirer [1922] 2003) and the epistemology of Johann Friedrich Herbart (1776-1841) (Beiser 2022).

Finally, the study of these naturalizations of the *a priori* would also have to consider the rise of what was later called “historical materialism”, at the margins of the academic and the political fields in a uniquely transnational constellation. From the 1840s onwards, Karl Marx (1818-1883) and Friedrich Engels (1820-1895) developed a materialistic and economic “critique” of “ideology” and of science all while promoting a peculiar kind of historical social science. This attempt – redefining the term “*idéologie*” coined in 1796 by French philosopher, economist and politician Antoine Destutt de Tracy (1754-1836) (Kennedy 1979) – emerged primarily from a critical account of German post-Hegelian philosophy (Marx and Engels [1845–1846] 1990) and the liberal as well as socialist political economy of their day (Marx 1847). In this context, they conceived ideas and categories explicitly as “transient historical products” of the economically shaped social relations (Marx 1847, 99–100; [1846] 1977, 554). Marx and Engels also engaged critically both with versions of “positivism” and of the Kant revival (Marx [1873] 1962; Engels [1878] 1962b). To both movements they opposed a materialistic reading of Hegel’s dialectical method. This position proved hugely influential for later debates on the relations between neo-Kantianism and socialism at the turn of the 20th century when “Marxism” entered the academic debate.

Taken together, these various attempts at naturalizing the *a priori* around the middle of the 19th century provided some of the most important intellectual resources and tools (ideas, concepts, problems, argumentative patterns, etc.) that were to be used in debates on sociological accounts of the *a priori* around the turn of the 20th century. In this sense, they would be an important part of a prehistory of sociologizing the *a priori*.

(2) French neo-Kantianism and sociology? Uses and functions of Kant in France

A second investigation could turn to the reception of Kant in France and study the effective role that it played in sociologizations of the *a priori*.¹ Which was the relationship between neo-Kantianism and sociology in France? This often asked or suggested question (see Chapter 3) presupposes that there existed something like a “French neo-Kantianism” in the relevant time period. The existence of such an entity, however, can be reasonably doubted. Instead, I would suggest starting with an overview of the various uses and functions of the reference to Kant in

¹ This study is to be published as Strauss [forthcoming] 2024.

19th century French philosophy, especially in its second half. We could focus particularly on the tensions between positivism and criticism among French philosophers and scientists, on the various accounts and discussions of the Kantian *a priori* and on the various connections of the uses of Kant with emerging sociology. We could thus try to distil those peculiar uses of Kant in France which had effectively at least some importance (positive or negative) for early French sociologists, especially regarding the issue of a possible sociologization of the *a priori*.

To begin with, a critical discussion and clarification of the label “French neo-Kantianism” or “neo-Kantianism in France” is indispensable. On the one hand, the references to “Kant” and his philosophical vocabulary are, in fact, omnipresent – to the point that it has been said that studying Kant’s “influence” would amount to writing the history of the whole of French philosophy in the 19th century (Benrubi 1933, 297–98). On the other hand, however, – as a survey of the most important philosophy journals and book publications at the time shows – occurrences of the label “*néo-kantisme*” are extremely rare among philosophers and historians of philosophy at the time (for one important positive instance, see Fouillée 1881). The expressions most frequently used are the less specific “*kantisme*” and “*criticisme*” (referring mostly to Kant’s philosophy, not its revival) or the more specific “*néo-criticisme*” (referring most of the time to Renouvier and his disciples). Lalande’s *Vocabulaire* (Lalande [1902–1923] 2010b), for example – a dictionary collectively elaborated in the *Société française de philosophie* that expressed in many respects the collective representations of French academic philosophers at the time – did not contain any entry on “*néo-kantisme*” and mentioned in its entry on the prefix “*néo-*” only Renouvier’s “*néo-criticisme*” (Lalande [1902–1923] 2010b, 680). In a nutshell: The reference to “Kant” – “un impératif pour tous” (Bourel 2009) – is everywhere; but a French “neo-Kantianism” apparently nowhere. Moreover, we can also identify only a relatively feeble reception of German-speaking “neo-Kantianism” in France (Boutroux 1877; Nolen 1877; Bonnemaison 2011).

This unseizable omnipresence of “Kant” in 19th century French philosophy has produced – and it did so already among contemporaneous historiographers of philosophy (Brooks 1998, 240, 244) – contradicting views as to who is to count as a French “neo-Kantian” and whether there was actually such a thing as a “French neo-Kantianism” (Capeillères 1998; Ferrari [1997] 2001; Brooks 1998; Ferrari et al. 2005; Luft and Capeillères 2010; Bonnet 2011; Fedi 2018; Braverman 2020; Terzi 2020, 2023). As other isms (Höpfel 1983; Boschetti 2014a), “*néo-kantisme*” can mean different things, reaching from an organized academic “school” to the presence of “Kant” in academic teaching to the simple sum of references to Kantian philosophy in philosophical publications (see Chapter 3).

I would propose to take “French neo-Kantianism” to designate not a “movement” whose existence could be taken for granted, but – following a contemporaneous suggestion by philosopher Maurice Blondel (1861-1949) concerning the broader “criticist problem” (Lalande [1902–1923] 2010b, 196, n.) regarding the conditions of our knowledge – take the reference to Kant and the meaning of his philosophy as an indicator for a “problem” that involved at the time the better part of the French philosophical community. In fact, the reference to Kant cannot be pinpointed in one particular group among French philosophers which we might then call “neo-Kantians”. Instead, it permeated – as Benrubi and later Bourel (Bourel 2009) had already suggested – almost the whole of the philosophical field. This field – with its different poles – can thus be construed in the perspective of the different uses and functions of the reference to Kant and his philosophy. Metaphorically speaking, in the French philosophical field in the second half of the 19th century, “Kant” has to be conceived not on the model of a “point” or “position”, but on the model of a “vector” or “force” (cp. Bourel 2009, 20; Fedi 2018, 5). This view is in accordance with the fact that recent historiography of the reception of Kant in France has tended to speak of the “functions” (Bonnet 2011), “uses” (Fedi 2018), “representations” (Braverman 2020) and “images” (Terzi 2020; 2023; 2024) of Kant and Kantianism rather than of a single French current named “neo-Kantianism”.

We can identify among the various uses of Kant in the 19th century in France several relatively distinct, but also interconnected groups, generational lineages and interpretative traditions which have their respective social and institutional characteristics. We can thus devise a sort of “morphology” – in the Durkheimian sense of the word (Durkheim [1900] 1975a, 19–22; Mauss 1927, 129–30; see also Brian 2012, 61–63) – of the uses of Kant in 19th century French philosophy – uses in specific historical contexts and for specific purposes. We could distinguish the following seven types of uses of Kant (cp. Fedi 2018): (1) sensualistic, empiricist and “ideological” uses (Destutt de Tracy, Degérando) (Braverman 2015; 2020), (2) spiritualist-eclecticist uses (Maine de Biran, Cousin, Ravaisson, Paul Janet) (Brooks 1998; Schmaus 2004), (3) positivist and evolutionist uses (Comte, Littré, Laffitte, Wyruboff, de Roberty, Ribot, *Revue philosophique*, Lévy-Bruhl), (4) neo-criticist uses (Renouvier, Pillon, *L'Année philosophique*, Hamelin) (Fedi 2018), (5) spiritualist-idealist uses (Lachelier, Boutroux, Brunschvicg, *Revue de métaphysique et de morale*), (6) scientific and epistemological uses (Ampère, Cournot, Bernard, Milhaud, Poincaré, Meyerson, Rey, Bachelard) (Fedi and Salanskis 2001; Braverman 2020), and – on a different level – (7) cultural-political uses (Renouvier, Ferry, Liard, Jaurès, Bourget, Barrès) (Ringer 1992; Bonnet 2011). This variety shows that the reference to Kant was used in some way or the other by almost all parties in the French philosophical field (and beyond). While the uses (1)-(3) emerged between around 1800 and

1850, the uses (4)-(5) emerged between the 1850s and 1900s, with the uses (6)-(7) encompassing more or less both periods.

Starting from this general picture of the uses of Kant in France, we could focus then on the concrete interactions between specific types and groups of uses of Kant and early French sociology, mostly on the issue of the sociologization of the *a priori*. The word “interaction” is here appropriate insofar as it is not only the case that some early sociologists in France reacted to specific uses of Kant in philosophy. *Vice versa*, also some proponents of specific uses of Kant reacted to the emergence of sociology and especially the sociology of morals, of religion and of knowledge.

We could isolate here at least five important cases: (1) First, the lineage of the “néo-criticisme” of Charles Renouvier (1815-1903) (Renouvier [1875] 1912; Schmaus 2018) and his followers, such as Octave Hamelin (1856-1907) (Hamelin 1907), in its interactions with early promoters of sociology such as Alfred Fouillée (1838-1912), Louis Liard (1846-1917), and then especially Émile Durkheim (1858-1917), Marcel Mauss (1872-1950), Dominique Parodi (1870-1955) or René Hubert (1885-1954) (Benrubi 1933, 486–94). (2) Second, the spiritualist-idealist lineage from Jules Lachelier (1832-1918) to Émile Boutroux (1845-1921), the impact of their teaching on Kant at the École normale supérieure and the Sorbonne (Capeillères 1998) – with the likes of Durkheim and Henri Berr (1863-1954) as their students –, the explicit discussions on a possible conjunction of the heritage of Kant and Comte (Boutroux 1874; Boutroux and Lévy-Bruhl 1903), as well as the reactions of these philosophers to emerging sociology (e.g. Lachelier’s participation in the 1913 debate at the Société française de philosophie on Durkheim’s sociology of religion and knowledge, see Durkheim [1913] 1975). (3) Third, the connections of early sociology with positivist and evolutionist uses of Kant. Most prominent here is the case of Théodule Ribot (1839-1916) and Alfred Espinas (1844-1922) who introduced and defended a Spencerian evolutionist account of the *a priori* (see their translation Spencer [1870] 1875; Ribot [1873] 1881; 1897) and their impact on the Durkheimian enquiry into “primitive classifications”. But also Eugène de Roberty’s (1843-1915) alternative project for an “anti-criticist” and “neo-positivist” sociologization of the *a priori* grew visibly out of the negative positivist uses of Kant (Eugène de Roberty 1907; Roberty 1908). (4) Fourth, there are the interactions of emerging sociology with the scientific and epistemological uses of Kant. Particularly important here are the appropriations and uses of Kantian vocabulary in Claude Bernard (1813-1878) (for example, his “idées *a priori*” in Bernard [1865] 2008) with its impact on Durkheim and Berr. But also Henri Poincaré’s (1854-1912) unorthodox reformulation of the *a priori* in terms of “conventions” (Poincaré 1902) with its connections to Boutroux (Ferrari 2003, 231–33; Nye 1979) plays a role here, as does, more generally, the “*critique de la science*”

movement identified by Benrubi (Benrubi 1933, 325–451). There were some important links between these scientific-epistemological reformulations of the *a priori* and early sociologists who took inspiration from them or reacted against them. (5) Fifth and finally, the interactions of emerging sociology with the arguably last major proponent of a positive reference to Kantian philosophy, Léon Brunschvicg (1869-1944), deserve attention. Brunschvicg (see recently Terzi 2022b), coming from the spiritualist Lachelier-Boutroux lineage and critical of Renouvier's "néo-criticisme", sought to combine elements of both "criticism" and "positivism" (Fedi 2018, 648). He engaged explicitly with emerging academic sociology, especially in its Durkheimian version, and proposed – all while acknowledging sociology's autonomy and its positive contributions – an influential critique of "sociologism" directed against Durkheimian sociology of knowledge (most prominently in Brunschvicg [1927] 1953; but see already Durkheim [1906] 2010; Brunschvicg 1912, 573–77; 1922, 102–14; see also Fedi 2018, 639–341).

Through this overview of the interactions between uses of Kant and early sociology we would see that the most relevant positions for the problem of the sociologization of the *a priori* were those that tried to bridge the gap between "positivism" and "criticism". They proposed either modified theories of the *a priori* and the categories (e.g. Renouvier, Hamelin, Ribot) or revisions of the classification of the sciences (e.g. Boutroux). These positions were, obviously, not in agreement with each other. Rather they formed – through their internal oppositions – a spectrum of positions with different emphases, reaching from forms of "criticist positivism" to forms of "positivist criticism".

In sum, in order to give a qualified answer to the question regarding the relationship between "French neo-Kantianism" and "sociology", we need first a more nuanced picture of the uses and functions of "Kant" in French philosophy. This entails then also a more complex account of the relationship between certain uses of Kant in 19th century French philosophy and emerging sociology, an account where the black box of "neo-Kantianism" tends to vanish eventually. If there is no doubt that various agents envisioned a sociological account of the *a priori* where the reference to Kant and his vocabulary played at least some role, the sources of these positions were uses of Kant that cannot be simply qualified as "neo-Kantian" (at least, not in any historically precise sense of the term).

(3) Germany's first positivism dispute (1859-1863): Carl Twisten, Rudolf Haym and the introduction of Comte to Germany

A third investigation could then take the inverse direction and enquire into the issues involved in the first reception of Comte in Germany. The first contacts between Auguste Comte's (1798-1857) work and the German context reach back as far as the 1820s, with Gustave d'Eichthal

(1804-1886) and Friedrich Buchholz (1768-1843) serving as intermediaries (Pickering 1989; 1993, 275–77). Aside the 1824 review of Comte’s *Système de politique positive* by Wilhelm Krug (1770-1842) (Krug 1824; Laffitte 1882, 233–36), the first known review on Comte’s “positive philosophy” and his “sociology” in Germany was published in 1853 – still during Comte’s lifetime – by German philosopher Franz Vorländer (1806-1867) (Vorländer 1853; see also Köhnke 1986, 139–40). The first traceable scholarly controversy on Comte, however, took place only between 1859 and 1863. It involved philosopher, historian and liberal politician Carl Twesten (1820-1870) and early neo-Kantian philosopher and editor of the important *Preußische Jahrbücher* (1858-1935) Rudolf Haym (1821-1901) (K. Twesten 1859; Haym and Twesten 1915). This first debate – which was not published until 1915 by historian Julius Heyderhoff (1884-1949) from the private correspondence of Twesten and Haym – has received, so far, only limited attention (Rothacker [1920] 1930, 198–99; Simon 1963b, 240–42; Riedel 1978, 114–18; Heilbron [1990] 1995, 261; Fuchs 1999, 154–56; Lessing 2016; surprisingly, there is no reference to the episode in Fedi 2014b; esp. 2014a, 16–18).

The controversy started from Twesten’s article on Comte for *Preußische Jahrbücher* (K. Twesten 1859) – probably the second such review in German language. This article had been submitted on the request of Haym, who had contacted Twesten after a positive review of the latter’s political tract *Woran uns gelegen ist* (C. Twesten 1859) by historian and politician Heinrich von Treitschke (1834-1896). In the discussion on Twesten’s review, two positions opposed each other. On the one hand, there was Carl Twesten, an early partisan of Comte’s “positive philosophy”, who was personally connected to both Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911) (Dilthey [1873] 1974; Belke 1971, LV; Lessing 2016, 42) and German *Völkerpsychologie* (Lazarus 1872), who worked at the time on an ambitious “philosophy of history” along the lines of Comtean philosophy (Twesten 1872) and who was counted simultaneously by early neo-Kantian Friedrich Albert Lange (1828-1875) as a proponent of a “young school of Kantians” (Lange [1866] 1914b, 4, 111). On the other hand, there was Rudolf Haym, another early neo-Kantian (Köhnke 1986, 163–67) who was a prominent critic of Hegelian philosophy (Haym 1857; Köhnke 1986, 163–64) and who defended at the same time a sort of criticist metaphysics against “positive philosophy”. The debate between Twesten and Haym is, it seems, the earliest case of an encounter between Comtean “positive philosophy” and Kantianism – or, at least, Kantian schemes of thought – in the German context. It shows that, from the very beginning, Comte’s positive philosophy provoked in Germany a specific type of “Kantian resistance” – even despite agreement in political orientation, as between Twesten and Haym who both were liberals.

Indeed, the Twesten-Haym debate contained already some of the most important and durable schemes and argumentative patterns used later in Germany by neo-Kantian as well as idealist

philosophers of various creeds against “positivism”. Among them were the identification of Comte’s positive philosophy with “empiricism” – systematically downplaying Comte’s “rationalist” pedigree and orientation and his own criticisms of inductivism (Cassirer [1950] 1995, 14, 17; Elias [1970] 2006a, 41–43); the conflation of Comte’s “positive philosophy” with the work of other, mainly British authors such as Henry Thomas Buckle (1821-1862), later also John Stuart Mill (1806-1873) and Herbert Spencer (1820-1903); the *petitio principii* argument according to which positivism presupposed what it pretended to explain (the ordering of empirical reality by the mind) or even refute (metaphysics); and the objection that “positive philosophy” would contain a sort of *contradictio in adiecto*, “positivity” and “philosophy” being thought to be mutually exclusive. Importantly, already then the issue of the evaluation of Comte’s positive philosophy was explicitly connected with the question of the “right” interpretation of Kant (Haym and Twesten 1915, 252–55).

Since the controversy between Haym and Twesten remained confidential for over 50 years, the point cannot be its “influence” on later debates in the 19th century. The interest of the controversy lies rather in the fact that it reveals the institutional, political and intellectual conditions under which Comte’s positive philosophy and sociology – with its provocative sociological account of the Kantian *a priori* – were first received in Germany. The opposition of Haym to positive philosophy was based on schemes of perception and evaluation that persisted throughout later German-speaking debates on “positivism” (e.g. Droysen [1863] 1974; Dilthey [1883] 1990; Scheler 1921a), up to the so-called “positivism dispute” of the 1960s in German sociology and philosophy (Adorno et al. 1969; Habermas [1968] 1973; Dahms 1994). In this sense, the Haym-Twesten debate could indeed be considered – literally as well as in terms of the arguments discussed – as Germany’s first “positivism dispute”.

(4) The spectre of positivism: Sociology in German neo-Kantian disputes on the classification of the sciences

In the continuity of this case study on the first dispute on positive philosophy in Germany, the role of sociology in German disputes on the classification of the sciences should be further investigated. In today’s social and human sciences, German neo-Kantianism is probably best remembered for its attempts to classify the sciences (in the broad sense going beyond the *natural* sciences). Still today, distinctions such as those between “*Naturwissenschaften*” and “*Geisteswissenschaften*” or between “nomothetic” and “idiographic” sciences are familiar to anyone who has ever touched upon studies in the human and social sciences in a German-speaking context. To this day, they continue to organize the academic field and the university (with faculties of “*Geisteswissenschaften*”, for instance). Sociologists, in particular, learn as

part of the history of their discipline that early proponents of the specialty, first and foremost Max Weber (1864-1920), were in some way involved in these debates on the classification of the sciences and the connected “dispute on methods” (*Methodenstreit*) (see, for example, much used Kruse [2008] 2018, 140–48).

However, these German neo-Kantian classifications of the sciences and knowledge are rarely considered in a historical or sociological perspective (Feuerhahn 2020c; 2020b). They are hardly ever put in the context of the “long history” of classification disputes involving prior stages, such as the classification of knowledge and the sciences in Kant’s transcendental philosophy and in Comte’s positive philosophy. When we attend to this long history, we see that German neo-Kantian classification debates involved an important transnational dimension, namely the largely polemical reaction to prior classifications of knowledge and the sciences that were deemed “positivistic” and “Western European” (Ringer 1969; 1992; 1997). Once again, we assist here to a complicated transnational encounter of and a tension between various versions of “criticism” and of “positivism” (with its potential for a sociologization of the *a priori*). The German classification debates in the second half of the 19th century reflected – as the historical agents involved themselves acknowledged – profound transformations in the academic field (e.g. Feuerhahn 2017), especially the emergence of the social and human sciences in the aftermath of the “Second Scientific Revolution”. Against this background of institutional changes the struggles on the classification of the sciences can be profitably conceived as a specific type of “symbolic struggle”, concerning in this case the legitimate “vision and division” of the academic field as a whole (Bourdieu 1977b; 1979a; [1981–1983] 2015, 84–90; 1984a). As in other such struggles on categories and classifications of the social world, we can explore the possibility of “classifying classifiers (of science) by their classifications” (Bourdieu 1979b) and relating their classifications (as *prises de position*) to their social, academic and disciplinary position.

The concrete question to be studied in this context would be: Which role did “positive philosophy” – with its classification of the sciences, its promotion of “sociology” and its potential for a sociologization of the *a priori* – play in the prominent debates on the classification of the sciences, especially the social and human sciences, among German neo-Kantian philosophers in the second half of the 19th century? This question would delineate another “strategic research site” (Merton 1987) for observing through the encounter between “positivism” and “criticism” *in concreto* the problem of sociologizing of the *a priori*. By concentrating on the references in German classification debates to Comte (often lumped together with Mill, Buckle, Spencer and others), “positivism” and “sociology”, we could take into account not only the official epistemological content and the local institutional context (Feuerhahn 2017) of these debates. We

could also see the transnational or geopolitical dimensions of these debates with, at the core, the relationship of German philosophy with French and British philosophy (often lumped together as “Western European”) (Feuerhahn 2015; 2020c).

In this perspective, we would have to give first due attention to German philosopher and historian Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911). His introduction of the distinction between “*Geisteswissenschaften*” and “*Naturwissenschaften*” (Dilthey [1883] 1990) launched German debates on the classification of the sciences on a large scale. This distinction was, indeed, the result of a critical dialogue with Comte and Mill, whose works Dilthey had probably encountered through the mediation of Carl Twisten (1820-1870) and Moritz Lazarus (1824-1903) (Lessing 2016, 42; for an important earlier critique directed against Buckle, see Droysen [1863] 1974). Dilthey acknowledged explicitly the historical need to combine an answer to the differentiation of scientific disciplines (roughly the extension of the “Second Scientific Revolution” to the human and social sciences) – provided so far primarily by “positivism” – with an “epistemological” (*erkenntnistheoretisch*) orientation – covered so far mainly by “transcendental philosophy” (Dilthey [1883] 1990, 407). His “*Philosophie der Geisteswissenschaften*” was conceived as a direct, genuinely “German” competitor to Comte’s “positive philosophy” and Mill’s “logic of the moral sciences”. Dilthey used here the idea of an autochthonous “German Historical School” – especially in law and economics – whose methodological procedures would be, as he tried to show, fundamentally different from “positivism” (Dilthey [1883] 1990, XV–XVII). In doing so, Dilthey contributed decisively to constructing the mainly negative reference to “positivism” in Germany (Ringer 1992, 198–99, 210–11). On the other hand, despite Dilthey’s Kantian-sounding call for a “critique of historical reason” (Dilthey [1883] 1990, IX), his own solution in terms of “descriptive psychology” (Dilthey [1894] 1982) featured several anti-Kantian aspects (Riedel 1978, 21–23; Damböck et al. 2020), especially a call for considering the total empirical-historical subject as opposed to the intellectualist transcendental subject of Kantian epistemology (Dilthey [1883] 1990, XVIII).

Dilthey’s Kantian-sounding but actually anti-Kantian solution did not fail to provoke answers from self-described Kantians. From Dilthey onwards, neo-Kantian philosophers of both the Southwest and the Marburg “schools” took up the issue of the classification of the sciences and sought to connect it with their respective interpretations of Kantian epistemology. They were critical of Dilthey as well as of “positivism”, but continued to seek a solution for the problem of the classification of the sciences. While this problem had initially been raised by “positive philosophy”, it imposed itself also by the ongoing institutional differentiation of the academic field. The most glaring symptom of this process was possibly the dispute on

“psychologism” around the turn of the 20th century (Kusch 1995), which hit philosophy close to home and saw most neo-Kantian philosophers taking defensive positions.

We would have to consider here, of course, the so-called “Southwest School” of neo-Kantianism anchored at the universities of Strasbourg, Freiburg and Heidelberg – which is also the lineage within German neo-Kantianism most frequently discussed in connection with sociology (see Chapter 3). Proponents and allies of this orientation offered in the course of the 1890s almost simultaneously several different answers to Dilthey’s distinction. The first was arguably philosopher and sociologist Georg Simmel (1858-1918) – not quite a member of any school – who distinguished already in 1892 between “*Wirklichkeitswissenschaft*” and “*Gesetzeswissenschaft*” (Simmel [1892] 1989, 348–49). This account is important in the context of the sociologization of the *a priori* for it came with an explicit theory of a “relative *a priori*” in history (Simmel [1892] 1989, 304, 327–28). Then there were, of course, the two main figures of Southwest neo-Kantianism, Wilhelm Windelband (1848-1915) and Heinrich Rickert (1863-1939). Both engaged, as Simmel, in an “extension” of the Kantian framework – elaborated from the model of Newtonian mathematical physics – to the historical, cultural and social sciences. Windelband attacked Dilthey for his ontological distinction between “nature” and “mind” (*Geist*) based on “inner perception” (the anti-Kantian aspect of Dilthey’s solution). He proposed instead a “purely methodological” distinction between “nomothetic” and “idiographic” sciences (Windelband [1894] 1924, 145). Rickert, in turn, developed this formal-methodological distinction further into an opposition between “natural science” (*Naturwissenschaft*) and “cultural science” (*Kulturwissenschaft*) (Rickert [1896–1902] 1929; [1899–1926] 2013). He reframed the problem as an issue of the difference in “concept formation” (*Begriffsbildung*) in those two groups of scientific disciplines. Rickert’s work *Die Grenzen der naturwissenschaftlichen Begriffsbildung* (1896/1902) (going through five editions until 1929) enjoyed a remarkable success – especially in the context of the controversy on Karl Lamprecht’s (1856-1916) *Deutsche Geschichte*, which was refused by many professional historians as “positivistic”.

However, and contrary to most historiography on neo-Kantianism and sociology, also the so-called “Marburg school” of neo-Kantianism – for once, a “school” in the proper sense (Sieg 1994) – engaged positively with questions of the classification of the sciences, with “positivism” and with the social and human sciences (see already Willey 1978). Tellingly, Hermann Cohen (1842-1918) and Paul Natorp (1854-1924) – not Windelband and Rickert – signed the call for supporting the foundation of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Soziologie in 1910 (Sieg 1994, 285; Lichtblau 2018, 20). In fact, already Friedrich Albert Lange (1828-1875), founder of the Marburg school, had discussed in his *Geschichte des Materialismus* (Lange [1866] 1914a) – a fundamental and widely read work of early neo-Kantianism (for Max Weber’s

enthusiasm for Lange's book, see Jacobsen 1999) – not only developments in the natural sciences, but also in the social and human sciences, referring several times positively to Comte. Moreover, Lange engaged not only in the debates on the “social question” and the “workers’ question”, but also in the debates on the social sciences (Lange 1865; 1866). Lange's peculiar combination of returning epistemologically to Kant while defending politically reformist socialism provided the blueprint for later debates on the connection between neo-Kantianism and socialism (for the development of this “Marburg Left-Kantianism” from Lange to Stammler, see Widmer 2021a).

Lange's disciple Hermann Cohen followed his teacher in some respects. He re-insisted, however, on the logical, non-psychological character of the “transcendental method”, reinforcing the empirical-transcendental distinction against “positivistic” tendencies – and his own earlier involvement with *Völkerpsychologie* (Pinto 1995; Widmer 2021b). This had also some implications for the classification of the sciences. Cohen argued that the equivalent to transcendental philosophy founding the validity of the natural sciences as a “historical fact” was in the case of the social and human sciences philosophical ethics, which should provide the foundations for law and the state (Cohen [1881] 1914). Philosophical ethics thus took in a way the place of what Dilthey had envisioned as the “philosophy of *Geisteswissenschaften*”. Cohen's Marburg colleague philosopher and educationalist Paul Natorp (1854-1924) was even closer to sociology. He used in his widely read work on “social pedagogy” – *Sozialpädagogik* (Natorp 1899) – elements of sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies's (1855-1936) theory of “community” and “society” (Sieg 1994, 284–85). Tönnies – with whom Natorp exchanged from 1886 onwards – did not hesitate, in turn, to call Natorp himself a “sociologist” (Tönnies et al. 1925, 2–3).

From around 1896 onwards, the relations between Marburg neo-Kantianism and the social sciences took also an explicitly political turn, creating a convergence between neo-Kantianism and reformist socialism. On the one hand, Cohen stated in his 1896 introduction to Lange's work that Kant had to be conceived as “the founder of German socialism” (Cohen [1896] 1914, 112). On the other hand, German social-democratic politician Eduard Bernstein (1850-1932) took at around the same time the third edition of Lange's *Arbeiterfrage* (1875) as an inspiration for formulating a reformist socialist political programme based on Kantian ethics (Bernstein 1897; 1899; Sieg 1994, 97–98). This sparked intense debates in the German workers' movement on “revisionism” (Sandkühler 1970). Simultaneously, Marburg neo-Kantian legal scholar and philosopher of law Rudolf Stammler (1856-1938) published in 1896 a much discussed neo-Kantian critique of “historical materialism” (Stammler [1896] 1924) – perceived as a “neo-Kantian discussion of Marx” (Zilsel [1930] 2001, 455). This work was not only among the first to introduce Marxism into the academic debate (e.g. Adler 1913b; 1913a), but it appeared to

some as the prototype of a neo-Kantian attempt to provide a foundation for the social sciences (Gerlach 1899). Stammler's work continued – though not without tensions with Cohen (Widmer forthcoming; Natorp 1913) – issues of Marburg neo-Kantianism – and of the prior classification debates. Through the discussion of the “materialist conception of history” it engaged with one version of the “naturalization” of the *a priori* (Stammler [1896] 1924, 18–19, 26) and, indeed, one of the major sources of inspiration for the later German debates on the sociology of knowledge. Out of these various elements developed around the turn of the century an important debate on “neo-Kantian socialism” (Sandkühler and De la Vega 1970; Keck 1975b; Willey 1978, 102–30), nourished primarily by Marburg neo-Kantianism. While these debates turned mostly around the ethical foundation of Marxism, the discussion had also an epistemological dimension (Sandkühler 1970, 11). Austrian Marxist philosopher and sociologist Max Adler (1873–1937), for example, came up in this context with his project – pursued through more than thirty years – of bringing Kant and Marx together in a theory of the “social *a priori*” (Adler 1904a; 1936) (see also below).

Finally, after the First World War, – still in the tradition of the “Marburg school” (e.g. Oesterreich [1916] 1923c, 443–45) – philosopher Ernst Cassirer (1874–1945) took up again the question of the classification of the social and human sciences. Cassirer himself presented his *Philosophie der symbolischen Formen* (1923–1929) as a sort of neo-Kantian reply to Dilthey's attempt at founding the “*Geisteswissenschaften*” (Cassirer [1923] 2010, VII). For Cassirer, this project implied a close dialogue with the human and social sciences as they were in the making at the time, nourished mostly by Aby Warburg's (1866–1929) *Kulturwissenschaftliche Bibliothek* in Hamburg. Cassirer engaged here also in a critical dialogue with Rickert (Cassirer [1942] 2011, 66–67) and elaborated his vision of the cultural sciences as “sciences of form” in a series of articles assembled in his *Logik der Kulturwissenschaften* (Cassirer [1942] 2011). Not only did Cassirer engage in a close and nuanced reading of Comte and various forms of “positivism”, for example as formulated by Hippolyte Taine (1828–1893) (Cassirer [1950] 1995; [1939] 2011). He also identified contemporary forms of sociology – such as Max Weber's sociology of religion (Cassirer [1925] 2010b, 227; 2002, 67, 70–73) or Karl Mannheim's sociology of knowledge (Cassirer 2004, 163) – as entering into the category of a cultural “science of forms”. What is more, with Cassirer's conception of “philosophy of culture” came a relativized, historicized and culturalized conception of the *a priori* which he formulated also in dialogue with Durkheimian sociology (see below).

Importantly, early German sociologists and social scientists were directly involved in neo-Kantian debates on the classification of the sciences and connected topics. As in France, there were some notable interactions between German neo-Kantian philosophers and early

sociologists. We could focus here in a first step on the three founding figures of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Soziologie, Ferdinand Tönnies, Georg Simmel and Max Weber (for a similar selection but with different focus, see Joly 2017). As indicated, Simmel contributed himself as a philosopher of history to these classification debates. Against the background of his own, relatively independent Kant interpretation (Simmel 1997) he developed out of his theory of “relative *a priori*” in history (Simmel [1892] 1989) his later theory of “sociological *a priori*” (Simmel [1908] 1992b). As for Tönnies, he was involved in an acrimonious controversy with Rickert on the latter’s classification proposal (Tönnies 1902; Rickert 1902b; Bickel 1991). At the same time, he was positively engaging with Marburg neo-Kantians such as Natorp or his friend Friedrich Paulsen (1846-1908). Max Weber’s case, finally, is certainly the most prominent one in the literature on neo-Kantianism and sociology (see Chapter 3). Weber re-used Rickert’s insistence on “value relations” (*Wertbeziehungen*) in the concepts of the cultural sciences prominently in his methodological writings on the social sciences. This led him – in contrast to Rickert who tried to develop a universal “system of values” (Ringer 1997, 36–62) – to the conception of socio-historically changing “cultural value ideas” (*Kulturwertideen*) (Weber [1904] 1988). These *Kulturwertideen* functioned arguably as another form of sociologized *a priori* and prepared German *Wissenssoziologie* (Schelting 1934; Stark 1958, 16). Finally, all three of these early sociologists were engaged in one way or the other in the controversy on the “neo-Kantian foundation of social science” proposed by Rudolf Stammler and developed important parts of their work out of this confrontation (e.g. Härpfer and Kaden 2017). In sum, neo-Kantian classification debates and connected issues would thus be an important site for exploring the interactions between early sociology and neo-Kantianism as well as the rails that were laid towards later German sociology of knowledge.

German debates on the classification of the sciences in the neo-Kantian vein were determined mostly *ex negativo* by the presence and, even more so, the imagined “threat of ‘positivism’” (Ringer 1997, 17–26; see also 1969; 1992). Comte’s positive philosophy had already been the symptom of as well as the attempted therapy for a more general historical state of the academic field: the differentiation of scientific disciplines and especially of the social and human sciences (Heilbron 2017a). Through the references to “positivism”, the different German classifications sought to reply to this historical situation too. But there was a crucial difference linked to the fundamental difference between “criticist” and “positivist” classification. Comte’s “positive philosophy” issued arguably in “sociology”. The “encyclopaedic law” formulating the hierarchy and classification of the sciences was – like the “law of the three states” – ultimately conceived as a sociological law. German classifiers, on the contrary, followed rather the model of transcendental philosophy and maintained that philosophy would

remain in the position of the autonomous arbiter of classification. Making philosophy the instance of the classification of the sciences was an ambiguous strategy. Depending on the context, it could be used defensively (in the sense of a protectionist “professional ideology”, a tendency in the Southwest school) or progressively (in the sense of an openness towards ongoing scientific transformations, a tendency in the Marburg school) (cp. also the distinction between the “orthodox” and the “modernist” Mandarin type in Ringer 1969). Either way, a fundamental difference between the classified sciences and the classifying science(s) was maintained.

If we want to understand German classification debates “socio-logically” – in both their intellectual and sociological dimensions –, we should attempt, as indicated, to “classify the classifiers by their classifications” (Bourdieu 1979b), i.e. try to relate their classifications as peculiar “points of view” or “*prises de position*” to their position in the academic space with its specific problems at specific moments. Following the hypothesis according to which the problem of sociologizing the *a priori* resulted basically from a conflict between classifications of science and knowledge replying to transformations in the academic field, it is not surprising to find that conceptions of a sociologized *a priori* in the German-speaking world (e.g. in Simmel, Weber, Adler) emerged largely in the context of the debates on the classification of the sciences. In other words, there is reason to think that in Germany – as in France – the problem of the sociologization of the *a priori* arose from a confrontation between criticism and positivism.

In sum, these four areas of investigation – even if, chronologically speaking, they go beyond the limits of the 1840s-1900s period – would contribute to illuminating the philosophical pre-history of sociological accounts of the *a priori* as they started to emerge around 1900. Following the tensions between criticism and positivism and focusing on cases where the two references to Kant and Comte cross, can provide a viable strategy.

Around 1900: Exploring the peak

As said, the decades around 1900 saw the emergence of various sociological accounts of the *a priori*, proposed by historical agents who were involved, in one way or the other, in the establishment of sociology as an academic discipline. Naturally, we have repeatedly come back to this central period. Yet, some further studies should be undertaken to flesh out the details of this crucial moment. Again, I propose here to pursue further a series of case studies I could begin in preparation for the present work. These investigations could concern the following topics:

- (1) The *a priori* nationalized? From “*Volksgeist*” to “*mentalité*” in the French reception of German *Völkerpsychologie*.
- (2) Durkheimian sociology of knowledge in context: Emergence, execution and diffusion of a collective research programme on the social origins of the categories of thought;
- (3) A transnational controversy on the sociologization of the *a priori*: Reconsidering Simmel’s participation in *L’Année sociologique*.
- (4) The *a priori* in German-speaking debates on the sociology of knowledge, 1900s-1940s.
- (5) Max Adler and the social *a priori*: From the neo-Kantian critique of historical materialism to the sociology of knowledge.
- (6) A tale of two traditions: The reception of Durkheimian sociology of knowledge in France and the German-speaking world, 1900s-1940s.
- (7) Culturalizing or sociologizing the *a priori*? Cassirer’s dialogue with Durkheimian sociologists.

Let us see what the studies on these topics could look like concretely.

(1) The a priori nationalized? From “Volksgeist” to “mentalité” in the French reception of German Völkerpsychologie

A first investigation could concern the continuities between early programmes in collective psychology and the sociology of knowledge in a transnational perspective.² One of the concepts that has sustained “socio-transcendental” or “historical-transcendental” reasoning in the social and human sciences to the present day (see Chapter 1) is the concept of “mentality” – with proxies such as “mental system” or “mental habit” and parent concepts such as “culture” or “sensibility”. Conceived as being relative to specific historical epochs, social classes, groups, whole nations or civilizations, mentalities have been presented as the collective mental structures that “make” experiences, perceptions, beliefs, feelings, etc. “possible”.

But where do the word, the idea and the problems associated with “mentality” come from? The study I envision could provide insights into a hitherto neglected background. The history of “*mentalité*” is most often associated in the literature with the encounter of European science with radically different systems of belief, knowledge and practice through ethnographical sources (e.g. Lloyd 1990, 14). This remains, of course, an important dimension. However, we can show that “*mentalité*” was also and simultaneously rooted in how Europeans thought about their own national and ethnic traditions in the framework of modern European nation states.

² I have presented this research as Strauss 2022.

The processes I am referring to are mostly prior to those aspects of the history of “*mentalité*” which the existing literature has covered, i.e. the large-scale diffusion of “*mentalité*” through the works of philosopher, sociologist and ethnologist Lucien Lévy-Bruhl (1857-1939) (Lévy-Bruhl 1910; 1922), its application in the works of the founders of the *Annales d'histoire économique et sociale* (e.g. Febvre [1942] 2003; Bloch 1939b; 1940; Burguière 1983; 2006a; Hulak 2008), and the promotion of a “history of mentalities” in the third generation of the *Annales* in the 1960s and 1970s (e.g. Duby 1961; Le Goff 1974). Instead, this study could shed light on the lesser known prehistory of “mentality”.

Concretely, we could enquire into the links between “mentality” and projects – formulated from around the middle of the 19th century onwards – for a “collective psychology”, presented at the time under different labels such as “collective” or “political ethology” (Mill), “*Völkerpsychologie*” (Lazarus/Steinthal, Wundt), “ethnological psychology” (Ribot) or “social psychology” (early Durkheim). I should like to examine in particular how the concept of “*Volksgeist*” (and the parent “*Volksseele*”) was connected historically to the concept of “*mentalité*”. By combining a sort of transnational socio-historical semantics (Koselleck 1979; Merton and Barber 2004) with a problem-oriented perspective focusing on controversies and receptions, we could establish a link between the notions “*Volksgeist*” as used in German *Völkerpsychologie* and “*mentalité*” as used in French sociology from the early 1900s onwards, especially in Durkheimian sociology of knowledge.

Importantly, both concepts were closely related to the problem of the sociologization of the *a priori*. The various projects for a “collective psychology” engaged indeed sometimes in a sort of “nationalization” of the *a priori* by relating mental structures, concepts, categories, etc. to the nation state and/or ethnic groups. This nationalization was arguably an early version of the social relativization of the *a priori* and, as such, an important site of debates on an eventual sociologization of the *a priori*. This investigation could thus also indicate how earlier naturalistic or sociological accounts of the *a priori* and the categories impacted the formulation of sociologies of knowledge around 1900 which, in turn, issued with “mentality” in a widely diffused concept in forms of socio-transcendental reasoning.

We would have to start, of course, with a sketch of German *Völkerpsychologie*. To begin with, we could focus on its initial version formulated by philosopher and psychologist Moritz Lazarus (1824-1903) and linguist and philosopher Heymann Steinthal (1823-1899) and promoted collectively in their *Zeitschrift für Völkerpsychologie und Sprachwissenschaft*, published in 20 volumes over a period of 30 years (1860-1890) (Trautmann-Waller 2004; Reiners 2020). Lazarus and Steinthal’s central ambition was to give a genuinely scientific account of *Volksgeist* and to identify the “laws” of its development with the help of the psychology of German

philosopher Johann Friedrich Herbart (1776-1841) – transposed to collective phenomena. The connected “subjective” vision of *Volk* and “nation” came clearly to the fore in the opposition between Lazarus and historian and politician Heinrich von Treitschke (1834-1896) in the so-called “Berlin controversy on anti-Semitism” (*Berliner Antisemitismusstreit*, 1879-1881) (Boehlich 1965).

Experimental psychologist and philosopher Wilhelm Wundt (1832-1920) proposed an alternative version of *Völkerpsychologie*. Wundt preferred the term “*Volksseele*” over Lazarus and Steinthal’s “*Volksgeist*” because it enabled analogies with individual psychology and the relationship between the individual soul and the material body. Wundt imagined on the collective level a sort of “interaction” or “reciprocal relation” (*Wechselwirkung*) between the individual soul and the *Volksseele* just as there was on the level of the individual soul an interaction between psychophysical processes and individual consciousness (Wundt 1900, 9–10). “*Volksseele*” could thus be more easily integrated in Wundt’s programme of experimental psychology than “*Volksgeist*” (Nicolas 2022). This version of *Völkerpsychologie* should prove especially important in the French reception (Plas 2022).

From there, we could attend to philosopher and sociologist Émile Durkheim’s (1858-1917) reception of German *Völkerpsychologie*. We must put his reception into the wider context of the French reception of *Völkerpsychologie* (Klautke 2013b; 2013a), especially with Théodule Ribot’s (1839-1916) import of German experimental psychology (Ribot 1879) and Ernest Renan’s “voluntaristic” conception of the nation in his famous *Qu’est-ce qu’une nation?* (Renan 1882) – which was indeed so close to *Völkerpsychologie*’s opposition to Treitschke that it resulted in rumors of Renan having plagiarized Lazarus (Berek 2020, 429–34). There were some concrete episodes of contact of Durkheim with German *Völkerpsychologie*, such as during his research trip to Germany in 1885-1886 when he visited Wundt in Leipzig on the recommendation of Ribot. Going beyond Durkheim’s references to *Völkerpsychologie*, we should also consider how *Völkerpsychologie* and “*Volksgeist*” were received in *L’Année sociologique*. In fact, we can observe here how the term “*mentalité*” took in Durkheimian sociology of knowledge and religion the place of “*Volksgeist*” in *Völkerpsychologie* – not without undergoing important modifications. In this context, we see how both “*Volksgeist*” and “*mentalité*” were connected to the problem of the sociologization of the *a priori*.

But there is still another, more political dimension to the French reception of German *Völkerpsychologie*. In fact, the First World War revealed another connection between “*Volksgeist*” and “*mentalité*”. We must attend here to the presence of *Völkerpsychologie* in Durkheim’s 1915 war writing *L’Allemagne au-dessus de tout. La mentalité allemande et la guerre* (Durkheim [1915] 2015) – a semi-scientific, semi-ideological work which until now has been largely

neglected in the history of “*mentalité*” (but see, more generally, Karsenti 2015; Marcel 2022). Durkheim’s pamphlet was one of many written at the time as part of the “intellectual mobilization” (Flasch 2000) by sociologists, philosophers, historians, scientists and other academics in the warfaring countries. Those writings made large use of “*Volksgeist*” and similar concepts such as “*mentalité*” or “*esprit*” (e.g. Duhem 1915). In some cases, they weaponized forms of socio-transcendental reasoning against enemy countries, such as philosopher and sociologist Max Scheler (1874-1928) who went so far as to propose a “table of categories of English thought” (Scheler [1915] 1917, 413–14) – in fact, a pseudo-Kantian polemic against English “cant”.

Durkheim’s attack on “German mentality” might appear in this context at first as an ironic turn of *Völkerpsychologie* against the country it originated from – as if *Völkerpsychologie* was used against the same German *Volksgeist* that had produced *Völkerpsychologie*. Yet, the matter seems more complicated. Interesting here is especially Durkheim’s attack against Treitschke – the main proponent of the “German mentality” criticized – and his partial defence of Lazarus and Steinthal’s tradition of *Völkerpsychologie*. Durkheim sided indeed with Lazarus and Steinthal’s subjectivist definition of “nation” against Treitschke’s objectivist conception of “*Volk*” and an all-powerful state. Durkheim thus defended simultaneously the “proto-sociological” German tradition of *Völkerpsychologie* against the anti-sociological German tradition epitomized by Treitschke with his earlier critique of *Gesellschaftswissenschaft* (Treitschke 1859). Durkheim hence continued – in the French context – topics from two decisive earlier German debates, both triggered by Treitschke: the debate on the possibility of an autonomous *Gesellschaftswissenschaft* or sociology (1859) and the *Berliner Antisemitismusstreit* (1879-1881). It seems that Durkheim’s distinction between various different competing traditions within the same nation state has important consequences for his conception of “*mentalité*”. Durkheim’s case is interesting in that he combined aspects that would appear today as untenable (such as the classification of national mentalities into “normal” and “pathological”) with considerations that still seem relevant for conceiving national traditions (such as the focus on the role of intellectuals and on national systems of education and their traditions).

Finally, we should consider how the problems involving “*Volksgeist*” and “*mentalité*” continued after Durkheim. This included, of course, the popularization and diffusion of “*mentalité*” through the works of Lévy-Bruhl (e.g. Lévy-Bruhl [1910] 1951; [1922] 2010) and its uses in disciplines as different as ethnology, child psychology (e.g. Piaget 1923; 1926; Wallon 1928), medieval and early modern history (the already mentioned works of the founders of the *Annales*), the history of science and the history of philosophy (e.g. Metzger 1930; see also Chimisso 2000; 2008; 2019). It seems that problems that beset already “*Volksgeist*” and

“*Volksseele*” continued to be present in “*mentalité*”, at least in some conceptions of it. Although the project of a “collective psychology” on a national basis was largely dismissed in the wake of the Second World War (largely due to the ideological use of “*Volk*” and “*Volksgeist*” in National Socialism), the problem of understanding national traditions persisted. Sociologists Norbert Elias (1897-1990) and Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002) should later offer accounts of national traditions in terms of “national *habitus*” that took up elements of the Durkheimian notion of mentalities, especially Durkheim’s interest in the role of national systems of education in the formation of national mentalities (Durkheim [1938] 2014).

In sum, by enquiring into the specific topic of the transition from “*Volksgeist*” to “*mentalité*”, we can retrace the route that led – in a scientifically, ideologically and politically highly complex context – from German *Völkerpsychologie* to French sociology of knowledge (parallel to Kusch 2019 for the German context). In both cases, we encounter specific versions of a sociologized *a priori* as applied to the level of national societies. Enquiring into these concrete historical links allows for addressing the prehistory of one of the major trends in “socio-transcendental” or “historico-transcendental thinking” in the social and human sciences after the Second World War, so-called “history of mentalities”. Contrary to what the existing literature has suggested, the application of the notion of “mentalities” to modern nation states was not a product of its later diffusion but accompanied the history of “*mentalité*” right from its start. It was perhaps the convergence between, on the one hand, the ethnographic and anthropological sources of “mentality” and, on the other hand, the debates on national traditions and identities – culminating in First World War propaganda – that led to the success of “mentality”. In any case, whether proponents relativized to modern nation states, to civilizations, to whole groups of civilizations (“primitive” vs. “modern”) or to historical epochs, “mentality” became a handy conceptual tool for promoting and spelling out a specific version of the historicization or sociologization of the *a priori*.

(2) Durkheimian sociology of knowledge in context: Emergence, execution and diffusion of a collective research programme on the social origins of the categories of thought

The study on the French reception of German *Völkerpsychologie* would lead naturally to a second investigation concerning the perhaps most important programme for sociologizing the *a priori*. In 1903, French sociologist Émile Durkheim (1858-1917) and his nephew sociologist and ethnologist Marcel Mauss (1872-1950) published in *L'Année sociologique* an article which, in retrospect, seems to amount to a “symbolic revolution” (Bourdieu 1971a; [1992] 1998; [1998–2000] 2013) or a sort of “symbolic bomb” (Bourdieu [1998–2000] 2013, 60). Entitled “De quelques formes primitives de classification. Contribution à l’étude des représentations

collectives” (Durkheim and Mauss 1903; [1903] 2017) it formulated a research programme for studying in a socio-historical perspective not only the basic function of classifying the world into genera and species, but also our basic “categories of thought” (substance, causality, force, etc.) as well as concepts of time and space. The “symbolic revolution” consisted in making – in open defiance to the Kantian empirical-transcendental distinction – of what was formerly thought to be *a priori* – the condition of all experience and thus beyond experience – the object of empirical sociological investigations. This research programme and the connected “sociological theory of knowledge” (Durkheim 1909) were pursued collectively over a period of some forty years by members of the Durkheimian group (for a recent overview, see Schick et al. 2022) – a feature that singularizes it among other sociological accounts of the *a priori* around 1900.

However, several questions concerning this research programme remain at least partially unanswered or continue to be discussed: How did this programme come about? Which were its sources? How did it relate to French and other neo-Kantian epistemologies? In which context and against which competitors was it defined? Which position did it take within the space of possible positions on categories and *a priori* knowledge within the social and human sciences at the time? How was it discussed – i.e. which meaning was attributed to it – both within and without the group of collaborators of *L’Année sociologique*? The intended investigation would seek to reply to some of these questions in the perspective of the problem of the sociologization of the *a priori*.

To begin with, we can reconstruct the “profane” history of the 1903 article that was the first to “desacralize” the *a priori*, as it were. We should attend here to the concrete work on it documented in the correspondence between Durkheim and Mauss (Durkheim 1998; Hubert and Mauss 2021) – illustrating (as earlier for Durkheim’s *Le suicide*) a division of labour between theoretical (Durkheim) and empirical (Mauss) work. We should also consider the various sources Durkheim and Mauss drew on – from Théodule Ribot’s (1839-1916) experimental psychology and its Spencerian motives (especially Ribot 1897; see also Fournier 2007) to English-speaking ethnographical and anthropological sources (Spencer and Gillen 1899; 1904; Howitt 1889; Mauss and Hubert 1900; Durkheim 1900c), not forgetting Renouvier’s and Hamelin’s neo-criticist theories of the categories. Against this background we can understand the transition from the philosophical focus on “categories” to the sociological one of “classifications”.

In a second step, we would have to explore the collective execution of the research programme in various works of the members of the Durkheimian group (Hubert and Mauss 1904; Mauss and Beuchat 1906; Hubert and Mauss 1909a; Hertz 1907; 1909; Lévy-Bruhl 1910) up until the systematization of the programme in Durkheim’s *Les formes élémentaires de la vie*

religieuse (Durkheim [1912] 2013) and his lectures on pragmatism (Durkheim [1913] 1955). This first phase ends with the First World War which left the Durkheimian group devastated (cp. the chronology in Schick et al. 2022; see also Hirsch 2016).

The 1903-1914 phase is important for positioning the project within the field of contemporary possibilities regarding a sociological account of knowledge. We should examine here the various – largely forgotten – competitors of the Durkheimians who proposed at the time alternative ways of sociologizing knowledge, especially the *a priori*: evolutionists such as Alfred Fouillée (1838-1912) and Jean-Marie Guyau (1854-1888), a Comtean anti-Kantian “neo-positivist” such as Eugène de Roberty (1843-1915), Bergsonian “pragmatists” such as Alphonse Chide (1868-1952) or a “conventionalist” such as Eugène Dupréel (1879-1967). This would enable us to carve out the specific profile and position of Durkheimian sociology of knowledge vis-à-vis the other dominant poles of French sociology at the time, connected with Gabriel Tarde (1843-1904) and René Worms (1869-1926) (Heilbron 2015, 59–91). We should also attend here to the first reception of the Durkheimian programme within philosophy, including the important debates of Durkheim at the Société française de philosophie in 1906 and 1913 (Durkheim [1906] 2010; [1913] 1975). Finally, we should also take into account the internal tensions surrounding the “categories project” within the Durkheimian group itself, especially in the case of Célestin Bouglé (1870-1940) (Vogt 1979, 137–39), Gaston Richard (1860-1945) or, quite differently, Lucien Lévy-Bruhl (1857-1939) (Lévy-Bruhl 1910).

The interwar period introduced a new dynamics into the Durkheimian group (Heilbron 1985; Marcel 2001b). In this changed context, the initial programme was continued, but also transformed and extended. Cases to be considered here are Marcel Mauss’s extension of the list of “categories” considered, their redefinition as “symbols” (Mauss [1924] 1950, 309) and the connection with “body techniques” (Mauss [1936] 2013; [1938] 1950); Maurice Halbwachs’s (1877-1945) transformation of the Durkheimian programme into the work on group-specific “collective memories” (Halbwachs [1925] 1994; [1938] 2015; [1950] 1997b); and Lucien Lévy-Bruhl’s connected, but relatively autonomous research on “primitive mentality” (Lévy-Bruhl 1922) – without any doubt the most successful international export product at the time stemming from the Durkheimian programme.

Finally, we should retrace how the Durkheimian programme – though often eschewed in its most general philosophical-sociological formulation – survived in one way or the other in other specialized disciplines such as ethnology (Mauss [1947] 2021), sinology (Granet [1934] 1999), linguistics (Meillet 1906; 1925; Benveniste 1958; 1969a; 1969b), child psychology (Piaget 1923; 1926; 1970; Wallon 1928), medieval and early modern history (Bloch 1924; 1939b; Febvre [1942] 2003; [1952] 2021) or classical studies (Gernet and Boulanger 1932; Gernet

1968). The Durkheimian programme for sociologizing the *a priori* was here largely stripped from its polemics with philosophy and diffused as a research practice. In this way, it became an important element of French social and human sciences – ready to be revived after the Second World War by “structuralism” (Lévi-Strauss [1950] 2013; [1960] 1996a).

(3) A transnational controversy on the sociologization of the a priori: Reconsidering Simmel's participation in L'Année sociologique

A third enquiry could then focus on the international relations of the Durkheimian programme and, in fact, its confrontation with the most prominent attempt at sociologizing the *a priori* in Germany.³ At the turn of the 20th century German philosopher and sociologist Georg Simmel (1858-1918) and French sociologist Émile Durkheim (1858-1917) were not only among the most prominent promoters of academic “sociology” in Europe (Simmel [1894] 1992; Durkheim [1894] 2007). Both proposed explicitly at various occasions sociological accounts of the *a priori* (Simmel [1892] 1989; 1997; [1908] 1992b; Durkheim and Mauss [1903] 2017; Durkheim 1909; [1912] 2013). What is more, Simmel and Durkheim cooperated for a short period of time at the end of the 1890s with Simmel contributing to the first issue of Durkheim's *L'Année sociologique* (1898) (Simmel 1898). However, the ephemeral collaboration quickly turned into more or less explicit controversy (Durkheim 1900a; [1900] 1975a; Durkheim and Fauconnet 1903; Durkheim [1915] 1975; Simmel [1908] 1992c), implicitly pursued up until their deaths at the end of the First World War.

This raises several questions for the study of the sociologization of the *a priori*: How did Simmel's and Durkheim's proposals regarding sociology and the sociologization of the *a priori* relate to each other? In which respects were they similar, in which respects did they differ? How did these similarities and differences condition their short-lived collaboration and their later controversy? What might this episode tell us about differences and similarities between the German and the French context regarding projects for a sociological account of the *a priori*?

In order to examine these questions, we can take as a starting point Simmel's contribution to the first issue of Durkheim's *L'Année sociologique* (1898) and the non-continuation of the collaboration. This episode has led in the literature to the creation of various narratives concerning the relationship between Simmel and Durkheim. Some commentators have insisted on the internal incompatibility of the views of Simmel and Durkheim regarding sociology (Sagnol 1987) while others have emphasized practical complications during the copy-editing of Simmel's article for *L'Année* and the importance of external conditions such as the political context

³ I have presented this research as Strauss 2018.

of the Dreyfus affair (Rammstedt 1992; 1997; 1998). The reiteration of these narratives has led to the creation and diffusion of several myths, such as the idea that the collaboration had ended in an “*éclat*” (Rammstedt 1992, 886), that Durkheim had “excluded” Simmel from *L’Année sociologique* (Rammstedt 1992, 889) or that Durkheim would have intentionally prevented the French reception of Simmel’s work (Deroche-Gurcel 2002). These myths can be encountered to this day. The whole episode has taken on the allure of a dramatic confrontation between “the two founders of sociology” (Fitzi 2017, 296).

In order to debunk these myths and de-dramatize the episode we can reconsider the collaboration between Simmel and Durkheim on the basis of the central archival materials conserved in the Fonds Célestin Bouglé at the Bibliothèque nationale de France as well as various published correspondences (Mauss et al. 1979; Gülich 1990; Durkheim 1998; Béra 2019). On the basis of these materials, I would argue that: (1) The cooperation with Simmel was never conceived as a long-term project (contra Rammstedt 1997, 455). Simmel never was a regular collaborator of *L’Année*, but had the status of an “external contributor”. (2) There are no solid indications for an isolated “break” or “*éclat*” between Simmel and Durkheim (contra Rammstedt 1992, 886). From the beginning the cooperation was dominated, at least on Durkheim’s part, by ambivalence, skepticism and outright critique. Rather than for conditions of “failure” we should look for conditions for the sporadic success of the cooperation. (3) The sporadic success of the transnational cooperation in 1897/98 can be explained by a convergence of local strategies on the part of both Simmel (the international diffusion of his work on sociology) and Durkheim (the positioning of *L’Année*). When these conditions changed, the cooperation lost its *raison d’être*.

The first step would thus consist in a critique of existing accounts of the collaboration between Simmel and Durkheim and in a proposal for an alternative historical interpretation. However, given the fact that both the archives of Simmel and Durkheim have been lost, we will have to accept a certain degree of indeterminacy regarding the events surrounding Simmel’s participation. Where does that leave us with regard to the content of their dispute in the aftermath of Simmel’s contribution to *L’Année*?

In a second step, we could reconstruct this conflict on the basis of the publications of both authors prior and posterior to the collaboration (in the period 1894-1918). I would argue here that this conflict had, in fact, several dimensions: (1) the question of the status of a “scientific sociology”, i.e. its relations with psychology, philosophy, and the various special social sciences (economics, law, history, etc.); (2) the issue of spelling out in concrete terms a sociological account of the *a priori* – a question that emerged between Simmel and Durkheim in the context of the sociology of religion and the sociology of knowledge; (3) a tension between

general orientations in epistemology and the philosophy of science (especially the role of abstraction in the social sciences); and finally (4) a “social conflict over styles of sociological work” (Merton 1961) between a collectivist (Durkheim and his group) and an individualist (Simmel) model.

Regarding the first dimension, we can retrace the differences in the positions between Simmel and Durkheim through their programmatic statements on sociology (Simmel [1894] 1992; Durkheim [1894] 2007; Simmel 1899; Durkheim 1900a; Durkheim and Fauconnet 1903; Simmel [1908] 1992c). We must also consider the intermediate position of philosopher and sociologist Célestin Bouglé (1870-1940) who instigated not only Simmel’s participation in the first issue of *L’Année*, but also sought to mediate between the positions of Simmel and Durkheim, especially regarding psychology (Bouglé 1896). I would emphasize in particular the surprisingly neglected conflict between Durkheim and Simmel regarding the relationship between sociology and the special social sciences and their materials. We see here clearly the difference between Simmel’s conception of “formal sociology” and the Durkheimian conception of “general sociology” (Durkheim and Fauconnet 1903).

Regarding the second issue mentioned, we should follow the differences between Simmel and Durkheim on the field of the sociology of religion and of knowledge – fields on which both authors were working in the first years around 1900 (Durkheim 1899; Durkheim and Mauss [1903] 2017; Simmel 1903; 1995; Durkheim 1909; [1912] 2013) and which were of strategic importance for the problem of the sociologization of the *a priori*. We should reconsider here Rammstedt’s hypothesis of a sort of hidden dialogue between Simmel and Durkheim in this area, more exactly, his hypothesis of an impact of Simmel’s writings on religion on Durkheim’s sociology of religion and knowledge (Rammstedt 1997, 448–49; 1998, 148–49). I would rather argue that the basic conflict consisted in their respective conceptions of the relationship between epistemology and sociology.

Regarding the third dimension, we must consider basic differences in the epistemologies and philosophies of science of Simmel and Durkheim. The most important issue here is the question of the role of “abstraction” in science in general and in sociology in particular. Importantly, I would argue against framing the conflict as opposing “Simmel, the Kantian” to “Durkheim, the positivist” (Fitzi 2017, 299). This recurring account ignores Durkheim’s own background in French neo-criticism (Renouvier’s theory of the categories) and spiritualist Kantianism (Boutroux’s classification of the sciences). In fact, the situation is more complicated. Both Simmel and Durkheim were situated in between “(neo-)Kantianism” and “positivism”, but they took different positions on the spectrum of possible positions.

Finally, regarding the fourth dimension, we could show how this conflict about fundamental epistemological orientations and presuppositions was, in fact, closely connected with practical questions regarding the social organisation of sociological work. Simmel and Durkheim pursued indeed different models of sociological practice: an individualist model on the part of Simmel, a collectivist model on the part of Durkheim and his group. On the most general level, their controversy can thus be interpreted as a “social conflict over styles of sociological work” (Merton [1961] 1973b, esp. 64).

In conclusion, the controversy between Simmel and Durkheim could show not only that the issue of sociologizing the *a priori* was a shared concern among several German and French scholars. It shows that the issue was intertwined with general conceptions of sociology and with the question of how to organize sociological work concretely in order to put the sociologization of the *a priori* into practice. As the complex and regularly revived memory of the failed cooperation between Simmel and Durkheim indicates, the opposition between both models of sociologizing the *a priori* is still active.

(4) *The a priori in German-speaking debates on the sociology of knowledge, 1900s-1940s*

Another investigation should then provide an overview of the German-speaking debate on *Wissenssoziologie* (Meja and Stehr 1982a), mainly between the 1900s and the 1940s, and examine the presence of the specific problem of sociologizing the *a priori* in this context. Contemporary accounts (e.g. Jerusalem [1924] 1982, 28–31; Dunkmann [1927] 1982, 194–97; Horkheimer [1930] 1982, 475; Plessner [1931] 1982, 658; Popper [1945] 2011a, 420–21) indicate indeed that this problem was an important dimension of the controversy on the emerging field of the sociology of knowledge. We should try here again to reconstruct the various positions concerning the problem by following concretely the references to Kant, criticism and “neo-Kantianism”, on the one hand, and to Comte, “positivism” and its proxies, on the other. We should also take into consideration, as far as necessary, other “forces” in the field of philosophy and the social and human sciences at the time, such as “psychologism”, Marxism, phenomenology or the import to the German-speaking world of American pragmatism and Durkheimian sociology – positions that gained in importance with the decline of neo-Kantianism after the First World War.

In a first step, we should map – for the period from the 1880s to the 1900s in German-speaking countries, especially in Austria and Germany – the field of effective positions and, connected to it, the field of possibilities (Bourdieu [1975] 1988, 51–65; [1992] 1998, 378–92; [1998–2000] 2013, passim and esp. 61–62; Hauchecorne 2020a) for a sociological approach to knowledge and cognition. Importantly, we encounter two relatively separate spaces of

references in Austria and in Germany, certainly in connection with the different receptions of “Kant” and “Comte” in each country.

In the Austrian context – where ideas for a sociology of knowledge emerged for the first time within the German-speaking world –, the relevant forces were Spencerian or Darwinian evolutionism, Herbartianism, Wundtianism, Machian positivism, Marxism, pragmatism and Durkheimian sociology (for this context, see e.g. Feichtinger 2010; Fillafer and Feichtinger 2018; Hoeschen and Schneider 2006; Maigné 2021). Connecting these various isms with their concrete supporters, we should consider some of the earliest formulations for a sociology of knowledge among Austrian evolutionistic sociologists such as Ludwig Gumplowicz (1838-1909) (Gumplowicz [1885] 1926, 172) and Gustav Ratzenhofer (1842-1904) (Ratzenhofer 1902). We should then also attend to the peculiar group of philosopher-sociologists assembled in the first sociological association in the German-speaking world, the *Soziologische Gesellschaft in Wien* (1907-1934) (Exner 2013; Mozetič 2018; Müller 2001; 2018; 2021). Several members of this society promoted indeed a sociology of knowledge while engaging in a – mostly critical – dialogue with Kantian and neo-Kantian philosophy. The relevant agents here were Wilhelm Jerusalem (1854-1923), Rudolf Goldscheid (1870-1931), Rudolf Eisler (1873-1926), Max Adler (1873-1937) and Paul Szende (1879-1934), but also Rosa Mayreder (1858-1938). It seems that in the context of the *Soziologische Gesellschaft* the different “forces” mentioned above came together to favour the emergence of a sociological account of cognition and knowledge, mostly in polemical relation with the Kantian tradition in Germany.

We should proceed analogously for the situation in Germany between the 1880s and 1900s. The resources for a sociological account of knowledge here were – under the impact of the German classification debates and the symbolic barriers erected against “positivism” (see above) – sensibly different. They included *Völkerpsychologie* (both Lazarus and Steinthal’s and Wundt’s variety), the psychologism dispute (Kusch 1995; 2003), phenomenology, Diltheyan *Weltanschauungslehre* (Dilthey [1883] 1990, second book; 1960), *Lebensphilosophie* – with the import of Bergson in the background (Zanfi 2013) – and, to some extent, academic neo-Kantianism (Šuber 2003; 2010).

Having achieved an overview of these various tendencies and their potential for a sociology of knowledge, we should turn to the first phase of the German-speaking debate on the sociology of knowledge. This first phase reached arguably from Wilhelm Jerusalem’s first explicit formulation of a programme for a “sociology of cognition” in 1909 (Jerusalem 1909; [1909] 1925; Uebel 2012a; Huebner 2013) to the death, in 1928, of the main promotor of *Wissenssoziologie* in early German academic sociology, philosopher and sociologist Max Scheler (1874-1928). This period included the debate between Jerusalem and Scheler on the relationship with

“positivistic” – especially Comtean and Durkheimian – sociology of knowledge in 1921 (Scheler 1921a; Jerusalem 1921a; Scheler 1921b) (see below), the publication of the first programmatic collective volume on the sociology of knowledge in 1924 (Scheler 1924), the public debate on the sociology of knowledge at the Fourth Congress of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Soziologie in 1924 in Heidelberg (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Soziologie 1925) confronting Scheler with Max Adler, and the early attempt at a reflexive sociology of knowledge of the sociology of knowledge (Mannheim 1925).

The second phase of the debate – between 1928 and 1933, and further roughly until 1945 – was then dominated by debates on Karl Mannheim’s (1893-1947) version of *Wissenssoziologie*. It started with the second public debate on the sociology of knowledge at the Sixth Congress of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Soziologie in Zurich in 1928 (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Soziologie 1929b), especially with Mannheim’s talk on the role of competition in mental and cultural life (Mannheim 1929). It then continued with the publication of Mannheim’s *Ideologie und Utopie* (Mannheim [1929] 1995) and the ensuing debate among philosophers, social scientists and the wider educated public (Meja and Stehr 1982a). We should try to map here the main positions and oppositions in this controversy (see Kusch 2003): (1) the opposition to Mannheim from a Marxist point of view (e.g. Marcuse [1929] 1982; Neurath [1930] 1982; Horkheimer [1930] 1982; Adler 1936, 22, 149); (2) the conservative-literary opposition and the debate of Mannheim with Ernst Robert Curtius (1886-1956) (Curtius [1929] 1982; Mannheim [1929] 1982; Curtius 1932; Hoeges 1994; Lepenies [1985] 2006a); (3) specific forms of sociological opposition (e.g. Alfred Weber in Deutsche Gesellschaft für Soziologie 1929a; Schelting 1934); (4) specific forms of philosophical opposition (e.g. Stern [1930] 1982; Arendt [1930] 1982; Grünwald 1934; Popper [1945] 2011b); as well as (5) the few supportive positions (e.g. Norbert Elias in Deutsche Gesellschaft für Soziologie 1929a; Speier [1930] 1982). Throughout, we should try – as several of the authors mentioned suggest themselves – to relate these different stances concerning *Wissenssoziologie* to the issue of the sociologization of the *a priori* as well as to the social position of those who promoted them.

Finally, we would also have to address the issue of the forced closure and displacement of the German debate on *Wissenssoziologie* through the ascension to political power of the National Socialist Party in 1933 and the involuntary emigration that it entailed. In fact, most of the remaining agents in favour of the project of a sociology of knowledge – in whatever terms it was spelt out – lost their university positions in 1933 – most prominently Mannheim himself, but also his then *Habilitation* Norbert Elias (1897-1990). In the best case, they could continue their work under the difficult circumstances of exile. In the worst case, they changed topics or abandoned altogether. Only to some extent and with important modifications could the debate

on the sociology of knowledge continue elsewhere, mostly in the English-speaking world where it was at least partially received (such as in Parsons [1937] 1968; Merton 1937; [1941] 1968; 1945; Mills [1940] 1963). These difficulties can be illustrated to some extent by two marginal projects for a sociology of science that – at least partially – grew out in the 1930s and 1940s of the German-speaking debate on the sociology of knowledge but were rediscovered only much later: Ludwik Fleck’s (1896-1961) sociology of “thought collectives” (Fleck [1935] 1980; [1935] 1979) inspired to a certain extent by Durkheimian sociology as imported to the German-speaking context by Wilhelm Jerusalem; and Edgar Zilsel’s (1891-1944) sociology of science elaborated in US-American exile against the background of both Austromarxism and logical empiricism (Zilsel 1992; 1976; 2003; Romizi et al. 2022). Such “rediscoveries” seem in fact symptomatic of the long-term effects of the displacement of the European debate on the sociology of knowledge to the English-speaking world through forced emigration as well as partial reception. The German-speaking debate, in any case, was *de facto* closed in 1933.

(5) Max Adler and the social a priori: From the neo-Kantian critique of historical materialism to the sociology of knowledge

In the context of the German-speaking debate on Wissenssoziologie, one historical agent deserves particular attention because he enables us to illustrate the complex connections between several contemporaneous debates involving Kantianism and sociology.⁴ In fact, in the first decades of the 20th century in the German-speaking world, the question of the relationship between neo-Kantianism and sociology as well as the peculiar problem of the sociologization of the *a priori* were prominently discussed in a series of debates involving Marxism and its doctrine of “historical materialism”. Our investigation would have to connect three of these controversies which are rarely related to each other: the debate on the work of Marburg neo-Kantian philosopher of law and legal scholar Rudolf Stammler (1856-1938); the debate on neo-Kantian socialism or socialist neo-Kantianism between Marburg neo-Kantians, reformist socialists and revolutionary Marxists at the fringes of the academic and political fields; and the later German-speaking debates on the sociology of knowledge in the 1920s and 1930s. As a guiding thread through these three disputes can serve Austro-Marxist philosopher and sociologist Max Adler’s (1873-1937) theory of the “social *a priori*”, which was involved in all three controversies. I would argue that Adler’s work provides indeed a sort of “missing link” between the debates on Stammler, on neo-Kantian socialism and on *Wissenssoziologie*. Most importantly, Adler’s case enables us to illustrate that the problem of the sociologization of the *a priori* was prominently

⁴ I have presented this research as Strauss 2024.

discussed in the German-speaking world in the context of the first reception and accommodation of Marxism within academia.

First, we would have to reconstruct Stammler's background and his proposal. Contrary to the relative neglect in the secondary literature on neo-Kantianism and sociology, Stammler was in German-speaking countries at the end of the 19th century probably the single most prominent author associated with the attempt of providing a neo-Kantian foundation for the social sciences (e.g. Gerlach 1899). His 1896 book *Wirtschaft und Recht nach der materialistischen Geschichtsauffassung* (republished in a much discussed second edition in 1906 and going through five editions till 1924) (Stammler [1896] 1924) was not only among the first books to introduce Marx and Engels's "materialist conception of history" into the German academic debate – in order to publicly refute it (e.g. Adler 1913b; 1913a). Based on insights from Marburg neo-Kantianism (especially Cohen and Natorp – Natorp being a friend of Stammler's to whom he dedicated his book) – but not without tensions (Widmer forthcoming; Natorp 1913) – and claiming directly a Kantian pedigree (Stammler [1896] 1924, 17), Stammler's book attempted to provide a new "foundation" for the social sciences and "social philosophy" (Stammler [1896] 1924, 19). This new foundation was based on a refutation of the Marxist doctrine of "historical materialism".

Like others at around the same time in the context of the debates on the classification of the social and human sciences (e.g. Simmel [1892] 1989; [1896] 1999) (see above), Stammler proposed to extend Kantian criticism – elaborated on the example of the mathematical natural sciences – to the social sciences and history. He did so by proposing to distinguish – like Kant had done in the domain of knowledge – between the "form" and the "matter" of social life. "Form" was thought to correspond roughly to law, "matter" to economy. On this basis, "historical" or "social materialism" – roughly the Marxist idea (according to Stammler) that the laws of the economy determined entirely the lawful course of social life and history – was refuted along lines similar to Lange's rejection of physical materialism (Stammler [1896] 1924, 21; Lange [1866] 1914a). To "social materialism" Stammler opposed – similar to Cohen and Natorp – "social idealism" (Stammler [1896] 1924, 61). Through the discussion of the "materialist conception of history" Stammler engaged with the Marxist version of the "naturalization" of the *a priori* (see above) (Stammler [1896] 1924, 18–19, 26) and thus one of the major sources of inspiration for the later German-speaking debates on the sociology of knowledge.

Stammler's *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* immediately sparked controversy among contemporary philosopher-sociologists. We should retrace here the different ways in which various agents sought to demarcate themselves from this sort of "neo-Kantian social science". Stammler's proposal was indeed discussed by major social scientists and philosophers at the

time. Among them were Georg Simmel (Simmel [1896] 1999), Paul Natorp (Natorp 1896; 1899, 134–45) (Natorp’s *Sozialpädagogik* was dedicated to Stammler), Othmar Spann (Spann 1902; 1907, 142–77), Max Adler (Adler 1904b; 1913b; 1913a), Max Weber (Weber [1907] 1988; [1922] 1988b; for a critical edition, see [1907] 2018; [1922] 2018) and Ferdinand Tönnies (Tönnies 1907; 1909; 1908). In some cases, the discussion of Stammler’s work had important impacts on the respective intellectual projects of these authors, especially for Simmel and Weber (Härpfer and Kaden 2017). Weber, for example, suggested himself in his fundamental “Soziologische Grundbegriffe” (used as an introduction to *Wirtschaft and Gesellschaft*) that the basics for his conceptual distinctions regarding different forms of order and regularity in social life were laid out for the first time in his acrimonious critique of Stammler (Weber [1921] 2014, 1, 23; see also Adair-Totef 2014).

Starting from the controversy on Stammler, we should then establish the link between this debate and another fundamental controversy on neo-Kantianism and the social sciences at the time: the intense debate on neo-Kantian socialism and/or socialist neo-Kantianism (Lübbe 1958; 1963a, 85–125; Sandkühler and De la Vega 1970; Keck 1975b; Willey 1978, 102–30; Holzhey 1994; Meyer 2005; recently Widmer 2021a; 2024). This dispute ran parallel to the Stammler debate – in almost perfect synchrony remarked already by Adler (Adler 1904b, 15). The two debates were intimately connected as indicated by the reviews of Stammler’s work by agents involved simultaneously in the debate on neo-Kantian socialism (e.g. Staudinger 1897; Vorländer 1897). Interestingly, the discussions on neo-Kantian socialism took place at the margins of the academic field and the political field, especially within the German workers’ movement and their journals, the “revisionist” *Socialistische Monatshefte* (1897–1933) and the Marxist *Die Neue Zeit* (1883–1923) (Sandkühler 1970, 16, 34–40).

The main interlocutor for the reference to Kant in these debates was Marburg neo-Kantianism. In fact, already the founder of this lineage, Friedrich Albert Lange (1828–1875) had engaged in the debates on the “social question” and the “workers’ question” (Lange 1865; 1866). His peculiar conjunction of returning epistemologically to Kant while defending politically reformist socialism provided the blueprint for later debates (for the development of this “Marburg Left-Kantianism” from Lange through Cohen and Natorp to Stammler, see Widmer 2021). Lange’s disciple Hermann Cohen (1842–1912) followed his teacher in some respects. Similar to Jean Jaurès (1859–1914) in France a few years earlier (Jaurès [1892] 1927), Cohen stated in his 1896 introduction to Lange’s *Geschichte des Materialismus* that Kant had to be conceived as “the founder of German socialism” (Cohen [1896] 1914, 112). Almost simultaneously, Cohen’s Marburg colleague Paul Natorp (1854–1924) exchanged in 1895 with August Bebel (1840–1913), one of the founders of the Social Democratic Workers’ Party of Germany

(1869) (Keck 1975a). Thus, not only did Marburg neo-Kantian philosophers turn to socialism, but also socialist politicians turned to Marburg neo-Kantianism.

In this way, German social-democratic politician Eduard Bernstein (1850-1932) took at around the same time the third edition of Lange's *Arbeiterfrage* (1875) as an inspiration for formulating a reformist socialist political programme based on Kantian ethics (Bernstein 1897; 1899; Sieg 1994, 97–98). This proposal sparked intense debates within the German workers' movement on "revisionism" (Sandkühler 1970). The ensuing dispute involved, on the side of the neo-Kantian socialists, Franz Staudinger (1849-1921), Karl Vorländer (1860-1928), Conrad Schmidt (1863-1932) and Gerhart von Schulze-Gävernitz (1864-1943). Opposed to them were Marxist materialists such as Franz Mehring (1846-1919), Karl Kautsky (1854-1938), Georgi Plekhanov (1856-1918) and Vladimir Lenin (1870-1924) (for the most important references, see Sandkühler and De la Vega 1970, 368–73). The debate used and reinterpreted, of course, the earlier positions taken by Marx and Engels on the Kant revival, on "positivism" and materialism (Marx [1873] 1962; Engels [1878] 1962b; [1873–1883] 1962; [1888] 1962). Especially Lenin's simultaneous critique of "positivism", "empirio-criticism" and "neo-Kantianism" (Lenin [1909] 1962) should prove influential internationally after the First World War, when academic neo-Kantianism was in decline (see e.g. Korsch [1923] 1966; Lukács [1923] 1968; Nizan [1932] 2012, see also Chapter 3). While most of the debates on neo-Kantian socialism at the turn of the 20th century turned around questions of the ethical foundations of Marxism in Kant's *practical* philosophy, there was also a part of the discussion that engaged with Kant's *theoretical* philosophy (Sandkühler 1970, 11; Plechanow 1898; Schmidt 1898). Stammer's work, which proposed a primarily epistemological critique of "historical materialism" contributed crucially to this part of the discussion.

Having established the connections between the Stammler debate and the controversy on neo-Kantian socialism, we could then turn to the position in which both debates came together and in which these earlier disputes were further connected with German-speaking discussions on the sociology of knowledge. This position was Max Adler's attempt to provide a synthesis of Marx and Kant's *theoretical* philosophy through his main idea of the "social *a priori*" or the "social-transcendental" (Adler 1904a; 1936). The debate on Stammler and the debate on neo-Kantian socialism served indeed as a springboard for Adler's "intellectual project" (Bourdieu 1966). Adler himself insisted on the connection between both debates (Adler 1904b, 15). He developed his theory of the "social *a priori*" – pursued over more than thirty years (Adler [1924] 1975; 1925; 1936) – in order to solve simultaneously the "crisis of Marxism" epitomized by the debate on (neo-Kantian) "revisionism" and the problem of the critical "foundation of the social sciences" raised by Stammler.

What is more, Adler then connected these two contexts with the German-speaking controversy on the sociology of knowledge in the 1920s and 1930s. In fact, Adler participated actively and critically in this debate (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Soziologie 1925). In this context, he insisted – against the caricatures of “historical materialism” and the critiques of Marxism advanced, for example, by philosopher and sociologist Max Scheler (1874-1928) – on the opposition between Marxism and materialism (Scheler and Adler 1925, 188). In the debate later provoked by Karl Mannheim’s (1893-1947) *Ideologie und Utopie* (Mannheim [1929] 1995), Adler defended the primacy of Marxism over *Wissenssoziologie* (Adler 1936, 22, 149). In Adler, we thus encounter a version of the sociologized *a priori* which sought to provide a solution for the problem of founding a “critical sociology” on the basis of Marxism – a problem that was raised by the introduction of Marxism into the academic debate at the turn of the 20th century. However, Adler’s position did not go unchallenged within the Austro-Marxist context. It was in turn criticized by more materialistically oriented Austro-Marxists such as Edgar Zilsel (1891-1944) who saw in Adler’s neo-Kantian critique of materialism an unacceptable compromise with academic philosophy (Zilsel [1930] 2001; [1931] 1992a; [1931] 1992b).

The goal should be to reconstruct the links between the three controversies mentioned through Adler’s project. For each debate, we could situate Adler’s position in the “space of positions” and the “positions taken” (*prises de position*) (Bourdieu [1975] 1988, 51-65; [1992] 1998, 378-92; 2001). We should systematically compare it with alternative positions regarding Stammler (e.g. Simmel, Weber, Tönnies, Spann), regarding “revisionism” and materialism (e.g. Bauer, Szende, Zilsel, see also Sandkühler and De la Vega 1970) and in relation to the sociology of knowledge (e.g. Neurath, Horkheimer, Marcuse, see also Meja and Stehr 1982). Focusing on the Adlerian theory of the social *a priori*, we can see how at the beginning of the 20th century controversies over the relationship between Kantianism, socialism and Marxism were intertwined with debates over the epistemological foundations of the social sciences, and of sociology in particular.

Whatever the final judgment on Adler’s theory of the “social *a priori*”, his work provides a sort of “missing link” between three important debates in the first decades of the 20th century that involved neo-Kantianism, sociology and the problem of the sociologization of the *a priori*: the controversies on Stammler, on neo-Kantian socialism and on *Wissenssoziologie*. So far, neither Stammler nor Adler have received in the literature on neo-Kantianism and sociology the attention they deserve given the importance accorded to them by their contemporaries. This investigation could thus reintroduce and reconsider the connection between some of the probably most important debates on neo-Kantianism and sociology in the German-speaking world at the turn of the 20th century. In the cases of Stammler’s neo-Kantian foundation of the social

sciences as well as of Adler's Marxist theory of the "social *a priori*" we see not only how the issue of the sociologized *a priori* was debated in the context of the introduction of Marxism into academia. We also see clearly how the sociologization of the *a priori* could be perceived by more radically inclined agents not as a fundamental break but as an accommodation strategy *vis-à-vis* academic philosophy.

Finally, reconsidering Adler's project of the "social *a priori*" is also important because it illustrates the ambiguities of sociological accounts of the *a priori* around 1900 and how such a "hybridization" strategies could finally fail in the face of increasingly fortified disciplinary borders between philosophy and sociology. In the end, Adler accumulated the disadvantages of his – in multiple respects – marginal position. He remained too philosophical for Marxists and sociologists; too sociological for Marxists and philosophers; and too Marxist for philosophers and sociologists. Against the increasing rifts between these communities, Adler did not succeed in asserting the new "role-hybrid" (Ben-David and Collins 1966) he imagined of the (Austro-)Marxist sociologist-philosopher. However, this did not prevent a certain continuity between Adler's "sociological" or "social transcendentalism" and Jürgen Habermas's (1929-) later version of sociologizing the *a priori* (Habermas 2006, 552; see also [2006] 2008).

(6) A tale of two traditions: The reception of Durkheimian sociology of knowledge in France and the German-speaking world, 1900s-1940s

With a clear picture of both the French and the German-speaking debate on the sociology of knowledge in mind, we could turn back again to issues of transnational circulation.⁵ The arguably most widespread narrative on the history of the sociology of knowledge is that the discipline is primarily a German invention which emerged in the 1920s and 1930s in the works of Max Scheler (1874-1928) and Karl Mannheim (1893-1947) under the peculiar political circumstances of the Weimar republic (e.g. Meja and Stehr 1982b, 11–12; Frisby [1983] 1992; Meja 2015; McCarthy 2016; Kruse [2008] 2018, 187–207). If Durkheimian sociology of knowledge is mentioned at all – which is not systematically the case –, it features as a "precursor" or part of the "prehistory" of the discipline (Camic 2001; see already Grünwald 1934, 20). At best, the French and the German branches of the debate are presented as two "largely autochthonous and independent" traditions in the sociology of knowledge (Merton [1941] 1968, 543–44). The projected enquiry could reconsider this narrative critically and retrace how it came about – in fact, how it emerged right out of the historical situation it pretended to describe. It would study the transfer and reception of Durkheimian sociology of knowledge – and

⁵ I have presented this research, among other occasions, as Strauss 2018b.

especially the problem of the sociologization of the *a priori* – in the German-speaking world between the 1900s and the 1940s. It would then compare the debates triggered in Germany to those in France and try to account for their differences.

There several crucial episodes in the transfer and reception of Durkheimian sociology of knowledge in the German-speaking world (see also König 1961b; 1961a; Löwy 2012; Keim 2013; 2021): the exchange between Durkheim and Austrian philosopher and sociologist Wilhelm Jerusalem (1854-1923) before the First World War on the sociology of knowledge (Durkheim 1908; Jerusalem [1909] 1925; Durkheim 1910; Jerusalem 1921a; 1921b) in the context of the activities of the Soziologische Gesellschaft in Wien (Exner 2013; Müller 2021); the first German-speaking reviews of Durkheim's *Les formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse* (Durkheim 1912; Baciocchi 2012; Baciocchi and Théron 2012); the debate between Jerusalem and Max Scheler in 1921 regarding the relationship between French and German sociologies of knowledge (Scheler 1921a; Jerusalem 1921a; Scheler 1921b); and the further references to Durkheimian and French sociology of knowledge as the German controversy on the sociology of knowledge unfolded (e.g. Mannheim 1925; Curtius [1929] 1982; Mannheim [1929] 1982; [1931] 1995), for example in the first German academic works on Durkheim (Marica 1932; Günzel 1934; Grünwald 1934; Machhausen 1937).

We could show in this context that the narrative of the French and German debates being independent or unconnected was actively created and promoted by Scheler, Mannheim and others in order to formulate a genuinely German anti- or non-“positivistic” sociology of knowledge. The background of this strategy were again earlier German debates on the classification of the sciences, especially the social and human sciences (see above). The marginalization of “positivistic” sociologies of knowledge contributed to excluding the contributions of Durkheim and his group, of Jerusalem (Huebner 2013), Gumpłowicz and others from the “collective memory” of the sociology of knowledge. In other words, in the course of the German reception of Durkheim's work the sociology of knowledge was purged from its “positivistic” ancestry by strategies of “purification” (Douglas [1970] 2003; [1966] 1984; Bloor [1976] 1991, 94; Kusch 1995, 160–210). An indicator of this process is also the fact that the label “sociologism” – having referred earlier to “positivistic” Durkheim and his school – came in the German debate to refer primarily to Mannheim's anti-“positivistic” *Wissenssoziologie*.

With a picture of both the French and the German-speaking reception of Durkheimian sociology of knowledge in mind, we could try to gain some comparative understanding. How to explain the differences in the receptions of Durkheimian sociology of knowledge in France and Germany? One possible focus here would be the issues of “reflexivity” (the self-application of the sociology of knowledge to itself), “relativism” and “sociologism” (for the connection of

“sociologism” with the psychologism dispute, see Kusch 2003). Specifically, we could try to explain why the problem of self-application raised by the sociology of knowledge led to a sort of epistemic crisis (“relativism”) in the German context, but not necessarily in the French context. What accounts for the fact that “reflexivity” – or simply “self-exemplification” (Cole and Zuckerman [1975] 2017; Merton 2004, 231–33) – was perceived as a problem in the one context and not in the other? Why was self-application thought to lead automatically to self-refutation in Germany, but not in France?

We could explore here explanatory hypotheses such as different epistemological orientations (idealism, specific forms of neo-Kantianism and hermeneutics in Germany vs. specific forms of rationalism, “positivism” in France), different representations of historical time (historicism in Germany vs. evolutionism and progressivism in France), and different views regarding the organization of scientific work (individualistic models in Germany vs. collective models in France). In order to avoid tautological explanations of national traditions through national traditions (Charle [1996] 2001, 28), these various factors must ultimately be connected back to evolutions in the French and German-speaking academic fields and the debates on these transformations, such as the German classification debates (see above). In this perspective, we can understand why certain arguments – such as the one leading from self-application to self-refutation – possessed some compelling force in Germany, but not in France (or Austria, for that matter).

Finally, for understanding the origins of the “tale of two traditions” we should also consider the transfer and reception of French and German-speaking sociology of knowledge into the English-speaking world, especially in American sociology. In fact, this narrative was established and stabilized in this context from the 1940s onwards (Merton 1937; [1941] 1968; 1945). It was later reinforced through the phenomenological “renewal” of the sociology of knowledge in the 1960s (Berger and Luckmann 1966) – which amounted to a second exclusion of the “positivistic” tradition of Durkheim and others from the disciplinary memory of the sociology of knowledge. From there on, the narrative of two independent traditions has remained largely unchallenged. Reconsidering it critically seems to be the condition for (re-)establishing a both conceptually interesting and historically controlled dialogue among the various options in the sociology of knowledge, including those previously excluded.

(7) Culturalizing or sociologizing the a priori? Cassirer’s dialogue with Durkheimian sociologists

Within the German-speaking reception of Durkheimian sociology of knowledge, one episode deserves particular attention: the dialogue with this tradition initiated by German neo-Kantian

philosopher Ernst Cassirer (1874-1945).⁶ When it comes to the interrelations between neo-Kantianism and sociology – and, in particular, the issue of the relativization and historicization of the *a priori* –, we encounter Cassirer’s name frequently (e.g. Vandenberghe 1996; 2001; Katzmaier and Heffler 1999; Magerski 2004; 2005; Merz-Benz 2014, 318; Luft 2015b). Yet, how did Cassirer actually relate to the sociology of his day? This seemingly simple question has been largely overshadowed by the interest in Cassirer’s later reception in sociology and the social and human sciences more generally.

In order to address this issue head-on, we must conduct a systematic analysis of the references to “sociology” and “sociologists” in the corpus of Cassirer’s published as well as posthumous writings according to the definitive *Hamburger Ausgabe* and *Nachgelassene Manuskripte und Texte* (Cassirer 1998–2009; 1995–2022). This procedure enables us not only to obtain a representative overview of Cassirer’s references to sociology. It also uncovers some remarkable discussions in Cassirer of past and contemporary sociologists such as Comte, Simmel, Max Weber, Mannheim, and even Marxist sociology.

Yet, the most important portion of Cassirer’s references to contemporary sociology concerns a dialogue that took place, between the 1920s and the 1940s, between Cassirer and sociologists of the Durkheim group – especially Émile Durkheim (1858-1917), Marcel Mauss (1872-1950), Maurice Halbwachs (1877-1945), Antoine Meillet (1866-1936) and Lucien Lévy-Bruhl (1857-1939). Indeed, this encounter stands out within the – otherwise quite limited – German-speaking reception of Durkheimian sociology of knowledge. We should attend here first to the material conditions of Cassirer’s encounter with the work of the Durkheimians in the context of his appointment to the newly founded Hamburg University in 1919 and the contacts with Aby Warburg’s (1866-1929) Kulturwissenschaftliche Bibliothek (Ferrari [1996] 2003; Maigné et al. 2018; Bredekamp 2019; Thimann and Gilbhard, forthcoming). We can show indeed that Cassirer and the Durkheimians shared a substantial background of sources coming mostly from English-speaking ethnography, ethnology and anthropology. Special attention deserve here the cases of British-Australian anthropologist Alfred W. Howitt (1830-1908) and American ethnographer Frank H. Cushing (1857-1900). Against this shared background of references, the dialogue between Cassirer and the Durkheimians displayed both agreements and disagreements regarding the question of reformulating the Kantian *a priori* in a contemporary relativized or dynamized fashion. While the Durkheimians had proposed since the early 1900s a sociologization of the *a priori* in the framework of their “sociological theory of knowledge”, Cassirer envisioned in his “philosophy of symbolic forms” in the 1920s rather a historicization or

⁶ I have published this study as Strauss 2025.

culturalization of the *a priori*. The two different paths combined and opposed each other at the same time.

Cassirer opposed the Durkheimian theory of totemism as the most “primitive” religion on empirical grounds as well as criticizing Durkheim’s “sociological deduction” of the categories on philosophical grounds (Cassirer [1921] 2011a; [1921] 2011b; [1922] 2009; [1925] 2010a). He charged the Durkheimian approach with an untenable social “realism” and insisted, in an openly “idealistic” turn, on the primacy of mythical consciousness over social organization. In reaction, Durkheimians such as Mauss (Mauss 1925; [1927] 2004) and Halbwachs (Halbwachs 1926) objected to Cassirer’s ultimately philosophical method and his socially unconnected concept of *Geist* that would be incapable of explaining changes in mythical organization. They charged Cassirer with a sort of “spiritualism” – opposing to it Durkheimian “scientific rationalism” (Durkheim [1894] 2007, VII) and “sociological naturalism” (Durkheim [1898] 2010, 47–48). The whole opposition can be illustrated by the contrary interpretations that Cassirer and the Durkheimians offered of ethnographer Alfred Howitt’s “diagram of stick” representing the mythical organization of physical space in the Australian indigenous tribe of the Wotjobaluk (Howitt 1889, 62).

The conflict can be summarize in terms of the opposition between a historicization or culturalization of the *a priori* in Cassirer, and a sociologization of the *a priori* in the Durkheimians. Again, at issue here are the boundaries and the hierarchy between philosophy and sociology: Which should finally be the discipline studying evolving *a prioris* – philosophy (of culture) or (general) sociology? However, in spite of these “internal oppositions”, it would be important to also take into consideration the “external oppositions” common to both Cassirer and the Durkheimians. These shared oppositions included, most prominently, Henri Bergson (1859-1941) and Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) – as we can demonstrate through the presence of Durkheimian topics in the Davos encounter between Cassirer and Heidegger (Heidegger [1928] 2010; Cassirer and Heidegger [1929] 2010; Cassirer et al. [1929] 2014; Gordon 2010; Grandjean 2011; Faye et al. 2021) –, but also Marxism and Marxist sociology. These shared external oppositions indicate that, within the academic field of the social and human sciences at the time, the controversy between Cassirer and the Durkheimians represented rather a tension between allied projects than a fierce antagonism.

A nuanced account of the episode would have to account for both convergences and divergences between the Cassirerian and the Durkheimian projects. This is all the more important since – although French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002) later built prominently on the alliance between Cassirer and the Durkheimians in his project for a “sociology of symbolic forms” (e.g. Bourdieu 1970; 1971a; 1977b) – the contrast between Cassirerian culturalization

and Durkheimian sociologization of the *a priori* has been revived and sometimes exaggerated (e.g. Ferry and Renaut [1985] 1988; Mermet 2020). It has remained effective throughout later receptions and uses of Cassirer's work in the social and human sciences. A proper historicization of Cassirer's actual relationship with the sociology of his day is the precondition, it seems, for discussing the question of what we might learn from Cassirer for the social and human sciences today.

All in all, these various investigations concerning the decades around the turn of the 20th century would provide us with a complex transnational picture of the debates on sociologizing knowledge in general and the *a priori* in particular. From there, we could try explore more general hypotheses about the social mechanisms involved in the evolution of the problem. Sociology's search in this period for academic recognition and legitimation (for the French case, e.g. Clark 1973; Karady 1976; 1979) and, at the same time, its ambition of becoming an autonomous discipline, would certainly be here a central aspect – and explain some of the fundamentally “ambivalent” (Merton and Barber [1963] 1976) strategies of sociologizing the *a priori*.

1930s-1960s: Decline and transformation

I have suggested that a new cycle in the evolution of the problem of sociologizing the *a priori* started around the 1930s. We have seen in Chapter 3 that several of the positions formulated between the 1930s and 1960s conditioned how the sociologization of the *a priori* around 1900 was later interpreted and received. In some cases, this had traceable effects up to the present day. It was critical for us to historicize these visions in order to overcome some “memorial obstacles” regarding the relationship between neo-Kantianism and sociology and the problem of the sociologization of the *a priori*. There is no doubt, then, that the 1930s-1960s period would deserve further detailed investigation if we were to retrace the evolution of the problem up to the present day. In a first step, we would need an overview, a map, as it were, that could guide us towards further strategic research sites. We could elaborate such a synopsis along the following lines, perhaps under the title “Transformations of the sociologized *a priori*, 1930s-1960s: Anti-neo-Kantianism, scholarly migration and the autonomization of the social sciences”.

Although the period from the turn of the 20th century to the Second World War was arguably the period where the problem of the sociologization of the *a priori* was most intensely debated, the discussion did not simply stop with the war or after it. Between the 1930s and the 1960s, it evolved further in new directions. It did so under the impact of more general dynamics in the academic and the broader intellectual fields at the time. Accordingly, we should try to

understand the continuities and discontinuities in the discussions of sociological accounts of the *a priori* in this period in German-speaking, French-speaking and English-speaking social sciences.

Concretely, we should focus here on positions that were formulated in the 1930s and 1940s and came to prominence after the Second World War, thus setting the options for the aftermath of the war. We could consider a selection of German-speaking, French-speaking and English-speaking scholars, mostly (but not exclusively) identifying professionally as “sociologists” and mostly from the generation born between 1895 and 1910. In fact, it seems useful to isolate this generation from their predecessor and their successor generation (for generations, see e.g. Mannheim [1928] 1964a; Febvre 1929; Kaesler 1984; Sirinelli 1988; Winock 1989; Jureit and Wildt 2005; Neun 2008; Potin and Sirinelli 2019). For the most part, they were educated at the universities by the last generation of Kantian or neo-Kantian philosophers. When coming of age in the late 1920s and early 1930s, they turned against their teachers. In the 1960s, they had come to represent the new academic establishment which, in turn, became the target of the following generation (those born between the 1920s and 1940s, see below). The members of the generation dominating in the 1930s-1960s were thus quite distinct in terms of their social characteristics, their career paths and trajectories, in terms of their intellectual contexts and their contributions to the debate on the sociologization of the *a priori*.

In the three populations of French, German and English-speaking scholars of roughly the same generation, we could identify three general and often interconnected processes that contributed to the transformation of the problem of the sociologization of the *a priori*:

(1) New anti-neo-Kantian sources: First, regarding the historical situation of this generation, new intellectual resources had become available that stemmed from intellectual movements which were themselves explicitly opposed to forms of Kantian or neo-Kantian criticist philosophy. These movements were, most prominently, phenomenology and existentialism, logical empiricism, pragmatism and Marxism. These new elements inflected the trajectory of the problem of sociologizing the *a priori*, triggered new debates and put the issue into new perspectives.

(2) Scholarly mobility: Second, regarding the impacts of socio-political dynamics on the academic field, for all three populations different forms of scholarly mobility between France and Germany and especially – in connection with the Second World War – between Europe and North America played a decisive role (Heilbron et al. 2008; Fleck 2007; 2015b). This mostly involuntary mobility and/or emigration of scholars resulted in many cases in the blending of hitherto relatively separated intellectual traditions and disciplines, such as between phenomenology and pragmatism, social anthropology and formal linguistics or history of science and sociology of knowledge. From this blending of perspectives resulted new visions of

the basic categories and concepts – the domain of the *a priori* – being treated as objects of the social sciences.

(3) The autonomization of the social sciences: Third, regarding the internal dynamics of academic fields, the development of relatively autonomous disciplinary fields in the social sciences (such as sociology and anthropology) in this period in France, German-speaking countries and the United States played a further transformatory role (for an overview of these processes in sociology, see Turner 2014; Heilbron 2015; Masson and Schrecker 2016; Fleck 2016; Moebius 2021b). In connection with increasing autonomization, professionalization and the accompanying “boundary-work” (Gieryn 1983), the philosophical framing of the issues connected with the sociologization of the *a priori* declined – or was explicitly refused. The Kantian vocabulary and framework – associated with a prior pre-disciplinary stage of the social sciences which was deemed “too philosophical” – lost much of its appeal outside philosophy. The issues formulated by prior generations within this framework were translated into new languages and operationalized within new research programmes such as structural functionalism, social phenomenology or structural anthropology. This did not preclude, however, that some agents in this period – especially those coming from philosophy – occasionally reframed the issue in the terms of the Kantian vocabulary (e.g. Stark 1958; Ricœur 1963).

The selection of the agents considered could be made by crossing several criteria, such as contribution to discussions on the sociologization of the *a priori*, direct contact with the previous generation of neo-Kantians or sociologists of knowledge, direct contact with members of the following generation proposing sociological or historical accounts of the *a priori*, etc. The idea would be to arrive at a meaningful selection of positions actually taken on the problem of the sociologization of the *a priori* in the period between the 1930s and the 1960s. Following the simple principle that what was actual was apparently also possible, retracing these actual positions could enable us to get a grasp of the “space of possibles” – and its transformations – regarding the problem of the sociologization of the *a priori* in this period.

We could thus arrive at a population of agents that would include, in the German-speaking context, sociologist Norbert Elias (1897-1990), philosophers and sociologists Max Horkheimer (1895-1973) and Theodor W. Adorno (1903-1969), economist and philosopher Alfred Sohn-Rethel (1899-1990), lawyer, philosopher and sociologist Alfred Schütz (1899-1959), as well as marginal pioneers of the sociology of science such as Polish Austro-Hungarian physician and medical researcher Ludwik Fleck (1896-1961) and Viennese philosopher, historian and sociologist Edgar Zilsel (1891-1944). As a contrast to these emigrés and outsiders, we should also consider the opposition between the slightly younger sociologists René König (1906-1992) and Helmut Schelsky (1912-1984) in post-war German sociology (for an overview, see Moebius

2021b, 58–64). In France, we should include Russian-French philosopher and sociologist Georges Gurvitch (1894-1965), philosopher and sociologist Raymond Aron (1905-1983), anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss (1908-2009), phenomenological philosopher and psychologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961) and philosopher and historian of science Georges Canguilhem (1904-1995). In the English-speaking context, relevant agents would be English anthropologist Edward E. Evans-Pritchard (1902-1973) – especially for his transformation of the Durkheimian and Lévy-Bruhl heritage – or American sociologists Talcott Parsons (1902-1979) and Robert K. Merton (1910-2003). Merton, in particular, would give us the opportunity to engage in a “deviant case analysis” (Molnar 1967), i.e. seeking to understand why an agent who was very well-acquainted with sociological accounts of the *a priori* in both Germany and France (e.g. Sorokin and Merton 1937; Merton [1945] 1968b; [1941] 1968) did *not* employ this framing.⁷

All in all, it seems that in the 1930s-1960s period new intellectual orientations, partly generated by the international circulation of ideas, together with the autonomization of social science disciplines had the effect that explicit references to the framework of Kantian philosophy tended to decline – with the exception perhaps of those agents who had received themselves a philosophical education and were thus familiar with the Kantian idiom. The pressure to legitimize sociology vis-à-vis other disciplines, especially philosophy, seems to have weakened. In some cases, the relationship between philosophy and the social sciences seems indeed to have been inversed. Instead of sociology and anthropology coming towards philosophy in the quest for legitimacy (as it was still the case for the generation of Durkheim), from the 1960s and 1970s onwards philosophy came towards sociology and anthropology and sought to interpret philosophically what was taken as “results” of social-scientific enquiry (Bourdieu and Passeron 1967, 196–97; e.g. Ricœur 1963; Lévi-Strauss 1963). These modified power relations between philosophy and the social sciences formed the background, it seems, for the further evolution of the problem in the following period between the 1960s and 2000s.

1960s-2000s: Reemergence and proliferation of relativized *a prioris*

If we were to characterize the 1960s-2000s phase briefly, we could speak of a reemergence and proliferation of a variety of relativized *a prioris*, especially in debates involving constructivism, relativism and post-modernism. From the 1960s onwards, new approaches in the social and human sciences emerged that put the issue of the sociologization of the *a priori* – after its relative decline in the immediate post-war period – back on the map of theoretical discussions.

⁷ I could present aspects of this topic as Strauss 2024a.

Mostly directed against various manifestations of “positivism” or otherwise “scientific” programmes, they proposed different sorts of relativized *a priori*s: historical, social, cultural, linguistic, etc. Often these notions were paired with the idea that social and natural reality was in some way or the other “constructed” on the basis of these *a priori*s. Indeed, much of today’s “historico-transcendental” or “socio-transcendental” talk in the social and human sciences involving “social” or “socially constructed categories”, “social” or “historical conditions of possibility”, “historical”, “social” or “relativized *a priori*s” (see Chapter 1) goes directly back to works from this period. We can imagine here at least two investigations – quite different in character – to be pursued further:

- (1) Reconstructing the transnational space of options for relativizing the *a priori*.
- (2) Bourdieu’s sociology of symbolic forms between Cassirer, Durkheim and Panofsky, 1950s-2000s.

(1) Reconstructing the transnational space of options for relativizing the a priori

Again, we would need for the 1960s-2000s period some sort of map that could guide us in defining strategically significant local research sites. We could try here to reconstruct the space of options for relativizing the *a priori* in the 1960s-2000s period in a transnational perspective.

As a first step, we could start from a relatively small number of positions of English, French and German-speaking scholars in the social and human sciences from the generation born between the 1920s and 1940s and coming to prominence in the course of the 1960s and 1970s. This would include – besides Pierre Bourdieu – American historian and philosopher of science Thomas S. Kuhn (1922-1996), Austrian-American sociologists Thomas Luckmann (1927-2016) and Peter L. Berger (1929-2017), American founder of “ethnomethodology” Harold Garfinkel (1917-2011), French philosopher and historian Michel Foucault (1926-1984), German philosopher and sociologist Jürgen Habermas (1929-) and, finally, also a group of North-American philosophers of language and social theorists including John Searle (1932-), Charles Taylor (1931-) and Richard Rorty (1931-2007). This first selection could be justified by the fact that the agents mentioned became, arguably, some sort of intellectual “opinion leaders” (Lazarsfeld et al. [1944] 1960) in their respective linguistic and intellectual contexts regarding the relativization and/or sociologization of the *a priori*.

In the discussions on relativized *a priori*s in different national contexts, we could then try to identify shared aspects such as the following three:

- (1) Critiques of positivism, functionalism and structuralism: First, little surprisingly, the protagonists of this generation defined themselves with and against the dominant positions of the

prior generation. In almost all cases, this involved discussing, modifying or dismissing various forms of “positivism” (or what was taken for it). In the US-American context, this was concretely “logical positivism” or “logical empiricism” (Uebel 2013) in the area of the philosophy and history of science, “ideal-language philosophy” (Rorty [1967] 1992) in the area of the philosophy of language, and “structural functionalism” – as promoted by Talcott Parsons (1902–1979) and, in a different way, Robert K. Merton (1910–2003) – in the area of the social sciences and sociology.

In the French context, the main orientations of the prior generation with and against which new approaches in 1960s evolved were, of course, different. They included structural linguistics as applied to various branches of the social and human sciences under the label “structuralism” (Boschetti 2014b), phenomenology, especially in its Heideggerian and existentialist variant, Marxism, combined with a renewed and prolonged critical interest in Hegel (Kojève [1933–1939] 1947; Hyppolite [1946] 2021; 1954; Descombes 1979, 21–63; Pinto 2002, 31–32), and the tradition of “historical epistemology” epitomized at the Sorbonne by Bachelard and Canguilhem (Lecourt 1969; Gingras 2010; on the problem of the “historical transcendental” in this tradition, see Cavazzini and Gualandi 2006).

In Germany, “positivism” was likewise a major bone of contention in the social sciences and philosophy. It was controversially discussed in the “positivism dispute” of the 1960s (Adorno et al. 1969; Dahms 1994) where “positivism” was taken to denote at once tenets of analytic philosophy of language and of science (e.g. inductivism) and “positivist” methods in empirical social research. Besides, Hegelian Marxism as well as hermeneutics remained a major reference point in Germany. At the same time, new elements from analytic philosophy and pragmatist philosophy of language (especially Peirce, Mead, Wittgenstein) were introduced.

In all three national contexts, the critique of and shift away from “positivism” made use of transcendental or quasi-transcendental modes of reasoning. In this context, Kantian vocabulary and tropes made a comeback, especially among philosophically educated participants. However, the transcendental level making experience possible now appeared almost exclusively in a historicized, socialized or otherwise relativized version. We discover in these debates then an important continuity with earlier confrontations between “positivism” and “criticism” since the 19th century.

(2) “Linguistic turn”: This first common aspect was connected with a second shared feature in the transformation of the debate on a sociologized or historicized *a priori*. The guiding model of many of the approaches cited became the analysis of language. However, not of language as an ideal formal symbolic system, but of language as a historical formation embedded in a broader system of social practices. Depending on the context, the reference points for these

approaches were pragmatist and/or Wittgensteinian philosophy of language, ordinary language philosophy and speech act theory or the critiques of structural linguistics.

(3) Constructivism, relativism, post-modernism: Finally, the various versions of relativized *a priori*s gave rise to a third shared aspect in this period: the numerous debates on “relativism”, “constructivism” and “post-modernism” in different areas of philosophy and the social sciences, especially in the 1980s and 1990s (e.g. Hacking 1999; Zammito 2004). The reference to the Kantian vocabulary and the notion of *a priori* or quasi-transcendental conditions could serve in this context various different functions. As in earlier stages of the debate, the strategy of “sociologizing” or “relativizing the *a priori*” maintained its fundamental ambiguity. Depending on the setting of the debate, it could indicate either a move in favour of “relativism” (e.g. in Foucault); a move against it (e.g. in Habermas or Friedman); or both, i.e. an intermediate position (e.g. in Kuhn or Bourdieu). In fact, on the basis of this ambiguity some of the proponents mentioned engaged in common debates on these issues. Retracing these debates (e.g. Habermas vs. Foucault, Bourdieu vs. Habermas and Foucault, Friedman vs. the “strong programme” in the sociology of scientific knowledge, etc.) would enable us to reconstruct the inner oppositions within the camp of those envisioning a relativized *a priori*. It is through the debates on “social constructivism” and “relativism” that this last transformation of the Kantian legacy in the social sciences is arguably still with us. The authors mentioned have in some cases become reference points for today’s use of sociologized or otherwise relativized *a priori*s. They bridge the gap between the long history of the sociologization of the *a priori* and present-day preoccupations.

Through an overview of several leading authors publishing and circulating widely between the 1960s and the 2000s, we could hope to obtain a first idea of how the problem of the sociologization of the *a priori* evolved further in different debates and different linguistic contexts. As to the “social bases” of these developments, we can speculate so far only that there might have been some connection with the morphological transformations of the academic field. The fact is that the period of the 1960s-1980s – when most of the proposals discussed above were formulated – coincided with a cycle of expansion of the social sciences at the universities (for the French case, see Heilbron 2015, 152–80), but also on the publishing market. In several countries, the social sciences became dominant “guiding disciplines” (*Leitdisziplin*) in public and intellectual debate. The hypothesis might be explored that there was some correlation between the social sciences’ rise in status and the fact that the philosophical object of the *a priori* came again under the purview of these disciplines, generating various forms of relativization, historicization or sociologization of knowledge.

(2) Bourdieu's sociology of symbolic forms between Cassirer, Durkheim and Panofsky, 1950s-2000s

This overview should, of course, be developed in dialogue with specific case studies on central agents such as Foucault, Habermas, Kuhn or Bourdieu. It was the latter who, in the 1960s-2000s period, proposed probably the most explicit sociologization (not only a relativization, historicization or a vague socialization) of the *a priori*.⁸ In dialogue with Durkheimian sociology, the works of neo-Kantian philosopher Ernst Cassirer (1874-1945) and art historian Erwin Panofsky (1892-1968), Bourdieu formulated the project of a “sociology of symbolic forms” – an apparent allusion to Cassirer’s three-volume *Philosophie der symbolischen Formen* (1923-1929). In this context, he sought explicitly to integrate – though not uncritically – aspects of the Kantian and neo-Kantian philosophical tradition into sociology. Also, Bourdieu’s work later became undoubtedly one of the main sources of today’s widespread way of speaking of “social conditions of possibility”, “socio-transcendental conditions”, “social categories”, “social time” or “social space” (see Chapter 1). In this respect, his project of a sociology of symbolic forms represents a crucial episode in the history of sociologizations of the *a priori* after 1945. The task here would be to reconstruct the conditions, the emergence and the fate of this project in its various social and intellectual contexts. At the same time, Bourdieu’s approach is closely connected to the general orientation of the present research project on the sociologization of the *a priori*. Enquiring into its history might thus also allow to clarify and control some of the presuppositions of the present work in a reflexive way.

In a first step, we would have to examine the socio-intellectual conditions of Bourdieu’s encounter with the work of Cassirer. According to his own account, Bourdieu had encountered Cassirer’s writings already in the early 1950s during his studies in philosophy at the École normale supérieure (Bourdieu and Biasi 1992, 106) where he was socialized in the tradition of the history and philosophy of science (Bourdieu 2001b, 205). In order to reconstruct the conditions of this encounter, we should consider the state of the reception of Cassirer in France at this time (Capeillères 2021; Ferrari 2021). We see here that during his education and his early career, Bourdieu was in contact – either personally or through their works – with some of the earliest importers of Cassirer’s works in France, such as Martial Gueroult (1891-1976), Henri Gouhier (1898-1994), Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961) or Cassirer’s former doctoral student Éric Weil (1904-1977) (Sichirolo 1994; Deligne 2022). A particularly important role played Bourdieu’s early mentor philosopher Jules Vuillemin (1920-2001) who received, cited and discussed not only Cassirer but the whole tradition of Marburg neo-Kantianism (Vuillemin

⁸ I could present this research at various occasions and publish an early version as [Strauss 2020](#).

1949; 1954; 1955; Dussort 1963; Robbins 2005). Although there was from the beginning a critical dimension to Bourdieu's reception of the neo-Kantian tradition (e.g. represented by Merleau-Ponty's critique of Cassirer's "intellectualism"), these references became part of how he defined his own stance in the French philosophical field of the 1950s, both against the Heideggerian, Sartrean and other "existentialist" uses of phenomenology and against Marxism. He took this vision with him when he transitioned from philosophy to anthropology and sociology.

Against the background of this early encounter, Bourdieu became active in his early career in the middle of the 1960s as an editor of the works of Cassirer in his book series "Le Sens commun" (Sapiro 2020h; Duval and Noël 2022). Cassirer should become there between 1969 and 1983 the most important foreign author in quantitative terms (Strauss 2020a). Through the editorial work for "Le Sens commun", Bourdieu came into touch with the historical dialogue between Cassirer and the Durkheimians on the sociologization of the *a priori*. He thus came to defend the idea of a convergence of both programmes – the Durkheimian sociology of knowledge and the Cassirerian philosophy of symbolic forms (Bourdieu 1971a, 296, n. 2). In the context of the book series, Bourdieu also entered into direct contact with one of Cassirer's most prominent disciples in the social and human sciences at the time, art historian Erwin Panofsky (1892-1968), translating himself Panofsky and editing two books of his (Panofsky [1951] 1967; 1975; Pasquali 2023; Anheim and Pasquali 2025). It was in the discussion of Panofsky that Bourdieu formulated the earliest systematic accounts of his concept of "*habitus*" (Bourdieu 1967a).

In a next step, we would have to examine in detail the context in which the label "sociology of symbolic forms" appeared for the first time, that is, in the title of Bourdieu's earliest publication in German, a collection of articles entitled *Zur Soziologie der symbolischen Formen* (Bourdieu 1970). Based on archival sources and interviews, we can trace the origins of this syntagma back to a transnational academic gift exchange between Bourdieu and Hungarian-German literary scholar Peter Szondi (1929-1971), with the crucial mediation of French-Swiss Greek scholar and close friend of Bourdieu's Jean Bollack (1923-2012). To understand the background of Bourdieu's publication, we could analyse the both social and intellectual homologies (as well as differences) between these three allied "heretics". Each of them, in fact, pursued at the time a highly reflexive, critical project against the academic orthodoxy in their respective disciplines sociology (Bourdieu), classical Greek studies (Bollack) and literary studies (Szondi). Together they formed what might be called an interdisciplinary "invisible college of heretics" – based on various forms of gift exchange and mutual "elementary scientific recognition" (Hagstrom 1965, 23–42).

This context makes us understand that Bourdieu's brand "sociology of symbolic forms" was both highly ambiguous and highly distinctive. It fulfilled multiple functions in demarcating Bourdieu's approach from key positions in the intellectual fields in France and Germany at the time, such as "intellectualist" academic philosophy, Marxism, hermeneutics, positivism and structuralism. In these various cases, the reference to art historian Erwin Panofsky trumped, in fact, the one to Ernst Cassirer, author of the *Philosophie der symbolischen Formen* – who is not once cited in *Zur Soziologie der symbolischen Formen*. Panofsky's work in the history of art served Bourdieu indeed as a warrant for his transition from the philosophy to the sociology of symbolic forms. Within Bourdieu's œuvre, the "sociology of symbolic forms" project – pursued at the time in German, in Brazilian Portuguese (Bourdieu [1974] 2007) and in French (Duval and Noël 2022, 376–77, 384) – marked a sort of theoretical "pre-synthesis", i.e. an important intermediary step towards the "first theoretical synthesis" spelt out in Bourdieu's 1972 *Esquisse d'une théorie de la pratique* (Heilbron 2011, 198; 2018).

We should then turn also to how Bourdieu continued to use "sociology of symbolic forms" (and its cognates) in the following years and decades, up until the end of his life when the term became no less than a catchword for his whole scientific enterprise (Bourdieu [1997] 2003, 32). With references to Cassirer, Panofsky, certain branches of the neo-Kantian tradition and Durkheimian sociology of knowledge Bourdieu constructed in the 1970s and 1980s what he himself called a "mythical genealogy" (Bourdieu [1983–1986] 2016, 596, 777) of his sociological project. The distinctive functions of the label remained relatively constant compared to the German-French context of the 1960s in which it had first emerged. Bourdieu continued to use these references to defend "relational reasoning" against both methodological monism ("positivism") and dualism (hermeneutics) in the philosophy of (social) science; to emphasize the "structuring" activity of social agents against various forms of "objectivism"; to insist on the "structured" character and social conditions of this activity against forms of "intellectualism" and "subjectivism"; and to adhere to what he took to be the heritage of Enlightenment against forms of post-modernism, constructivism and relativism.

Bourdieu's resulting vision involved a specific version of sociologizing the *a priori* which continued explicitly the "sociologized neo-Kantian tradition" (Bourdieu [1989–1992] 2012, 265) that Bourdieu saw in the Durkheimians. Emphasizing the role of corporal embodiment, Bourdieu reconceptualized the *a priori* in both its "structured" and "structuring" functions in terms of "practical" and "corporal schemes" and "dispositions" acquired through exposition to a symbolically and probabilistically structured social environment. This sociologized *a priori* formed the basis for Bourdieu's theory of "symbolic power" (Bourdieu 1977). The label

“sociology of symbolic forms” thus gives us not only a key to Bourdieu’s specific strategy in sociologizing the *a priori*, but also to his general sociological-theoretical orientation.

In the end, we should also try to spell out the reflexive dimension this investigation into Bourdieu’s sociologization of the *a priori*. By showing how it became possible for Bourdieu to identify a convergence between Durkheimian sociology of knowledge and Cassirer’s philosophy of symbolic forms and to attribute to Durkheim “the paternity of the idea of *socio-transcendental conditions*” (Bourdieu 2001b, 158), we could transform, it seems, one of the starting points of the present enquiry into a historical-empirical object of investigation. This could be taken as an illustration for the practical difference between “narcissistic” or “relativistic” reflexivity, on the one hand, and “scientific”, “reformist” or “realist” reflexivity, on the other (Bourdieu 1993b; [1993] 2022; 2001b, 176, 178). If we subscribe to the latter view, such a reflexive investigation can provide – instead of a self-refutation – some means for controlling our own perspective on the sociologization of the *a priori*.

In sum, a lot remains to be done on the 1960s-2000s period. Some episodes are perhaps still too close, historically speaking, to be investigated. But distance starts to set in: archival resources, critical editions and historical scholarship on these topics are becoming available, such as in Bourdieu’s case. In any case, we can expect great epistemic benefit from studying this period for understanding how the ways of speaking that formed the starting point of the present investigation diffused on a large scale in the social and human sciences.

A case of long-term sociological ambivalence?

These are then some specific ways in which the historical investigation into the problem of sociologizing the *a priori* might be continued. A question remains: Can we say, in the end, anything general about the long-term evolution of this problem? Is there anything in common – intellectually or socially speaking – to this multiplicity of debates and contexts? We can venture here at least a hypothesis – which, of course, will need further testing and corroboration.

The sociologization of the *a priori* emerged from our socio-historical explorations as a problem that required for its solution what has been described in the sociology of science – in the “old”, “functionalist” and “outmoded” strand⁹ – as “hybridization” or “role hybridization” (Ben-David [1960] 1991; Ben-David and Collins 1966).¹⁰ That is, solutions to this problem

⁹ For the staged opposition between “old” and “new” sociology of science and the critique of this distinction, see e.g. Merton [1977] 1979; Ben-David 1991, pt. VI; Gieryn 1982 and reactions; Knorr Cetina 1991; Dubois 1999; 2001; Kitcher 2000; Bourdieu 2001; Richardson 2004; Shinn and Ragouet 2005.

¹⁰ “This process whereby a person in Role A is set to achieve the aims of Role B can be described as ‘role hybridization’. The innovation is the result of an attempt to apply the usual means in Role A to achieve the goals of Role B.” (Ben-David [1960] 1991, 45)

must combine, it seems, the normative requirements of two different “social roles” or, in other words, they must meet the expectations of two distinct social “reference groups” (Merton [1949] 1968b, 279–440; [1975] 1976): academic philosophers and – emerging from within this profession – academic sociologists. The means of sociology – i.e. empirical-theoretical investigations about the observable social-historical world – are used to achieve goals of philosophy – i.e. identify experience-independent conditions of the possibility of knowledge.¹¹ And also the other way around: The means of philosophy – say, certain concepts, problems, forms and patterns of reasoning – are used to achieve the goals of sociology – say, understand the organization of society into groups and classes.

In the case of sociologizations of the *a priori*, these hybridizations seem characterized by a peculiar sort of ambiguity or “ambivalence”. An object traditionally assigned to philosophy, the *a priori*, is appropriated and integrated into sociology. At the same time, this does not leave sociology unchanged. With the object “*a priori*” also certain modes of reasoning – transcendental or quasi-transcendental – are imported into sociology. As set out in Chapter 1, genuine sociologizations of the *a priori* hybridize transcendental philosophy’s notion of a dependence of constituted from constituting elements with sociology’s claim to cover all social phenomena, including knowledge. They are, as it were, a continuation of philosophy by sociological means; but also a continuation of sociology by philosophical means. Accordingly, they could in fact be used – and interpreted by contemporaries – both as an accommodation strategy regarding academic philosophy and its Kantian underpinning (e.g. the above cited criticisms of Stammler and Adler by Zilsel); or as a radical break with this institution (e.g. the reception of Durkheimian sociology of knowledge by French and German philosophers); or both, depending on context and audience.

In other words, strategies of sociologizing the *a priori* were intrinsically ambiguous as to their philosophical and social meaning. They intervened in the institutionalized relations between philosophy and sociology and transformed with the evolution of these relations. They could mean a radical break with philosophy as well as an accommodation of sociology to the conceptual imperatives of academic philosophy. Also, depending on context, some of these

¹¹ It is in these terms that French sociologist Jean-Claude Chamboredon (1938-2020) – in a critical review of American sociologist Terry N. Clark’s (1940-) institutionalist history of the emergence of French sociology (Clark 1973) – described Durkheimian sociology of knowledge and its “transfert du kantisme”: “La place de la sociologie de la connaissance peut s’expliquer comme un effort pour répondre aux problèmes que pose la philosophie de la connaissance, et s’éclairer ainsi par la concurrence de la sociologie naissante avec la philosophie; en particulier une des intentions centrales de l’œuvre de Durkheim, la tentative de transfert du kantisme, attribuant à la société ce que celui-ci attribue à la raison, peut s’interpréter comme un effort pour reprendre et accomplir, sur un autre terrain, les ambitions théoriques des traditions philosophiques par référence auxquelles s’est constitué le projet de Durkheim et du groupe des durkheimiens.” (Chamboredon 1975, 14) Thanks to Johan Heilbron for providing me access to this paper.

hybridization strategies succeeded (e.g. the case of the Durkheimian group in France or, later, of Habermas in Germany or Bourdieu in France), others failed (e.g. the cases of Adler or Sohn-Rethel).

At the source of the ambiguous uses of sociologizations of the *a priori* lies, we suspect, what Robert K. Merton and Elinor G. Barber called “sociological ambivalence”, i.e. the “incompatible normative expectations of attitudes, beliefs, and behavior assigned to a status (i.e., a social position) or to a set of statuses in society” (Merton and Barber [1963] 1976, 6; see also Merton [1963] 1973b). Early academic sociologists around found themselves in a situation of this structurally ambivalent type. They sought in their relation with philosophy both academic legitimacy and autonomy for their intellectual projects. Not only did many of them have a philosophical education dominated at the time by Kantian or neo-Kantian elements. With philosophy often in the (Kantian) position of a “legislative power” in the academic field – that is, detaining the authority on questions of the classification, division and organization of the sciences – to obtain academic credibility involved for early sociologists also to meet certain expectations of academic philosophy, concretely: to pay respect to constitutive elements of its cognitive and institutional identity, such as to the distinction between transcendental and empirical enquiries. Early sociologists were in a paradoxical situation where, in a sense, they sought the approval and recognition of the authority which they were to topple and to declare incompetent on their case. Sociologizations of the *a priori*, at least those around 1900, reflected this “sociological ambivalence”, it seems. The long-term structural conditions of this ambivalence – in other words, the “structural sources of ambivalence” (Merton and Barber [1963] 1976, 23) – could ultimately be traced back to the autonomization of academic philosophy at the turn of the 19th century, the emergence of projects for an autonomous “social science” or “sociology” and the conflicts in which these two processes entered.

It goes without saying that this hypothesis of sociological ambivalence is incredibly broad in scope and invites all sorts of counterexamples. It started from the particular case of the autonomization of academic sociology around 1900 and we should be wary of generalizing these specific conditions. Nevertheless, if we look for an overarching sociological explanation of the evolution of the problem in question and of the structurally ambivalent character of its solutions, then this hypothesis is a serious candidate deserving further investigation.

3. A paradigm for the sociologization of the *a priori*

I continue to use the now polysémie term *paradigm* not in the widely adopted Kuhnian sense but in the more restricted sense of the codification of basic and often tacit assumptions, problem-sets, key

concepts, notations, logic of procedure, and selectively accumulating knowledge in particular fields of scientific inquiry (Merton [1994] 2019, 99, n. 7).

Rationalizing historical diversity

From the 1830s through the present, we have encountered a great variety of attempts to sociologize the *a priori*. What do these various accounts have in common and where do they differ? An important step in pursuing this work further would consist in devising a typology of sociologizations of the *a priori* covering the whole period from Comte to Bourdieu up until today. The interest of such a typology would be to “rationalize” or bring order to the historical record of solutions to the problem. So far, the hypothesis of “sociological ambivalence” provided us with a possible sociological answer. But what about similarities and differences on the intellectual level?

A first answer here is that all sociologizations of the *a priori* share that they are – more precisely: can be constructed as – solutions to the same problem. I have sought to define this problem in Chapter 1 against the background of my historical explorations through four conditions: (1) a two-level distinction between constituting and constituted elements, dependence relations pointing not only (2) from the constituting to the constituted, but also (3) from the constituted to the constituting level, and (4) the competency attributed to sociology. Yet, the different solutions of this problem differ in their interpretations of these conditions and how they respond to them. Hence, having identified the problem-conditions does not yet enable us to provide a typology of problem-solutions.

For doing so, we could draw, I suggest, on a different model, namely Robert K. Merton’s notion of “paradigm” (used in various contexts) and its specific application to the sociology of knowledge (Merton [1945] 1968b; [1945] 1973; for the difference with the Kuhnian notion, see 2004, 266–69). As Merton sought to provide with this paradigm a rationale that allowed to reconstruct the diversity of positions in the field of the sociology of knowledge, so we might do for the more specific case of sociologizations of the *a priori*. The aim of such a typology would be to offer a unified perspective on the available problem-solutions and specify what the different accounts share and where they diverge. A classification along these lines would “rationalize” or “codify” the variety of options as functions of a set of variables (the meaning of “*a priori*”, of “sociology”, of “relative to”, etc.) which can each take on different values. Such a typology would establish “a basis of comparability” between the different accounts encountered, help to dress an “inventory” of positions and enable us to identify similar, compatible and incompatible solutions (Merton [1945] 1968b, 514). Proposing such a typology would be instrumental in clarifying the different versions of a sociologized *a priori* that were and continue

to be debated. Such a classification would hence be one of the main results of the thesis and an important element for its potential usefulness.

Variables and their possible values

A first step here would consist in elaborating the variables and their potential values according to which we can distinguish sociological accounts of the *a priori*. Sociological accounts of the *a priori* vary, obviously, depending on what is understood by “sociology” and “*a priori*”. Each of these two terms indicates a variable whose value determines what a specific account looks like. These are then our first two variables and, arguably, the most important. According to the meaning given to these terms, we can indicate a range of possible values:

- (1) “*A priori*”: scientific or ordinary categories of thought, scientific or ordinary concepts of space and time, logic, forms of reasoning, concepts in general, vocabularies, lexica, grammars, hypotheses, theories, paradigms, research programmes, ideologies, intellectual organization, mentalities, etc.
- (2) “Sociology”, “sociological” or “social science”: science of historical social development, of humanity as a whole, of socio-biological evolution, of civilizations, of social groups, of social facts, of social action, of social forms, of social laws, of interaction, as synthesis of special social sciences, as generalization, as abstraction, as *Geisteswissenschaft*, as social or collective psychology, disciplinary models for sociology (e.g. biology, psychology, history, economics, ethnology, geometry), etc.

But we could yet be more specific. We could adapt and extend here Merton’s still useful “paradigm for the sociology of knowledge” (Merton [1945b] 1968, 514–15; [1945] 1973, 12–13). Applying this classification to solutions to the problem of sociologizing the *a priori*, we could identify the following further variables with their possible values:¹²

- (3) The “existential basis” to which the *a priori* is thought to be relative: (a) “social bases”: social position, class, generation, profession, mode of production, group structures, interests, society, ethnic affiliation, power structure, social processes, etc.; (b) “cultural bases”: values, ethos, culture, *Volksgeist*, *Zeitgeist*, *Weltanschauung*, mentality, etc.
- (4) The type of relation between the *a priori* and the existential basis: (a) causal or functional relations: determination, cause, necessary condition, interaction, dependence, etc.; (b) symbolic or meaningful relations: consistency, coherence, compatibility, unity, (symbolic) expression, inner connection, *Strukturzusammenhang*, etc.; (c)

¹² I am citing in the following partly from Merton’s “paradigm for the sociology of knowledge” (Merton [1945b] 1968, 514–15; [1945] 1973, 12–13).

ambiguous terms for relations: correspondence, reflection, bound up with, in close connection with, etc.

- (5) The function the *a priori* fulfils in relation to the existential basis: maintaining power or authority, obscuring actual social relationships, exploitation, social control, control of nature, social stability, social integration, orientation, moral and logical conformity, coordination, etc.
- (6) The conditions under which relations between the *a priori* and the existential basis obtain: “primitive” societies, “modern” societies, specific stages of civilization, “capitalism”, specific political or economic systems, specific historical epochs, specific stages of science, membership in groups, identity or homology of social or economic positions, etc.
- (7) The associated epistemological position: nihilism, relativism, perspectivism, exceptionalism, relationism, reflexivity, intersubjectivism, criticism, instrumentalism, constructivism, evolutionism, sociologism, pragmatism, realism, objectivism, positivism, progressivism, monism, etc.

Towards a typology of positions

Starting from these variables and their possible values we could reconstruct the actual combinations we encountered in our historical investigation.¹³ We could thus classify the positions of the various authors discussed. In the case of Comte’s early sociologization of the *a priori*, for example, we would recognize a peculiar combination that interpreted “*a priori*” in terms of the “collective intelligence of humanity” (e.g. Comte [1839–1842] 1975, 728) and “sociology” in terms of a science establishing the historical laws of the evolution of this collective intelligence.

By classifying each position we encountered through the “paradigm”, we could start to see convergences and divergences. For example, we would quickly see that many sociologizations of the *a priori* in Germany – e.g. in Simmel or Max Weber – concerned first and foremost the “*a priori*” in the sense of the conditions of the possibility of *scientific* knowledge (e.g. history) and remained reluctant to generalizing from there to *all* categories or to the conditions of experience *tout court*. Weber, for example, combined an interpretation of “*a priori*” in this sense with a notion of “sociology” as a science of social action, defining the “existential basis” as cultural values and their function as one of selection and orientation. By contrast, the

¹³ We could even construct the total space of possibilities by considering all possible combinations of values. If we attributed only three possible values to each of the seven variables, we would already arrive at a total of 2,187 possible combinations. Of course, this would include many combinations of values which would be logically or otherwise incompatible.

Durkheimian research on the categories started from categories and “classifications” involved in ordinary, not scientific experience and began only later to draw explicit conclusions for specifically scientific knowledge.

By clustering positions on the basis of typical combinations, similarities and differences, we could arrive at a limited number of specific types of sociologizing the *a priori*. Ideally, we would find a suitable label for each of these types and translate the whole classification into a synoptic graphical overview in the form of a table. Finally, for our understanding of the space of problem-solutions it would also be helpful to consider “lateral options”, i.e. versions of historicizing or relativizing the *a priori* that cannot count as genuine sociologizations. It would be useful to understand in which specific respects, i.e. regarding which specific variables they deviate from the above paradigm.

The table below illustrates how this paradigm can be applied to generate a synoptic view of sociologizations of the *a priori* – in this case, concerning some important options we encountered in France and the German-speaking context. Further work will be needed, of course, to refine this analytical scheme, extend it to other cases and develop a genuine typology of positions. What counts here is to see how the paradigm can function to clarify and map the whole space of solutions to this problem.

The preparatory work towards a typology in this area highlights, in any case, that there was not *one* single sociologization of the *a priori*. Rather, there were many different and conflicting solutions to the problem of sociologizing the *a priori*, each involving particular notions of “*a priori*”, “sociology”, the relata concerned, “relative to”, etc. Sociologizing the *a priori* was and probably will remain a “multiple” (Merton [1957] 1973; [1961] 1973a; [1963] 1973a, see Chapter 1). Importantly, once we have done this work of clarification and classification, once we have mapped the various effectively proposed solutions to this problem, we will also be in a better position to ask ourselves which of these solutions are best suited for issues that are pre-occupying us today.

Paradigm for the sociologization of the *a priori*: Some applications

Variable	Comte	Simmel	Durkheim	Adler	Mannheim	Metzger	Bourdieu
1. Meaning of “ <i>a priori</i> ”	Collective intelligence of humanity; “theory” vs. “observation”; “subjective” vs. “objective”	“Relative <i>a priori</i> ” of history; “sociological <i>a prioris</i> ” making society possible; forms of <i>Wechselwirkung</i>	Categories of thought (time, space, causality, classification, etc.), concepts	“Social <i>a priori</i> ”, “social-transcendental”; social = transcendental	<i>Kategorialapparaturen</i> , <i>seinsgebundenes Denken</i> , concepts, problems	Categories and mental structures in science, in the history of science, in history	Schemes (practical, corporal), dispositions, categories, classifications, <i>habitus</i> , symbolic instruments
2. Meaning of “sociology”	Positive science of humanity in historical development; law of three stages; encyclopaedic law	Science of forms of interaction; model of formal sciences (geometry)	Science of social facts; collective representations (“physiology”)	Sociology grounded in Marxism as social science	Reflexive sociology of culture, of knowledge, basis for social planning	Sociology and anthropology of mentalities (Lévy-Bruhl)	Reflexive science of symbolic power; theory of practice
3. Existential basis	Collective development of humanity; stages of civilization	Historical-cultural forms; social interaction structures (e.g. urban life, money)	Social groups, collective life, “morphology” institutions, civilizations	Class structure; mode of production	Social position (class, generation, historical milieu, ideology); earlier: “life”	Depending on civilization: expansive vs. reflected thought	Social fields, positions, power structures, objective chances
4. Type of relation	Causal, evolutionary law; functional dependence via “milieu”; coherence via “consensus”	Relational, structural; forms of interaction generate categories.	Functional and symbolic (categories express collective life, social relations)	Social-transcendental relation; sociality constitutes categories	Causal, perspectival, coherence	Symbolic/structural; scientific concepts enabled by historically changing <i>a prioris</i>	Symbolic-structural; <i>habitus</i> -field relation
5. Function of the <i>a priori</i>	Social integration and cohesion, order, progress	Orientation in history, making society possible and intelligible	Integration, coordination, moral and logical conformity	Critical foundation for Marxist social science; emancipation	Selection; social orientation of knowledge	“Orientation” of thought	Structuring practice; symbolic power; reproduction of domination
6. Conditions of validity	Specific to stages of intellectual development	Historical epochs; cultural change; economic-cultural systems	Continuity between “primitive” and modern societies, religion and science	Capitalism, class conflict; but also universal sociality	Historical-social epochs; ideology vs. utopia	Historical stages in science	Premodern and modern societies; fields, socialization
7. Epistemological position	“Positivism”; realism; progressivism; vs. metaphysics, empiricism, mysticism	Relativism, perspectivism, relationism	“Scientific rationalism”; “sociological naturalism”; sociologism; functionalism	Marburg neo-Kantian; anti-materialism; anti-teleological (vs. Stammler)	Relationism combined with reflexivity; perspectivism; methodological dualism	“Historical epistemology”; vs. logical empiricism, vs. Bernardian experimental method	“Rationalist realism”, symbolic instrumentalism

4. Towards symbolic instrumentalism

Genau an derjenigen Stelle, an der für den Forscher die Erprobung eines Gedankens durch Experimente einsetzt, steht bei Kant die “Realität der Empfindung”, die die kategoriale Formung niemals erproben, sondern immer nur erdulden kann. Dieser Auffassung galt es eine Theorie des Experiments entgegenzusetzen, die gerade die Rückwirkung der Erfahrung auf die kategoriale Formung verständlich macht, – eine Theorie, die erklärt, daß es durchaus kein Widersinn ist, wenn die Voraussetzungen, die Erfahrung “allererst möglich machen”, selbst wieder durch Erfahrung bestätigt oder widerlegt werden können. Diese Theorie geht von dem Grundsatz aus, daß die Instrumente, mit denen die Welt erforscht wird, der zu erforschenden Welt selbst als Teile angehören und daher von der Erkenntnis, die sie selbst vermittelt haben, wieder rückwirkend betroffen werden. (Wind [1929] 2000, 66–67)

Challenges to the sociologized a priori

What, if any, is the enduring significance of the debates on sociologizing the *a priori* that we have retraced historically? This question can lead us to considering the sociologization of the *a priori* in a more systematic and contemporary perspective (e.g. recently Salomone 2017). We could thus also return to our initial starting point in present-day talk of “social conditions of possibility”, “socio-transcendental conditions”, “enablers” or “socially constructed categories”.

Is there indeed any plausible way of reformulating the sociologized *a priori* for today’s epistemology, philosophy of science and social sciences? Or do we have to dismiss this whole tradition for one reason or the other? For example, because of its Kantian “representationalist” and “foundationalist” presuppositions (e.g. Rorty 1979; recently Beer 2022)? Because of its reliance on an untenable dualism of content and scheme (Davidson 1973) or on the “myth of the framework” (Popper [1976] 1987)? Because of its reactionary “ideological” functions (e.g. Kilminster 1998; 2007; Joly 2017; 2020)? Or simply because of its empirical sterility in social research (e.g. Lazarsfeld [1960] 1975, 14–15)? Has this tradition perhaps become superfluous with recent advances of the cognitive sciences (e.g. Sperber 1996; Mercier 2017; Tomasello 2014)? Or, on the contrary, has it been confirmed in some way (e.g. Brook 1994; 2004; Ferrari 2003, 305–7)? The condition for exploring the present-day potential of this tradition would be to consider and reject some radical criticisms that have – explicitly or implicitly – been directed against the very idea of a sociologized *a priori*.

Symbolic instrumentalism: Sources, claims, allies

We could then seek to elaborate the durable core of the variegated discussions on sociologizing the *a priori*. I would suggest for this position the label “symbolic instrumentalism”. The task would be to present the most important historical antecedents and sources, provide an epistemological profile of this position, and show in which debates it might be fruitfully applied.

Historically speaking, we can trace the position of symbolic instrumentalism back to the intersection between Marburg neo-Kantianism, American pragmatism and the sociology of knowledge. Sociologist Émile Durkheim (1858-1917) – with his characterization of categories as “instruments” and “tools” (Durkheim [1912] 2013, 27, n. 1) –, art historians Erwin Panofsky (1892-1968) and Edgar Wind (1900-1971), philosopher Arthur Pap (1921-1959) or sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002) might all serve as possible historical precedents and references.¹

Starting from these references, we could sketch the claims of symbolic instrumentalism as follows. Our – scientific as well as ordinary – cognitive structures (categories, schemes, classifications, concepts, etc.) are “symbolic instruments” (Bourdieu 1977b). As other instruments in a broad sense – concrete artefacts, but also bodies, hypotheses or theories – they enable and “make possible” human activity and cognition. In this sense, they operate as “relative” or “functional *a priori*” (Pap 1944; 1946; Stump 2011). On the other hand, as other instruments, they are themselves part of the changing material social and historical world (Wind [1929] 2000, 70–73; 1936; Viola 2024).² While instruments relate to the knowledge they enable as constitutive to constituted elements, their *a priori* or transcendental function does not involve any sort of epistemological or ontological dualism.

Furthermore, as specifically *symbolic*, these instruments function only in and through the encounter of an objective-material and a subjective-meaningful dimension – two dimensions that do not necessarily evolve synchronically (Bourdieu 1980a). These symbolic instruments – anchored in the socialized material body (Mauss [1936] 2013; Merleau-Ponty [1942] 2013; [1945] 2004) – allow us to actively “construct” a world and act upon it. At the same time, they are – contrary to the opposition imposed by transcendental philosophy between the “empirical” and the “transcendental” – themselves an evolving part of the empirical-historical world and have been modified, adapted and changed between generations of humans according to interests, needs, and social and physical mechanisms.

¹ In continuity with Bourdieu (especially Bourdieu 1977b), see also the title of Éric Brian’s *direction d’études* at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, Paris: “sociologie des instruments symboliques”.

² Wind argued that this was indeed a physical and logical necessity for any type of measure: “Nur *in* Welt selbst sind die Instrumente zu finden, *an* denen die Welt sich messen läßt.” (Wind [1929] 2000, 184)

What is interesting about this sort of “symbolic instrumentalism” is that it goes beyond a fundamental distinction entrenched in and diffused by transcendental philosophy between “activity” (“spontaneity”) and “passivity” (“receptivity”). On the one hand, we “receive” these symbolic instruments “passively” through socialisation and embodiment – they are “constituted” or “structured”. But at the same time, in their use, they become “constitutive” or “structuring”. In fact, having received and starting from such instruments is the very condition for us being able to turn to these instruments reflexively and actively (this is, we might argue, the core of Bourdieu’s – and some others’ – view of “reflexivity”). Whether we are engaged in ordinary or scientific practice, we are regarding these instruments in a situation that Edgar Wind and Erwin Panofsky described for the methodology of the human sciences as a “methodical circle” (Wind [1929] 2001, 7–10; Panofsky [1939] 1955, 35, n. 3) – in fact, the same situation as the physicist regarding his instruments or the historian regarding his documents (Wind 1936; [1936] 2005). In this respect, symbolic instrumentalism also avoids dualism in the philosophy of science: there is no in-principle difference between natural and historical sciences, *Naturwissenschaften* and *Geisteswissenschaften*. Methodologically speaking, the scientist and the historian are in the same situation: being part of the world, they use some portions of it (instruments, documents, etc.) – including themselves – to understand others (laws of nature, historical events, etc.).³

Possible applications

Once we have spelt out the position of symbolic instrumentalism, the next task would be to argue for the attractiveness of this position in present-day debates in epistemology, in philosophy of science as well as in the social sciences properly speaking. Symbolic instrumentalism might indeed be profitably applied in these different areas.

In the philosophy of science, symbolic instrumentalism – with its peculiar combination of “constructivism” and “realism” – might offer a plausible alternative to the opposition between scientific “realism” and “anti-realism” or “constructivism” (for a recent, potentially allied “realistic” position, see Chang 2022, 131–33). Again, alliances here would probably involve the

³ This implied a specific form of reflexivity, the researcher becoming himself part of the object they study: “*Der Forscher ist in den Prozeß, den er erforscht, selbst eingeschaltet*. So verlangt es der oberste Grundsatz aller Methodenlehre. [...] Wohl aber läßt sich sagen, daß durch diese Einschaltung in den zu erforschenden Prozeß der Forscher selbst, wie jedes seiner Werkzeuge, zum Teilobjekt der Forschung wird, wobei das Wort ‘Teilobjekt’ in zwiefachem Sinne gemeint ist: Er ist, wie jedes andere Forschungsmittel, nur ein *Teil* des Gesamtobjekts, das erforscht wird. Es ist aber auch nur ein *Teil* seiner selbst, was in dieser Weise, zum ‘Instrument’ entäußert, in die Objektwelt seiner Forschung eingeht.” (Wind [1936] 2000, 261)

pragmatist tradition.⁴ In the continuity of these debates in the philosophy of science, symbolic instrumentalism might also hint at a possible intermediary solution in the continuing debates on “social construction” and “relativism”. In this area, Bourdieu’s position of “rationalist realism” (Bourdieu 2001b, 151) could be interpreted and further elaborated in a symbolic-instrumentalist sense.

Moreover, it would also be worth introducing the sociologized *a priori* in this symbolic-instrumentalist interpretation in the recent debates on the “relativized *a priori*” (Friedman 2001; Suárez and Uebel 2012; Stump 2015). In these discussions, sociological considerations have been relatively neglected (for an exception, see Nemeth 2018) – despite the fact that the historical background of the debate arguably involved social scientific knowledge (such as Kuhnian history and sociology of science, linguistic relativism, sociology of knowledge, etc.). The symbolic-instrumentalist interpretation of the *a priori* could introduce here a novel position that would be close to pragmatist and functionalist options (e.g. Mormann 2012; Stump 2015), but that would integrate also the specific contribution of the social sciences.

Finally, regarding the social sciences proper, symbolic instrumentalism might be the most promising way of spelling out the epistemological and methodological implications of today’s socio-transcendental reasoning in terms of “social categories”, “social conditions of possibility” or “enabling conditions” (Abend [2020] 2022). It would allow, it seems, to spell out the various types of structural conditions that make social phenomena possible. It would consider both social agents and the social world of which they are part and in which they act as both “structuring” and “structured” – without presupposing any dualistic or substantialist distinction between structures functioning in a constituting and or in a constituted sense. Symbolic instrumentalism seems to be the meaningful, reasonable and still defensible epistemological core of forms of transcendental reasoning in present-day social sciences. If this analysis is correct, then we might formulate a simple demand for clarity and consistency: Users of socio-transcendental or historico-transcendental reasoning should either assume this position of symbolic instrumentalism – with its monistic, rationalist-realist and reflexive implications – or else abandon talk and suggestions of sociologized or otherwise historicized *a prioris*.

This plea for symbolic instrumentalism might be taken as the provisional epistemological result from the historical investigation conducted here. Without the latter – involving the exploration of a considerable number of agents and positions connected to the problem of sociologizing the *a priori* – we would barely have been able to uncover and appreciate this

⁴ Historically, the alliance between Marburg neo-Kantianism, especially Cassirer, and American pragmatism was epitomized by the intellectual and social trajectory of Wind.

peculiar family of positions and identify potential allies for elaborating this perspective in the future. Of course, these few indications and ideas are hardly more than a sketch. They amount to a “few hopeful fireworks” (Austin [1955] 1975, 148). But then this is the purpose of an outlook: to specify possible and, in the best case, interesting ways in which the work might be continued.

5. Conclusion: Keeping the ladder

This dissertation has opened a vast construction site. The project as a whole, for which I laid the groundwork in Part I – i.e. retracing sociologically, historically as well as epistemologically the sociologization of the *a priori* through the *longue durée* of about two centuries in several different national contexts and involving at least two, often more academic disciplines – this project has been started here, not accomplished.

Yet, even unfinished construction sites can have their merits. They include things such as a demarcation of the parcel, some solid, preferably impermeable basement, supply of most of the necessary tools and construction materials and the disposal of some supporting pillars for building the next storey. With the notion of the “sociologization of the *a priori*” I have identified a peculiar intellectual problem in its socio-historical dimensions. This problem functioned like a “way of seeing things” (*Auffassung*) (e.g. Wittgenstein 1980, 16, 16e; see also Genova 1993), a way of constructing the historical record, and of conceiving both the historical and the present-day importance of the issue. Within this site, I have offered some case studies – some of them supporting pillars, as it were – using in their fabrication the historical, sociological and philosophical tools I forged earlier. Of course, the property lines might be redrawn, the basement reinforced, the pillars rearranged. But this would testify only to the workability of the building site. In the best case, this thesis offered such a workable site where efforts to understand a series of today still relevant sociological, historical and philosophical problems can be continued – by myself or by others.

At the end, another picture comes to mind. I started the introduction of this research with Wittgenstein’s definition of philosophical problems: “Ein philosophisches Problem hat die Form: ‘Ich kenne mich nicht aus.’” (Wittgenstein [1953] 1984, 302, § 123) We should now understand our problem better – ideally, both in historical, sociological and epistemological terms. But does not this better understanding dissolve the problem rather than solve it? Is the solution to the problem its dissolution? Concretely, is it still useful to speak here of *one* problem? Has not the typology based on the above “paradigm” shown that “sociologizing the *a priori*” meant and continues to mean a lot of different things – things that should better be kept

apart? Should the framing of the problem in terms of a “sociologization of the *a priori*” be like Wittgenstein’s famous ladder that we have to throw away once we have climbed it up?

The point is that we would not have seen the variety of sociologizations of the *a priori* if we had not presupposed, in a first step – by a sort of Kantian “reflective judgment” providing us with a *focus imaginarius* or a systematic perspective guiding our investigation (e.g. Kant [1781/1787] 1974, 565, A644/B672; [1790] 1974, 21–29) – some sort of unity. We have climbed up the ladder – establishing relations between various intellectual and social positions that have rarely been related to each other, presupposing that they somehow formed a whole. Now, at the end of this investigation, with all the complexity it made us discover, does it make sense to maintain the idea of such a whole? Or is there rather a diversity of problems in the plural – discourses, practices, contexts, dialogues, debates, controversies?

The framing “sociologization of the *a priori*” has served its purpose so far, I think. It has made the picture more complicated – and thus contributed to our comprehension (Febvre [1927] 2021, 124; [1938] 2021b, 307). We have reason to believe that it could continue to do so in the context of further studies. Perhaps we will have to throw it away at some point in the future. But it seems that we still need to understand the problem better before taking such radical action. Perhaps we just do not yet *kennen uns aus* (“know our way about”) *enough* to dissolve the problem. For now, we may still need to climb up and down a few times.

CONCLUSION: TOWARDS A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF SOCIO-TRANSCENDENTAL REASONING

The sociologization of the *a priori* served in this investigation as a guide through the history of the social and human sciences of the last two hundred years in French and German-speaking academic fields. Elaborating and applying this category of analysis enabled us to reach the following general results:

(1) A comprehensive historical narrative: Contrary to existing short-term accounts of the issue, we could retrace the problem of sociologizing the *a priori* over an extended period, from around the 1780s to today. We could develop here a narrative containing a periodization into six phases that considered both intellectual and socio-historical evolutions in the relationship between philosophy and sociology. From this long history, the sociologization of the *a priori* emerged as an ensemble of strategies of “hybridization” (Ben-David [1960] 1991; Ben-David and Collins 1966) characterized by a specific form of ambivalence. The latter consisted in a simultaneous acceptance and rejection of tenets of both Kantian transcendental philosophy and Comtean sociology. The *a priori* should be explained sociologically, but it should not be dissolved. Sociologizations of the *a priori* sought to hold a middle ground between transcendental philosophy and various empirical dissolutions of *a priori* conditions of knowledge. Sociologically speaking, these strategies can be interpreted as expressing a situation of “sociological ambivalence” (Merton and Barber [1963] 1976) in which emerging academic sociology found itself: it was taken in a tension between the norms and values of transcendental academic philosophy and the requirements associated with the ambitions of sociology, together with recent developments in experimental psychology or anthropology. With changes in these social conditions also changed the presence and the form of the problem as well as the corresponding problem-solutions. Depending on their social-intellectual context and their concrete content, these hybridization strategies had different chances of success.

(2) A problem in the classification of the sciences and of knowledge: In our search for the historical origins of sociologizing the *a priori*, we could reframe the whole problem as resulting from a conflict between different classifications of science and of knowledge. The problem relied on an apparent contradiction between the transcendental function of the *a priori* and the empirical character of sociology. This contradiction went back to linguistic stipulations made in the framework of attempts to classify and divide the whole of the sciences and of knowledge – concretely, Kantian transcendental philosophy and Comtean positive philosophy. These attempts, in turn, had to be understood against the background of the structural transformations

in the academic and scientific field around 1800 in both France and Germany. Conceiving the sources of the sociologization of the *a priori* in this way enabled us to connect in our analysis intellectual contents to larger socio-structural processes. It proved also heuristically fruitful for projecting further studies starting from the constitutive tension between “criticist” and “positivist” classifications.

(3) A typology of positions: Our conception of the problem enabled us to discover relations between a variety of positions that have rarely been connected to each other. We thus arrived at a historical inventory of a considerable number of sociologizations of the *a priori* since the 19th century, including relevant limiting and negative cases. In an effort to understand both the unity and the diversity of these various positions, we formulated the outline of a typology of positions. We could classify sociologizations of the *a priori* along a set of variables, each with a range of possible values. Their concrete form will depend on definitions of “sociology”, of “*a priori*”, of “relative to”, of the relata involved, etc. The resulting types reach from comprehensive accounts covering *a priori* conditions of all types of knowledge and relating them to the evolution of humanity as a whole to more limited accounts focusing, for example, on the *a priori* conditions of scientific knowledge and relating them to the specific situation of socio-historical individuals. What remains common to all sociologizations of the *a priori* (by the very definition of the problem) is the adherence to some form of dualism between constitutive and constituting elements, the exploration of bidirectional dependences between these levels and the assignment of the task to a relatively autonomous general science of society. Where these conditions are not met, we encounter accounts of the *a priori* where either the *a priori* or sociology has gone missing. In a historical perspective, we could identify concrete controversies where these questions were at issue.

(4) Uncovering and developing the tradition of symbolic instrumentalism: By focusing on cases of a genuine sociologization of the *a priori* – i.e. where both criteria of a (relative) dualism and of the competency of sociology are met – we became aware of a specific family of positions that sought to go beyond conceptual distinctions of the Kantian tradition all while integrating aspects of them in a broadly naturalistic outlook. In this tradition – located at the intersections of Marburg neo-Kantianism, American pragmatism and the sociology of knowledge, with proponents such as Durkheim, Panofsky, Wind or Bourdieu – the terms “instruments” and “symbols” came to play a vital role. These notions allowed to reformulate the basic Kantian distinctions between *a priori/a posteriori* or transcendental/empirical in a methodological or functional sense, avoiding any kind of epistemological or ontological dualism. The “instruments” that make empirical knowledge possible – concrete artefacts, but also categories, schemes, bodies, hypotheses, theories – are themselves part of the empirical world. At the same

time, their use involves symbolic activity on the part of the agents using them. In this position of “symbolic instrumentalism” we could recognize an epistemologically still interesting position resulting from one strand within the tradition of sociologizing the *a priori*. It could be fruitfully applied to debates in the philosophy of science on realism, constructivism and relativism or to discussions on “social conditions of possibility” or “enabling conditions” in the epistemology and methodology of the social sciences.

(5) Towards a methodology of sociological problem history: Finally, on the methodological level, our efforts to define what the problem of sociologizing the *a priori* consisted in and how it can be studied, led us to developing the peculiar methodological approach of “sociological problem history”. We could revive and clarify here a tradition with diverse roots in both German-speaking and French social and human sciences. By putting this tradition into dialogue with contemporary sociological theory and the sociology of science, we arrived at a novel methodological position that should be of interest – beyond the specific case to which we applied it here – to intellectual historians, historians of science and sociologists of culture. The main advantage of this position was that it integrated aspects which are often opposed through the polemical labels “presentism” and “historicism”. Sociological problem history combines the emphasis on both agents’ and historians’ constructive work with acknowledging the socio-historical conditions of these constructions. Insisting on the indispensable role of reflexive critique – interpreted in a “reformist” sense – it maintains nevertheless the ideal of increasing objectivity or intersubjectivity in historical and sociological work. In this way, sociological problem history finally turned out to be another exponent of sociologized Kantianism in the social and human sciences.

Besides these general results, the focus on the sociologization of the *a priori* enabled us to generate also some more local historical results. Within the overall narrative, we could isolate several strategically important episodes that ranged from the reception of Kant in France to sociological accounts of the *a priori* around 1900 and to the functions which the reference to a sociologized neo-Kantian tradition could fulfil in the 1960s and 1970s in France and Germany. By studying these cases, we could produce some new knowledge regarding the specific historical agents and contexts involved. The outlook above has made it sufficiently clear that these local contributions could and should be pursued further in future work.

Although we have covered here with our focus on the sociologization of the *a priori* only one source of the various forms of transcendental reasoning we encounter today in the social and human sciences, we have moved towards a better understanding of this type of reasoning. At the very least, our explorations will have sensitized us to the plurality and the complex history of positions hiding behind intriguing expressions such as “social conditions of possibility”,

“historical *a priori*” or “socially constructed categories”. This can be the start for future clarification.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Acknowledgments of this kind frequently begin with “this work would not have been possible without”. The expression cannot fail to trigger someone who has spent years trying to get his head around the history and epistemology of the idea of “social conditions of possibility”. *Déformation professionnelle oblige*. What are we actually saying with this phrase? How did these conditions do the “enabling”? What and whom should we mention as such “enablers”? Of course, I am not the first to stumble upon this innocuous opener. In the acknowledgment sections of works touching upon social and historical conditions of possibility this has become something of a running gag (e.g. Levine 2013, XV; Abend [2020] 2022, 95).

But if we took the joke seriously? Would that lead us to some preposterous “third-order socio-transcendental questions” of the kind: what (and who) was it that (and who) enabled a thesis on the socio-transcendental conditions of the idea of socio-transcendental conditions? I am inclined to think that such questions would not be complete nonsense. There would certainly be some – more or less interesting – empirical answers to them. I would even be ready to argue that they do not pull the rug from under our feet: they would not invalidate the findings I proposed here or set me on the path of an infinite regress. In agreement with a “reformist” notion of reflexivity, thinking about the “socio-transcendental conditions” engaged in this work might even be heuristically useful in controlling some of its presuppositions – an experience I could actually make at several points in this. Yet, it would also lead into new areas of investigation that I am happy to leave to others. I shall spare the reader.

Of the many things without which this work strictly would not have been possible stand out my academic teachers who were ready to share their vision of problems with me. My deepest heartfelt thanks go to Elisabeth Nemeth. More than anybody else she has helped me, throughout my academic education, to pursue my own, sometimes circuitous way. In preparing this dissertation, she has been an infallible source of both inspiration and support, an invaluable interlocutor, ready to share moments of discouragement as well as bouts of esoteric enthusiasm, and, finally, a true friend. Through her feedback on my writing, she did her best to build my texts back from a heavy and joyless war vessel into something like a smaller, more flexible sailing ship – all out “on the open sea”, just as in Neurath’s simile. I know myself in agreement with her view on transcendental conditions when saying that she has made this work not only possible but has helped to actively overcome its impossibility.

Similarly, I am deeply grateful to Éric Brian, my late supervisor at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (EHESS) in Paris. It was him who first, many years ago at a

workshop in Vienna, instilled in me the idea of a then mysteriously-sounding “*cotutelle de thèse*”. Without his interest in my work, his curiosity, his intellectual hospitality, as it were, I would hardly have made it to EHESS. He taught me more than anybody else what the *métier d'historien* was about, presenting me with an out-of-time model of the *savant* thinking not on the scale of years or decades but rather centuries. His acute reading of the academic field with its long-term intellectual and institutional genealogies and traditions guided me throughout my research. In moments of distress, Éric did much more than encourage me; in fact, he taught me what an applied *psychanalyse de l'esprit scientifique* might look like. Sadly, I learned about Éric's passing in mid-August 2025. I still feel too baffled to say something meaningful about it. Simply, I would have loved to discuss the results of my work with him, have his opinion, exchange ideas, pursue things further. In the last weeks since his passing, I was surprised by Éric's continuing presence – through his writings, through the ways of seeing I became aware I owed to him, through the riddles he left. If anything, this testifies to the fact just how an important and exceptionally gifted teacher he was.

Without the constant support of both Elisabeth Nemeth and Éric Brian, the *cotutelle* agreement – and thus the thesis in the present form – would not have been possible. Yet, without Wolf Feuerhahn, who agreed to replace Éric as a *directeur de thèse* at the EHESS for these last weeks, it would not have come to completion. Early on in my research, Wolf had encouraged me to historicize my initial question about the relationship between neo-Kantianism and sociology in Germany in France. His great sensibility for the names, labels and categories we use in writing the history of the social sciences as well as his work on the classification of the sciences has accompanied me throughout. I am deeply grateful for Wolf's availability and efficiency under these difficult circumstances.

I also want to address special thanks to Johan Heilbron. He accepted, early on, to discuss my thesis project, helped me to find my way through EHESS and, later, became an essential part of my *Comité de suivi de thèse*. The example of his work – combining the best from various national and disciplinary traditions and presenting it in an admirably accessible form – has been an important model for my own efforts. His incitation to find a sort of *juste milieu* between solid historical scholarship and large-scale sociological and socio-historical analysis has left its mark on my work – even if I feel that I am still falling short of this ambition. Importantly, Johan also sought to instill in me a sense of pragmatism in writing this thesis – although, I am afraid, I have far too long remained an “unruly apprentice” on this matter.

The research on and the writing of this thesis has been a long journey – figuratively and literally. It led me through various countries and places with their national, local and disciplinary traditions. On this way, I have encountered many helping hands – scholars, colleagues and

friends who have accepted to discuss aspects of my work during my academic peregrinations between Vienna, Paris, Berlin, Graz, Mulhouse, Strasbourg and, again, Paris. Unfortunately, I do not have here the space to acknowledge the specific contribution of each of them. I have tried to be as explicit as possible in the footnotes of each chapter.

In Vienna (and related to Vienna), I thank Massimo Ferrari, Michael Heidelberger, Katherina Kinzel, Martin Kusch, Miguel de la Riva, Friedrich Stadler, Johannes Steizinger, Bastian Stoppelkamp, Elisabeth Widmer, and, for instructive exchange on Durkheim in Groningen, Warren Schmaus.

In Paris, I am grateful to Tangi Audinet, Stéphane Baciocchi, Ioanna Bartsidi, Matthieu Béra, Giuseppe Bianco, Federico Brandmayr, Matthias Cléry, Victor Collard, Stéphane Dufoix, Jean-Louis Fabiani, Jean-Pierre Faguer, Quentin Fondu, Matthias Fringant, Vincent Heimendinger, Thomas Hirsch, Jean-Hugo Ihl, Laurent Jeanpierre, Marc Joly, Bruno Karsenti, Jean Lacoste, Jean Lassègue, Laurent Mazliak, Pierre-François Moreau, Bertrand Müller, Louis Pinto, Emmanuel Renault, Arnaud Saint-Martin, Johanna Siméant-Germanos, Pietro Terzi, Heinz Wismann and Sébastien Zerilli. Special thanks to Gisèle Sapiro for giving me the opportunity to assist to her impressive doctoral seminar and to contribute to the *Dictionnaire international Bourdieu*; and to Gabriel Abend who, after a lecture at EHESS, shared with me a draft of his paper on “Making things possible” (Abend [2020] 2022) and remained a source of inspiration and encouragement.

In Berlin, I thank Denis Thouard who enabled me to spend a year at the Centre Marc Bloch in Berlin – and, ironically, incited me to take the German-speaking hermeneutical tradition more seriously than I was inclined to do. For further exchange I am grateful to Lucie Fabry, Christoph König, Catherine König-Pralong, David Kristinsson, Solange Lucas, Andreas Mayer, Jean Tain, Peter Schöttler and Tommy Stöckel. Wolfgang Fietkau accepted to discuss the making of Bourdieu’s *Zur Soziologie der symbolischen Formen* and thus provided me with unique insights into the intellectual atmosphere in Berlin in the late 1960s, especially at Szondi’s *Seminar* – many thanks.

In Graz, I am grateful to Stephan Moebius who gave me the opportunity to join the sociology department at the University of Graz and, through working together, passed me on his passion for German-speaking history of sociology. Thanks also to the members of the Forschungsschwerpunkt “Theorie und Geschichte der Soziologie” who repeatedly accepted to discuss my work: Sabine Haring-Mosbacher, Barbara Hönig, Andreas Kranebitter, Frithjof Nungesser, Karin Scaria-Braunstein, Katharina Scherke and Antonia Schirgi. For further exchange in and around Graz, I thank Christian Dayé, Dieter Reicher and Rafael Schögler as well as Tanja Grassmugg-Eigner, Rudolf Meer and Simone De Angelis; Jakob Gassner, Johannes

Fiebich and Cora Lackner for enlightening discussions on Marx; Fabian Beer and Lukas Posselt for discussions between Graz and Mulhouse. Special thanks to Christian Fleck for joyful moments of shared *Mertonophilia* and other curiosities.

In Strasbourg, I thank Laurent Fedi, Édouard Mehl, Stéphanie Dupouy and Emmanuel Salanskis for giving me the opportunity to teach at a French philosophy department – in addition, one with the unique history of the University of Strasbourg. This added a surprisingly concrete, practical side to the theoretical knowledge I had until then of national disciplinary traditions. For further discussions and exchanges, thanks to Myriam Bienenstock, Victor Béguin, Alix Bouffard, Alexandre Feron, Guillemette Leblanc and Jean Quétier.

Speaking of Vienna, Graz and Strasbourg, I would also like to thank the students who participated in the various courses I could teach at these universities. Whether on Kant, on Comte, on the history of sociology or on the sociology of science, they constantly pushed me to explaining things as clearly as possible and made me appreciate the old *docendo discimus*.

I do not want to omit all those whose efforts made this work possible on an administrative and practical level. Thanks to administrative staff at the University of Vienna and the EHESS, especially Christian Kolowrat and David Zuser as well as Vanessa Szenwald-Liwicki and Claudine Raymond. During my research in archives, I also benefited from the help of Stéphanie Cudré-Mauroux (Archives littéraires suisses), Ruth Doersing (Deutsches Literaturarchiv Marbach), Sandrine Iraci (École normale supérieure), Christophe Labaune (Collège de France), Clarisse Sabbagh (Humathèque, Campus Condorcet) and Olivier Wagner (Bibliothèque nationale de France). Special thanks also to Michael Thimann and Thomas Gilbhard (both University of Göttingen) for sharing with me their research on the catalogue of the Kulturwissenschaftliche Bibliothek Warburg. Financially speaking, this research was enabled by a Uni:docs scholarship provided by the University of Vienna, a Marietta Blau grant of the Österreichischer Austauschdienst (OeAD), research grants from the Centre interdisciplinaire d'études et de recherches sur l'Allemagne (CIERA) and from the Institut français de Vienne as well as by appointments at the University of Graz and the University of Strasbourg.

Finally, there are all those who did the dirty work of putting up with me, supporting me morally, cheering me up or just being there (many of them already mentioned, to be fair). Further thanks to my friends Robert Frühstückl (also for feedback on several drafts), to Leo Stadlmüller, Lisa Stadlmüller and Karoline, to Lukas Schlögl, Birgit Pimpel and Rosa, to Pauli Aro, Tanja Hilfka and Benjamin, to Jan Zimmermann and – through a happy encounter between cats, frogs and hedgehogs – to Aude Pascalucci. Special thanks to the *coloc du Pressoir* that received me during a memorable year in Paris in 2019: Martin Denoun, Sébastien Saetta, Maxime Petit and Alice Barth.

I also thank my family for supporting me generously whenever needed: my parents Rudi and Helga and my brother Lukas with Vroni, Luisa and Oskar. Moreover, I am grateful to José and Claude Richebourg for their immense generosity, patience and support.

Special thanks to Lucrezia Ietri and Thierry Hergueta without whom, I fear, not even this “incomplete analysis” (Freud [1937] 1982, 360–61) would have been finished.

Lastly, and above all, I thank Aube Richebourg. Her support has gone far beyond anything having to do with a PhD dissertation. It made the whole thing not only possible, but also liveable, agreeable, and even joyful. These thanks in an arid acknowledgement section could almost seem inappropriate – were it not for the fact that she not only read, commented and encouraged me on my drafts, but also put up with me and my working habits on a daily basis. All this has gone far beyond anything I could imagine, ask or hope for. *Merci pour tout*. As for Elisabeth, she might not yet fully grasp it, but she simply is the most wonderful “contingency” that could happen to bring this work to an end – and go on.

While all these people have – in one way or the other – made the present work possible, the responsibility for its actuality and reality remains, of course, mine. Yet another case where sociology does not seem to provide any excuses (see Brandmayr 2021).

Paris, October 2025

ARCHIVES

Fonds Célestin Bouglé, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris.

Fonds Marcel Mauss-Henri Hubert, Collège de France, Paris.

Fonds Henri Berr, Institut Mémoires de l'édition contemporaine (IMEC), Abbaye d'Ardenne, Saint-Germain-la-Blanche-Herbe.

Nachlass Otto Neurath (microfiche), Institut Vienna Circle (IVC), Vienna.

Fonds Jean Bollack, Archives littéraires suisses (ALS), Bern.

Nachlass Peter Szondi, Deutsches Literaturarchiv (DLA) Marbach.

Fonds Pierre Bourdieu, Humathèque, Campus Condorcet, Paris-Aubervilliers.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abbott, Andrew. 1999. *Department and Discipline. Chicago Sociology at One Hundred*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- . 2001. *Chaos of Disciplines*. Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press.
- Abend, Gabriel. 2006. 'Styles of Sociological Thought: Sociologies, Epistemologies, and the Mexican and U.S. Quests for Truth'. *Sociological Theory* 24 (1): 1–41.
- . 2008a. 'The Meaning of "Theory"'. *Sociological Theory* 26 (2): 173–99.
- . 2008b. 'Two Main Problems in the Sociology of Morality'. *Theory and Society* 37 (2): 87–125.
- . 2014a. *The Moral Background: An Inquiry into the History of Business Ethics*. Princeton Studies in Cultural Sociology. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- . 2014b. *The Moral Background: An Inquiry into the History of Business Ethics*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- . 2014c. 'Transcendental Sociological Arguments'. *Contemporary Sociology* 43 (3): 327–31.
- . 2020. 'Making Things Possible'. *Sociological Methods & Research* [online first publication] (July): 1–40.
- . (2020) 2022. 'Making Things Possible'. *Sociological Methods & Research* 51 (1): 68–107.
- . 2023. *Words and Distinctions for the Common Good. Practical Reason in the Logic of Social Science*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Abend, Gabriel, Caitlin Petre, and Michael Sauder. 2013. 'Styles of Causal Thought: An Empirical Investigation'. *American Journal of Sociology* 119 (3): 602–54.
- Acham, Karl. (1995) 2017. 'Soziologie'. In *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie online*. Basel: Schwabe.
- Adair-Totef, Christopher. 2002. 'Max Weber as Philosopher: The Jaspers–Rickert Confrontation'. *Max Weber Studies* 3 (1): 15–32.
- . 2003. 'Neo-Kantianism: The German Idealism Movement'. In *The Cambridge History of Philosophy 1870–1945*, edited by Thomas Baldwin, 27–42. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- . 2014. "'Methodological Pestilence': Max Weber's Devastating Critique of Stammler". *Max Weber Studies* 14 (2): 245–68.
- . 2023. 'Why Rickert? Regarding the Dogma about Heinrich Rickert's Influence on Max Weber'. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour* 53 (2): 128–41.
- Adler, Max. 1904a. 'Kausalität und Teleologie im Streite um die Wissenschaft'. *Marx-Studien* 1: 193–433.
- . 1904b. *Kausalität und Teleologie im Streite um die Wissenschaft*. Separatabdruck aus den 'Marx-Studien', I. Band. Wien: Verlag der Wiener Volksbuchhandlung Ignaz Brand.
- . 1913a. 'R. Stammlers Kritik der materialistischen Geschichtsauffassung'. In *Marxistische Probleme. Beiträge zur Theorie der materialistischen Geschichtsauffassung und Dialektik*, 214–54. Internationale Bibliothek. Stuttgart: Verlag von J.H.W. Dietz.
- . 1913b. 'Zur Erkenntniskritik der Sozialwissenschaft'. In *Marxistische Probleme. Beiträge zur Theorie der materialistischen Geschichtsauffassung und Dialektik*, 150–213. Internationale Bibliothek. Stuttgart: Verlag von J.H.W. Dietz.
- . 1925. *Kant und der Marxismus. Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Erkenntniskritik und Theorie des Sozialen*. Berlin: E. Laub'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung.
- . 1936. *Das Rätsel der Gesellschaft. Zur erkenntniskritischen Grundlegung der Sozialwissenschaft*. Wien: Saturn-Verlag.

- . (1924) 1975. *Das Soziologische in Kants Erkenntniskritik. Ein Beitrag zur Auseinandersetzung zwischen Naturalismus und Kritizismus*. Edited by Norbert Leser. Aalen: Scientia Verlag.
- . (1924) 1982. 'Wissenschaft und soziale Struktur'. In *Der Streit um die Wissenssoziologie*, edited by Volker Meja and Nico Stehr, 1:128–57. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.
- Adorno, Theodor W., Hans Albert, Ralf Dahrendorf, Jürgen Habermas, Harald Pilot, and Karl R. Popper. 1969. *Der Positivismusstreit in der deutschen Soziologie*. Soziologische Texte 58. Neuwied: Luchterhand.
- Agathon, Henri Massis, and Alfred de Tarde. (1910) 1911. *L'Esprit de la Nouvelle Sorbonne. La crise de la culture classique. La crise du français*. Paris: Mercure de France.
- Ajouri, Philip, and Benjamin Specht. 2015. 'Empirisierung des Transzendentalen: Epistemologische Voraussetzungen und Erscheinungsformen der Moderne in Wissenschaft, Literatur und Kunst um 1900'. *Scientia Poetica* 19 (1): 181–204.
- , eds. 2019. *Empirisierung des Transzendentalen. Erkenntnisbedingungen in Wissenschaft und Kunst, 1850-1920*. Göttingen: Wallstein.
- Allais, Lucy. 2016. 'Kant's Racism'. *Philosophical Papers* 45 (1–2): 1–36.
- Allen, Nicholas. 2000. *Categories and Classifications: Maussian Reflections on the Social*. New York/Oxford: Berghahn.
- Althusser, Louis. (1970) 2011. 'Idéologie et appareils idéologiques d'État (Notes pour une recherche)'. In *Sur la reproduction*, with Étienne Balibar and Jacques Bidet, 263–306. Actuel Marx confrontation. Paris: Presses universitaires de France.
- . (1965) 2018. *Pour Marx*. With Étienne Balibar. La Découverte Poche 16. Paris: La Découverte.
- Ampère, André-Marie. 1834. *Essai sur la philosophie des sciences, ou exposition analytique d'une classification naturelle de toutes les connaissances humaines*. Paris: Bachelier.
- Ancelovici, Marcos. 2009. 'Esquisse d'une théorie de la contestation : Bourdieu et le modèle du processus politique'. *Sociologie et sociétés* 41 (2): 39–61.
- Anheim, Étienne. 2018. *Le travail de l'histoire*. In *Le travail de l'histoire*. Itinéraires. Paris: Éditions de la Sorbonne.
- Anheim, Étienne, and Paul Pasquali. 2025. *Bourdieu et Panofsky. Essai d'archéologie intellectuelle. Suivi de leur correspondance inédite*. Le sens commun. Paris: Minuit.
- Apel, Karl -Otto. 1975. 'The Problem of Philosophical Fundamental-Grounding in Light of a Transcendental Pragmatic of Language'. *Man and World* 8 (3): 239–75.
- Apel, Karl-Otto. 1973a. 'Das Apriori der Kommunikationsgemeinschaft und die Grundlagen der Ethik'. In *Transformation der Philosophie*, 2:358–436. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.
- . 1973b. *Transformation der Philosophie*. 2 vols. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.
- . 1973c. *Transformation der Philosophie*. Vol. 2. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.
- . 1973d. 'Von Kant zu Peirce: Die semiotische Transformation der Transzendentalen Logik'. In *Transformation der Philosophie*, 2:157–77. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.
- . (1963) 1975. 'Das Leibapriori der Erkenntnis. Eine erkenntnisanthropologische Betrachtung im Anschluß an Leibnizens Monaden-Lehre'. In *Neue Anthropologie*, edited by Hans-Georg Gadamer and P. Vogler, 7:264–88. Stuttgart: G. Thieme.
- Arendt, Hannah. (1930) 1982. 'Philosophie und Soziologie'. In *Der Streit um die Wissenssoziologie*, edited by Volker Meja and Nico Stehr, 2:515–31. suhrkamp taschenbuch wissenschaft 361. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.
- Ariès, Philippe. 1975. *Essais sur l'histoire de la mort en Occident: du Moyen Âge à nos jours*. Paris: Seuil.
- . (1960) 1975. *L'enfant et la vie familiale sous l'Ancien Régime*. Points Histoire. Paris: Seuil.
- . 1977. *L'Homme devant la mort*. Paris: Seuil.

- Aristoteles. 1994. *Metaphysik*. 5th ed. Edited by Ursula Wolf. Translated by Hermann Bonitz and Eduard Wellmann. With Héctor Carvallo and Ernesto Grassi. rowohlts enzyklopädie. Reinbeck: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag.
- . 1997. *Topik. Topik, neuntes Buch oder Über die sophistischen Widerlegungsschlüsse. Griechisch-Deutsch*. Edited and translated by Hans Günter Zekel. Philosophische Bibliothek 492. Hamburg: Meiner.
- . 2014. *Zweite Analytik. Griechisch-Deutsch*. Edited and translated by Wolfgang Detel. Philosophische Bibliothek 633. Hamburg: Meiner.
- Armitage, David. 2012. ‘What’s the Big Idea? Intellectual History and the *Longue Durée*’. *History of European Ideas* 38 (4): 493–507.
- . 2017. *Civil Wars. A History in Ideas*. New Haven/London: Yale University Press.
- Arnauld, Antoine, and Pierre Nicole. (1662) 1992. *La logique ou l’art de penser*. Tel. Paris: Gallimard.
- Aron, Raymond. 1983. *Mémoires. 50 ans de réflexion politique*. Paris: Julliard.
- . (1938) 1991. *Introduction à la philosophie de l’histoire. Essai sur les limites de l’objectivité historique*. Edited by Sylvie Mesure. Tel 58. Paris: Gallimard.
- . (1935) 2007. *La sociologie allemande contemporaine*. Edited by Serge Paugam and Franz Schultheis. Quadrige. Paris: Presses universitaires de France.
- . (1967) 2014. *Les étapes de la pensée sociologique. Montesquieu. Comte. Marx. Tocqueville. Durkheim. Pareto. Weber*. Paris: Gallimard.
- . (1938) 2018. *La philosophie critique de l’histoire. Essai sur une théorie allemande de l’histoire*. Essais. Paris: Vrin/Points.
- Ashmore, Malcolm. 1989. *The Reflexive Thesis. Wrighting Sociology of Scientific Knowledge*. With Steve Woolgar. Chicago/London: The University of Chicago Press.
- Augustinus. (397-400) 1987. *Bekenntnisse. Confessiones. Lateinisch und Deutsch*. Translated by Joseph Bernhart. With Ernst Ludwig Grasmück. insel taschenbuch 1002. Frankfurt am Main/Leipzig: Insel.
- Austin, J. L. (1955) 1975. *How to Do Things with Words*. Edited by J. O. Urmson and Marina Sbisa. 2nd ed. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- Authier, Raphaël. 2023. ‘L’idée d’un transcendantal historique a-t-elle un sens ?’ In *Les limites du transcendantal*, edited by Jean-Baptiste Fournier and Laura Tavernier, 97–125. Philosophies. Paris: Sorbonne Université Presses.
- Azouvi, François, and Dominique Bourel. 1991. *De Königsberg à Paris. La réception de Kant en France*. Bibliothèque d’histoire de la philosophie. Paris: Vrin.
- Bachelard, Gaston. 1945. ‘La philosophie scientifique de Léon Brunschvicg’. *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale* 50 (1/2): 77–84.
- . (1949) 1966. *Le rationalisme appliqué*. Bibliothèque de philosophie contemporaine. Logique et philosophie des sciences. 3rd ed. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
- . (1927) 1973. *Étude sur l’évolution d’un problème de physique. La propagation thermique dans les solides*. Edited by A. Lichnerowicz. L’histoire des sciences. Textes et études. 2nd ed. Paris: Vrin.
- . (1938) 1985. *La psychanalyse du feu*. Folio Essais. Paris: Gallimard.
- . (1944) 2000. ‘Causalité’. In *Les mots de l’histoire. Le vocabulaire historique du Centre international de synthèse*, edited by Margherita Platania, 145–53. Istituto italiano per gli studi filosofici, Serie Testi, XIV. Napoli: Bibliopolis.
- . (1938) 2011. *La formation de l’esprit scientifique. Contribution à une psychanalyse de la connaissance*. Bibliothèque des textes philosophiques. Paris: Vrin.
- . (1940) 2012. *La philosophie du non. Essai d’une philosophie du nouvel esprit scientifique*. Bibliothèque de philosophie contemporaine. 7th ed. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
- . (1934) 2017. *Le nouvel esprit scientifique*. Quadrige. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.

- Baciocchi, Stéphane. 2012. 'Les recensions des *Formes* du vivant de leur auteur (1912-1917)'. *Archives de sciences sociales des religions* 159 (September): 17–27.
- Baciocchi, Stéphane, and François Théron, eds. 2012. 'La première réception des *Formes* (1912-1917)'. *Archives de sciences sociales des religions*.
- Bacon, Francis. (1620) 1999. *Neues Organon. Teilband 1. Lateinisch-Deutsch*. Edited by Wolfgang Krohn. Translated by Rudolf Hoffmann. Philosophische Bibliothek 400a. Hamburg: Meiner.
- . (1605) 2002. 'The Advancement of Learning'. In *The Major Works*, edited by Brian Vickers, 120–299. Oxford World's Classics. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- . (1627) 2002. 'New Atlantis'. In *The Major Works*, edited by Brian Vickers, 457–89. Oxford World's Classics. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Baehr, Peter. (2002) 2016. *Founders, Classics, Canons. Modern Disputes Over the Origins and Appraisal of Sociology's Heritage*. With Steven Lukes, Adomas Puras, Philip Walsh, and William Outhwaite. 2nd ed. New Brunswick/London: Transaction Publishers.
- Baldwin, James Mark, ed. 1901. *Dictionary of Philosophy and Psychology*. 3 vols. New York/London: Macmillan.
- Bammé, Arno. 2022. *Gesellschaftstheorie und Erkenntniskritik. Der soziologische Blick auf die Episteme der 'reinen Vernunft'*. Marburg: Metropolis.
- Barber, Bernard. 1953. *Science and the Social Order*. London: George Allen & Unwin.
- Barboza, Amalia. 2017. 'Karl Mannheim's Sociology of Self-Reflexivity'. In *The Anthem Companion to Karl Mannheim*, edited by David Kettler and Volker Meja, 175–98. Anthem Companions to Sociology. Anthem Press.
- Barker, Martin. 1980. 'Kant as a Problem for Weber'. *The British Journal of Sociology* 31 (2): 224–45.
- Barnes, Barry. 1982. *T.S. Kuhn and Social Science*. Contemporary Social Theory. London/Basingstoke: Macmillan.
- Barnes, Barry S. 1974. *Scientific Knowledge and Sociological Theory*. Monographs in Social Theory. London/Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Barsotti, Bernard. 2003. 'Le "non-kantisme" de Bachelard : vers le sens transcendantal de la rupture épistémologique'. In *Bachelard et l'épistémologie française*, edited by Jean-Jacques Wunenburger, 183–213. Débats philosophiques. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
- Bartsidi, Ioanna. 2024. '« Procéder plus historiquement que nulle part ailleurs ». Hegel et l'historicisation du discours philosophique en Allemagne (1767-1830)'. *Les Études philosophiques* 149 (2): 27–55.
- Bast, Rainer A. 1991. *Die Philosophische Bibliothek. Geschichte und Bibliographie einer philosophischen Textreihe seit 1868*. Hamburg: Meiner.
- Bastide, Roger. 1940. 'Kantisme et sociologie'. *Filosofia, Ciências e Letras*, no. 7 (August): 7–14.
- Bauer, Eberhard. 1999. 'Oesterreich, Traugott Konstantin'. In *Neue Deutsche Biographie [Online-Version]*, 19:461–62.
- Bauer, Laurie, Rochelle Lieber, and Ingo Plag. 2013. *The Oxford Reference Guide to English Morphology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bauer, Otto. 1937. 'Max Adler. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des "Austromarxismus"'. *Der Kampf. Internationale Revue* 4 (8): 297–302.
- . (1924) 1971. *Das Weltbild des Kapitalismus*. marxismus bibliothek 1. Frankfurt/Main: Makol Verlag.
- Bayertz, Kurt, Myriam Gerhard, and Walter Jaeschke, eds. 2012a. *Der Darwinismus-Streit*. Philosophische Bibliothek 619. Hamburg: Meiner.
- , eds. 2012b. *Der Materialismus-Streit*. Philosophische Bibliothek 618. Hamburg: Meiner.

- Beck, Lewis White. 1967. 'Neo-Kantianism'. In *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Paul Edwards, 5:468–73. New York/London: The Macmillan Company & The Free Press.
- Becker, Howard S. 1953. 'Becoming a Marihuana User'. *The American Journal of Sociology* 59 (3): 235–42.
- . 1963. *Outsiders. Studies in the Sociology of Deviance*. New York/London: The Free Press /Collier-Macmillan Limited.
- Becker, Ralf. 2009. *Ernst Cassirer. Gesammelte Werke. Hamburger Ausgabe. Register*. Edited by Birgit Recki. Ernst Cassirer Werke 26. Hamburg: Meiner.
- Bedel, Charles, Henri Bernard-Maitre, Georges Bouligant, et al. 1964. 'Souvenirs, témoignages, évocations par des amis et des disciples'. *Revue de synthèse* 85: 27–150.
- Beer, Fabian. 2022. *Soziologisch denken mit Richard Rorty. Wider die repräsentationalistischen Prämissen der wissenssoziologischen Tradition*. Philosophische Grundlagen der Soziologie. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.
- Béguin, Victor. 2025. 'Naissance de la "philosophie allemande classique". Le Ludwig Feuerbach d'Engels en contexte'. *Hegel-Studien* 58: 75–100.
- Beiser, Frederick C. 2013. *Late German Idealism. Trendelenburg and Lotze*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- . 2014. *The Genesis of Neo-Kantianism, 1796-1880*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- . 2022. *Johann Friedrich Herbart. Grandfather of Analytic Philosophy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Belke, Ingrid. 1971. 'Einleitung'. In *Moritz Lazarus und Heymann Steinthal. Die Begründer der Völkerpsychologie in ihren Briefen*, by Moritz Lazarus and Heymann Steinthal, edited by Ingrid Belke, XIII–CXLII. Tübingen: Mohr.
- Bellone, Enrico. (1976) 1980. *A World on Paper. Studies on the Second Scientific Revolution*. Translated by Mirella Giacconi and Riccardo Giacconi. With Stillman Drake. Cambridge, Massachusetts/London: The MIT Press.
- Ben-David, Joseph. 1960. 'Roles and Innovations in Medicine'. *American Journal of Sociology* 65 (6): 557–68.
- . 1971. *The Scientist's Role in Society. A Comparative Study*. Foundations of Modern Sociology Series. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall.
- . 1991. *Scientific Growth. Essays on the Social Organization and Ethos of Science*. Edited by Gad Freudenthal. California Studies in the History of Science. Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press.
- . (1958) 1991. 'The Concepts of "Role", "Status" and "Reference Group". A Theoretical Statement'. In *Scientific Growth. Essays on the Social Organization and Ethos of Science*, edited by Gad Freudenthal, 91–93. California Studies in the History of Science. Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press.
- . (1960) 1991. 'Roles and Innovations in Medicine'. In *Scientific Growth. Essays on the Social Organization and Ethos of Science*, edited by Gad Freudenthal, 33–48. California Studies in the History of Science. Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press.
- Ben-David, Joseph, and Randall Collins. 1966. 'Social Factors in the Origins of a New Science: The Case of Psychology'. *American Sociological Review* 31 (4): 451–65.
- Ben-David, Joseph, and Awraham Zloczower. 1962. 'Universities and Academic Systems in Modern Societies'. *European Journal of Sociology / Archives Européennes de Sociologie* 3 (1): 45–84.
- Benrubi, Isaak. 1933. *Les sources et les courants de la philosophie contemporaine en France*. 2 vols. Bibliothèque de philosophie contemporaine. Paris: Alcan.
- Bensaude-Vincent, Bernadette. 1996. 'Présences scientifiques aux Semaines de synthèse (1929–1939)'. *Revue de synthèse* 117 (1–2): 219–30.

- Benveniste, Émile. 1958. 'Catégories de pensée et catégories de langue'. *Les Études philosophiques* 13 (4): 419–29.
- . 1969a. *Le vocabulaire des institutions indo-européennes. 1. Économie, parenté, société*. With Jean Lallot. Le sens social, [11]. Paris: Minuit.
- . 1969b. *Le vocabulaire des institutions indo-européennes. 2. Pouvoir, droit, religion*. With Jean Lallot. Le sens social, [12]. Paris: Minuit. <https://catalogue.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cb34329744k>.
- Béra, Matthieu. 2019. 'Quatre lettres inédites de Durkheim à Célestin Bouglé (1897)'. *L'Année sociologique* 69 (1): 43–66.
- Berek, Mathias. 2020. *Moritz Lazarus. Deutsch-jüdischer Idealismus im 19. Jahrhundert*. Hamburger Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Juden 51. Göttingen: Wallstein.
- Berger, Peter L., and Thomas Luckmann. 1966. *The Social Construction of Reality. A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*. Garden City, NY: Anchor Books.
- Bernard, Claude. 1865. *Introduction à l'étude de la médecine expérimentale*. Paris: J. B. Baillière et fils.
- . (1865) 2008. *Introduction à l'étude de la médecine expérimentale*. Champs classiques. Paris: Flammarion.
- Bernstein, Eduard. 1897. 'Das realistische und das ideologische Moment im Sozialismus'. *Die Neue Zeit* XVI (34/39): 225–232/388–395.
- . 1899. *Die Voraussetzungen des Sozialismus und die Aufgaben der Sozialdemokratie*. Stuttgart: Verlag von J.H.W. Dietz.
- Berr, Henri. 1899. *L'Avenir de la philosophie. Esquisse d'une synthèse des connaissances fondée sur l'histoire*. Paris: Hachette.
- . 1900. 'Sur notre programme'. *Revue de Synthèse historique* 1 (1): 1–8.
- . 1904. 'Le problème des idées dans la synthèse historique. A propos d'ouvrages récents'. *Revue de Synthèse historique* 8 (23): 129–49.
- . 1906. 'Les progrès de la sociologie religieuse'. *Revue de Synthèse historique* 12–1 (34): 16–43.
- . 1910. 'Au bout de dix ans'. *Revue de synthèse historique* 21 (61): 1–13.
- . 1911. *La Synthèse en histoire. Essai critique et théorique*. Paris: Alcan.
- . (1913) 1920a. 'Introduction à une histoire universelle'. *Revue de Synthèse historique* 30 (88): 17–34.
- . (1913) 1920b. 'L'Évolution de l'humanité. Synthèse collective. Introduction générale'. In *La terre avant l'histoire. Les origines de la vie et de l'homme*, by Edmond Perrier, V–XXVI. L'Évolution de l'humanité. Bibliothèque de synthèse historique. Première section: Préhistoire, protohistoire 1. Paris: La Renaissance du livre.
- . 1921. *L'histoire traditionnelle et la synthèse historique*. Bibliothèque de philosophie contemporaine. Paris: Alcan.
- . 1922. 'Avant-propos. Action du milieu et exploitation de la terre'. In *La terre et l'évolution humaine. Introduction géographique à l'histoire*, by Lucien Febvre and Lionel Bataillon, VII–XXVI. L'Évolution de l'humanité. Synthèse collective. Préhistoire, protohistoire 4. Paris: La Renaissance du livre.
- . 1925a. 'Fondation "Pour la Science". Centre international de Synthèse. Statuts'. *Revue de Synthèse historique* 40 (December): 13–16.
- . 1925b. 'Pour la science'. *Revue de Synthèse historique* 40 (December): 5–12.
- . 1927. 'Rapport sur l'organisation matérielle et la vie scientifique du Centre présenté par le Directeur au Conseil d'Administration dans la séance du 6 mai 1927'. *Bulletin du Centre international de Synthèse. Section de synthèse historique* 3: 45–51.
- . 1930a. 'Au bout de trente ans. I. Coup d'oeil en arrière'. *Revue de Synthèse historique*, Nouvelle série. Tome 24, vol. 50 (148–150): 5–27.
- . 1930b. 'Avant-propos'. In *Civilisation. Le mot et l'idée*, edited by Henri Berr and Centre international de Synthèse, with Lucien Febvre, Émile Tonnellat, Marcel Mauss,

- Alfredo Niceforo, and Louis Weber. Première Semaine internationale de Synthèse (20-25 mai 1929). Deuxième Fascicule. Paris: La Renaissance du livre.
- . 1931a. ‘Avertissement’. *Revue de Synthèse. Science de la nature et Synthèse générale* 51 (2): 5–7.
- . 1931b. ‘La vie du Centre. La section de Synthèse générale. Son programme’. *Revue de Synthèse. Science de la nature et Synthèse générale* 51 (2): 127–31.
- . 1937. ‘Scientisme et science’. *Science. L’Encyclopédie hebdomadaire* 2 (8–1, 9–1): 4.
- . 1945. ‘In memoriam’. *Revue de Synthèse* 60 (1940–1945): 5–10.
- . 1947. ‘Antécédents de la nouvelle Revue d’Histoire des Sciences’. *Revue d’histoire des sciences et de leurs applications* 1 (1): 5–8.
- . 1950. ‘Les vingt-cinq ans du Centre. Rapport du Directeur au Conseil d’Administration dans la séance du 28 mars 1950’. *Revue de Synthèse, Nouvelle série*. Tome 26, vol. 67: 69–78.
- . 1953a. ‘Appendice. Au bout de quarante ans’. In *La Synthèse en histoire. Son rapport avec la Synthèse générale*, 2nd ed., 255–308. L’Évolution de l’humanité. Synthèse collective. Série complémentaire. Paris: Albin Michel.
- . 1953b. ‘Avant-propos’. In *La Synthèse en histoire. Son rapport avec la Synthèse générale*, 2nd ed., V–X. L’Évolution de l’humanité. Synthèse collective. Série complémentaire. Paris: Albin Michel.
- . (1911) 1953. *La Synthèse en histoire. Son rapport avec la Synthèse générale*. L’Évolution de l’humanité. Synthèse collective. Série complémentaire. 2nd ed. Paris: Albin Michel.
- . (1942) 2003. ‘Avant-propos. Psychologie collective et raison individuelle’. In *Le problème de l’incroyance au XVI^e siècle. La religion de Rabelais*, by Lucien Febvre, I–XXI. Bibliothèque de l’Évolution de l’Humanité. Paris: Albin Michel.
- Berr, Henri, and Centre international de Synthèse, eds. 1930. *Civilisation. Le mot et l’idée*. With Lucien Febvre, Émile Tonnellat, Marcel Mauss, Alfredo Niceforo, and Louis Weber. Première Semaine internationale de Synthèse (20-25 mai 1929). Deuxième Fascicule. Paris: La Renaissance du livre.
- Berr, Henri, and Lucien Febvre. 1923. ‘History’. In *Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences*, edited by Edwin R. A. Seligman and Alvin Johnson, 7: Gossen-Industrial Relations Councils, 357–68. London: Macmillan and Co.
- Bert, Jean-François. 2010. ‘Éléments pour une histoire de la notion de civilisation. La contribution de Norbert Elias’. *Vingtième Siècle. Revue d’histoire* 106 (2): 71–80.
- Berthelot, Marcellin. 1860. *Chimie organique fondée sur la synthèse*. Vol. 2. Paris: Mallet-Bachelier.
- Bertrand, Romain, and Guillaume Calafat. 2018a. ‘La microhistoire globale : affaire(s) à suivre’. *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 73 (1): 3–18.
- . eds. 2018b. ‘Micro-analyse et histoire globale’. *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 73 (1): 1–159.
- Besnard, Philippe. 1981. ‘Présentation’. *Revue Française de Sociologie* 22 (3): 311–14.
- Betti, Arianna, Hein van den Berg, Yvette Oortwijn, and Caspar Treijtel. 2019. ‘History of Philosophy in Ones and Zeros’. In *Methodological Advances in Experimental Philosophy*, edited by Eugen Fischer and Mark Curtis, 295–332. Bloomsbury Academic.
- Bianco, Giuseppe. 2018a. ‘Poltzer, Kant et la critique. Où voulait aller la psychologie concrète?’ In *La signification du concret. Psychologie, philosophie et politique chez Georges Poltzer*, edited by Giuseppe Bianco, 45–82. Paris: Hermann.
- . 2018b. ‘The Misadventures of the “Problem” in “Philosophy”. From Kant to Deleuze’. *Angelaki. Journal of the Theoretical Humanities* 23 (2): 8–30.
- Biard, Agnès, Dominique Bourel, and Éric Brian, eds. 1997. *Henri Berr et la culture du XX^e siècle*. Paris: Albin Michel.

- Bickel, Cornelius. 1991. 'Die Kontroverse mit Rickert. Programmatische Gegensätze und verschwiegene Gemeinsamkeiten'. In *Ferdinand Tönnies: Soziologie als skeptische Aufklärung zwischen Historismus und Rationalismus*, 115–52. Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag.
- Bitbol, Michel, and Jean Gayon. (2006) 2015a. 'Introduction'. In *L'épistémologie française 1830-1970*, 2nd ed., edited by Michel Bitbol and Jean Gayon, 11–14. Sciences & philosophie. 2nd ed. Paris: Éditions Matériologiques.
- , eds. (2006) 2015b. *L'épistémologie française 1830-1970*. Sciences & philosophie. 2nd ed. Paris: Éditions Matériologiques.
- Bloch, Marc. 1924. *Les Rois thaumaturges. Étude sur le caractère surnaturel attribué à la puissance royale particulièrement en France et en Angleterre*. Publications de la Faculté des lettres de l'Université de Strasbourg 19. Strasbourg: Istra.
- . 1928. 'Pour une histoire comparée des sociétés européennes'. *Revue de Synthèse historique* 46 (136–138): 15–50.
- . 1930. 'Comparaison'. *Bulletin du Centre international de Synthèse. Section de Synthèse historique* 9 (June): 31–39.
- . 1934. 'Une étude régionale: géographie ou histoire?' *Annales d'histoire économique et sociale* 6 (25): 81–85.
- . 1939a. 'Histoire d'un mot'. *Annales d'histoire sociale* 1 (2): 187–90.
- . 1939b. *La société féodale. La formation des liens de dépendance*. With Henri Berr. Vol. 1. L'Évolution de l'humanité. Paris: Albin Michel.
- . 1940. *La société féodale. Les classes et le gouvernement des hommes*. With Henri Berr. Vol. 2. L'Évolution de l'humanité. Paris: Albin Michel.
- . 1949. *Apologie pour l'histoire ou Métier d'historien*. Edited by Lucien Febvre. Cahier des 'Annales' 3. Paris: Armand Colin.
- . (1924) 1961. *Les Rois thaumaturges. Étude sur le caractère surnaturel attribué à la puissance royale particulièrement en France et en Angleterre*. Paris: Armand Colin.
- . (1949) 2020. *Apologie pour l'histoire ou Métier d'historien*. Edited by Étienne Bloch. With Jacques Le Goff. EKHO. Malakoff: Dunod.
- Bloch, Marc, and Lucien Febvre. 1994–2003. *Correspondance*. Edited by Bertrand Müller. 3 vols. Histoire de la pensée. Paris: Fayard.
- Blomert, Reinhard. 2002. 'Editorischer Bericht'. In *Frühschriften*, by Norbert Elias, edited by Reinhard Blomert, 175–81. Gesammelte Schriften 1. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.
- Blondel, Charles. 1928. *Introduction à la psychologie collective*. Paris: Armand Colin.
- Blondiaux, Loïc, and Nathalie Richard. 1999. 'À quoi sert l'histoire des sciences de l'homme?' In *L'histoire des sciences de l'homme. Trajectoire, enjeux et questions vives*, edited by Claude Blanckaert, Loïc Blondiaux, Laurent Loty, Marc Renneville, and Nathalie Richard, 109–30. Paris: L'Harmattan.
- Bloor, David. 1973. 'Wittgenstein and Mannheim on the Sociology of Mathematics'. *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science Part A* 4 (2): 173–91.
- . 1978. 'Polyhedra and the Abominations of Leviticus'. *The British Journal for the History of Science* 11 (3): 245–72.
- . 1982. 'Durkheim and Mauss Revisited: Classification and the Sociology of Knowledge'. *Studies in the History and Philosophy of Science* 13 (4): 267–97.
- . 1983. *Wittgenstein: A Social Theory of Knowledge*. Contemporary Social Theory. London/Basingstoke: Macmillan.
- . (1976) 1991. *Knowledge and Social Imagery*. 2nd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- . 1992. 'Left and Right Wittgensteinians'. In *Science as Practice and Culture*, edited by Andrew Pickering, 266–82. Chicago/London: The University of Chicago Press.
- . 1997. *Wittgenstein, Rules and Institutions*. London/New York: Routledge.

- . 2020. 'Sociologism and Relativism'. In *Social Epistemology and Relativism*, edited by Natalie Alana Ashton, Martin Kusch, Robin McKenna, and Katharina Anna Sodoma, 161–73. New York: Routledge.
- Blum, Oskar. 1919. 'Max Adlers Neugestaltung des Marxismus'. *Archiv für die Geschichte des Sozialismus und der Arbeiterbewegung* 8: 177–247.
- Blumer, Herbert. 1969. *Symbolic Interactionism. Perspective and Method*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall.
- Bock, Hans Manfred. 1991. 'Die deutsch-französische Gesellschaft 1926 bis 1934. Ein Beitrag zur Sozialgeschichte der deutsch-französischen Beziehungen der Zwischenkriegszeit'. *Francia. Forschungen zur westeuropäischen Geschichte* 17: 57–101.
- . 2014. *Versöhnung oder Subversion? Deutsch-französische Verständigungs-Organisationen und -Netzwerke der Zwischenkriegszeit*. edition l'endemain 30. Tübingen: Narr Francke Attempto.
- Boehlich, Walter, ed. 1965. *Der Berliner Antisemitismusstreit*. sammlung in sel 6. Frankfurt am Main: Insel-Verlag.
- Boghossian, Paul A. 2006. *Fear of Knowledge. Against Relativism and Constructivism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Böhme, Gernot, and Hartmut Böhme. (1983) 2016. *Das Andere der Vernunft. Zur Entwicklung der Rationalitätsstrukturen am Beispiel Kants*. suhrkamp taschenbuch wissenschaft 542. 7th ed. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.
- Bollack, Jean. 1965. *Empédocle I. Introduction à l'ancienne physique*. Le sens commun. Paris: Minuit.
- Bond, Niall. 2010. 'Ferdinand Tönnies and Friedrich Paulsen: Conciliatory Iconoclasts'. *The European Legacy* 15 (1): 35–53.
- Bonnemaison, Marc. 2011. 'Sur la réception en France de l'Histoire du matérialisme par F.A. Lange'. *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale* 69 (1): 61–74.
- Bonnet, Christian. 2006. 'La première réception française du Cercle de Vienne : Ernest Vuillemin et Louis Rougier'. *Austriaca. Cahiers universitaires d'information sur l'Autriche* 63: 71–83.
- Bonnet, Jean. 2011. *Dékantations. Fonctions idéologiques du kantisme dans le XIXe siècle français*. Convergences 60. Bern et al.: Peter Lang.
- Borchardt, Knut, Edith Hanke, and Wolfgang Schluchter. 2014. 'Nachwort'. In *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft. Soziologie. Unvollendet. 1919–1920*, by Max Weber, edited by Knut Borchardt, Edith Hanke, and Wolfgang Schluchter, 221–63. Max Weber-Gesamtausgabe, I/23. Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck).
- Borgeaud, Philippe. 1994. 'Le couple sacré/profane. Genèse et fortune d'un concept "opérateur" en histoire des religions'. *Revue de l'histoire des religions* 211 (4): 387–418.
- Boschetti, Anna. 2014a. *Ismes. Du réalisme au postmodernisme*. Culture & société. Paris: CNRS Éditions.
- . 2014b. 'Structuralisme'. In *Ismes. Du réalisme au postmodernisme*, 221–76. Culture & société. Paris: CNRS Éditions.
- . 2020. 'Révolution symbolique'. In *Dictionnaire international Bourdieu*, edited by Gisèle Sapiro, 746–47. Culture & société. Paris: CNRS Éditions.
- Bostaph, Samuel. 1978. 'The Methodological Debate Between Carl Menger and the German Historicists'. *Atlantic Economic Journal* 6 (3): 3–16.
- Boucheron, Patrick, ed. 2017. *Histoire Mondiale de La France*. Paris: Seuil.
- Bouglé, Célestin. 1896. *Les sciences sociales en Allemagne. Les méthodes actuelles*. Paris: Alcan.
- . 1925. 'Die philosophischen Tendenzen der Soziologie Émile Durkheims'. *Jahrbuch für Soziologie - Eine internationale Sammlung* 1: 47–52.
- . 1930. 'Quelques souvenirs'. *Europe. Revue mensuelle*, no. 86 (February): 281–84.

- . 1935. *Bilan de la sociologie française contemporaine*. Nouvelle encyclopédie philosophique. Paris: F. Alcan.
- , ed. 1938. *Les convergences des sciences sociales et l'esprit international*. Travaux de la Conférence internationale des sciences sociales. Travaux des groupes d'études. Centre d'études de politique étrangère 9. Paris: Paul Hartmann.
- . (1924) 2010. 'Préface'. In *Sociologie et philosophie*, 4th ed., by Émile Durkheim, edited by Célestin Bouglé, with Bruno Karsenti, LXI–LXXI. Quadrige. 4th ed. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
- Bouglé, Célestin, Georges Davy, Marcel Granet, Raymond Lenoir, and René Maublanc. 1930. 'L'oeuvre sociologique d'Émile Durkheim'. *Europe. Revue mensuelle*, no. 86 (February): 281–304.
- Bourdé, Guy. (1983) 1997. 'L'école méthodique'. In *Les écoles historiques*, 3rd ed., by Guy Bourdé and Hervé Martin, with Pascal Balmand, 181–214. Points Histoire. 3rd ed. Paris: Seuil.
- Bourdeau, Michel. 2018. 'La préparation du congrès de 1935 dans la correspondance d'Otto Neurath et de Louis Rougier'. *Philosophia Scientiae* 22 (22–3): 17–32.
- Bourdieu, Jérôme, and Johan Heilbron. 2022. 'Introduction. De la vigilance épistémologique à la réflexivité'. In *Retour sur la réflexivité*, by Pierre Bourdieu, edited by Jérôme Bourdieu and Johan Heilbron, 9–27. Audiographie 26. Paris: Éditions de l'EHESS.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1966. 'Champ intellectuel et projet créateur'. *Les Temps Modernes* 246 (November): 865–906.
- . 1967a. 'Postface'. In *Architecture gothique et pensée scolastique*, by Erwin Panofsky, 135–67. Le sens commun. Paris: Minuit.
- . 1967b. 'Systèmes d'enseignement et systèmes de pensée'. *Revue internationale des sciences sociales* 19 (3): 367–88.
- . 1968. 'Structuralism and Theory of Sociological Knowledge'. Translated by Angela Zanolli-Karp. *Social Research* 35 (4): 681–706.
- . (1966) 1969. 'Intellectual Field and Creative Project'. Translated by Sian France. *Social Science Information* 8 (2): 89–119.
- . 1970. *Zur Soziologie der symbolischen Formen*. Translated by Wolfgang Fietkau. Theorie 6337. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.
- . 1971a. 'Genèse et structure du champ religieux'. *Revue française de sociologie* 12 (3): 295–334.
- . 1971b. 'Le marché des biens symboliques'. *L'Année sociologique* 22: 49–126.
- . 1971c. 'Une interprétation de la théorie de la religion selon Max Weber'. *Archives européennes de sociologie* 12 (1): 3–21.
- . 1975a. 'La critique du discours lettré'. *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 1 (5): 4–8.
- . 1975b. 'La spécificité du champ scientifique et les conditions sociales du progrès de la raison'. *Sociologie et sociétés* 7: 91–118.
- . 1975c. 'L'ontologie politique de Martin Heidegger'. *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 1 (5–6): 109–56.
- . 1975d. 'The Specificity of the Scientific Field and the Social Conditions of the Progress of Reason'. *Social Science Information* 14 (6): 19–47.
- . 1976. 'Le champ scientifique'. *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 2 (2–3): 88–104.
- . 1977a. *Algérie 60. Structures économiques et structures temporelles*. Le Sens commun. Paris: Minuit.
- . 1977b. 'Sur le pouvoir symbolique'. *Annales. Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations* 32 (3): 405–11.
- . 1979a. 'Conclusion. Classes et classements'. In *La distinction. Critique sociale du jugement*, 543–64. Le Sens commun. Paris: Minuit.

- . 1979b. *La distinction. Critique sociale du jugement*. Le sens commun. Paris: Minuit.
- . 1980a. 'Le mort saisit le vif. Les relations entre l'histoire réifiée et l'histoire incorporée'. *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 32 (1): 3–14.
- . 1980b. *Le sens pratique*. Le sens commun. Paris: Minuit.
- . (1963) 1980. 'La maison ou le monde renversé'. In *Le Sens pratique*, 441–61. Le Sens commun. Paris: Minuit.
- . (1975) 1980. 'Pour une sociologie des sociologues'. In *Questions de sociologie*, 79–85. Documents 58. Paris: Minuit.
- . 1982. *Ce que parler veut dire. L'économie des échanges linguistiques*. Paris: Fayard.
- . 1984a. 'Espace social et genèse des "classes"'. *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 52–53: 3–14.
- . 1984b. *Homo academicus*. Le Sens commun. Paris: Minuit.
- . 1986. 'L'illusion biographique'. *Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales* 62 (1): 69–72.
- . 1987a. *Choses dites*. Le sens commun. Paris: Minuit.
- . 1987b. 'Postface. Vingt ans après'. In *Homo academicus*, 289–307. Le Sens commun. Paris: Minuit.
- . (1985) 1987. 'Fieldwork in Philosophy'. In *Choses dites*, 13–46. Le sens commun. Paris: Minuit.
- . (1975) 1988. *L'ontologie politique de Martin Heidegger*. Le Sens commun. Paris: Minuit.
- . 1989. *La noblesse d'État. Grandes écoles et esprit de corps*. Le sens commun. Paris: Minuit.
- . 1990a. 'Animadversiones in Mertonem'. In *Robert K. Merton. Consensus and Controversy*, edited by Jon Clark, Celia Modgil, and Sohan Modgil, 297–301. London/New York: The Falmer Group.
- . 1990b. 'Les conditions sociales de la circulation internationale des idées'. *Romanistische Zeitschrift für Literaturgeschichte. Cahiers d'Histoire des Littératures Romanes* 14 (1–2): 1–10.
- . 1991. 'The Peculiar History of Scientific Reason'. *Sociological Forum* 6 (1): 3–26.
- . 1993a. 'À propos de la famille comme catégorie réalisée'. *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 100: 32–36.
- . 1993b. 'Narzißtische Reflexivität und wissenschaftliche Reflexivität'. In *Kultur, soziale Praxis, Text. Die Krise der ethnographischen Repräsentation*, edited by Eberhard Berg and Martin Fuchs, 365–74. suhrkamp taschenbuch wissenschaft 1051. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.
- . (1986) 1994. 'Pour une science des œuvres'. In *Raisons pratiques. Sur la théorie de l'action*, 59–80. Points. Paris: Seuil.
- . (1990) 1994. 'La double rupture'. In *Raisons pratiques. Sur la théorie de l'action*, 91–97. Points. Paris: Seuil.
- . 1995. 'La cause de la science. Comment l'histoire sociale des sciences sociales peut servir le progrès de ces sciences'. *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 106 (1): 3–10.
- . (1992) 1998. *Les règles de l'art. Genèse et structure du champ littéraire*. Points. Édition revue et corrigée. Paris: Seuil.
- . 1999. 'The Social Conditions of the International Circulation of Ideas'. In *Bourdieu. A Critical Reader*, edited by Richard Shusterman, 220–28. Oxford: Blackwell.
- . (1972) 2000a. *Esquisse d'une théorie de la pratique. Précédé de Trois études d'ethnologie kabyle*. Points. Paris: Seuil.
- . (1972) 2000b. 'Pratiques économiques et dispositions temporelles'. In *Esquisse d'une théorie de la pratique. Précédé de Trois études d'ethnologie kabyle*, 377–85. Points. Paris: Seuil.

- . (1977) 2000. *Die zwei Gesichter der Arbeit. Interdependenzen von Zeit- und Wirtschaftsstrukturen am Beispiel einer Ethnologie der algerischen Übergangsgesellschaft*. Translated by Franz Schultheis. Édition discours 25. Konstanz: UVK Universitätsverlag Konstanz.
- . 2001a. *Grand Oral à l'Institut d'Études Politiques de Bordeaux*. Bordeaux, March 15.
- . 2001b. *Science de la science et réflexivité*. Cours et travaux. Paris: Raisons d'agir.
- . 2002a. *Interventions, 1961-2001. Science sociale & action politique*. Edited by Franck Poupeau and Thierry Discepolo. Marseille: Agone.
- . 2002b. 'Wittgenstein, le sociologisme et la science sociale'. In *Wittgenstein, dernières pensées*, edited by Jacques Bouveresse, Sandra Laugier, and Jean-Jacques Rosat, 345–53. Marseille: Agone.
- . (1990) 2002. 'Les conditions sociales de la circulation internationale des idées'. *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 145: 3–8.
- . 2003a. 'L'objectivation participante'. *Sociologie. Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 150 (5): 43–58.
- . 2003b. 'Participant Objectivation'. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 9 (2): 281–94.
- . (1997) 2003. *Méditations pascaliennes*. Points Essais. Paris: Seuil.
- . 2004. *Esquisse pour une auto-analyse*. Cours et travaux. Paris: Raisons d'agir.
- . (2001) 2004. *Science of Science and Reflexivity*. Translated by Richard Nice. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- . (1974) 2007. *A economia das trocas simbólicas*. Edited by Sergio Miceli. Translated by Sergio Miceli, Silvia de Almeida Prado, Sonia Miceli, and Wilson Campos Vieira. estudos 20. São Paulo: Perspectiva.
- . (1989–1992) 2012. *Sur l'État. Cours au Collège de France (1989-1992)*. Edited by Patrick Champagne, Remi Lenoir, Franck Poupeau, and Marie-Christine Rivière. Cours et travaux. Paris: Raisons d'agir/Seuil.
- . (1998–2000) 2013. *Manet. Une révolution symbolique. Cours au Collège de France (1998-2000) suivis d'un manuscrit inachevé de Pierre et Marie-Claire Bourdieu*. Edited by Pascale Casanova, Patrick Champagne, Christophe Charle, Franck Poupeau, and Marie-Christine Rivière. Cours et travaux. Paris: Raisons d'agir/Seuil.
- . (1994) 2014. *Raisons pratiques. Sur la théorie de l'action*. Points. Paris: Seuil.
- . (1981–1983) 2015. *Sociologie générale. Volume 1. Cours au Collège de France, 1981-1983*. Cours et travaux. Paris: Raisons d'agir/Seuil.
- . (1983–1986) 2016. *Sociologie générale. Volume 2. Cours au Collège de France, 1983-1986*. Edited by Patrick Champagne, Julien Duval, Franck Poupeau, and Marie-Christine Rivière. Cours et travaux. Paris: Raisons d'agir/Seuil.
- . (1992–1993) 2017. *Anthropologie économique. Cours au Collège de France (1992-1993)*. Paris: Raisons d'agir/Seuil.
- . (1963) 2021. *Travail et travailleurs en Algérie*. Edited by Amín Pérez. With Tassadit Yacine. Cours et travaux. Édition revue et actualisée. Paris: Raisons d'agir.
- . 2022a. *Microcosmes. Théorie des champs*. Edited by Jérôme Bourdieu and Franck Poupeau. Microcosmes 1. Paris: Raisons d'agir.
- . 2022b. *Retour sur la réflexivité*. Edited by Jérôme Bourdieu and Johan Heilbron. Audiographie 26. Paris: Éditions de l'EHESS.
- . (1984) 2022. 'Sur Michel Foucault. L'engagement d'un "intellectuel spécifique"'. In *Interventions, 1961-2001. Science sociale & action politique*, 2nd ed., by Pierre Bourdieu, edited by Franck Poupeau and Thierry Discepolo, 227–30. 2nd ed. Marseille: Agone.
- . (1991) 2022. 'L'histoire singulière de la raison: Le champ scientifique'. In *Microcosmes. Théorie des champs*, by Pierre Bourdieu, edited by Jérôme Bourdieu and Franck Poupeau, 277–319. Microcosmes 1. Paris: Raisons d'agir.

- . (1992) 2022a. ‘Introduction. Un principe de construction d’objet’. In *Microcosmes. Théorie des champs*, edited by Jérôme Bourdieu and Franck Poupeau, 27–32. Microcosmes 1. Paris: Raisons d’agir.
- . (1992) 2022b. ‘Les murs mentaux’. In *Interventions, 1961-2001. Science sociale & action politique*, 2nd ed., edited by Franck Poupeau and Thierry Discepolo, 341–48. 2nd ed. Marseille: Agone.
- . (1993) 2022. ‘Réflexivité narcissique et réflexivité scientifique’. In *Retour sur la réflexivité*, edited by Jérôme Bourdieu and Johan Heilbron, 45–59. Audiographie 26. Paris: Éditions de l’EHESS.
- . (1997) 2022. ‘Projet d’histoire sociale des sciences sociales’. In *Retour sur la réflexivité*, edited by Jérôme Bourdieu and Johan Heilbron, 61–96. Audiographie 26. Paris: Éditions de l’EHESS.
- . 2023. *Impérialismes. Circulation internationale des idées et luttes pour l’universel*. Edited by Jérôme Bourdieu, Franck Poupeau, and Gisèle Sapiro. Microcosmes 3. Paris: Raisons d’agir.
- . (1985) 2023. ‘Existe-t-il une littérature belge? Limites d’un champ et frontières politiques’. In *Impérialismes. Circulation internationale des idées et luttes pour l’universel*, edited by Jérôme Bourdieu, Franck Poupeau, and Gisèle Sapiro, 101–4. Microcosmes 3. Paris: Raisons d’agir.
- . (1991) 2023. ‘Programme pour une sociologie de la circulation internationale des œuvres culturelles’. In *Impérialismes. Circulation internationale des idées et luttes pour l’universel*, edited by Jérôme Bourdieu, Franck Poupeau, and Gisèle Sapiro, 83–96. Microcosmes 3. Paris: Raisons d’agir.
- Bourdieu, Pierre, and Pierre-Marc de Biasi. 1992. ‘Tout est social’. *Le magazine littéraire*, October.
- Bourdieu, Pierre, Jean-Claude Chamboredon, and Jean-Claude Passeron. (1968) 1991. *The Craft of Sociology. Epistemological Preliminaries*. Translated by Nice Richard. With Beate Kraus. Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter.
- . (1968) 2005. *Le métier de sociologue. Préalables épistémologiques*. 5th ed. Berlin/New York: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Bourdieu, Pierre, and Roger Chartier. (1988) 2010. *Le sociologue et l’historien*. Banc d’essais. Paris/Marseille: Raisons d’agir/Agone.
- Bourdieu, Pierre, and Beate Kraus. (1988) 2005. “... je suis un peu comme un vieux médecin qui connaît toutes les maladies de l’entendement sociologique.” L’entretien avec Pierre Bourdieu - recueilli par Beate Kraus en décembre 1988.’ In *Le métier de sociologue. Préalables épistémologiques*, 5th ed., by Pierre Bourdieu, Jean-Claude Chamboredon, and Jean-Claude Passeron, v–xix. 5th ed. Berlin/New York: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Bourdieu, Pierre, and Erwin Panofsky. (1966–1967) 2025. ‘Correspondance. Décembre 1966–juin 1967’. In *Bourdieu et Panofsky. Essai d’archéologie intellectuelle. Suivi de leur correspondance inédite*, by Étienne Anheim and Paul Pasquali, 241–72. Le sens commun. Paris: Minuit.
- Bourdieu, Pierre, and Jean-Claude Passeron. 1967. ‘Sociology and Philosophy in France since 1945: Death and Resurrection of a Philosophy without Subject’. *Social Research* 34 (1): 162–212.
- Bourdieu, Pierre, Jean-Claude Passeron, and Jean-Claude Chamboredon. 1968. *Le métier de sociologue. Livre I. Les textes sociologiques 1*. Paris: Mouton/Bordas.
- Bourdieu, Pierre, and Lutz Raphael. 1995. ‘Sur les rapports entre la sociologie et l’histoire en Allemagne et en France. Entretien avec Lutz Raphael’. *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 106–107: 108–22.
- Bourdieu, Pierre, and Monique de Saint Martin. 1975. ‘Les catégories de l’entendement professoral’. *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 1 (3): 68–93.

- Bourdieu, Pierre, and Gisèle Sapiro. 2004. 'Annexe. Entretien de Pierre Bourdieu avec Gisèle Sapiro, le 7 juin 2000'. In *Pierre Bourdieu, sociologue*, edited by Louis Pinto, Gisèle Sapiro, Patrick Champagne, and Marie-Christine Rivière, 79–90. Paris: Fayard.
- Bourdieu, Pierre, and Loïc J. D. Wacquant. 1992. *Réponses. Pour une anthropologie réflexive*. Libre examen. Politique. Paris: Seuil.
- Bourel, Dominique. 1996. 'Henri Berr (1863–1954)'. *Revue de synthèse* 117 (1): 9–20.
- . 2009. 'Kant en France : un impératif pour tous'. In *Le commerce des idées philosophiques*, edited by Louis Pinto, 19–28. Vulaines sur Seine: Éditions du Croquant.
- Bouriau, Christophe, Anthony Feneuil, and Yves Meessen, eds. 2018. *Le transcendantal. Réceptions et mutations d'une notion kantienne*. Philosophie allemande: une autre histoire. Nancy: Presses universitaires de Nancy-Éditions universitaires de Lorraine.
- Boutier, Jean, Jean-Claude Passeron, and Jacques Revel, eds. 2006. *Qu'est-ce qu'une discipline?* Enquête 5. Paris: Éditions de l'EHESS.
- Boutroux, Émile. 1874. *De la contingence des lois de la nature*. Paris: Alcan.
- . 1877. 'Introduction du traducteur'. In *La philosophie des Grecs considérée dans son développement historique*, by Édouard Zeller, translated by Émile Boutroux, 1:III–LXXIX. Paris: Hachette.
- . 1900a. 'Histoire et synthèse'. *Revue de Synthèse historique* 1 (1): 9–13.
- . 1900b. 'Introduction. Allocution de M. E. Boutroux'. In *Ier Congrès international de philosophie. Tome 1. Philosophie générale et Métaphysique*, XI–XXII. Bibliothèque du Congrès international de philosophie. Paris: Armand Colin.
- Boutroux, Émile, and Lucien Lévy-Bruhl. 1903. 'Séance du 27 Novembre 1902. Comte et la métaphysique'. *Bulletin de la Société française de philosophie* 3 (5): 1–24.
- Bouveresse, Jacques. 1977. 'L'animal cérémoniel. Wittgenstein et l'anthropologie'. *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 16: 43–54.
- Bouvier, Robert. 1915. 'Les débuts de la psychologie scientifique en Allemagne'. *Revue de théologie et de philosophie* 3 (14): 81–103.
- . 1916. 'Ernst Mach (1838-1916)'. *Revue de théologie et de philosophie* 4 (18): 77.
- . 1920. 'Théodore Flournoy. Le professeur'. *Journal de Genève*, November 22.
- . 1922. *La Pensée d'Ernst Mach. Essai de biographie intellectuelle et de critique*. Thèse présentée à la Faculté des Lettres de l'Université de Genève pour obtenir le grade de docteur en philosophie. Paris: Chez l'auteur.
- . 1923. *La Pensée d'Ernst Mach. Essai de biographie intellectuelle et de critique*. Paris: Vélín d'Or.
- . 1929a. 'A Priori et A Posteriori'. *Bulletin du Centre international de synthèse. Section de synthèse historique* 7 (June): 23–28.
- . 1929b. 'Les femmes et la science'. *Revue de synthèse historique* 47: 99–110.
- . 1931. 'Comparaison'. *Revue de Synthèse. Synthèse historique* 1 (Tome 51 de la Revue de Synthèse historique) (1): 51–59.
- . 1935. 'Le congrès international de philosophie scientifique'. *Revue de synthèse* 54 (10): 229–31.
- . 1964. 'Henri Berr et son œuvre'. *Revue de synthèse* 85: 39–50.
- Bouvier, Robert, Henri Berr, Robert Eisler, et al. 1929. 'Séance du mercredi 27 février 1929, à 17h15. Communication de M. R. Bouvier sur "a priori" et "a posteriori". - Discussion.' *Bulletin du Centre international de synthèse. Section de synthèse historique* 7 (June): 20–23.
- Bowker, Geoffrey C., and Susan Leigh Star. 1999. *Sorting Things Out. Classification and Its Consequences*. Inside Technology. Cambridge, Massachusetts/London: The MIT Press.
- Brandmayr, Federico. 2021. 'Social Science as Apologia'. *European Journal of Social Theory* 24 (3): 319–37.
- Braudel, Fernand. 1947. 'En Espagne au temps de Richelieu et d'Olivarès'. *Annales. Economies, sociétés, civilisations* 2 (3): 354–58.

- . 1949. 'En marge ou au cœur de l'Histoire ?' *Annales. Economies, sociétés, civilisations* 4 (3): 311–15.
- . 1958. 'Histoire et Sciences sociales: La longue durée'. *Annales. Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations* 13 (4): 725–53.
- Braun, Lucien. 1973. *Histoire de l'histoire de la philosophie*. Association des publications près les universités de Strasbourg 150. Paris: Éditions Ophrys.
- . 1985. *Théorie de l'histoire de la philosophie*. Cahier du Séminaire de philosophie 3. Strasbourg: Centre de documentation en histoire de la philosophie.
- Braunstein, Jean-François. (2006) 2015. 'Abel Rey et les débuts de l'Institut d'histoire des sciences et des techniques (1932-1940)'. In *L'épistémologie française 1830-1970*, 2nd ed., edited by Michel Bitbol and Jean Gayon, 163–80. Sciences & philosophie. 2nd ed. Paris: Éditions Matériologiques.
- Braverman, Charles. 2015. 'The Kantian Legacy in French Empiricism During the Early Nineteenth Century'. *Kant Yearbook* 7 (1): 1–22.
- . 2020. *Kant, épistémologue français du XIXe siècle. Réalisme et rationalisme chez les savants*. Histoire et philosophie des sciences 23. Paris: Classiques Garnier.
- Bredenkamp, Horst. 2019. *Aby Warburg, der Indianer. Berliner Erkundungen einer liberalen Ethnologie*. Berlin: Wagenbach.
- Bréhier, Émile. 1932. *Histoire de la philosophie. Tome II. La philosophie moderne. Fascicule IV. Le XIXe siècle après 1850. Le XXe siècle. Index général*. Paris: Alcan.
- . 1937. *La philosophie du Moyen Age*. With Henri Berr. L'Évolution de l'humanité. Synthèse collective 45. Paris: Albin Michel.
- Brenner, Anastasios. 2021. 'How Did Philosophy of Science Come About? From Comte's Positive Philosophy to Abel Rey's Absolute Positivism'. *HOPOS: The Journal of the International Society for the History of Philosophy of Science* 11 (2): 428–45.
- Breysig, Kurt. 1931a. 'Das geistige Schaffen als Gegenstand der Gesellschaftslehre'. In *Verhandlungen des Siebenten Deutschen Soziologentages vom 28. September bis 1. Oktober 1930 in Berlin*, edited by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Soziologie, 156–69. Schriften der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Soziologie. 1. Serie: Verhandlungen der Deutschen Soziologentage 7. Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck).
- . 1931b. *Der Aufbau der Persönlichkeit von Kant. Aufgezeigt an seinem Werke. Ein Versuch zur Seelenkunde des Gelehrten*. Forschungen zur Geschichts- und Gesellschaftslehre 5. Stuttgart/Berlin: Cotta.
- Brian, Éric. 1994. *La mesure de l'État. Administrateurs et géomètres au XVIIIe siècle*. L'Évolution de l'humanité. Paris: Albin Michel.
- . 1998. 'Mathematics, Administrative Reform and Social Sciences in France at the End of the Eighteenth Century'. In *The Rise of the Social Sciences and the Formation of Modernity. Conceptual Change in Context, 1750-1850*, edited by Johan Heilbron, Lars Magnussen, and Björn Wittrock, 207–24. Sociology of the Sciences 20. Dordrecht: Kluwer.
- . 2008. 'Portée du lexique halbwachsien de la mémoire'. In *La topographie légendaire des évangiles en Terre sainte. Étude de mémoire collective*, by Maurice Halbwachs, 113–46. Paris: Presses universitaires de France.
- . 2010. 'Cent dix ans de renouvellements incessants. Note sur l'itinéraire de la *Revue de synthèse* de 1900 à 2010'. *Revue de Synthèse* 131 (3): 401–38.
- . 2012. 'Où en est la sociologie générale ?' *Revue de synthèse* 133 (1): 47–74.
- . 2013. 'Comment les sciences durent'. *Revue Sciences/Lettres* 1: 1–7.
- . 2019. 'Les infortunes du réalisme épistémologique durkheimien au XXe siècle'. Paper. Conference 'Durkheim au Collège de France', Collège de France, Paris, June 7.
- . 2020. 'Einstein au bord de la falaise. Les attentes des historiens parisiens après ses conférences au Collège de France (1922-1943)'. In *Einstein au Collège de France*,

- edited by Antoine Compagnon and Céline Surprenant. *Passage des disciplines*. Paris: Collège de France.
- . 2021a. ‘A Theorist of Collective Memory’. In *The Anthem Companion to Maurice Halbwachs*, edited by Robert Leroux and Jean-Christophe Marcel, 5–16. Anthem Companions to Sociology. London/New York/Melbourne/Delhi: Anthem Press.
- . 2021b. ‘Ce que nous devons à Jean-Claude Perrot’. *Revue de Synthèse* 142 (3–4): 267–73.
- . 2023. ‘Un problème que le XXe siècle n’a pas résolu. Postface’. In *Histoire et sciences*, by Lucien Febvre, edited by Éric Brian, 179–229. EHESS Poche. Paris: Éditions de l’EHESS.
- . Forthcoming. ‘Revue de synthèse historique’. In *Dictionnaire de la philosophie française du XIXe siècle*, edited by Delphine Antoine-Mahut, Pierre-François Moreau, Renzo Raghianti, and Patrice Vermeren. Paris: Classiques Garnier.
- Brinnich, Max. 2015. ‘Hönigswalds Verhältnis zu Kant und zur Phänomenologie’. In *Umwege. Annäherungen an Immanuel Kant in Wien, in Österreich und in Osteuropa*, edited by Violetta L. Waibel, 539–45. Vienna: Vienna University Press.
- Brook, Andrew. 1994. *Kant and the Mind*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- . 2004. ‘Kant, Cognitive Science and Contemporary Neo-Kantianism’. *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 11 (10–11): 1–25.
- Brooks, John I. 1998. *The Eclectic Legacy. Academic Philosophy and the Human Sciences in Nineteenth-Century France*. Newark: University of Delaware Press.
- Bruhns, Hinnerk. 2019. ‘La thèse de doctorat “disparue” de Talcott Parsons, publiée 90 ans après sa soutenance’. *Revue d’histoire des sciences humaines*, no. 34 (June): 285–88.
- Brunet, Lucien, and Robert Bouvier. 1936. ‘La Logique de La Science et l’École de Vienne’. *Revue de Synthèse. Science de La Nature et Synthèse Générale* XII (1): 113–15.
- Brunner, Otto, Werner Conze, and Reinhart Koselleck, eds. 1972–1997. *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe. Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*. 8 vols. Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta.
- Brunschvicg, Léon. 1897. *La modalité du jugement*. Paris: Alcan.
- . 1912. *Les étapes de la philosophie mathématique*. Paris: Alcan.
- . 1920. ‘L’orientation du rationalisme. Représentation, concept, jugement’. *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale* 27 (3): 261–343.
- . 1922. *L’expérience humaine et la causalité physique*. Paris: Alcan.
- . 1934. *Les âges de l’intelligence*. Nouvelle encyclopédie philosophique 1. Paris: Alcan.
- . (1927) 1953. ‘Chapitre XIX. Synthèse dogmatique et analyse positive. Section III. L’alternative sociologique’. In *Le progrès de la conscience dans la philosophie occidentale*, 2nd ed., 2:533–52. 2nd ed. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
- Bruun, Hans Henrik. 2001. ‘Weber on Rickert: From Value Relation to Ideal Type’. *Max Weber Studies* 1 (2): 138–60.
- . (1972) 2007. *Science, Values and Politics in Max Weber’s Methodology*. Rethinking Classical Sociology. 2nd ed. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- . 2010. ‘The Incompatibility of Values and the Importance of Consequences: Max Weber and the Kantian Legacy’. *The Philosophical Forum* 41 (1–2): 51–67.
- Buchdahl, Gerd. 1982. ‘Editorial Response to David Bloor’. *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science Part A* 13 (4): 299–304.
- Bukharin, Nikolai I., ed. 1931. *Science at the Cross Roads. Papers Presented to the International Congress of the History of Science and Technology Held in London from 29th to July 3rd, 1931 by Delegates of the U.S.S.R.* London: Kniga (England).
- Bunzl, Matti. 1996. ‘Franz Boas and the Humboldtian Tradition. From *Volksgeist* and *Nationalcharakter* to an Anthropological Concept of Culture’. In *Volksgeist as Method and Ethic. Essays on Boasian Ethnography and the German Anthropological Tradition*,

- edited by George W. Stocking, 17–78. *History of Anthropology* 8. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press.
- Burger, Thomas. 1976. *Max Weber's Theory of Concept Formation: History, Laws and Ideal Types*. Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press.
- . 1998. 'Max Weber's Methodology in Its Place'. *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 12 (2): 277–91. JSTOR.
- Burguière, André. 1979. 'Histoire d'une histoire: la naissance des Annales'. *Annales. Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations* 34: 1347–59.
- . 1983. 'La notion de "mentalité" chez Marc Bloch et Lucien Febvre. Deux conceptions, deux filiations'. *Revue de Synthèse* 104 (111–112): 333–48.
- . 2006a. 'Chapitre 3. La notion de mentalités. une invention ou une filiation?' In *L'école des Annales. Une histoire intellectuelle*, 71–98. Paris: Odile Jacob.
- . 2006b. *L'école des Annales. Une histoire intellectuelle*. Paris: Odile Jacob.
- Burke, Kenneth. (1935) 1984. *Permanence and Change. An Anatomy of Purpose*. 3rd ed. Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press.
- Burke, Peter. 1990. *The French Historical Revolution. The Annales School, 1929-1989*. Key Contemporary Thinkers. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Butterfield, Herbert. (1931) 1965. *The Whig Interpretation of History*. The Norton Library. New York: W. Norton & Company.
- Buxton, William J. 1994. 'Academic Dispute or Clash of Commitments?: The Schutz-Parsons Exchange Reconsidered'. *Human Studies* 17: 267–75.
- Cahiers internationaux de sociologie, ed. 1958. 'Chroniques. Groupe de recherches sur la sociologie de la connaissance et la sociologie de la vie morale'. *Cahiers internationaux de sociologie* 25: 179.
- Calhoun, Craig, ed. 2002. 'Neo-Kantianism'. In *Dictionary of the Social Sciences*, 333–34. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- . 2013. 'The Social History of the Present. Bourdieu as Historical Sociologist'. In *Bourdieu and Historical Analysis*, edited by Philip S. Gorski, 36–66. Politics, History, and Culture. Durham/London: Duke University Press.
- Camic, Charles. 1979. 'The Utilitarians Revisited'. *American Journal of Sociology* 85 (3): 516–50.
- . 1981. 'On the Methodology of the History of Sociology: A Reply to Jones'. *American Journal of Sociology* 86 (5): 1139–44.
- . 2001. 'Knowledge, Sociology Of'. In *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences*, edited by Neil J. Smelser and Paul B. Baltes, 8143–48. Oxford: Pergamon.
- Camic, Charles, and Neil Gross. 2001. 'The New Sociology of Ideas'. In *The Blackwell Companion to Sociology*, edited by Judith R. Blau, 236–49. Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.
- Camic, Charles, Neil Gross, and Michèle Lamont. 2011. 'The Study of Social Knowledge Making'. In *Social Knowledge in the Making*, edited by Charles Camic, Neil Gross, and Michèle Lamont, 1–40. Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press.
- Canguilhem, Georges. (1989) 1992. 'Raymond Aron et la philosophie critique de l'histoire: De Hegel à Weber'. *Enquête*, no. 7 (June): 1–8.
- . (1957) 2005. 'Sur une épistémologie concordataire'. In *Le métier de sociologue. Pré-alables épistémologiques*, 5th ed., by Pierre Bourdieu, Jean-Claude Chamboredon, and Jean-Claude Passeron, 109–16. 5th ed. Berlin/New York: Mouton de Gruyter.
- . (1943–1966) 2013. *Le normal et le pathologique*. Quadrige. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
- . (1958) 2019. 'La philosophie biologique d'Auguste Comte et son influence en France au XIXe siècle'. In *Écrits d'histoire des sciences et d'épistémologie*, edited by Camille Limoges, 323–42. Œuvres complètes, III. Paris: Vrin.

- Capeillères, Fabien. 1998. 'Généalogie d'un néokantisme français à propos d'Émile Boutroux'. *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale* 103 (3): 405–42.
- . 2004. *Kant philosophe newtonien. Figures de l'idéal de scientificité en métaphysique, I. Passages*. Paris: Cerf.
- . 2021. 'Cassirer in France, 1903–1948. Mapping Cassirer's Influences and Receptions'. In *Ernst Cassirer's Post-War Afterlife*, 93–148. Cassirer Studies 13/14. Napoli: Bibliopolis.
- Capitant, Henri, ed. 1936. *Vocabulaire juridique. Rédigé par des Professeurs de Droit, des Magistrats et des Jurisconsultes*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
- Carbonell, Charles-Olivier. 1978. 'L'histoire dite "positiviste" en France'. *Romantisme* 8 (21): 173–85.
- Carlson, Thomas. 1997. 'James and the Kantian Tradition'. In *The Cambridge Companion to William James*, edited by Ruth Anna Putnam, 363–83. Cambridge Companions to Philosophy. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Carnap, Rudolf. 1934. *Logische Syntax der Sprache*. Schriften zur Wissenschaftlichen Weltauffassung 8. Wien: Springer.
- . 1950. 'Empiricism, Semantics, and Ontology'. *Revue Internationale de Philosophie* 4 (11): 20–40.
- . (1928) 1966. *Der logische Aufbau der Welt*. 3rd ed. Hamburg: Meiner.
- Carrithers, Michael, Steven Collins, and Steven Lukes. 1985. *The Category of the Person: Anthropology, Philosophy, History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Carroll, Lewis. 1893. *Sylvie and Bruno Concluded*. London/New York: Macmillan.
- Casanova, Pascale. 2013. 'Autoportrait en artiste libre ou "Je ne sais pas pourquoi je me suis mêlé à ça"'. In *Manet. Une révolution symbolique. Cours au Collège de France (1998–2000) suivis d'un manuscrit inachevé de Pierre et Marie-Claire Bourdieu*, by Pierre Bourdieu, edited by Pascale Casanova, Patrick Champagne, Christophe Charle, Franck Poupeau, and Marie-Christine Rivière, 737–41. Cours et travaux. Paris: Raisons d'agir/Seuil.
- Cassirer, Ernst. 1912a. 'Das Problem des Unendlichen und Renouviere "Gesetz der Zahl"'. In *Philosophische Abhandlungen. Hermann Cohen zum 70sten Geburtstag (4. Juli 1912) dargebracht*, edited by Paul Natorp, 85–98. Berlin: Bruno Cassirer.
- . 1912b. 'Hermann Cohen und die Erneuerung der Kantischen Philosophie'. *Kant-Studien* 17: 252–73.
- . 1918. *Kants Leben und Lehre*. Berlin: Bruno Cassirer.
- . (1916) 1918. *Freiheit und Form. Studien zur deutschen Geistesgeschichte*. 2nd ed. Berlin: Bruno Cassirer.
- . 1929. 'Neo-Kantianism'. In *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 14th ed., 16:215–16.
- . 1931. 'Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik. Bemerkungen zu Martin Heideggers Kant-Interpretation'. *Kant-Studien*. *Kant-Studien* 36 (1–2): 1–26.
- . 1937. 'Descartes et l'idée de l'unité de la science'. Translated by Paul Schrecker. *Revue de Synthèse. Science de la nature et Synthèse générale* 14 (1): 7–28.
- . 1945. 'Structuralism in Modern Linguistics'. *Word. Journal of the Linguistic Circle of New York* 1 (2): 99–120.
- . 1946. *The Myth of the State*. New Haven/London: Yale University Press.
- . (1918–1921) 1975. 'Zweites Kapitel. Die Magisterjahre und die Anfänge der Kantischen Lehre'. In *Kants Leben und Lehre*, 38–148. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft.
- . (1906/1922, reprint of 3rd edition) 1995. *Das Erkenntnisproblem in der Philosophie und Wissenschaft der neueren Zeit*. Vol. 1. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft.
- . (1906–1950) 1995. *Das Erkenntnisproblem in der Philosophie und Wissenschaft der neueren Zeit*. 4 vols. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft.

- . (1907–1922) 1995a. ‘Achstes Buch. Die kritische Philosophie’. In *Das Erkenntnisproblem in der Philosophie und Wissenschaft der neueren Zeit*, 2:583–762. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft.
- . (1907–1922) 1995b. *Das Erkenntnisproblem in der Philosophie und Wissenschaft der neueren Zeit*. Vol. 2. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft.
- . (1907–1922) 1995c. ‘Siebentes Buch. Von Newton zu Kant. Wissenschaft und Philosophie im achtzehnten Jahrhundert’. In *Das Erkenntnisproblem in der Philosophie und Wissenschaft der neueren Zeit*, 2:391–582. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft.
- . (1950) 1995. *Das Erkenntnisproblem in der Philosophie und Wissenschaft der neueren Zeit. Vierter Band. Von Hegels Tod bis zur Gegenwart (1832–1932)*. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft.
- . 1995–2022. *Nachgelassene Manuskripte und Texte*. Edited by Klaus Christian Köhnke, John Michael Krois, Oswald Schwemmer, and Christian Möckel. 19 vols. Hamburg: Meiner.
- . 1998–2009. *Ernst Cassirer Werke (Hamburger Ausgabe)*. Edited by Birgit Recki. 26 vols. Hamburg: Meiner.
- . (1910) 2000. *Substanzbegriff und Funktionsbegriff. Untersuchungen über die Grundfragen der Erkenntniskritik*. Ernst Cassirer Werke (ECW) 6. Hamburg: Meiner.
- . (1914) 2001. ‘Charles Renouvier, Essais de critique générale’. In *Aufsätze und kleine Schriften (1902–1921)*, edited by Birgit Recki and Marcel Simon, 484–86. Ernst Cassirer Werke (ECW) 9. Hamburg: Meiner.
- . (1921) 2001. *Zur Einsteinschen Relativitätstheorie. Erkenntnistheoretische Betrachtungen*. Edited by Reinold Schmücker. Ernst Cassirer Werke (ECW) 10. Hamburg: Meiner.
- . 2002. *Geschichte. Mythos. Mit Beilagen: Biologie, Ethik, Form. Kategorienlehre, Kunst, Organologie, Sinn, Sprache, Zeit*. Edited by Klaus Christian Köhnke, Herbert Kopp-Oberstebrink, and Rüdiger Kramme. *Nachgelassene Manuskripte und Texte* (ECN) 3. Hamburg: Meiner.
- . (1927) 2002. *Individuum und Kosmos in der Philosophie der Renaissance*. Edited by Friederike Plaga and Claus Rosenkranz. Ernst Cassirer Werke, edited by Birgit Recki, vol. 14. Hamburg: Meiner.
- . (1922) 2003. ‘Die Kantischen Elemente in Wilhelm von Humboldts Sprachphilosophie’. In *Aufsätze und kleine Schriften (1922–1926)*, edited by Julia Clemens, 105–33. Ernst Cassirer Werke 16. Hamburg: Meiner.
- . 2004. *Kulturphilosophie. Vorlesungen und Vorträge 1929–1941*. Edited by Rüdiger Kramme and Jörg Fingerhut. *Nachgelassene Manuskripte und Texte* (ECN) 5. Hamburg: Meiner.
- . (1936) 2004. *Determinismus und Indeterminismus in der modernen Physik. Historische und systematische Studien zum Kausalproblem*. Edited by Claus Rosenkranz. Ernst Cassirer Werke (ECW) 19. Hamburg: Meiner.
- . (1922) 2009. ‘Die Begriffsform im mythischen Denken’. In *Schriften zur Philosophie der symbolischen Formen*, edited by Marion Lauschke, 3–61. Philosophische Bibliothek 604. Hamburg: Meiner.
- . (1923) 2010. *Philosophie der symbolischen Formen. Erster Teil. Die Sprache*. Edited by Claus Rosenkranz. Philosophische Bibliothek 607. Hamburg: Meiner.
- . (1925) 2010a. ‘Dritter Abschnitt. Der Mythos als Lebensform. Entdeckung und Bestimmung der subjektiven Wirklichkeit im mythischen Bewußtsein. Kapitel II. Die Herausbildung des Selbstgefühls aus dem mythischen Einheits- und Lebensgefühl. 1. Die Gemeinschaft des Lebendigen und die mythische Klassenbildung. - Der Totemismus’. In *Philosophie der symbolischen Formen. Zweiter Teil. Das mythische Denken*,

- edited by Claus Rosenkranz, 205–35. Philosophische Bibliothek 608. Hamburg: Meiner.
- . (1925) 2010b. *Philosophie der symbolischen Formen. Zweiter Teil. Das mythische Denken*. Edited by Claus Rosenkranz. Philosophische Bibliothek 608. Hamburg: Meiner.
- . (1921) 2011a. ‘Begriffs- und Klassenbildung im mythischen und religiösen Denken (Manuskript)’. In *Mythos, Sprache und Kunst*, by Ernst Cassirer, edited by Jörn Bohr and Gerald Hartung, 3–36. Ernst Cassirer Nachgelassene Manuskripte und Texte (ECN) 7. Hamburg: Meiner.
- . (1921) 2011b. ‘Begriffs- und Klassenbildung im mythischen und religiösen Denken. Vortrag gehalten in der Religionswissenschaftlichen Gesellsch[aft] in Hamburg am 14[.] Juli 1921 (erweiterte Fassung)’. In *Mythos, Sprache und Kunst*, by Ernst Cassirer, edited by Jörn Bohr and Gerald Hartung, 37–91. Ernst Cassirer Nachgelassene Manuskripte und Texte (ECN) 7. Hamburg: Meiner.
- . (1939) 2011. ‘Naturalistische und humanistische Begründung der Kulturphilosophie’. In *Zur Logik der Kulturwissenschaften. Fünf Studien*, 135–61. Philosophische Bibliothek 634. Hamburg: Meiner.
- . (1942) 2011. *Zur Logik der Kulturwissenschaften. Fünf Studien*. Philosophische Bibliothek 634. Hamburg: Meiner.
- Cassirer, Ernst, and Martin Heidegger. (1929–1931) 1972. *Débat sur le kantisme et la philosophie (Davos, mars 1929) et autres textes de 1929-1931*. Edited by Pierre Aubenque. Translated by Pierre Aubenque, Jean-Marie Fataud, and Pierre Quillet. Bibliothèque des Archives de philosophie 12. Paris: Beauchesne.
- . (1929) 2010. ‘Davoser Disputation zwischen Ernst Cassirer und Martin Heidegger’. In *Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik*, by Martin Heidegger, edited by Otto Friedrich Bollnow and Joachim Ritter, 274–96. Rote Reihe. Frankfurt/Main: Klostermann.
- Cassirer, Ernst, Hermann Mörchen, and Helene Weiss. (1929) 2014. ‘Heidegger-Vorlesung (Davos) März 1929’. In *Davoser Vorträge. Vorträge über Hermann Cohen*, by Ernst Cassirer, edited by Jörn Bohr and Klaus Christian Köhnke, 1–73. Nachgelassene Manuskripte und Texte (ECN) 17. Hamburg: Meiner.
- Cassirer, Toni. (1948) 2003. *Mein Leben mit Ernst Cassirer*. Hamburg: Meiner.
- Castelli Gattinara, Enrico. 1996. ‘L’idée de la synthèse: Henri Berr et les crises du savoir dans la première moitié du xxe siècle’. *Revue de synthèse* 117 (1): 21–38.
- . 1998. *Les inquiétudes de la raison. Épistémologie et histoire en France dans l’entre-deux-guerres*. Contextes. Paris: Éditions de l’École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales.
- Catana, Leo, and Mogens Lærke. 2020. ‘Historiographies of Philosophy 1800–1950’. *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 28 (3): 431–41.
- Cavazzini, Andrea. 2006. ‘Introduzione’. In *L’epistemologia francese e il problema del ‘trascendentale storico’*, edited by Andrea Cavazzini and Alberto Gualandi, 5–8. Discipline filosofiche 26. Macerata: Quodlibet.
- Cavazzini, Andrea, and Alberto Gualandi, eds. 2006. *L’epistemologia francese e il problema del ‘trascendentale storico’*. Discipline filosofiche 26. Macerata: Quodlibet.
- Cavell, Stanley. 1962. ‘The Availability of Wittgenstein’s Later Philosophy’. *The Philosophical Review* 71 (1): 67–93.
- Centre international de Synthèse, ed. 1926a. ‘Centre international de Synthèse. Conseil d’administration’. *Bulletin du Centre international de Synthèse. Section de Synthèse historique* 1 (June): 2–3.
- , ed. 1926b. ‘Membres de la section de Synthèse historique’. *Bulletin du Centre international de Synthèse. Section de Synthèse historique* 1 (June): 34–35.

- , ed. 1926c. ‘Notes diverses. Instructions pour la rédaction des articles du Vocabulaire’. *Bulletin du Centre international de Synthèse. Section de Synthèse historique* 2 (December): 32–33.
- , ed. 1926d. ‘Séance du dimanche 25 avril 1926, à 10 heures’. *Bulletin du Centre international de Synthèse. Section de Synthèse historique* 1 (June): 8–10.
- , ed. 1929. ‘Séance du dimanche 10 mars 1929, à 10 h. 15’. *Bulletin du Centre international de Synthèse. Section de Synthèse historique* 7 (June): 6–9.
- , ed. 1932. ‘Projet d’un Dictionnaire historique des sciences dans leur rapport avec la philosophie. Section de Synthèse générale. Séance du 25 novembre 1931. Séance du 27 janvier 1932. Séance du 24 février 1932.’ *Revue de Synthèse. Science de la nature et Synthèse générale* 4 (October): 45–57.
- Chalus, Paul, and André Davidovitch. 1971. ‘In memoriam. Raymond Lenoir (1890-1972)’. *L’Année sociologique* 22 (Troisième série): 7–9.
- Chamberlain, Houston Stewart. 1905. *Immanuel Kant. Die Persönlichkeit als Einführung in das Werk*. München: Verlagsanstalt F. Bruckmann A.-G.
- Chamboredon, Jean-Claude. 1975. ‘Sociologie de la sociologie et intérêts sociaux des sociologues. La sociologie américaine et l’héritage français à propos d’un livre de Terry Clark sur l’histoire de la sociologie en France’. *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 1 (2): 2–17.
- Chang, Hasok. 2022. *Realism for Realistic People. A New Pragmatist Philosophy of Science*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Charle, Christophe. 1986. ‘Lalande (Pierre, André)’. In *Les professeurs de la faculté des lettres de Paris. Dictionnaire biographique 1909-1908*, 122–24. Histoire biographique de l’enseignement 2. Paris: Institut national de recherche pédagogique.
- . 1990. *Naissance des ‘intellectuels’. 1880-1900*. Le Sens commun. Paris: Minuit.
- . 1994. *La République des universitaires (1870-1940)*. L’Univers historique. Paris: Seuil.
- . (1996) 2001. *Les intellectuels en Europe au XIXe siècle. Essai d’histoire comparée*. Points Histoire 291. Paris: Seuil.
- . 2010. ‘Comparaisons et transferts en histoire culturelle de l’Europe. Quelques réflexions à propos de recherches récentes’. *Histoire. Les cahiers Irice* 5 (1): 51–73.
- . 2013. ‘Comparative and Transnational History and the Sociology of Pierre Bourdieu: Historical Theory and Practice’. In *Bourdieu and Historical Analysis*, edited by Philip S. Gorski, translated by Gray Anderson, 67–85. Politics, History, and Culture. Durham/London: Duke University Press.
- . 2020. ‘Histoire’. In *Dictionnaire international Bourdieu*, edited by Gisèle Sapiro, 410–12. Culture & société. Paris: CNRS Éditions.
- Charle, Christophe, and Jacques Verger. (1994) 2012. *Histoire des universités. XIIIe-XXIe siècle*. Quadrige Manuels. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
- Charpentier, Pierre-Frédéric. 2021. ‘*Imbéciles, c’est pour vous que je meurs!...*’ Valentin Feldman (1909-1942). Paris: CNRS Éditions.
- Cheng, Patricia W., and Laura R. Novick. 1991. ‘Causes versus Enabling Conditions’. *Cognition* 40 (1): 83–120.
- Chevalier, Jean-Marie. 2016. ‘Peirce lecteur de Kant’. *Philosophia Scientiæ. Travaux d’histoire et de philosophie des sciences* 20 (1): 20–1.
- Chimisso, Cristina. 2000. ‘The Mind and the Faculties: The Controversy Over “Primitive Mentality” and the Struggle for Disciplinary Space at the Inter-War Sorbonne’. *History of the Human Sciences* 13 (3): 47–68.
- . 2001a. *Gaston Bachelard. Critic of Science and the Imagination*. Routledge Studies in Twentieth-Century Philosophy. London/New York: Routledge.
- . 2001b. ‘Hélène Metzger: The History of Science between the Study of Mentalities and Total History’. *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science Part A* 32 (2): 203–41.

- . 2008. *Writing the History of the Mind: Philosophy and Science in France, 1900 to 1960s*. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- . 2011. 'Fleeing Dictatorship: Socialism, Sexuality and the History of Science in the Life of Aldo Mieli'. *History Workshop Journal* 72 (1): 30–51.
- . 2019. *Hélène Metzger, Historian and Historiographer of the Sciences*. Science, Technology and Culture, 1700-1945. London: Routledge.
- . 2024. 'Historical Epistemology: A Broader and More Complex View'. In *The Oxford Handbook of Modern French Philosophy*, edited by Mark Sinclair and Daniel Whistler, 201–18. Oxford Handbooks. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Chimisso, Cristina, and Gad Freudenthal. 2003. 'A Mind of Her Own: Hélène Metzger to Émile Meyerson, 1933'. *Isis* 94 (3): 477–91.
- Cicourel, Aaron V. 1964. *Method and Measurement in Sociology*. New York: The Free Press.
- Clark, Terry N. 1973. *Prophets and Patrons. The French University and the Emergence of the Social Sciences*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- Clifford, James, and George E. Marcus, eds. 1986. *Writing Culture. The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Cohen, Alix. 2009. *Kant and the Human Sciences. Biology, Anthropology and History*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Cohen, H. Floris, ed. 2016. 'Viewpoint: *The History Manifesto* and the History of Science'. *Isis* 107 (2): 309–57.
- Cohen, Hermann. 1883. *Von Kants Einfluß auf die deutsche Kultur. Rede bei der Marburger Universitäts-Feier des Geburtstages Sr. Majestät des Kaisers und Königs am 17. März 1883*. Berlin: Ferd. Dümmlers Verlagsbuchhandlung.
- . (1881) 1914. 'Biographisches Vorwort des Herausgebers'. In *Geschichte des Materialismus und Kritik seiner Bedeutung in der Gegenwart. Erstes Buch. Geschichte des Materialismus bis auf Kant*, by Friedrich Albert Lange, edited by Hermann Cohen, 1:III–XI. Leipzig: Verlag von Friedrich Brandstetter.
- . (1896) 1914. 'Einleitung mit kritischem Nachtrag zur neunten Auflage der Geschichte des Materialismus von Friedrich Albert Lange in dritter, erweiterter Auflage'. In *Geschichte des Materialismus und Kritik seiner Bedeutung in der Gegenwart. Erstes Buch. Geschichte des Materialismus bis auf Kant*, by Friedrich Albert Lange, edited by Hermann Cohen, 1:1–125. Leipzig: Verlag von Friedrich Brandstetter.
- . (1883) 1968. *Das Prinzip der Infinitesimal-Methode und seine Geschichte. Ein Kapitel zur Grundlegung der Erkenntniskritik*. Edited by Werner Flach. Theorie 1. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.
- . (1871) 1987. 'Vorrede zur ersten Auflage'. In *Kants Theorie der Erfahrung*, 5th ed., edited by Hermann-Cohen-Archiv am Philosophischen Seminar der Universität Zürich unter der Leitung von Helmut Holzhey, with Geert Edel, IX–XIV. Werke, 1.1. 5th ed. Hildesheim/Zürich/New York: Georg Olms Verlag.
- . (1885) 1987. 'Vorrede zur zweiten Auflage'. In *Kants Theorie der Erfahrung*, 5th ed., edited by Hermann-Cohen-Archiv am Philosophischen Seminar der Universität Zürich unter der Leitung von Helmut Holzhey, with Geert Edel, XV–XVIII. Werke, 1.1. 5th ed. Hildesheim/Zürich/New York: Georg Olms Verlag.
- Cohen, I. Bernard. 1985a. 'A Second Scientific Revolution and Others?' In *Revolution in Science*, 91–101. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- . 1985b. *Revolution in Science*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- . 1987. 'Alexandre Koyré in America - Some Personal Reminiscences'. *History and Technology* 4 (1–4): 55–70.
- Cole, Jonathan R., and Harriet Zuckerman. (1975) 2017. 'The Emergence of a Scientific Specialty: The Self-Exemplifying Case of the Sociology of Science'. In *The Idea of Social Structure. Papers in Honor of Robert K. Merton*, edited by Lewis A. Coser, 139–74. London/New York: Routledge.

- Collingwood, R. G. (1939) 2002. *An Autobiography*. With Stephen Toulmin. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Collins, Brian. 2021. *Robert Eisler and the Magic of the Combinatory Mind. The Forgotten Life of a 20th-Century Austrian Polymath*. Palgrave Pivot. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan/Springer Nature.
- Collins, Harry. (1985) 1992. *Changing Order. Replication and Induction in Scientific Practice*. Chicago/London: The University of Chicago Press.
- . 2004. *Gravity's Shadow. The Search for Gravitational Waves*. Chicago/London: The University of Chicago Press.
- Collins, Randall. 1975. *Conflict Sociology. Toward an Explanatory Science*. With Joan Annett. New York/San Francisco/London: Academic Press.
- . 1981. 'On the Microfoundations of Macrosociology'. *American Journal of Sociology* 86 (5): 984–1014.
- . 1987. 'A Micro-Macro Theory of Intellectual Creativity: The Case of German Idealist Philosophy'. *Sociological Theory* 5 (1): 47–69.
- . 1989. 'Toward a Theory of Intellectual Change: The Social Causes of Philosophies'. *Science, Technology, & Human Values* 14 (2): 107–40.
- . 1998a. *The Sociology of Philosophies. A Global Theory of Intellectual Change*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- . 1998b. 'The Transformation of Philosophy'. In *The Rise of the Social Sciences and the Formation of Modernity. Conceptual Change in Context, 1750-1850*, edited by Johan Heilbron, Lars Magnussen, and Björn Wittrock, 141–61. *Sociology of the Sciences* 20. Dordrecht: Kluwer.
- Collins, Randall, and Sal Restivo. 1983. 'Robber Barons and Politicians in Mathematics: A Conflict Model of Science'. *The Canadian Journal of Sociology / Cahiers Canadiens de Sociologie* 8 (2): 199–227.
- Compagnon, Antoine. (1979) 2016. *La seconde main ou le travail de citation*. Essais. 2nd ed. Seuil/Points.
- Comte, Auguste. 1854. *Système de politique positive, ou Traité de sociologie, instituant la Religion de l'Humanité*. Vol. 4. Paris: Chez l'auteur/Carilian-Goeury/Dalmont.
- . (1822) 1854. 'Plan des travaux scientifiques nécessaires pour réorganiser la société'. In *Système de politique positive, ou Traité de sociologie, instituant la Religion de l'Humanité*, 4: 'Appendice général', 47–136. Paris: Chez l'auteur/Carilian-Goeury/Dalmont.
- . (1825) 1854. 'Considérations philosophiques sur les sciences et les savants'. In *Système de politique positive, ou Traité de sociologie, instituant la Religion de l'Humanité*, 4: 'Appendice général', 137–176. Paris: Chez l'auteur/Carilian-Goeury/Dalmont.
- . (1852) 1874. 'Préface de la première édition'. In *Catéchisme positiviste ou Sommaire exposition de la religion universelle en treize entretiens systématiques entre une femme et un prêtre de l'Humanité*, edited by Pierre Laffitte, 3–34. Paris: Ernest Leroux.
- . (1819–1820) 1970. 'Essais sur la Philosophie des mathématiques. Matériaux, 1819–1820, charpente de l'ouvrage, *Revue occidentale*, 1879'. In *Écrits de jeunesse 1816–1828. Suivis du mémoire sur la cosmogonie de Laplace 1835*, edited by Paulo E. de Berrêdo Carneiro and Pierre Arnaud, 507–41. *Archives positivistes* 5. Paris: Mouton.
- . 1973. *Correspondance générale et confessions. Tome I. 1814-1840*. Edited by Paulo E. de Berrêdo Carneiro and Pierre Arnaud. Vol. 1. *Archives positivistes* 6. Paris/La Haye: Mouton.
- . (1839–1842) 1975. *Cours de philosophie positive. Physique sociale. Leçons 46 à 60*. Edited by Jean-Paul Enthoven. Paris: Hermann.
- . (1829) 1998a. 'Avertissement de l'auteur'. In *Cours de philosophie positive. Philosophie première. Leçons 1 à 45*, edited by Michel Serres, François Dagognet, and Allal Sinaceur, with Annie Petit, v–vi. Paris: Hermann.

- . (1829) 1998b. ‘Deuxième leçon. Exposition du plan de ce cours, ou considérations générales sur la hiérarchie des sciences positives’. In *Cours de philosophie positive. Philosophie première. Leçons 1 à 45*, edited by Michel Serres, François Dagognet, and Allal Sinaceur, with Annie Petit, 42–64. Paris: Hermann.
- . (1830–1835) 1998. *Cours de philosophie positive. Philosophie première. Leçons 1 à 45*. Edited by Michel Serres, François Dagognet, and Allal Sinaceur. With Annie Petit. Paris: Hermann.
- . (1837) 1998. ‘Quarante-cinquième leçon. Considérations générales sur l’étude positive des fonctions intellectuelles et morales, ou cérébrales’. In *Cours de philosophie positive. Philosophie première. Leçons 1 à 45*, edited by Michel Serres, François Dagognet, and Allal Sinaceur, with Annie Petit, 842–82. Paris: Hermann.
- . (1822) 2020. *Plan des travaux scientifiques nécessaires pour réorganiser la société*. Edited by Michel Bourdeau. Philosophie. Paris: Hermann.
- Condillac, Étienne Bonnot de. (1746) 1924. *Essai sur l’origine des connaissances humaines. Ouvrage où l’on réduit à un seul principe tout ce qui concerne l’entendement*. Edited by Raymond Lenoir. Les classiques de la philosophie 6. Paris: Armand Colin.
- Cooper, Andrew. 2024. ‘Kant, Race, and Racism: Views from Somewhere. By Huaping Lu-Adler, Oxford University Press. 2023’. *European Journal of Philosophy* 32 (1): 286–91.
- Corbin, Alain. 1982. *Le miasme et la jonquille. L’odorat et l’imaginaire social, XVIIIe-XIXe siècles*. Collection historique. Paris: Aubier Montaigne.
- Corbin, Alain, Jean-Jacques Courtine, and Georges Vigarello, eds. 2011. *Histoire du corps*. 3 vols. Points Histoire. Paris: Seuil.
- Coser, Lewis A. (1956) 2001. *The Functions of Social Conflict*. The International Library of Sociology - Race, Class and Social Structure. Oxon/New York: Routledge.
- Cournot, Augustin. 1851. *Essai sur les fondements de nos connaissances et sur les caractères de la critique philosophique*. Vol. 1. Paris: Hachette.
- Coutu, Michel, Dominique Leydet, Guy Rocher, and Elke Winter. 2001. ‘Introduction’. In *Rudolf Stammler et le matérialisme historique*, by Max Weber, translated by Michel Coutu and Dominique Leydet. Passages. Québec/Paris: Les Presses de l’Université Laval/Cerf.
- Couturat, Louis. 1906. *Pour la langue internationale*. Coulommiers: Imprimerie Paul Brodard.
- Couturat, Louis, and Léopold Léau. 1903. *Histoire de la langue universelle*. Paris: Hachette.
- Crocco, Gabriella, and Frédéric Patras. 2022. ‘Introduction à la Leçon inaugurale (G.-G. Granger, 1987)’. *Noesis*, no. 38 (June): 38.
- Crombie, Alistair C. 1952. *Augustine to Galileo. The History of Science, AD 400-1650*. London: Falcon.
- . 1953. *Robert Grosseteste and the Origins of Experimental Science, 1100-1700*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- . 1994. *Styles of Scientific Thinking in the European Tradition*. 3 vols. London: Duckworth.
- Crothers, Charles. 2015. ‘Discipline-Building in the Social Sciences: Collective Memory, Biography and Autobiography’. In *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences*, 2nd ed., edited by James D. Wright, 6:491–97. Oxford: Elsevier, January 1.
- Culler, Jonathan. 2015. ‘Deconstruction’. In *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences*, 2nd ed., edited by James D. Wright, 5:927–32. Amsterdam: Elsevier.
- Curtius, Ernst Robert. 1932. *Deutscher Geist in Gefahr*. Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlagsanstalt.
- . (1929) 1982. ‘Soziologie und ihre Grenzen’. In *Der Streit um die Wissenssoziologie*, edited by Volker Meja and Nico Stehr, 2:417–26. Frankfurt/New York: Suhrkamp.
- Cusset, François. (2003) 2008. *French Theory. How Foucault, Derrida, Deleuze, & Co. Transformed the Intellectual Life of the United States*. Translated by Jeff Fort, Josephine Berganza, and Marlon Jones. Minneapolis/London: University of Minnesota Press.

- Cutrofello, Andrew. 1994. *Discipline and Critique. Kant, Poststructuralism, and the Problem of Resistance*. SUNY Series in Contemporary Continental Philosophy. New York: State University of New York Press.
- Cuttica, Cesare. 2013. 'To Use or Not to Use ... The Intellectual Historian and the Isms : A Survey and a Proposal'. *Études Épistémè*, no. 23 (April).
- . 2015. 'Isms and History'. In *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences*, 759–64. Elsevier.
- Dagognet, François. 1965. 'Brunschvicg et Bachelard'. *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale* 70 (1): 43–54.
- Dahms, Hans-Joachim. 1994. *Positivismusstreit. Die Auseinandersetzungen der Frankfurter Schule mit dem logischen Positivismus, dem amerikanischen Pragmatismus und dem kritischen Rationalismus*. suhrkamp taschenbuch wissenschaft 1058. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.
- Dahrendorf, Ralf. (1958) 2006. *Homo Sociologicus. Ein Versuch zur Geschichte, Bedeutung und Kritik der Kategorie der sozialen Rolle*. 16th ed. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.
- Damböck, Christian, Uljana Feest, and Martin Kusch. 2020. 'Descriptive Psychology and *Völkerpsychologie* —in the Contexts of Historicism, Relativism, and Naturalism'. *HOPOS: The Journal of the International Society for the History of Philosophy of Science* 10 (1): 226–33.
- Darmon, Muriel. 2018. 'Drafting the "Time Space". Attitudes towards Time among Prep School Students'. *European Societies* 20 (3): 525–48.
- Darmon, Muriel, Delphine Dulong, and Elsa Favier, eds. 2019a. 'Temps et pouvoir'. *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 226–227 (1–2).
- . 2019b. 'Temps et pouvoir'. *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 226–227 (1–2): 6–15.
- Daston, Lorraine. 1994. 'Historical Epistemology'. In *Questions of Evidence. Proof, Practice and Persuasion across the Disciplines*, edited by James Chandler, Arnold I. Davidson, and D. Harootunian Harry, 282–89. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Dathe, Uwe, and Gisela Schlüter, eds. 2024. *Begriffsgeschichte um 1900. Rudolf Eucken und die Folgen*. Archiv für Begriffsgeschichte. Sonderheft 16. Hamburg: Meiner.
- Davidson, Donald. 1973. 'On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme'. *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association* 47: 5–20.
- . (1963) 2011. 'Actions, Reasons, and Causes'. In *Essays on Actions and Events*, 2nd ed., 3–19. 2nd ed. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Davis, Natalie Zemon. 1990. 'Rabelais among the Censors (1940s, 1540s)'. *Representations*, no. 32: 1–32.
- Davy, Georges. 1919. 'Émile Durkheim. I. - L'Homme'. *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale* 26 (2): 181–98.
- . 1949. 'Sur les conditions de l'explication scientifique et la part qu'elle peut faire à l'individuel [Review]'. *L'Année sociologique. Troisième série* 1 (1940-1948): 181–96.
- Dayé, Christian. 2015. 'Schools in the Social and Behavioral Sciences: Concepts and Historical Relevance'. In *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences (Second Edition)*, edited by James D. Wright, 128–33. Oxford: Elsevier, January 1.
- . 2017. 'Soziologische Konzeptualisierungen von wissenschaftlichen Kollektiven und ihr Einsatz inn der Soziologiegeschichte'. In *Handbuch Geschichte der deutschsprachigen Soziologie. Band 2: Forschungsdesign, Theorien und Methoden*, edited by Stephan Moebius and Andrea Ploder, 63–80. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.
- Dayé, Christian, and Stephan Moebius. 2015a. 'Einleitung'. In *Soziologiegeschichte. Wege und Ziele*, edited by Christian Dayé and Stephan Moebius, 7–17. Berlin: Suhrkamp.
- , eds. 2015b. *Soziologiegeschichte. Wege und Ziele*. Berlin: Suhrkamp.

- Delgado, Jorge Costa, and José Luis Moreno Pestaña. 2022. 'Is There a Model for Symbolic Revolution? Bourdieu's Theory in Manet and a Comparison with a Case Study: The Generation of 1914 in Spain'. *Revista Española de Sociología* 31 (4): 4.
- Deligne, Alain. 2022. *L'itinéraire philosophique du jeune Éric Weil. Hambourg-Berlin-Paris*. With Gilbert Kirscher. Études weilienues. Villeneuve d'Ascq: Presses Universitaires du Septentrion.
- Deroche-Gurcel, Liliane. 2002. 'Introduction. Une sociologie innovante et les résistances à sa réception en France'. In *La Sociologie de Georg Simmel (1908): Éléments actuels de modélisation sociale*, edited by Liliane Deroche-Gurcel and Patrick Watier, 17–59. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
- Descola, Philippe. 2005. *Par-delà nature et culture*. NRF - Bibliothèque des sciences humaines. Paris: Gallimard.
- . 2022. 'Durkheim et Mauss en tandem'. *L'Année sociologique* 72 (1): 185–99.
- Descombes, Vincent. 1979. *Le même et l'autre. Quarante-cinq ans de philosophie française*. Critique. Paris: Minuit.
- Destutt de Tracy, Antoine Louis Claude. (1798–1802) 1992. *Mémoire sur la faculté de penser. De la métaphysique de Kant. Et autres textes*. Edited by Anne Deneys and Henry Deneys. Corpus des oeuvres de philosophie en langue française. Paris: Fayard.
- Deutsche Gesellschaft für Soziologie, ed. 1925. *Verhandlungen des Vierten Deutschen Soziologentages am 29. und 30. September 1924 in Heidelberg*. With Adolf Günther, Ludwig Heyde, Max Scheler, and Max Adler. Schriften der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Soziologie. 1. Serie: Verhandlungen der Deutschen Soziologentage 4. Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck).
- , ed. 1929a. 'Diskussion über "Die Konkurrenz"'. In *Verhandlungen des Sechsten Deutschen Soziologentages vom 17. bis 19. September 1928 in Zürich*, 84–124. Schriften der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Soziologie. 1. Serie: Verhandlungen der Deutschen Soziologentage 6. Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck).
- , ed. 1929b. *Verhandlungen des Sechsten Deutschen Soziologentages vom 17. bis 19. September 1928 in Zürich*. Schriften der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Soziologie. 1. Serie: Verhandlungen der Deutschen Soziologentage 6. Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck).
- , ed. 1931. *Verhandlungen des Siebenten Deutschen Soziologentages vom 28. September bis 1. Oktober 1930 in Berlin*. Schriften der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Soziologie. 1. Serie: Verhandlungen der Deutschen Soziologentage 7. Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck).
- Devoto, Fernando J. 2020. 'Autour de l'historicisme : points de vue, étiquettes et temporalités'. *Histoire. Questions de communication* 38 (2): 257–78.
- Digeon, Claude. 1959. *La crise allemande de la pensée française (1870-1914)*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
- Dilthey, Wilhelm. 1960. *Weltanschauungslehre. Abhandlungen zur Philosophie der Philosophie*. 3rd ed. Edited by Bernhard Groethuysen. Gesammelte Schriften, VIII. Stuttgart/Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
- . (1911) 1960. 'Die Typen der Weltanschauung und ihre Ausbildung in den metaphysischen Systemen'. In *Weltanschauungslehre. Abhandlungen zur Philosophie der Philosophie*, 3rd ed., edited by Bernhard Groethuysen, 75–118. Gesammelte Schriften, VIII. 3rd ed. Stuttgart/Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
- . (1873) 1974. 'Karl Twisten, Die religiösen, politischen und sozialen Ideen der asiatischen Kulturvölker und Ägypter in ihrer historischen Entwicklung. Herausgegeben von Lazarus. 2 Bände, Berlin 1872'. In *Zur Geistesgeschichte des 19. Jahrhunderts*, edited by Ulrich Herrmann, 305–7. Wilhelm Dilthey Gesammelte Schriften, XVII. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.

- . (1894) 1982. 'Ideen über eine beschreibende und zergliedernde Psychologie'. In *Die geistige Welt. Einleitung in die Philosophie des Lebens. Erste Hälfte. Abhandlungen zur Grundlegung der Geisteswissenschaften*, 7th ed., 139–240. Gesammelte Schriften, V. 7th ed. Stuttgart/Göttingen: Teubner/Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
- . (1883) 1990. *Einleitung in die Geisteswissenschaften. Versuch einer Grundlegung für das Studium der Gesellschaft und der Geschichte*. Edited by Bernhard Groethuysen. Wilhelm Dilthey Gesammelte Schriften 1. 9th ed. Stuttgart/Göttingen: Teubner/Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
- Dogan, Mattei, and Robert Pahre. 1990. *Creative Marginality. Innovation at the Intersections of Social Sciences*. Boulder/San Francisco/Oxford: Westview Press.
- Domski, Mary, and Michael Dickson, eds. 2010. *Discourse on a New Method. Reinvigorating the Marriage of History and Philosophy of Science*. With Michael Friedman. Chicago/LaSalle, Illinois: Open Court.
- Dosse, François. 1991. *Histoire du structuralisme. Tome I: Le champ du signe, 1945-1966*. Textes à l'appui. Série Histoire contemporaine. Paris: La Découverte.
- . 1992. *Histoire du structuralisme. Tome II: Le chant du cygne, 1967 à nos jours*. Textes à l'appui. Série Histoire contemporaine. Paris: La Découverte.
- Douglas, Mary. (1966) 1984. *Purity and Danger. An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*. London/New York: Routledge.
- . (1970) 2003. *Natural Symbols. Explorations in Cosmology*. Routledge Classics. London/New York: Routledge.
- Douglas, Mary, and David Hull, eds. 1992. *How Classification Works. Nelson Goodman among the Social Sciences*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Doyon, Maxime. 2014. 'The Transcendental Claim of Deconstruction'. In *A Companion to Derrida*, edited by Zeynep Direk and Leonard Lawlor, 132–49. Blackwell Companions to Philosophy. Oxford: Wiley Blackwell.
- Droysen, Johann Gustav. (1863) 1974. 'Erhebung der Geschichte zum Rang einer Wissenschaft'. In *Historik. Vorlesungen über Enzyklopädie und Methodologie der Geschichte*, 7th ed., edited by Rudolf Hübner, 386–405. 7th ed. München/Wien: R. Oldenbourg Verlag.
- Dubois, Michel. 1999. *Introduction à la sociologie des sciences et des connaissances scientifiques*. Premier cycle. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
- . 2001. *La nouvelle sociologie des sciences*. Sociologies. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
- . 2020. 'Un mythe fondateur à l'épreuve des archives personnelles: La controverse Kuhn-Merton'. In *La sociologie en toutes lettres. L'histoire de la discipline à travers les correspondances*, edited by Patricia Vannier, 53–72. Socio-Logiques. Toulouse: Presses universitaires du Midi.
- Duby, Georges. 1961. 'L'histoire des mentalités'. In *L'histoire et ses méthodes*, edited by Charles Samaran, 937–66. Encyclopédie de la Pléiade 11. Paris: Gallimard.
- Dufoix, Stéphane. 2014. 'Du poids des mots'. *Diasporas*, nos. 23–24 (December): 12–29.
- Duhem, Pierre. 1915. *La science allemande*. Paris: Hermann.
- Dujarier, Marie-Anne. 2021. *Troubles dans le travail. Sociologie d'une catégorie de pensée*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
- Dunkmann, Karl. (1927) 1982. 'Die soziologische Begründung der Wissenschaft'. In *Der Streit um die Wissenssoziologie*, edited by Volker Meja and Nico Stehr, 1:192–210. suhrkamp taschenbuch wissenschaft 361. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.
- Durkheim, Émile. 1887. 'La philosophie dans les universités allemandes'. *Revue internationale de l'enseignement* 13: 313–38, 423–40.
- . 1888. 'Cours de science sociale. Leçon d'ouverture'. *Revue internationale de l'enseignement* 15: 23–48.
- . 1895. 'Lo stato attuale degli studi sociologici in Francia'. *La Riforma Sociale* 2 (3).

- . 1898. 'La prohibition de l'inceste et ses origines'. *L'Année sociologique* 1 (1896-1897): 1–70.
- . 1899. 'De la définition des phénomènes religieux'. *L'Année sociologique* 2 (1897-1898): 1–28.
- . 1900a. 'La sociologia ed il suo dominio scientifico'. *Rivista italiana di sociologia* 4: 127–48.
- . 1900b. 'La sociologie en France au XIXe siècle'. *Revue bleue*, May 19, 609–13, 647–52.
- . 1900c. 'Review of Baldwin Spencer and F.J. Gillen's Native Tribes of Central Australia (1899)'. *L'Année sociologique* 3 (1898-1899): 330–36.
- . 1901. 'De la méthode objective en sociologie'. *Revue de Synthèse historique* 2 (4): 3–17.
- . 1908. *Die Methode der Soziologie*. Autorisierte Übersetzung nach der vierten Auflage. Philosophisch-soziologische Bücherei, V. Leipzig: Verlag von Dr. Werner Klinkhardt.
- . 1909. 'Sociologie religieuse et théorie de la connaissance'. *Revue de métaphysique et de morale* 17 (6): 733–58.
- . 1910. 'Jérusalem (Wilhelm). - Soziologie des Erkennens. Die Zukunft, 1909, p. 236-246'. *L'Année sociologique* 11 (1906-1909): 42–45.
- . 1911. 'Préface'. In *Le système de Descartes*, by Octave Hamelin, edited by Léon Robin, V–XI. Bibliothèque de philosophie contemporaine. Paris: Alcan.
- . 1912. *Les formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse. Le système totémique en Australie*. Travaux de L'Année sociologique publiés sous la direction de M. E. Durkheim. Paris: Alcan.
- . 1913. 'Lévy-Bruhl, Les fonctions mentales dans les sociétés inférieures, 1910. Durkheim, Les formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse, 1912'. *L'Année sociologique* 12 (1909-1912): 33–37.
- . 1914. 'Le dualisme de la nature humaine et ses conditions sociales'. *Scientia* 15: 206–21.
- . 1915. 'La sociologie'. In *La science française*, vol. 1. Paris: Larousse.
- . (1913) 1955. *Pragmatisme et sociologie. Cours inédit prononcé à la Sorbonne en 1913-1914*. Edited by Armand Cuvillier. Paris: Vrin.
- . 1975a. 'Lettres à Xavier Léon'. In *Textes 2. Religion, morale, anomie*, edited by Victor Karady, 462–81. Le sens commun. Paris: Minuit.
- . 1975b. *Textes 1. Éléments d'une théorie sociale*. Edited by Victor Karady. Le sens commun. Paris: Minuit.
- . (1895) 1975. 'L'État actuel des études sociologiques en France'. In *Textes 1. Éléments d'une théorie sociale*, edited by Victor Karady, 73–108. Paris: Minuit.
- . (1897) 1975. '[L'empirisme rationaliste de Taine et les sciences morales] (1897)'. In *Textes 1. Éléments d'une théorie sociale*, by Émile Durkheim, edited by Victor Karady, 171–77. Le sens commun. Paris: Minuit.
- . (1900) 1975a. 'La sociologie et son domaine scientifique'. In *Textes 1. Éléments d'une théorie sociale*, by Émile Durkheim, edited by Victor Karady, 13–36. Le Sens commun. Paris: Minuit.
- . (1900) 1975b. '[Philosophie positive et sociologie] (1900)'. In *Textes 1. Éléments d'une théorie sociale*, edited by Victor Karady, 177–78. Le Sens commun. Paris: Minuit.
- . (1913) 1975. 'Le problème religieux et la dualité de la nature humaine'. In *Textes 2. Religion, morale, anomie*, edited by Victor Karady, 23–64. Paris: Minuit.
- . (1915) 1975. 'La sociologie'. In *Textes*, 1:109–18. Le Sens commun. Paris: Minuit.
- . 1998. *Lettres à Marcel Mauss*. Edited by Philippe Besnard and Marcel Fournier. Sociologies. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.

- . (1883–1884) 2002. *Cours de philosophie fait au Lycée de Sens en 1883-1884. Notes prises en 1883-84 par le philosophe français, André Lalande*. Edited by Robert Alun Jones. Chicoutimi, Québec: Les classiques de sciences sociales.
- . (1883–1884) 2004. *Durkheim's Philosophy Lectures. Notes from the Lycée de Sens Course, 1883-1884*. Edited by Neil Gross and Robert Alun Jones. Translated by Neil Gross. With André Lalande and Hans Joas. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- . (1894) 2007. *Les règles de la méthode sociologique*. 13th ed. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
- . (1898) 2010. 'Représentations individuelles et représentations collectives'. In *Sociologie et philosophie*, 4th ed., by Émile Durkheim, edited by Célestin Bouglé, with Bruno Karsenti, 1–48. Quadrige. 4th ed. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
- . (1906) 2010. 'Détermination du fait moral'. In *Sociologie et philosophie*, 4th ed., by Émile Durkheim, edited by Célestin Bouglé, with Bruno Karsenti, 49–116. Quadrige. 4th ed. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
- . (1912) 2013. *Les formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse. Le système totémique en Australie*. Quadrige. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
- . (1938) 2014. *L'évolution pédagogique en France*. Edited by Maurice Halbwachs. With François Dubet. Quadrige. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
- . (1915) 2015. *L'Allemagne au dessus de tout. Commentaire à vive voix*. Edited by Bruno Karsenti. Audiographie. Paris: Éditions de l'EHESS.
- . (1922) 2022. *Éducation et sociologie*. Edited by Nicolas Sembel. With Maurice Debesse and Paul Fauconnet. Quadrige. 11th ed. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
- . (1925) 2025. *L'éducation morale*. Edited by Nicolas Sembel. With Paul Fauconnet and Serge Paugam. Quadrige. 3rd ed. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
- Durkheim, Émile, and Paul Fauconnet. 1903. 'La sociologie et les sciences sociales'. *Revue philosophique de la France et de l'étranger* 55: 465–97.
- Durkheim, Émile, and Marcel Mauss. 1903. 'De quelques formes primitives de classification. Contribution à l'étude des représentations collectives'. *L'Année sociologique* 6 (1901-1902): 1–72.
- . (1903) 2017. *De quelques formes primitives de classification. Contribution à l'étude des représentations collectives*. Edited by Éric Brian, Jules Salomone, and Florence Weber. Quadrige. Série Mauss (ed. by Florence Weber) 2. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
- Dussort, H. 1963. *L'École de Marbourg*. Edited by Jules Vuillemin. With Pierre-Maxime Schuhl. Bibliothèque de philosophie contemporaine. Histoire de la philosophie et philosophie générale. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
- Duval, Julien. 2020. 'Anamnèse'. In *Dictionnaire international Bourdieu*, edited by Gisèle Sapiro, 29–30. Culture & société. Paris: CNRS Éditions.
- Duval, Julien, Johan Heilbron, and Pernelle Issenhuth, eds. 2022. *Pierre Bourdieu et l'art de l'invention scientifique. Enquêter au Centre de sociologie européenne (1959-1969)*. Bibliothèque des sciences sociales 10. Paris: Classiques Garnier.
- Duval, Julien, and Sophie Noël. 2022. 'Édition, éditeurs. Les stratégies de publication de Pierre Bourdieu et du CSE (1958-1975)'. In *Pierre Bourdieu et l'art de l'invention scientifique. Enquêter au Centre de sociologie européenne (1959-1969)*, edited by Julien Duval, Johan Heilbron, and Pernelle Issenhuth, 363–401. Bibliothèque des sciences sociales 10. Paris: Classiques Garnier.
- Eckermann, Johann Peter. (1836) 2011. *Gespräche mit Goethe in den letzten Jahren seines Lebens 1823-1832*. Edited by Christoph Michel. With Hans Grütters. Berlin: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag.
- Edgar, Scott. 2020. 'Völkerpsychologie and the Origins of Hermann Cohen's Antipsychologism'. *HOPOS: The Journal of the International Society for the History of Philosophy of Science* 10 (1): 254–73.

- Eisler, Robert. 1902. *Studien zur Werttheorie*. Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot.
- . 1925. *Orphisch-dionysische Mysteriengedanken in der christlichen Antike*. Edited by Fritz Saxl. Vorträge der Bibliothek Warburg, II. Vorträge 1922-1923. II. Teil. Leipzig/Berlin: Teubner.
- . 1929. *Iesous basileus ou basileusas. Die messianische Unabhängigkeitsbewegung vom Auftreten Johannes des Täufers bis zum Untergang Jakobs des Gerechten. Nach der neuerschlossenen Eroberung von Jerusalem des Flavius Josephus und den christlichen Quellen dargestellt*. 2 vols. Religionswissenschaftliche Bibliothek 9. Heidelberg: Carl Winter's Universitätsbuchhandlung.
- . 1951. *Man into Wolf. An Anthropological Interpretation of Sadism, Masochism, and Lycanthropy. A Lecture Delivered at a Meeting of the Royal Society of Medicine*. Edited by David K. Henderson. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Eisler, Rudolf. 1894. *Die Weiterbildung der Kant'schen Aprioritätslehre bis zur Gegenwart. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Erkenntnistheorie*. Leipzig: Verlag von Wilhelm Friedrich.
- . 1899a. 'A priori - a posteriori'. In *Wörterbuch der philosophischen Begriffe und Ausdrücke quellenmäßig bearbeitet*, 1st ed., 50–58. Berlin: Ernst Siegfried Mittler und Sohn.
- . 1899b. *Wörterbuch der philosophischen Begriffe und Ausdrücke quellenmäßig bearbeitet*. 1st ed. Berlin: Ernst Siegfried Mittler und Sohn.
- . 1903. *Soziologie. Die Lehre von der Entstehung und der Entwicklung der menschlichen Gesellschaft*. Leipzig: Verlagsbuchhandlung von J. J. Weber.
- . 1927a. 'A priori'. In *Wörterbuch der philosophischen Begriffe. 1. Band: A-K*, 4th ed., 1:85–96. Berlin: Ernst Siegfried Mittler und Sohn.
- . 1927b. *Wörterbuch der philosophischen Begriffe*. 4th ed. Edited by Karl Roretz. 3 vols. Berlin: Ernst Siegfried Mittler und Sohn.
- . (1916–1930) 2002. 'A priori'. In *Kant-Lexikon. Nachschlagewerk zu Kants sämtlichen Schriften, Briefen und handschriftlichem Nachlaß*, 5th ed., edited by Helmut Kuhn, 38–42. 5th ed. Hildesheim/Zürich/New York: Georg Olms Verlag.
- Elder-Vass, Dave. 2012. *The Reality of Social Construction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Elias, Norbert. 1984a. 'On the Sociogenesis of Sociology'. *Sociologisch Tijdschrift* 11 (1): 14–52.
- . 1984b. *Über die Zeit. Arbeiten zur Wissenssoziologie II*. Edited by Michael Schröter. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.
- . (1970) 1986. *Was ist Soziologie?* Edited by Wolfgang Lepenius. Grundfragen der Soziologie, ed. by D. Claessens 1. 10th ed. Weinheim/München: Juventa.
- . (1984) 1990. 'Notizen zum Lebenslauf'. In *Norbert Elias über sich selbst*, by Norbert Elias, with Arend-Jan Heerma van Voss and Abram van Stolk, 107–97. edition suhrkamp 1590. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.
- . 1992. *Studien über die Deutschen. Machtkämpfe und Habitusentwicklung im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*. Edited by Michael Schröter. suhrkamp taschenbuch wissenschaft 1008. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.
- . (1939) 1997a. *Über den Prozeß der Zivilisation. Soziogenetische und psychogenetische Untersuchungen*. 2 vols. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.
- . (1939) 1997b. *Über den Prozeß der Zivilisation. Soziogenetische und psychogenetische Untersuchungen. Band 1: Wandlungen des Verhaltens in den weltlichen Oberschichten des Abendlandes*. Gesammelte Schriften. Band 3.1. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.
- . (1990) 2001. *Symboltheorie*. Translated by Reiner Ansén. With Helmut Kuzmics. Gesammelte Schriften 13. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.

- . (1924) 2002. 'Idee und Individuum. Eine kritische Untersuchung zum Begriff der Geschichte'. In *Frühschriften*, edited by Reinhard Blomert, 29–72. Gesammelte Schriften 1. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.
- . (1970) 2006a. 'Soziologie - die Fragestellung Comtes'. In *Was ist Soziologie?*, edited by Annette Treibel, 40–61. Gesammelte Schriften 5. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.
- . (1970) 2006b. *Was ist Soziologie?* Edited by Annette Treibel. Gesammelte Schriften 5. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.
- . 2009. *Essays I. On the Sociology of Knowledge and the Sciences*. Edited by Richard Kilminster and Stephen Mennell. The Collected Works of Norbert Elias 14. Dublin: University College Dublin Press.
- . 2014. 'Lucien Lévy-Bruhl and "the Question of the Logical Unity of Humankind"'. In *Supplements and Index to the Collected Works*, by Norbert Elias, edited by Stephen Mennel, Marc Joly, and Katie Liston, 53–136. The Collected Works of Norbert Elias 18. Dublin: University College Dublin Press.
- Elias, Norbert, and Johan Heilbron. 2014. '« La sociologie... quand elle est bien faite ». Entretien, 1984-1985'. *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 205 (5): 4–19.
- Elkana, Yehuda. 1987. 'Alexandre Koyré: Between the History of Ideas and Sociology of Knowledge'. *History and Technology* 4 (1–4): 115–48.
- Engels, Friedrich. (1873–1883) 1962. 'Dialektik der Natur'. In *Werke. Band 20*, by Friedrich Engels and Karl Marx, edited by Institut für Marxismus-Leninismus beim ZK der SED, 305–570. Karl Marx-Friedrich Engels Werke 20. Berlin: Dietz Verlag.
- . (1878) 1962a. 'Alte Vorrede zum "[Anti-]Dühring"'. Über die Dialektik'. In *Werke. Band 20*, by Friedrich Engels and Karl Marx, edited by Institut für Marxismus-Leninismus beim ZK der SED, 328–36. Karl Marx-Friedrich Engels Werke 20. Berlin: Dietz Verlag.
- . (1878) 1962b. 'Herrn Eugen Dührings Umwälzung der Wissenschaft ("Anti-Dühring")'. In *Werke. Band 20*, by Friedrich Engels and Karl Marx, edited by Institut für Marxismus-Leninismus beim ZK der SED, 1–303. Karl Marx-Friedrich Engels Werke 20. Berlin: Dietz Verlag.
- . (1888) 1962. 'Ludwig Feuerbach und der Ausgang der klassischen deutschen Philosophie'. In *Friedrich Engels. Mai 1883-Dezember 1889*, edited by Institut für Marxismus-Leninismus beim ZK der SED, 273–307. Karl Marx-Friedrich Engels Werke (MEW) 21. Berlin: Dietz.
- . (1892) 1963. 'Einleitung [zur englischen Ausgabe (1892) der "Entwicklung des Sozialismus von der Utopie zur Wissenschaft"]'. In *Werke. Band 22*, edited by Institut für Marxismus-Leninismus beim ZK der SED, 287–311. Karl Marx-Friedrich Engels Werke 22. Berlin: Dietz Verlag.
- . (1890–1920) 1967. '236. Engels an Conrad Schmidt in Berlin'. In *Briefe von Friedrich Engels. Januar 1888-Dezember 1890*, edited by Institut für Marxismus-Leninismus beim ZK der SED, 488–95. Karl Marx-Friedrich Engels Werke 37. Berlin: Dietz Verlag.
- . (1878) 1988. *Herrn Eugen Dührings Umwälzung der Wissenschaft (Anti-Dühring)*. Edited by Institut für Marxismus-Leninismus beim Zentralkomitee der Kommunistischen Partei der Sowjetunion and Institut für Marxismus-Leninismus beim Zentralkomitee der Sozialistischen Einheitspartei Deutschlands. I/27. Karl Marx-Friedrich Engels-Gesamtausgabe (MEGA). Berlin: Dietz Verlag.
- Erdmann, Johann Eduard. (1896) 1964. *Die deutsche Philosophie seit Hegels Tode*. Edited by Hermann Lübbe. Stuttgart: Frommann.
- Espagne, Michel. 1994. 'Sur les limites du comparatisme en histoire culturelle'. *Genèses* 17 (1): 112–21.
- . 2013. 'La notion de transfert culturel'. *Revue Sciences/Lettres*, no. 1: 1–9.

- Espagne, Michel, and Michael Werner. 1985. 'Deutsch-französischer Kulturtransfer im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert. Zu einem neuen interdisziplinären Forschungsprogramm des C.N.R.S.' *Francia* 13: 502–10.
- Espagne, Michel, and Michaël Werner. 1987. 'La construction d'une référence culturelle allemande en France : genèse et histoire (1750-1914)'. *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 42 (4): 969–92.
- Espagne, Michel, and Michael Werner, eds. 1988a. 'Transferts culturels franco-allemands'. *Revue de Synthèse* 109 (2).
- , eds. 1988b. *Transferts. Les relations interculturelles dans l'espace franco-allemand (XVIIIe-XIXe siècles)*. Paris: Éditions Recherche sur les Civilisations.
- Etzrodt, Christian. 2013. 'The Methodological Implications of the Schutz-Parsons Debate'. *Open Journal of Philosophy* 3 (1): 29–38.
- Eucken, Rudolf. 1878a. 'A priori - angeboren'. In *Geschichte und Kritik der Grundbegriffe der Gegenwart*, 69–78. Leipzig: Veit & Comp.
- . 1878b. *Geschichte und Kritik der Grundbegriffe der Gegenwart*. Leipzig: Veit & Comp.
- . 1879. *Geschichte der philosophischen Terminologie. Im Umriss dargestellt*. Leipzig: Veit & Comp.
- Euclides. 1883. *Elementa*. Edited by Johann Ludvig Heiberg. Vol. 1. *Euclidis Opera Omnia* 1. Leipzig: Teubner.
- Evans-Pritchard, Edward Evan. (1934) 1970. 'Levy-Bruhl's Theory of Primitive Mentality'. *Journal of the Anthropological Society of Oxford* 2 (1): 39–60.
- . (1937) 1976. *Witchcraft, Oracles, and Magic among the Azande*. Edited by Eva Gillies. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Exner, Gudrun. 2013. *Die 'Soziologische Gesellschaft in Wien' (1907-1934) und die Bedeutung Rudolf Goldscheids für ihre Vereinstätigkeit*. *Austriaca*. Schriftenreihe des Instituts für Österreichkunde. Wien: New academic press.
- Fabiani, Jean-Louis. 1985. 'Enjeux et usages de la « crise » dans la philosophie universitaire en France au tournant du siècle'. *Annales. Economies, sociétés, civilisations* 40 (2): 377–409.
- . 1988. *Les philosophes de la République*. Le sens commun. Paris: Minuit.
- . 2006. 'A quoi sert la notion de discipline'. In *Qu'est-ce qu'une discipline?*, edited by Jean Boutier, Jean-Claude Passeron, and Jacques Revel, 11–34. Enquête 5. Paris: Éditions de l'EHESS.
- . 2010. *Qu'est-ce qu'un philosophe français? La vie sociale des concepts (1880-1980)*. Paris: Éditions de l'École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales.
- Fabry, Lucie, and Sophie Roux. 2025. *Bachelardismes et anti-bachelardismes. Controverses épistémologiques des années 1960*. *Histoire et philosophie des sciences* 32. Paris: Classiques Garnier.
- Fauconnet, Paul, and Marcel Mauss. 1901. 'Sociologie'. In *La Grande Encyclopédie. Inventaire raisonné des sciences, des lettres et des arts*, 30:165–75. Paris: Société anonyme de la Grande Encyclopédie.
- Fauque, Danielle. 2022. 'Les origines de la *Revue d'histoire des sciences* dans leur contexte national et international.' *Revue d'histoire des sciences* 75 (2): 293–326.
- Faye, Emmanuel, Jean Lassègue, François Rastier, and Muriel Van Vliet, eds. 2021. *Cassirer et Heidegger. Un siècle après Davos. Avec un inédit de Cassirer*. Philosophie critique. Paris: Éditions Kimé.
- Febvre, Lucien. 1922. *La terre et l'évolution humaine. Introduction géographique à l'histoire*. With Lionel Bataillon. L'Évolution de l'humanité. Synthèse collective. Préhistoire, protohistoire 4. Paris: La Renaissance du livre.
- . 1929. 'Génération'. *Bulletin du Centre international de synthèse. Section de synthèse historique* 7 (June): 36–43.

- . 1930. 'Civilisation. Évolution d'un mot et d'un groupe d'idées'. In *Civilisation. Le mot et l'idée*, edited by Henri Berr and Centre international de Synthèse, with Lucien Febvre, Émile Tonnelat, Marcel Mauss, Alfredo Niceforo, and Louis Weber, 1–55. Première Semaine internationale de Synthèse (20-25 mai 1929). Deuxième Fascicule. Paris: La Renaissance du livre.
- . 1939. 'Sur l'invention du feu: une méthode'. *Annales d'histoire sociale* 1 (2): 178–79.
- . 1940. 'La société féodale'. *Annales d'histoire sociale* 2 (1): 39–43.
- . 1948. 'Sur une forme d'histoire qui n'est pas la nôtre'. *Annales. Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations* 3 (1): 21–24.
- . 1952. 'De la Revue de synthèse aux Annales. Henri Berr ou un demi-siècle de travail au service de l'Histoire'. *Annales. Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations* 7 (3): 289–92.
- . 1955a. 'Henri Berr - un deuil des "Annales"'. *Annales. Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations* 10 (1): 1–2.
- . 1955b. 'Sur Einstein et sur l'histoire'. *Annales. Economies, sociétés, civilisations* 10 (3): 305–12.
- . 1964. 'Hommage à Henri Berr pour ses quatre-vingts ans'. *Revue de synthèse* 85: 8–12.
- . 1997. *De la Revue de synthèse aux Annales. Lettres à Henri Berr, 1911-1954*. Edited by Jacqueline Pluet-Despatin and Gilles Candar. Paris: Fayard.
- . (1935) 1997. *Le Rhin. Histoire, mythes et réalités*. Edited by Peter Schöttler. Paris: Perrin.
- . (1942) 2003. *Le problème de l'incroyance au XVIe siècle. La religion de Rabelais*. With Henri Berr and Denis Crouzet. Bibliothèque de l'Évolution de l'Humanité. Paris: Albin Michel.
- . (1928) 2008. *Martin Luther, un destin*. With Robert Mandrou. Quadrige. Grands textes. 4th ed. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
- . (1927) 2021. 'Contre le vain tournoi des idées. Une étude sur l'esprit politique de la réforme'. In *Combats pour l'histoire*, 122–29. EKHO. Paris: Dunod.
- . (1933) 2021. 'De 1892 à 1933. Examen de conscience d'une histoire et d'un historien'. In *Combats pour l'histoire*, 17–38. EKHO. Paris: Dunod.
- . (1936) 2021. 'Pour une histoire dirigée. Les recherches collectives et l'avenir de l'histoire'. In *Combats pour l'histoire*, 93–101. EKHO. Paris: Dunod.
- . (1938) 2021a. 'Leur histoire et la nôtre'. In *Combats pour l'histoire*, 402–12. EKHO. Paris: Dunod.
- . (1938) 2021b. 'Une vue d'ensemble. Histoire et psychologie'. In *Combats pour l'histoire*, 306–25. EKHO. Paris: Dunod.
- . (1941) 2021a. 'Comment reconstituer la vie affective d'autrefois? La sensibilité et l'histoire'. In *Combats pour l'histoire*, 326–52. EKHO. Paris: Dunod.
- . (1941) 2021b. 'Vivre l'histoire. Propos d'initiation. Conférence aux élèves de l'École Normale Supérieure, 1941'. In *Combats pour l'histoire*, 39–62. EKHO. Paris: Dunod.
- . (1948) 2021. 'Sur une forme d'histoire qui n'est pas la nôtre. L'histoire historisante'. In *Combats pour l'histoire*, 178–84. EKHO. Paris: Dunod.
- . (1949) 2021. 'Vers une autre histoire'. In *Combats pour l'histoire*, 605–33. EKHO. Paris: Dunod.
- . (1952) 2021. *Combats pour l'histoire*. EKHO. Paris: Dunod.
- . 2023. 'Méditation sur Einstein et sur l'histoire'. In *Histoire et sciences*, edited by Éric Brian, 151–64. EHESS Poche. Paris: Éditions de l'EHESS.
- Febvre, Lucien, and Albert Demangeon. 1935. *Le Rhin. Problèmes d'histoire et d'économie*. Paris: Arman Colin.
- Fedi, Laurent. 2014a. 'Avant-propos. De Paris à Vienne. Quelques jalons'. *Les Cahiers philosophiques de Strasbourg* 35: 9–36.

- , ed. 2014b. ‘La réception germanique d’Auguste Comte’. *Les Cahiers philosophiques de Strasbourg* 35.
- . 2014c. ‘Le représentation de l’élément germanique dans la philosophie d’Auguste Comte’. *Les Cahiers philosophiques de Strasbourg* 35: 37–84.
- . 2018. *Kant, une passion française 1795-1940*. Europaea memoria. Reihe I: Studien 125. Hildesheim/Zürich/New York: Georg Olms Verlag.
- Fedi, Laurent, and Jean-Michel Salanskis, eds. 2001. *Les Philosophies françaises et la science. Dialogue avec Kant*. Lyon: ENS Éditions.
- Feest, Uljana, ed. 2010. *Historical Perspectives on Erklären and Verstehen*. Dordrecht: Springer.
- Feichtinger, Johannes. 2010. *Wissenschaft als reflexives Projekt. Von Bolzano über Freud zu Kelsen: österreichische Wissenschaftsgeschichte 1848-1938*. Science studies. Bielefeld: Transcript.
- Feichtinger, Johannes, Franz L. Fillafer, and Jan Surman, eds. 2018. *The Worlds of Positivism. A Global Intellectual History, 1770–1930*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Feldman, Valentin. 1936. *L’Esthétique française contemporaine*. Nouvelle encyclopédie philosophique, edited by Henri Delacroix, vol. 9. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
- . 1938. ‘La science esthétique comme voie d’accès à la sociologie’. In *Les convergences des sciences sociales et l’esprit international. Travaux de la Conférence internationale des sciences sociales*, edited by Célestin Bouglé, 125–29. Travaux des groupes d’études. Centre d’études de politique étrangère 9. Paris: Paul Hartmann.
- . 2006. *Journal de guerre. 1940-1941*. Edited by Léone Teyssandier-Feldman and Pierre-Frédéric Charpentier. Tours: Farrago.
- Felt, Ulrike, Rayvon Fouché, Clark A. Miller, and Laurel Smith-Doerr, eds. 2017. *The Handbook of Science and Technology Studies*. 4th ed. Cambridge, Massachusetts/London: The MIT Press.
- Ferrari, Jean, Margit Ruffing, Robert Theis, and Matthias Vollet, eds. 2005. *Kant et la France - Kant und Frankreich*. Europaea memoria. Hildesheim/Zürich/New York: Georg Olms Verlag.
- Ferrari, Massimo. (1997) 2001. *Retours à Kant. Introduction au néokantisme*. Translated by Thierry Loisel. Passages. Paris: Cerf.
- . 2003. *Categorie e a priori*. La filosofia contemporanea. Saggi 584. Bologna: Il Mulino.
- . (1996) 2003. *Ernst Cassirer. Stationen einer philosophischen Biographie. Von der Marburger Schule zur Kulturphilosophie*. Cassirer-Forschungen 11. Hamburg: Meiner.
- . 2012. ‘Between Cassirer and Kuhn. Some Remarks on Friedman’s Relativized a Priori’. *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science Part A* 43 (1): 18–26.
- . 2021. ‘Ernst Cassirer’s Legacy: History of Philosophy and History of Science’. *Journal of Transcendental Philosophy* 2 (1): 85–109.
- Ferry, Luc, and Alain Renaut. (1985) 1988. *La pensée 68. Essai sur l’anti-humanisme contemporain*. Folio Essais. Paris: Gallimard.
- Feuerhahn, Wolf. 2005. ‘Max Weber et l’explication compréhensive’. *Philosophie* 85 (1): 19–41.
- . 2010. ‘Les sciences morales - des sciences historiques?’ *Écrire l’histoire* 5: 41–48.
- . 2014. ‘La sociologie avec ou sans guillemets. L’ombre portée de Comte sur les sciences sociales germanophones (1875-1908)’. *Les Cahiers philosophiques de Strasbourg* 35: 157–96.
- . 2015. ‘Partages politiques des savoirs. Lettres versus sciences, Geisteswissenschaften versus Naturwissenschaften’. In *Histoire des sciences et des savoirs. 2. Modernité et globalisation*, edited by Kapil Raj and H. Otto Sibum, 92–113. Paris: Éditions du Seuil.
- . 2016. ‘Pour l’historicisme. Avec et à partir de Christian Topalov’. *Revue d’histoire des sciences humaines*, no. 29 (October): 29.

- . 2017. 'Sciences de la nature versus sciences de l'esprit. Un conflit allemand des facultés'. In *La nature du socialisme. Pensée sociale et conceptions de la nature au XIXe siècle*, edited by Vincent Bourdeau and Arnaud Macé, 291–305. Annales littéraires 975. Besançon: Presses universitaires de Franche-Comté.
- . 2020a. 'Le chercheur et le discours de ses objets'. *Questions de communication* 37 (1): 217–34.
- . 2020b. 'Moral sciences, Geisteswissenschaften (1795-1900). Parcours transnationaux d'étiquetages savants'. *Revue d'histoire des sciences humaines*, no. 37 (December): 37.
- . 2020c. 'Prendre les noms des savoirs au sérieux'. *Revue d'histoire des sciences humaines* 37 (December): 37.
- . 2021a. 'Le chercheur et le discours de ses objets : bonds et rebonds'. *Histoire. Questions de communication* 39 (1): 239–58.
- . 2021b. 'On the Battlefield of "Theorie": Koselleck Reads L. von Stein with Carl Schmitt's Eyes'. *History of European Ideas*, June 15, 1–17.
- . 2023a. 'Avant « l'environnement ». Catégories et controverses'. *Mil neuf cent. Revue d'histoire intellectuelle* 41 (1): 31–50.
- . 2023b. 'Introduction. L'émergence polémique des réflexions wébériennes sur les sciences'. In *Qu'est-ce que les sciences de la culture?*, by Max Weber, edited and translated by Wolf Feuerhahn, 27–228. Biblis 266. Paris: CNRS éditions.
- Feuerhahn, Wolf, and Rafael Mandressi, eds. 2025. *Histoire de l'interdisciplinarité. Un mot, des pratiques*. Homme et société. Paris: Éditions de la Sorbonne.
- Feuerhahn, Wolf, Rafael Mandressi, and Antonella Romano, eds. 2017. 'Contextualiser: une pratique transdisciplinaire?' *Revue d'Histoire des Sciences Humaines* 30.
- Fichte, Johann Gottlieb. (1804–1805) 1846. 'Die Grundzüge des gegenwärtigen Zeitalters'. In *Populärphilosophische Schriften. Zweiter Band: Zur Politik, Moral und Philosophie der Geschichte*, by Johann Gottlieb Fichte, edited by Immanuel Hermann Fichte. Sämtliche Werke 7. Berlin: Veit & Comp.
- Fillafer, Franz L., and Johannes Feichtinger. 2018. 'Habsburg Positivism: The Politics of Positive Knowledge in Imperial and Post-Imperial Austria, 1804-1938'. In *The Worlds of Positivism. A Global Intellectual History, 1770–1930*, edited by Johannes Feichtinger, Franz L. Fillafer, and Jan Surman, 191–238. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Fischer, Kuno. (1860) 1899. *Immanuel Kant und seine Lehre. Zweiter Theil. Das Vernunftsystem auf der Grundlage der Vernunftkritik*. Geschichte der neuern Philosophie, 4.2. 4th ed. Heidelberg: Carl Winter's Universitätsbuchhandlung.
- . (1860) 1906. *Kant's Leben und die Grundlagen seiner Lehre. Drei Vorträge*. 2nd ed. Heidelberg: Carl Winter's Universitätsbuchhandlung.
- . (1860) 1909. *Immanuel Kant und seine Lehre. Erster Teil. Entstehung und Grundlegung der kritischen Philosophie*. Geschichte der neuern Philosophie, 4.1. Heidelberg: Carl Winter's Universitätsbuchhandlung.
- Fitzi, Gregor. 2017. 'Dialogue. Divergence. Veiled Reception. Criticism: Georg Simmel's Relationship with Émile Durkheim'. *Journal of Classical Sociology* 17 (4): 293–308.
- Flasch, Kurt. 2000. *Die geistige Mobilmachung. Die deutschen Intellektuellen und der Erste Weltkrieg*. Berlin: Alexander Fest Verlag.
- Fleck, Christian. 1993. 'Marxistische Kausalanalyse und funktionale Wissenschaftssoziologie. Ein Fall unterbliebenen Wissenstransfers'. In *Wien-Berlin-Prag. Der Aufstieg der wissenschaftlichen Philosophie. Zentenarien Rudolf Carnap - Hans Reichenbach - Edgar Zilsel*, edited by Rudolf Haller and Friedrich Stadler, 501–24. Veröffentlichungen des Instituts Wiener Kreis 2. Wien: Hölder-Pichler-Tempsky.
- . 2007. *Transatlantische Bereicherungen. Zur Erfindung der empirischen Sozialforschung*. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.

- . 2015a. ‘Edgar Zilsel: Exzellente Qualifikationen eines ungeschickten Mannes’. In *Etablierung in der Fremde. Vertriebene Wissenschaftler in den USA nach 1933*, 251–94. Frankfurt/Main: Campus.
- . 2015b. *Etablierung in der Fremde. Vertriebene Wissenschaftler in den USA nach 1933*. Frankfurt/Main: Campus.
- . 2016. *Sociology in Austria since 1945*. Sociology Transformed. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- . 2022a. ‘Edgar Zilsel: The Excellent Qualifications of an Awkward Man’. In *Edgar Zilsel: Philosopher, Historian, Sociologist*, edited by Donata Romizi, Monika Wulz, and Elisabeth Nemeth, 91–119. Vienna Circle Institute Yearbook 27. Cham: Springer.
- . 2022b. ‘Helping Hands’. *Serendipities. Journal for the Sociology and History of the Social Sciences* 7 (1–2): 168–71.
- Fleck, Christian, Matthias Duller, and Victor Karády, eds. 2019. *Shaping Human Science Disciplines. Institutional Developments in Europe and Beyond*. Socio-Historical Studies of the Social and Human Sciences. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Fleck, Ludwik. (1935) 1979. *Genesis and Development of a Scientific Fact*. Edited by Thaddeus J. Trenn and Robert K. Merton. Translated by Fred Bradley and Thaddeus J. Trenn. With Thomas S. Kuhn. Chicago/London: The University of Chicago Press.
- . (1935) 1980. *Entstehung und Entwicklung einer wissenschaftlichen Tatsache. Einführung in die Lehre vom Denkstil und Denkkollektiv*. Edited by Lothar Schäfer and Thomas Schnelle. suhrkamp taschenbuch wissenschaft 312. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.
- . (1927) 1983. ‘Über einige besondere Merkmale des ärztlichen Denkens’. In *Erfahrung und Tatsache. Gesammelte Aufsätze*, by Ludwik Fleck, edited by Lothar Schäfer and Thomas Schnelle, 37–45. suhrkamp taschenbuch wissenschaft 404. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.
- Fleury, Béatrice, and Jacques Walter. 2020. ‘Savoirs et objets : découper, nommer, historiciser’. *Histoire. Questions de communication* 38 (2): 239–56.
- Flournoy, Théodore. 1911. *La philosophie de William James*. Saint-Blaise: Foyer solidariste/Association chrétienne d’Etudiants.
- Forrester, John. 1996. ‘If *p*, Then What? Thinking in Cases’. *History of the Human Sciences* 9 (3): 1–25.
- Foucault, Michel. 1969. *L’archéologie du savoir*. Tel. Paris: Gallimard.
- . 1971. *L’ordre du discours. Leçon inaugurale au Collège de France prononcée le 2 décembre 1970*. nrf. Paris: Gallimard.
- . 1975. *Surveiller et punir. Naissance de la prison*. Tel. Paris: Gallimard.
- . (1966) 1990. *Les mots et les choses. Une archéologie des sciences humaines*. Tel. Paris: Gallimard.
- . (1966) 2001. ‘Une histoire restée muette’. In *Dits et écrits, I. 1954-1975*, edited by Daniel Defert, François Ewald, and Jacques Lagrange, 573–77. Quarto Gallimard. Paris: Gallimard.
- . (1971) 2001. ‘Nietzsche, la généalogie, l’histoire’. In *Dits et écrits, I. 1954-1975*, edited by Daniel Defert, François Ewald, and Jacques Lagrange, 1004–24. Quarto Gallimard. Paris: Gallimard.
- . (1981–1982) 2001. *L’herméneutique du sujet. Cours au Collège de France (1981-1982)*. Edited by François Ewald, Alessandro Fontana, and Frédéric Gros. Hautes études. Paris: Éditions de l’École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales/Gallimard/Seuil.
- . (1984) 2001. ‘Qu’est-ce que les Lumières?’ In *Dits et écrits, II. 1976-1988*, edited by Daniel Defert, François Ewald, and Jacques Lagrange, 1498–507. Quarto Gallimard. Paris: Gallimard.
- . (1961) 2008. ‘Introduction à l’Anthropologie de Kant’. In *Anthropologie d’un point de vue pragmatique. Introduction à l’Anthropologie*, by Immanuel Kant and Michel

- Foucault, edited by Daniel Defert, François Ewald, and Frédéric Gros, 11–79. Bibliothèque des textes philosophiques. Paris: Vrin.
- . (1954–1955) 2022. *La question anthropologique. Cours, 1954-1955*. Edited by François Ewald and Arianna Sforzini. Hautes études. Paris: Éditions de l'École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales/Gallimard/Seuil.
- . (1949) 2024. *La constitution d'un transcendantal historique dans La Phénoménologie de l'esprit de Hegel. Mémoire du diplôme d'études supérieures de philosophie 1949*. Edited by Christophe Bouton. Histoire de la philosophie. Paris: Vrin.
- Fouillée, Alfred. 1881. 'Le néo-Kantisme en France: I. - La morale criticiste'. *Revue philosophique de la France et de l'étranger* 6: 1–41.
- Fourcade, Marion. 2009. *Economists and Societies. Discipline and Profession in the United States, Britain, and France, 1890s to 1990s*. Princeton Studies in Cultural Sociology. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Fournier, Jean-Baptiste, and Laura Tavernier, eds. 2023. *Les limites du transcendantal*. Philosophies. Paris: Sorbonne Université Presses.
- Fournier, Marcel. 1982. 'Durkheim et la sociologie de la connaissance scientifique'. *Sociologie et sociétés* 14 (2): 55–66.
- . 2007. *Émile Durkheim (1858-1917)*. Histoire de la pensée. Paris: Fayard.
- Fowler, Bridget. 2020. 'Pierre Bourdieu on Social Transformation, with Particular Reference to Political and Symbolic Revolutions'. *Theory and Society* 49 (3): 439–63.
- Fradin, Bernard, Jean Widmer, and Louis Quéré, eds. 1994. *L'enquête sur les catégories. De Durkheim à Sacks*. Raisons pratiques. Paris: Éditions de l'École des hautes études en sciences sociales.
- Franck, Adolphe. 1844. 'A posteriori, a priori'. In *Dictionnaire des sciences philosophiques. Par une société de professeurs de philosophie*, edited by Adolphe Franck, 1:165–66. Paris: Hachette.
- . (1844) 1875. 'A posteriori, a priori'. In *Dictionnaire des sciences philosophiques*, 2nd ed., edited by Adolphe Franck, 81. 2nd ed. Paris: Hachette.
- Frängsmyr, Tore, ed. 2001. *The Structure of Knowledge. Classifications of Science and Learning Since the Renaissance. Five Lectures Delivered at the International Summer School in History of Science, Uppsala, 1998*. Office for History of Science and Technology. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Frazer, James George. (1890) 1906. *The Golden Bough. A Study in Magic and Religion*. 13 vols. 3rd ed. New York: Macmillan.
- Frege, Gottlob. (1892) 1962. 'Über Sinn und Bedeutung'. In *Funktion, Begriff, Bedeutung. Fünf logische Studien*, edited by Günther Patzig, 38–62. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
- Freud, Sigmund. (1937) 1982. 'Die endliche und die unendliche Analyse'. In *Schriften zur Behandlungstechnik*, 3rd ed., edited by Alexander Mitscherlich, Angela Richards, James Strachey, and Ilse Grubrich-Simitis. Sigmund Freud Studienausgabe, Ergänzungsband. 3rd ed. Frankfurt/Main: S. Fischer.
- Freudenthal, Gad, ed. 1990. *Études sur/Studies on Hélène Metzger*. Collection de travaux de l'Académie internationale d'histoire des sciences 32. Leiden/New York/København/Köln: Brill.
- . 1991. 'Preface'. In *Scientific Growth. Essays on the Social Organization and Ethos of Science*, by Joseph Ben-David, edited by Gad Freudenthal, ix–xi. California Studies in the History of Science. Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press.
- . (2006) 2015. 'Hélène Metzger (1888-1944)'. In *L'épistémologie française, 1830-1970*, 2nd ed., by Michel Bitbol and Jean Gayon, 107–48. Sciences & philosophie. 2nd ed. Paris: Editions Matériologiques.
- Frickel, Scott, and Neil Gross. 2005. 'A General Theory of Scientific/Intellectual Movements'. *American Sociological Review* 70 (2): 204–32.

- Friedell, Egon. (1927–1931) 2007. *Kulturgeschichte der Neuzeit. Von der Krisis der Europäischen Seele von der Schwarzen Pest bis zum Ersten Weltkrieg*. With Ulrich Weinzierl. München: C. H. Beck.
- Friedman, Michael. 1992. *Kant and the Exact Sciences*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- . 1996. ‘Overcoming Metaphysics: Carnap and Heidegger’. In *Origins of Logical Empiricism*, edited by Ronald N. Giere and Alan W. Richardson, 45–79. Minnesota Studies in the Philosophy of Science, XVI. Minneapolis/London: University of Minnesota Press.
- . 1997. ‘Philosophical Naturalism’. *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association* 71: 7–21.
- . 1998. ‘On the Sociology of Scientific Knowledge and Its Philosophical Agenda’. *Studies in the History and Philosophy of Science* 29 (2): 239–71.
- . 1999. *Reconsidering Logical Positivism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- . (1994) 1999. ‘Geometry, Convention, and the Relativized A Priori: Reichenbach, Schlick, and Carnap’. In *Reconsidering Logical Positivism*, 59–70. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- . 2000. *A Parting of the Ways: Carnap, Cassirer, and Heidegger*. Chicago: Open Court.
- . 2001. *Dynamics of Reason. The 1999 Kant Lectures at Stanford University*. Stanford: CSLI Publications.
- . 2008. ‘Ernst Cassirer and Thomas Kuhn: The Neo-Kantian Tradition in the History and Philosophy of Science’. *Philosophical Forum* 39 (2): 239–52.
- Fringant, Matthias. 2023. *Les usages sociaux de la réflexivité. Contribution à une sociologie historique du mot et de l'idée*. Thèse de doctorat à l'École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales. Paris: École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales.
- . 2024. ‘Les usages contemporains de la réflexivité. Une lente construction (1918-1968)’. *Revue européenne des sciences sociales. European Journal of Social Sciences* 62 (1): 62–1.
- . 2025. ‘Entre Chicago et Paris. Les usages de la « réflexivité » par Pierre Bourdieu’. *Sociologie* 16 (1): 59–72.
- Frisby, David. (1983) 1992. *The Alienated Mind. The Sociology of Knowledge in Germany. 1918-1933*. London: Routledge.
- Fuchs, Eckhardt. 1999. ‘Positivism and History in the XIXth Century’. In *Positivismes. Philosophie, Sociologie, Histoire, Sciences. Actes du colloque international 10-12 décembre 1997 Université Libre de Bruxelles*, edited by Andrée Despy-Meyer and Didier Devriese, 147–62. De diversis artibus. Collection de travaux de l'Académie internationale d'histoire des sciences 39. Turnhout: Brepols.
- Fugler, Martin. 1996. ‘Fondateurs et collaborateurs. Les débuts de La Revue de synthèse historique (1900-1910)’. *Revue de synthèse* 117 (1–2): 173–88.
- Furet, François. 1975. ‘De l'histoire-récit à l'histoire-problème’. *Diogène* (Paris, France) 89: 116–34.
- Fustel de Coulanges, Numa Denis. 1875. *Histoire des institutions politiques de l'ancienne France. Première partie. L'empire romain. Les germains. La royauté mérovingienne*. Paris: Hachette.
- Gadamer, Hans-Georg. 1924. ‘Zur Systemidee in der Philosophie’. In *Festschrift für Paul Natorp zum siebzigsten Geburtstage von Schülern und Freunden gewidmet*, edited by Ernst Cassirer and Albert Görland, 55–75. Berlin/Leipzig: Walter de Gruyter & Co.
- . (1960) 1986. *Wahrheit und Methode. Grundzüge einer philosophischen Hermeneutik*. Gesammelte Werke 1. Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck).
- Gantet, Claire, and Markus Meumann. 2019. ‘Introduction’. In *Les échanges savants franco-allemands au xviii^e siècle : Transferts, circulations et réseaux*, 7–18. Histoire. Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes.

- Garfield, Eugene. 1975. 'The "Obliteration Phenomenon" in Science - and the Advantage of Being Obliterated!' *Current Contents* 51/52 (December): 5–7.
- Garfinkel, Harold. (1967) 1984a. *Studies in Ethnomethodology*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- . (1967) 1984b. *Studies in Ethnomethodology*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Garfinkel, Harold, and Harvey Sacks. (1970) 1986. 'On Formal Structures of Practical Action'. In *Ethnomethodological Studies of Work*, edited by Harold Garfinkel, 160–93. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Garlitz, Dustin. 2020. 'Durkheim's French Neo-Kantian Social Thought: Epistemology, Sociology of Knowledge, and Morality in *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*'. *Kant Yearbook* 12 (1): 33–56.
- . 2021. 'Neo-Kantianism as Philosophy of Culture: Cassirer, Simmel, and the *Bildung* Tradition in Contemporary German Intellectual Thought'. *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 55 (3): 269–71.
- Gautier, Claude, and Emmanuel Renault. 2021. 'Pragmatism and Sociology. The French Debate'. In *Pragmatism and Social Philosophy. Exploring a Stream of Ideas from America to Europe*, edited by Michael G. Festl, 71–85. Routledge Studies in American Philosophy. New York/London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Gawronsky, Dimitry. 1949. 'Ernst Cassirer: His Life and His Work'. In *The Philosophy of Ernst Cassirer*, edited by Paul Arthur Schilpp, 1–37. The Library of Living Philosophers 6. Evanston, Illinois: The Library of Living Philosophers.
- Gayon, Jean. 1999. 'On the Uses of the Category of Style in the History of Science'. *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 32 (3): 233–46.
- Geier, Manfred. 2022. *Philosophie der Rassen. Der Fall Immanuel Kant*. Berlin: Matthes & Seitz.
- Geldsetzer, Lutz, Wolfgang Hübener, and Simone Haubold. (1989) 2017. 'Problemgeschichte'. In *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie online*, edited by Joachim Ritter and Karlfried Gründer, 7:1410–18. Basel: Schwabe.
- Gélis, Jacques. 1984. *L'arbre et le fruit. La naissance dans l'Occident moderne (XVIe-XIXe siècle)*. Paris: Fayard.
- Gemelli, Giuliana. 1987. 'Communauté intellectuelle et stratégies institutionnelles. Henri Berr et la fondation du Centre International de synthèse'. *Revue de synthèse* 108 (2): 225–59.
- . 1997. 'L'encyclopédisme au XXe siècle: Henri Berr et la conjoncture des années vingt'. In *Henri Berr et la culture du XXe siècle*, edited by Agnès Biard, Dominique Bourel, and Éric Brian, 269–92. Paris: Albin Michel.
- Genova, Judith. 1993. 'Wittgenstein: A Way of Seeing'. *Metaphilosophy* 24 (4): 326–43.
- George, Rolf. 1987. 'The Lives of Kant'. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 47 (3): 485–500.
- Gerhardt, Uta. 2001. *Idealtypus. Zur methodologischen Begründung der modernen Soziologie*. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.
- Gerhardt, Volker. 1979. 'Transzendente Theorie der Gesellschaft: Philosophische Anmerkung zu einem soziologischen Programm'. *Zeitschrift für Soziologie* 8 (2): 129–44.
- . 1985. '[Review of] Hartmut Böhme / Gernot Böhme: Das Andere der Vernunft. Zur Entwicklung von Rationalitätsstrukturen am Beispiel Kants, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt a.M. 1983, 516 Seiten.' *Kant-Studien* 76 (1–4): 471–78.
- Gerlach, Otto. 1899. 'Kant's Einfluss auf die Sozialwissenschaften in ihrer neuesten Entwicklung. Gedächtnisrede, gehalten in der Kantgesellschaft zu Königsberg am 22. April 1899'. *Zeitschrift für die gesamte Staatswissenschaft* 55 (4): 644–63.
- Gernet, Louis. 1968. *Anthropologie de la Grèce antique*. Edited by Jean-Pierre Vernant. Textes à l'appui. Paris: Maspero.

- Gernet, Louis, and André Boulanger. 1932. *Le génie grec dans la religion*. With Henri Berr. L'Évolution de l'humanité. Bibliothèque de synthèse historique. Première section. Antiquité 11. Paris: La Renaissance du livre.
- Geroulanos, Stefanos, and Gisèle Sapiro, eds. 2024. *The Routledge Handbook of the History and Sociology of Ideas*. Oxon/New York: Routledge.
- Gerring, John. (2007) 2017. *Case Study Research. Principles and Practices*. Strategies for Social Inquiry. 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gibbons, Michael, Camille Limoges, Helga Nowotny, Simon Schwartzman, Peter Scott, and Martin Trow. 1994. *The New Production of Knowledge. The Dynamics of Science and Research in Contemporary Societies*. Los Angeles/London/New Dehli/Singapore/Washington DC: Sage.
- Giddens, Anthony. 1976. 'Classical Social Theory and the Origins of Modern Sociology'. *American Journal of Sociology* 81 (4): 703–29.
- . 1984. *The Constitution of Society. Outline of a Theory of Structuration*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- . (1976) 1993. *New Rules of Sociological Method. A Positive Critique of Interpretative Sociologies*. 2nd ed. Cambridge: Polity.
- Gieryn, Thomas F. 1982. 'Relativist/Constructivist Programmes in the Sociology of Science: Redundance and Retreat'. *Social Studies of Science* 12 (2): 279–97.
- . 1983. 'Boundary-Work and the Demarcation of Science from Non-Science: Strains and Interests in Professional Ideologies of Scientists'. *American Sociological Review* 48 (6): 781–95.
- Gieryn, Thomas F., and Robert K. Merton. 1978. 'The Sociological Study of Scientific Specialties'. *Social Studies of Science* 8 (2): 257–61.
- Gilcher-Holtey, Ingrid. 2020. 'Habermas, Jürgen (1929)'. In *Dictionnaire international Bourdieu*, edited by Gisèle Sapiro, 385–86. Culture & société. Paris: CNRS Éditions.
- Gingras, Yves. 1995. 'Un air de radicalisme. Sur quelques tendances récentes en sociologie de la science et de la technologie'. *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 108 (1): 3–18.
- . 2004. 'Réflexivité et sociologie de la connaissance scientifique'. In *Pierre Bourdieu, sociologue*, edited by Louis Pinto, Gisèle Sapiro, and Patrick Champagne, 337–47. Paris: Fayard.
- . 2010. 'Naming without Necessity: On the Genealogy and Uses of the Label "Historical Epistemology"'. *Revue de Synthèse* 131 (3): 439–54.
- , ed. 2014. *Controverses. Accords et désaccords en sciences humaines et sociales*. Culture & société. Paris: CNRS Éditions.
- . 2020a. 'Piaget, Jean (1896-1980)'. In *Dictionnaire international Bourdieu*, edited by Gisèle Sapiro, 655–56. Culture & société. Paris: CNRS Éditions.
- . 2020b. 'Réflexivité'. In *Dictionnaire international Bourdieu*, edited by Gisèle Sapiro, 718–20. Culture & société. Paris: CNRS Éditions.
- . (2013) 2020. *Sociologie des sciences*. Que sais-je? 3rd ed. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
- Ginzburg, Carlo. 1994. 'Microstoria: Due o tre cose che so di lei'. *Quaderni storici* 29 (86–2): 511–39.
- . 2015. 'Microhistory and World History'. In *The Cambridge World History*, 1st ed., edited by Jerry H. Bentley, Sanjay Subrahmanyam, and Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks, 446–73. Cambridge University Press.
- . 2019. 'Postfazione 2019'. In *Il formaggio e i vermi. Il cosmo di un mugnaio del '500*, 211–18. L'oceano delle storie 24. Milano: Adelphi.
- . (1976) 2019. *Il formaggio e i vermi. Il cosmo di un mugnaio del '500*. L'oceano delle storie 24. Milano: Adelphi.

- Girel, Mathias. 2018. 'William James et Charles Renouvier. Liberté, Phénoménisme et "vampirisme philosophique"'. In *Chine France - Europe Asie. Itinéraires de concepts*, edited by Michel Espagne and Hongtu Li, 445–58. Les rencontres de Normal Sup'. Paris: Éditions Rue d'Ulm.
- Glauser, Andrea. 2009. 'Von der Anschauungs- zur Möglichkeitsform - Simmels soziologische Reinterpretation der Kantschen Raumtheorie'. In *Soziologie als Möglichkeit. 100 Jahre Georg Simmels Untersuchungen über die Formen der Vergesellschaftung*, edited by Cécile Rol and Christian Papilloud, 63–86. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.
- Goblot, Edmond. 1901a. 'A priori, a posteriori'. In *Le vocabulaire philosophique*, by Edmond Goblot, 65–66. Paris: Armand Colin.
- . 1901b. *Le vocabulaire philosophique*. Paris: Armand Colin.
- . 1904. 'L'Année sociologique 1901-1902'. *Revue de Synthèse historique* 8 (23): 171–77.
- Godlove, Terry F. 1986. 'Epistemology in Durkheim's Elementary Forms of Religious Life'. *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 24 (3): 385–401.
- Godlove, Terry F. 1989. *Religion, Interpretation, and Diversity of Belief: The Framework Model from Kant to Durkheim and Davidson*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- . 1996. 'Is "Space" a Concept? Kant, Durkheim, and French Neo-Kantianism'. *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 32 (4): 441–55.
- Goffman, Erving. (1956) 1959. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. 2nd ed. Garden City, New York: Doubleday Anchor Books.
- Gofman, Alexandre. 2019. 'Eugène de Roberty (1843-1915) (Evguéni Valentinovitch de Roberty de Castro de la Certda)'. *Bulletin d'histoire de la sociologie* 5 (9): 14.
- Goldmann, Lucien. 1945. *Mensch, Gemeinschaft und Welt in der Philosophie Immanuel Kants*. Studien zur Geschichte der Dialektik. Zürich: Europa-Verlag.
- . (1945) 1948. *La communauté humaine et l'univers chez Kant. Études sur la pensée dialectique et son histoire*. Bibliothèque de philosophie contemporaine. Histoire de la philosophie et philosophie générale. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
- . 1955. *Le dieu cachée. Étude sur la vision tragique dans les Pensée de Pascal et dans le théâtre de Racine*. NRF - Bibliothèque des idées. Paris: Gallimard.
- . (1945) 1967. *Introduction à la philosophie de Kant*. Idées 146. Paris: Gallimard.
- Gordon, Peter E. 2008. 'Neo-Kantianism and the Politics of Enlightenment'. *Philosophical Forum* 39 (2): 223–38.
- . 2010. *Continental Divide. Heidegger. Cassirer. Davos*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Goris, Wouter. 2012. 'Das historische Apriori bei Husserl und Foucault - Zur philosophischen Relevanz eines Leitbegriffs der historischen Epistemologie'. *Quaestio* 12 (January): 291–342.
- . 2014. 'L'a priori historique chez Husserl et Foucault (I). La pertinence philosophique d'un concept directeur de l'épistémologie historique'. Translated by Julien Farges. *Philosophie* 4 (123): 3–27.
- . 2015. 'L'a priori historique chez Husserl et Foucault (II). La pertinence philosophique d'un concept directeur de l'épistémologie historique'. Translated by Julien Farges. *Philosophie* 2 (125): 22–43.
- Gorski, Philip S. 2003. *The Disciplinary Revolution. Calvinism and the Rise of the State in Early Modern Europe*. Chicago/London: The University of Chicago Press.
- Gouarné, Isabelle. 2011a. 'La conférence de René Maublanc sur "Marx et Durkheim" (20 décembre 1934)'. *Durkheimian Studies/Études Durkheimiennes* 17: 3–7.
- . 2011b. 'Marxisme et durkheimisme dans l'entre-deux-guerres en France'. *Durkheimian Studies/Études Durkheimiennes* 17: 57–79.

- Goudsblom, Johan. 1995. 'Elias and Cassirer, Sociology and Philosophy'. *Theory, Culture & Society* 12: 121–26.
- Goudsblom, Johan, and Johan Heilbron. 2015. 'Sociology, History Of'. In *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences*, 2nd ed., edited by James D. Wright, 22:989–95. Oxford: Elsevier.
- Gouldner, Alvin W. 1970. *The Coming Crisis of Western Sociology*. London/New Delhi: Heinemann.
- Grafton, Anthony. 1997. *The Footnote. A Curious History*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- Graham, Loren, Wolf Lepenies, and Peter Weingart, eds. 1983. *Functions and Uses of Disciplinary Histories*. Sociology of the Sciences Yearbook 7. Dordrecht/Boston/Lancaster: D. Reidel Publishing Company.
- Grandjean, Martin. 2011. *Les cours universitaires de Davos 1928-1931. Au centre de l'Europe intellectuelle*. Mémoire de maîtrise. Lausanne: Université de Lausanne.
- . 2018. *Les réseaux de la coopération intellectuelle. La Société des Nations comme actrice des échanges scientifiques et culturels dans l'entre-deux-guerres*. Thèse de doctorat présentée à la Faculté des lettres de l'Université de Lausanne. Lausanne: Université de Lausanne.
- Granet, Marcel. 1929. *La civilisation chinoise. La vie publique et la vie privée*. L'Évolution de l'humanité. Paris: La Renaissance du livre.
- . (1934) 1999. *La pensée chinoise*. With Léon Vandermeersch. L'Évolution de l'humanité. Paris: Albin Michel.
- Granger, Gilles-Gaston. (1987) 2022. 'Leçon inaugurale au Collège de France (1987)'. *Noesis*, no. 38 (June): 251–69.
- Granville, Augustus Bozzi. 1836. *The Royal Society in the Nineteenth Century*. London: Mr. Churchill, Bookseller and Publisher.
- Gross, Neil. 2007. 'Pragmatism, Phenomenology, and Twentieth-Century American Sociology'. In *Sociology in America. A History*, edited by Craig Calhoun, 183–224. Chicago/London: The University of Chicago Press.
- Gross, Paul R., and N. Levitt. 1994. *Higher Superstition: The Academic Left and Its Quarrels with Science*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Groupe de la Sociologie de la Connaissance et de la Vie morale. 1962. 'Bibliographie de la sociologie de la connaissance. Oeuvre collective du "Groupe de la Sociologie de la Connaissance et de la Vie morale"'. *Cahiers internationaux de sociologie* 32: 135–76.
- Grünwald, Ernst. 1934. *Das Problem der Soziologie des Wissens. Versuch einer kritischen Darstellung der wissenssoziologischen Theorien*. Edited by Walther Eckstein. Wien/Leipzig: Braumüller.
- Gueroult, Martial. 1979–1988. *Dianoématique*. 4 vols. Paris: Aubier.
- Guibet-Lafaye, Caroline. 2000. 'Étienne Souriau, *Vocabulaire d'esthétique*, Paris, PUF, 1999, 1 415 pages'. *Cités* 4: 211–13.
- Guignebert, Charles. 1914. *Le problème de Jésus*. Paris: Flammarion.
- Guilhaumou, Jacques. 2006. 'Sieyès et le non-dit de la sociologie : du mot à la chose'. *Sociologie. Revue d'histoire des sciences humaines* 15 (2): 117–34.
- Guillaumont, Antoine. 1988. 'Notice sur la vie et les travaux d'Henri-Charles Puech, membre de l'Académie'. *Comptes rendus des séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* 132 (4): 763–76.
- Guillo, Dominique. 2015. 'Emile Durkheim's Debt to Claude Bernard. Back to the Origins of the Sociology of Generative Mechanisms'. In *Theories and Social Mechanisms. Essays in Honour of Mohamed Cherkaoui*, edited by Gianluca Manzo, 47–60. Oxford: The Bardwell Press.
- Guldi, Jo, and David Armitage. 2014. *The History Manifesto*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Gülich, Christian. 1990. 'Célestin Bouglé et Georg Simmel. Une correspondance franco-allemande en sociologie'. *Mil neuf cent* 8 (1): 59–72.
- Gulyga, Arsenij. (1977) 1987. *Immanuel Kant. His Life and Thought*. Translated by Marijan Despalatovic. Boston/Basel/Stuttgart: Birkhäuser.
- Gumplowicz, Ludwig. (1885) 1926. *Grundriß der Soziologie*. Edited by Gottfried Salomon. With Franz Oppenheimer. Ausgewählte Werke 2. Innsbruck: Universitäts-Verlag Wagner.
- Günzel, Kurt. 1934. *Die gesellschaftliche Wirklichkeit. Eine Studie über Émile Durkheims Soziologie*. Ohlau i. Schl.: Spezialdruckerei für Dissertationen Dr. Hermann Eschenhagen KG.
- Gurvitch, Georges. 1937. *Morale théorique et science des mœurs, leurs possibilités, leurs conditions*. Nouvelle encyclopédie philosophique, edited by Henri Delacroix, vol. 14. Paris: Alcan.
- . 1939. 'The Sociological Legacy of Lucien Levy-Bruhl'. *Journal of Social Philosophy* 5: 61.
- . 1948. 'Sociologie de la connaissance et psychologie collective'. *L'Année sociologique. Troisième série* 1 (1940-1948): 463–84.
- . 1957. 'Le problème de la sociologie de la connaissance I'. *Revue philosophique de la France et de l'étranger* 147: 494–502.
- . 1958. 'Le problème de la sociologie de la connaissance II'. *Revue philosophique de la France et de l'étranger* 148: 438–51.
- . 1959. 'Le problème de la sociologie de la connaissance III'. *Revue philosophique de la France et de l'étranger* 149: 145–68.
- . 1966. *Les cadres sociaux de la connaissance*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
- . (1958) 1966. 'Mon itinéraire intellectuel ou l'exclu de la horde'. *L'Homme et la société* 1 (1): 3–12.
- Gusti, Demetrius. 1908. 'Die Soziologischen Bestrebungen in Der Neueren Ethik'. *Vierteljahrsschrift Für Wissenschaftliche Philosophie Und Soziologie* 32: 134–69.
- H. R. B. 1951. 'Une leçon inaugurale'. *Journal de Genève*, April 24.
- Habermas, Jürgen. (1968) 1973. *Erkenntnis und Interesse*. suhrkamp taschenbuch wissenschaft 1. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.
- . 1981a. *Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns*. 2 vols. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.
- . 1981b. *Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns*. Vol. 2. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.
- . (1976) 1984. 'Was heißt Universalpragmatik?' In *Vorstudien und Ergänzungen zur Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns*, 353–440. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.
- . (1983) 1988. *Der philosophische Diskurs der Moderne. Zwölf Vorlesungen*. suhrkamp taschenbuch wissenschaft 749. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.
- . 2006. 'Ein avantgardistischer Spürsinn für Relevanzen. Was den Intellektuellen auszeichnet'. *Blätter für deutsche und internationale Politik* 2006 (5): 551–57.
- . (2006) 2008. 'Ein avantgardistischer Spürsinn für Relevanzen. Die Rolle des Intellektuellen und die Sache Europas'. In *Ach, Europa. Kleine Politische Schriften XI*, 77–87. edition suhrkamp 2551. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.
- Hacker, P. M. S. 2013. 'Kant and Wittgenstein: The Matter of Transcendental Arguments'. In *Wittgenstein: Comparisons and Context*, 31–53. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hacking, Ian. 1982. 'Language, Truth and Reason'. In *Rationality and Relativism*, edited by Martin Hollis and Steven Lukes, 48–66. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press.
- . (1983) 1987. 'Was There a Probabilistic Revolution 1800-1930?' In *The Probabilistic Revolution. Volume I: Ideas in History*, edited by Lorenz Krüger, Lorraine J. Daston, and Michael Heidelberger, 45–55. A Bradford Book. Cambridge, Massachusetts/London: The MIT Press.
- . 1992. "'Style" for Historians and Philosophers'. *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science Part A* 23 (1): 1–20.

- . 1999. *The Social Construction of What?* Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- . 2002. *Historical Ontology*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- . 2012. “‘Language, Truth and Reason’ 30 Years Later”. *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science Part A* 43 (4): 599–609.
- Haeckel, Ernst. 1904. *Die Lebenswunder. Gemeinverständliche Studien über Biologische Philosophie. Ergänzungsband zu dem Buche über die Welträthsel*. Stuttgart: Alfred Kröner.
- Hagstrom, Warren O. 1965. *The Scientific Community*. New York/London: Basic Books.
- Hahn, Robert. 1988. *Kant’s Newtonian Revolution in Philosophy*. The Journal of the History of Philosophy Monograph Series. Carbondale/Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press.
- Hahn, Roger. 1971. *The Anatomy of a Scientific Institution. The Paris Academy of Sciences, 1666-1803*. Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press.
- Halbwachs, Maurice. 1925. *Les origines du sentiment religieux d’après Durkheim*. La culture moderne. Paris: Stock.
- . 1926. ‘La pensée mythique d’après M. Cassirer’. *Revue philosophique de la France et de l’étranger* 102: 299–304.
- . 1938. ‘La psychologique collective du raisonnement’. *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung* 7 (3): 357–75.
- . (1925) 1994. *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire*. With Gérard Namer. Bibliothèque de l’Évolution de l’Humanité. Paris: Albin Michel.
- . (1939) 1997. ‘La mémoire collective chez les musiciens’. In *La mémoire collective*, edited by Gérard Namer and Marie Jaisson, 19–50. Bibliothèque de l’Évolution de l’Humanité. Paris: Albin Michel.
- . (1950) 1997a. ‘La mémoire collective et le temps’. In *La mémoire collective*, edited by Gérard Namer and Marie Jaisson, 143–92. Bibliothèque de l’Évolution de l’Humanité. Paris: Albin Michel.
- . (1950) 1997b. *La mémoire collective*. Edited by Gérard Namer and Marie Jaisson. Bibliothèque de l’Évolution de l’Humanité. Paris: Albin Michel.
- . (1941) 2008. *La Topographie légendaire des évangiles en Terre sainte. Étude de mémoire collective*. Edited by Marie Jaisson. With Danièle Hervie-Léger, Jean-Pierre Cléro, Sarah Gensburger, and Éric Brian. Quadrige. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
- . (1938) 2015. *La psychologie collective*. Edited by Thomas Hirsch. Champs classiques. Paris: Flammarion.
- Hall, A. Rupert. 1963. ‘Merton Revisited or Science and Society in the Seventeenth Century’. *History of Science* 2 (1): 1–16.
- Hamberger, Klaus. 2002. “‘Sozio-Logik’ und ‘Symbolische Form’ - Das Erkenntnisproblem im Horizont der Sozialwissenschaften’. In *Gesellschaft denken. Eine erkenntnistheoretische Standortbestimmung der Sozialwissenschaften. Politische Philosophie und Ökonomie*, edited by Leonhard Bauer and Klaus Hamberger, 153–74. Wien/New York: Springer.
- Hamelin, Octave. 1907. *Essai sur les éléments principaux de la représentation. Thèse présentée à la Faculté des Lettres de l’Université de Paris*. Paris: Alcan.
- . 1927. *Le système de Renouvier*. Edited by Paul Mouy. Paris: Vrin.
- Han, Béatrice. (1998) 2002. *Foucault’s Critical Project. Between the Transcendental and the Historical*. Translated by Edward Pile. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- . 2003. ‘L’a priori historique selon Michel Foucault. Difficultés archéologiques’. In *Lectures de Michel Foucault. Volume 2*, edited by Emmanuel Da Silva, 23–38. ENS Éditions.
- Hänel, Michael. 2001. ‘Problemgeschichte als Forschung: Die Erbschaft des Neukantianismus’. In *Das Problem der Problemgeschichte 1880-1932*, edited by Otto Gerhard Oexle, 87–127. Göttinger Gespräche zur Geschichtswissenschaft 12. Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag.

- Härpfer, Claudius, and Tom Kaden. 2017. 'Weber and Simmel on the Formation of Norms, Rules and Laws'. *Journal of Classical Sociology* 17 (2): 116–26.
- Hart, Joan. 1993. 'Erwin Panofsky and Karl Mannheim: A Dialogue on Interpretation'. *Critical Inquiry* 19 (3): 534–66.
- Hartmann, Eduard von. 1877. *Neukantianismus, Schopenhauerianismus und Hegelianismus in ihrer Stellung zu den philosophischen Aufgaben der Gegenwart. Zweite erweiterte Auflage der 'Erläuterungen zur Metaphysik des Unbewussten.'* Berlin: Carl Duncker's Verlag (C. Heymons).
- Hartmann, Nicolai. 1909. 'Zur Methode der Philosophiegeschichte'. *Kant-Studien* 15 (4): 459–85.
- . (1936) 1957. 'Der philosophische Gedanke und seine Geschichte'. In *Kleinere Schriften. Band II. Abhandlungen zur Philosophie-Geschichte*, 1–48. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co.
- Hartog, François. 2003. *Régimes d'historicité. Présentisme et expérience du temps*. Paris: Seuil.
- . 2020. *Chronos. L'Occident aux prises avec le temps*. Bibliothèque des histoires. Paris: Gallimard.
- Haslanger, Sally. 1995. 'Ontology and Social Construction'. *Philosophical Topics* 23 (2): 95–125.
- Hauchecorne, Matthieu. 2019. *La gauche américaine en France. La réception de John Rawls et des théories de la justice*. Culture & société. Paris: CNRS Éditions.
- . 2020a. 'Possibles (espace des)'. In *Dictionnaire international Bourdieu*, edited by Gisèle Sapiro, 668–70. Culture & société. Paris: CNRS Éditions.
- . 2020b. 'Prise(s) de position'. In *Dictionnaire international Bourdieu*, edited by Gisèle Sapiro, 679–81. Culture & société. Paris: CNRS Éditions.
- Haupt, Heinz-Gerhard. 2015. 'Comparative History'. In *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences*, 2nd ed., edited by James D. Wright, 405–10. Oxford: Elsevier.
- Hayek, Friedrich A. 1952. *The Counter-Revolution of Science. Studies on the Abuse of Reason*. London: The Free Press of Glencoe/Collier-Macmillan Limited.
- Haym, Rudolf. 1857. *Hegel und seine Zeit. Vorlesungen über Entstehung und Entwicklung, Wesen und Werth der Hegel'schen Philosophie*. Berlin: Verlag von Rudolph Gaertner.
- Haym, Rudolf, and Karl Twisten. 1915. 'Ein Briefwechsel über positive Philosophie und Fortschrittspolitik 1859-1863'. *Preußische Jahrbücher* 161: 232–56.
- Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich. (1817–1830) 1991. *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse (1830)*. Edited by Friedhelm Nicolin and Otto Pöggeler. Philosophische Bibliothek 33. 3rd ed. Hamburg: Meiner.
- Heidegger, Martin. (1927) 2001. *Sein und Zeit*. 18th ed. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer.
- . (1928) 2010. 'Ernst Cassirer, Philosophie der symbolischen Formen. 2. Teil: Das mythische Denken. Berlin 1925'. In *Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik*, 255–70. Rote Reihe. Frankfurt/Main: Klostermann.
- . (1929) 2010. *Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik*. Rote Reihe. Frankfurt/Main: Klostermann.
- Heidegren, Carl-Gören, and Henrik Lundberg. 2010. 'Towards a Sociology of Philosophy'. *Acta Sociologica* 53 (1): 3–18.
- Heidelberger, Michael. 2009. 'Contingent Laws of Nature in Émile Boutroux'. In *The Significance of the Hypothetical in the Natural Sciences*, edited by Michael Heidelberger and Gregor Schiemann, 99–144. De Gruyter.
- . 2010. 'From Mill via von Kries to Max Weber: Causality, Explanation, and Understanding'. In *Historical Perspectives on Erklären and Verstehen*, edited by Uljana Feest, 241–65. Dordrecht: Springer.
- . 2015. 'Naturalisierung des Transzendentalen in der Sinnesphysiologie von Hermann von Helmholtz'. *Scientia Poetica* 19 (1): 205–33.

- . 2019. “Leibnizische Gedanken”. Der darwinistisch gedeutete Nativismus als zeitgenössische Alternative zu Helmholtz’ Naturalismus’. In *Empirisierung des Transzendentalen. Erkenntnisbedingungen in Wissenschaft und Kunst, 1850-1920*, edited by Philip Ajouri and Benjamin Specht, 121-174 (?). Göttingen: Wallstein.
- Heilbron, Johan. 1985. ‘Les métamorphoses du durkheimisme, 1920-1940’. *Revue française de sociologie* 26 (2): 203–37.
- . 1990. ‘Auguste Comte and Modern Epistemology’. *Sociological Theory* 8 (2): 153–62.
- . 1991. ‘Theory of Knowledge and Theory of Science in the Work of Auguste Comte’. *Revue de Synthèse* 112 (1): 75–89.
- . (1990) 1995. *The Rise of Social Theory*. Translated by Sheila Gogol. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- . 1999. ‘Towards a Sociology of Translation. Book Translations as a Cultural World System’. *European Journal of Social Theory* 2 (4): 429–44.
- . 2003. ‘Social Thought and Natural Science’. In *The Cambridge History of Science. Volume 7. The Modern Social Sciences*, edited by Dorothy Ross and Theodore M. Porter, 40–56. The Cambridge History of Science. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- . 2004. ‘A Regime of Disciplines. Toward a Historical Sociology of Disciplinary Knowledge’. In *The Dialogical Turn. New Roles for Sociology in the Postdisciplinary Age. Essays in Honor of Donald N. Levine*, edited by Charles Camic and Hans Joas, 23–42. Lanham/Boulder/New York/Toronto/Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield.
- . 2008. ‘Qu’est-ce qu’une tradition nationale en sciences sociales?’ *Revue d’histoire des sciences humaines* 18 (1): 3–16.
- . 2009. ‘Sociology and Positivism in 19th-Century France: The Vicissitudes of the Société de Sociologie (1872-4)’. *History of the Human Sciences* 22 (4): 30–62.
- . 2011. ‘Practical Foundations of Theorizing in Sociology. The Case of Pierre Bourdieu’. In *Social Knowledge in the Making*, edited by Charles Camic, Neil Gross, and Michèle Lamont, 181–205. Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press.
- . 2014. ‘Auguste Comte and the Second Scientific Revolution’. *Sartoniana* 27: 149–68.
- . 2015. *French Sociology*. Ithaca/London: Cornell University Press.
- . 2017a. ‘Auguste Comte and the Second Scientific Revolution’. In *The Anthem Companion to Auguste Comte*, edited by Andrew Wernick, 23–41. London: Anthem Press.
- . 2017b. ‘Pour une sociologie historique et réflexive des sciences humaines et sociales’. *Revue d’histoire des sciences humaines* 30: 277–88.
- . 2018. ‘Sociogenèse de la théorie sociologique de Pierre Bourdieu’. *Zilsel* 3 (1): 105–35.
- . 2020. ‘École de Francfort’. In *Dictionnaire international Bourdieu*, edited by Gisèle Sapiro, 271–72. Culture & société. Paris: CNRS Éditions.
- . 2022. ‘Introduction. Comment comprendre une œuvre scientifique?’ In *Pierre Bourdieu et l’art de l’invention scientifique. Enquête au Centre de sociologie européenne (1959-1969)*, edited by Julien Duval, Johan Heilbron, and Pernelle Issenhuth, 11–40. Bibliothèque des sciences sociales 10. Paris: Classiques Garnier.
- . 2024. ‘Reconceptualizing National Traditions in Intellectual History’. In *The Routledge Handbook of the History and Sociology of Ideas*, edited by Stefanos Geroulanos and Gisèle Sapiro. Oxon/New York: Routledge.
- Heilbron, Johan, and Yves Gingras. 2015. ‘La résilience des disciplines’. *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 210 (5): 4–9.
- Heilbron, Johan, Nicolas Guilhot, and Laurent Jeanpierre. 2008. ‘Toward a Transnational History of the Social Sciences’. *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 44 (2): 146–60.

- Heilbron, Johan, Remi Lenoir, and Gisèle Sapiro, eds. 2004. *Pour une histoire des sciences sociales. Hommage à Pierre Bourdieu*. Paris: Fayard.
- Heilbron, Johan, Gustavo Sorá, and Thibaud Boncourt, eds. 2018. *The Social and Human Sciences in Global Power Relations*. Socio-Historical Studies of the Social and Human Sciences. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Heilbron, Johan, and Nico Wilterdink. 2023. 'Studying Long-Term Processes in Human History'. *Historical Social Research* 48 (1): 7–34.
- Heilbron, Johan, and Sébastien Zerilli. 2022. 'Vers un présentisme réflexif? Sur l'histoire sociologique de la sociologie. Propos recueillis par Sébastien Zerilli'. *Bulletin d'histoire de la sociologie* 14 (December): 20–25.
- Heine, Henri. (1835) 1998. *De l'Allemagne*. Edited by Pierre Grappin. Tel. Paris: Gallimard.
- Heinrich, Michael. (2018) 2019. 'How Is Biographical Writing Possible Today? On the Methodology of a Marx Biography'. In *Karl Marx and the Birth of Modern Society. The Life of Marx and the Development of His Work. Volume I: 1818-1841*, translated by Alexander Locascio, 323–40. New York: Monthly Review Press.
- Heis, Jeremy. 2013. 'Ernst Cassirer, Kurt Lewin, and Hans Reichenbach'. In *The Berlin Group and the Philosophy of Logical Empiricism*, edited by Nikolay Milkov and Volker Peckhaus, 273:67–94. Boston Studies in the Philosophy and History of Science. Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands.
- Heller, Hermann. 1934. *Staatslehre*. Edited by Gerhart Niemeyer. Leiden: Sijthoff.
- Hempel, Carl G. 1942. 'The Function of General Laws in History'. *The Journal of Philosophy* 39 (2): 35–48.
- Henderson, L. J. 1970. *On the Social System*. Edited by Bernard Barber. The Heritage of Sociology. Chicago/London: The University of Chicago Press.
- Hennis, Wilhelm. 1982. 'Max Webers Fragestellung'. *Zeitschrift für Politik* 29 (3): 241–81.
- . 1987. *Max Webers Fragestellung. Studien zur Biographie des Werks*. Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck).
- . 1996. *Max Webers Wissenschaft vom Menschen. Neue Studien zur Biographie des Werks*. Mohr Siebeck.
- Henrich, Dieter. 1952. *Die Einheit der Wissenschaftslehre Max Webers*. Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck).
- . 1991. *Konstellationen. Probleme und Debatten am Ursprung der idealistischen Philosophie (1789-1795)*. Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta.
- Hepburn, Brian, and Hanne Andersen. 2021. 'Scientific Method'. In *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Summer 2021, edited by Edward N. Zalta. Stanford: Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University.
- Hertz, Robert. 1907. 'Contribution à une étude sur la représentation collective de la mort'. *L'Année sociologique* 10 (1905-1906): 48–137. JSTOR.
- . 1909. 'La prééminence de la main droite. Étude sur la polarité religieuse'. *Revue de métaphysique et de morale* 68: 553–80.
- Hesse, Mary. 1982. 'Comments on the Papers of David Bloor and Steven Lukes'. *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science Part A* 13 (4): 325–31.
- Hessen, Boris. 1931. 'The Social and Economic Roots of Newtons "Principia"'. In *Science at the Cross Roads. Papers Presented to the International Congress of the History of Science and Technology Held in London from 29th to July 3rd, 1931 by Delegates of the U.S.S.R.*, edited by Nikolai I. Bukharin, 1–62. London: Kniga (England).
- Hettling, Manfred, and Wolfgang Schieder, eds. 2021. *Reinhart Koselleck als Historiker. Zu den Bedingungen möglicher Geschichten*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
- Hintikka, Jaakko. 1962. 'Cogito, Ergo Sum: Inference or Performance?' *The Philosophical Review* 71 (1962): 3–32.

- Hirsch, Thomas. 2012. 'Maurice Halbwachs et la sociologie religieuse. Des *Formes* aux *Cadres sociaux de la mémoire*'. *Archives de sciences sociales des religions*, no. 159 (September): 225–45.
- . 2015. 'Présentation. Psychologie collective et sociologie'. In *La psychologie collective*, by Maurice Halbwachs, edited by Thomas Hirsch, 7–42. Champs classiques. Paris: Flammarion.
- . 2016. *Le temps des sociétés. D'Émile Durkheim à Marc Bloch*. En temps & lieux. Paris: Éditions de l'École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales.
- Hirst, Paul Q. (1975) 2011. *Durkheim, Bernard and Epistemology*. Routledge Library Editions: Emile Durkheim 2. 2nd ed. London/New York: Routledge.
- Hitlin, Steven, and Stephen Vaisey, eds. 2010. *Handbook of the Sociology of Morality*. Handbooks of Sociology and Social Research. New York: Springer.
- . 2013. 'The New Sociology of Morality'. *Annual Review of Sociology* 39 (1): 51–68.
- Hoeges, Dirk. 1994. *Kontroverse am Abgrund. Ernst Robert Curtius und Karl Mannheim. Intellektuelle und 'freischwebende Intelligenz' in der Weimarer Republik*. Frankfurt/Main: Fischer.
- Hoeschen, Andreas, and Lothar Schneider. 2006. 'Herbartianismus im 19. Jahrhundert: Urnris einer intellektuellen Konfiguration'. In *Ideen als gesellschaftliche Gestaltungskraft im Europa der Neuzeit*, edited by Lutz Raphael and Heinz-Elmar Tenorth, 445–77. Oldenbourg.
- Hogrebe, Wolfgang. (1976) 2017. 'Konstitution'. In *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie online*, edited by Joachim Ritter, Karlfried Gründer, and Gottfried Gabriel. Schwabe Verlag.
- Hollis, Martin, and Steven Lukes, eds. 1982. *Rationality and Relativism*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press.
- Holzhauser, Nicole. 2018. 'Zur Marginalisierung von Frauen in der frühen deutschsprachigen Soziologie, untersucht am *Handwörterbuch der Soziologie* von 1931'. In *Zyklos 4. Jahrbuch für Theorie und Geschichte der Soziologie*, edited by Martin Endreß and Stephan Moebius, 101–20. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.
- . 2021. 'Quantifying the Exclusionary Process of Canonisation, or How to Become a Classic of the Social Sciences'. *International Review of Sociology* 31 (1): 97–122.
- Holzhey, Helmut. 1984. 'Neukantianismus'. In *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, 6:747–54. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft.
- . 1989. 'Popularphilosophie'. In *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, 13:Sp. 1093–1099. Basel: Schwabe.
- , ed. 1994. *Ethischer Sozialismus. Zur politischen Philosophie des Neukantianismus*. suhrkamp taschenbuch wissenschaft 949. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.
- . (1989) 2017. 'Problem'. In *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie online*, edited by Joachim Ritter and Karlfried Gründer, 7:1397–407. Basel: Schwabe.
- Höpfl, H. M. 1983. 'Isms'. *British Journal of Political Science* 13 (1): 1–17.
- Horkheimer, Max. 1937. 'Traditionelle und kritische Theorie'. *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung* 6 (2): 245–94.
- . (1930) 1982. 'Ein neuer Ideologiebegriff?' In *Der Streit um die Wissenssoziologie*, edited by Volker Meja and Nico Stehr, 2:474–96. suhrkamp taschenbuch wissenschaft 361. Frankfurt/New York: Suhrkamp.
- . (1937) 1988. 'Traditionelle und kritische Theorie'. In *Gesammelte Schriften. Band 4: Schriften 1936–1941*, edited by Alfred Schmidt, 162–216. Frankfurt/Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag.
- . (1949–1952) 1991. 'Eine Kantische Soziologie'. In *Gesammelte Schriften. Band 6: 'Zur Kritik der instrumentellen Vernunft' und 'Notizen 1949–1969'*, edited by Alfred Schmidt, 191–92. Frankfurt/Main: S. Fischer.

- Horkheimer, Max, and Theodor W. Adorno. (1944) 1988. *Die Dialektik der Aufklärung. Philosophische Fragmente*. Fischer Wissenschaft. Frankfurt/Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag.
- Howe, Richard Herbert. 1978. 'Max Weber's Elective Affinities: Sociology Within the Bounds of Pure Reason'. *American Journal of Sociology* 84 (2): 366–85.
- Howitt, Alfred William. 1889. 'Further Notes on the Australian Class Systems'. *The Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 18: 31–70.
- Hubert, Henri. (1905) 1909. 'Étude sommaire de la représentation du temps dans la religion et la magie'. In *Mélanges d'histoire des religions. De quelques résultats de la sociologie religieuse. Le sacrifice. L'origine des pouvoirs magiques. La représentation du temps*, by Henri Hubert and Marcel Mauss, 189–229. Travaux de L'Année sociologique publiés sous la direction de M. E. Durkheim. Paris: Alcan.
- . 1932. *Les Celtes depuis l'époque de la Tène et la civilisation celtique*. With Henri Berr. L'Évolution de l'humanité. Paris: La Renaissance du livre.
- . 1952. *Les germains. Cours professé à l'École du Louvre en 1924-1925*. With Paul Chalus and Henri Berr. L'Évolution de l'humanité 23. Paris: Albin Michel.
- Hubert, Henri, and Marcel Mauss. 1899. 'Essai sur la nature et la fonction du sacrifice'. *L'Année sociologique* 2 (1897-1898): 29–138.
- . 1904. 'Esquisse d'une théorie générale de la magie'. *L'Année sociologique* 7 (1902-1903): 1–146.
- . 1909a. *Mélanges d'histoire des religions. De quelques résultats de la sociologie religieuse. Le sacrifice. L'origine des pouvoirs magiques. La représentation du temps*. Travaux de L'Année sociologique publiés sous la direction de M. E. Durkheim. Paris: Alcan.
- . 1909b. 'Préface'. In *Mélanges d'histoire des religions. De quelques résultats de la sociologie religieuse. Le sacrifice. L'origine des pouvoirs magiques. La représentation du temps*, by Henri Hubert and Marcel Mauss, I–XLII. Travaux de L'Année sociologique publiés sous la direction de M. E. Durkheim. Paris: Alcan.
- . (1909) 1929. *Mélanges d'histoire des religions. De quelques résultats de la sociologie religieuse. Le sacrifice. L'origine des pouvoirs magiques. La représentation du temps*. Travaux de L'Année sociologique publiés sous la direction de M. Marcel Mauss. 2nd ed. Paris: Alcan.
- . 2021. *Correspondance (1897-1927)*. Edited by Rafael Faraco Benthien, Christophe Labaune, and Christine Lorre. With Dominique Merllié. Bibliothèque des sciences sociales 9. Paris: Classiques Garnier.
- Huebner, Daniel R. 2013. 'Wilhelm Jerusalem's Sociology of Knowledge in the Dialogue of Ideas'. *Journal of Classical Sociology* 13 (4): 430–59.
- Hulak, Florence. 2008. 'En avons-nous fini avec l'histoire des mentalités?' *Philonsorbonne* 2: 89–109.
- Husserl, Edmund. 1913. 'Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie. Erstes Buch: Allgemeine Einführung in die reine Phänomenologie'. *Jahrbuch für Philosophie und phänomenologische Forschung* 1 (1): 1–323.
- . (1936) 1939. 'Die Frage nach dem Ursprung der Geometrie als intentional-historisches Problem'. *Revue internationale de philosophie* 1 (2): 203–25.
- . 1954. *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendente Phänomenologie. Eine Einleitung in die phänomenologische Philosophie*. Edited by Walter Biemel. Husserliana, VI. Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff.
- . (1929) 2012. *Cartesianische Meditationen*. Edited by Elisabeth Ströker. Philosophische Bibliothek 644. Hamburg: Meiner.
- Hyppolite, Jean. 1954. 'La critique hegelienne de la réflexion kantienne'. *Kant-Studien* 45 (1–4): 83–95.

- . (1946) 2021. *Genèse et structure de la Phénoménologie de l'esprit de Hegel*. Edited by Giuseppe Bianco. Philosophies contemporaines 21. Paris: Classiques Garnier.
- Illouz, Eva. 2008. *Saving the Modern Soul. Therapy, Emotions, and the Culture of Self-Help*. Oakland: University of California Press.
- . 2012. *Why Love Hurts. A Sociological Explanation*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Isaac, Joel. 2012. *Working Knowledge. Making the Human Sciences from Parsons to Kuhn*. Cambridge/London: Harvard University Press.
- Isambert, François-André. 1979. 'Henri Hubert et la sociologie du temps'. *Revue française de sociologie* 20 (1): 183–204.
- Jacobs, Jerry A. 2013. *In Defense of Disciplines. Interdisciplinarity and Specialization in the Research University*. Chicago/London: The University of Chicago Press.
- Jacobsen, Bjarne. 1999. *Max Weber und Friedrich Albert Lange. Rezeption und Innovation*. Wiesbaden: Springer.
- Jacobson, Jon. 1972. *Locarno Diplomacy. Germany and the West, 1925-1929*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Jahoda, Marie, Paul F. Lazarsfeld, and Hans Zeisel. (1933) 1975. *Die Arbeitslosen von Marienthal. Ein soziographischer Versuch über die Wirkungen langandauernder Arbeitslosigkeit. Mit einem Anhang zur Geschichte der Soziographie*. edition suhrkamp 769. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.
- Jaisson, Marie. 1999. 'Temps et espace chez Maurice Halbwachs (1925-1945)'. *Revue d'histoire des sciences humaines* 1 (1): 163–78.
- Janet, Paul, and Gabriel Séailles. 1887. *Histoire de la philosophie. Les problèmes et les écoles*. Paris: Librairie Ch. Delagrave.
- Jaquet, Chantal. 2010. *Bacon et la promotion des savoirs*. Philosophies 209. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
- Jardine, Nick. 2004. 'Etics and Emics (Not to Mention Anemics and Emetics) in the History of the Sciences'. *History of Science* 42 (3): 261–78.
- Jasanoff, Sheila. 2019. 'Controversy Studies'. In *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology*, edited by George Ritzer, 1–5. Oxford: John Wiley & Sons.
- Jaspers, Karl. 1921. *Max Weber: Rede bei der von der Heidelberger Studentenschaft am 17. Juli 1920 veranstalteten Trauerfeier*. Tübingen: Mohr.
- . 1932. *Max Weber. Deutsches Wesen im politischen Denken, im Forschen und Philosophieren*. Stalling Bücherei Schriften an die Nation 4. Oldenburg: Stalling.
- . 1958. *Max Weber: Politiker, Forscher, Philosoph*. 3rd ed. Piper-Bücherei 121. München: Piper.
- . 1989. *On Max Weber*. Edited by John Dreijmanis. Translated by Robert J. Whelan. New York: Paragon House.
- Jaurès, Jean. (1892) 1927. *Les origines du socialisme allemand. Thèse latine de Jean Jaurès*. Translated by Adrien Veber. Paris: Les Écrivains Réunis.
- Jay, Martin. 1984. *Marxism and Totality. The Adventures of a Concept from Lukács to Habermas*. Berkeley/Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Jerusalem, Wilhelm. 1909. 'Soziologie des Erkennens'. *Die Zukunft* 67: 236–46.
- . 1921a. 'Soziologie des Erkennens. (Bemerkungen zu Max Schelers Aufsatz: "Die positivistische Geschichtsphilosophie des Wissens und die Aufgabe einer Soziologie der Erkenntnis".)'. *Kölner Vierteljahreshefte für Sozialwissenschaften* 1 (3): 28–34.
- . 1921b. 'Vorbemerkungen des Herausgebers'. In *Das Denken der Naturvölker*, by Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, translated by Paul Friedländer, V–XVII. Wien/Leipzig: Braumüller.
- . (1909) 1925. 'Soziologie des Erkennens'. In *Gedanken und Denker. Gesammelte Aufsätze. Neue Folge*, 140–53. Wien/Leipzig: Wilhelm Braumüller.

- . (1924) 1982. 'Die soziologische Bedingtheit des Denkens und der Denkformen'. In *Der Streit um die Wissenssoziologie*, edited by Volker Meja and Nico Stehr, 1:27–56. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.
- Jitschin, Adrian. 2021. *Das Leben des jungen Norbert Elias*. Weinheim Basel: Beltz Juventa.
- Joas, Hans. 1987. 'Durkheim und der Pragmatismus. Bewußtseinspsychologie und die soziale Konstitution der Kategorien'. In *Schriften zur Soziologie der Erkenntnis*, by Emile Durkheim, 257–88. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.
- Joly, Marc. 2012. *Devenir Norbert Elias. Histoire croisée d'un processus de reconnaissance scientifique: la réception française*. Histoire de la pensée. Paris: Fayard.
- . 2015. 'Excellence sociologique et « vocation d'hétérodoxie » : Mai 68 et la rupture Aron-Bourdieu'. *Revue d'histoire des sciences humaines*, no. 26 (February): 26.
- . 2017. *La révolution sociologique. De la naissance d'un régime de pensée à la crise de la philosophie (XIXe-XXe siècle)*. Laboratoire des sciences sociales, edited by Bernard Lahire. Paris: La Découverte.
- . 2018. *Pour Bourdieu*. Paris: CNRS Éditions.
- . 2020. *Après la philosophie. Histoire et épistémologie de la sociologie européenne*. Interdépendances. Paris: CNRS Éditions.
- . (2018) 2022. *La sociologie réflexive de Pierre Bourdieu*. 2nd ed. Biblis. Paris: CNRS Éditions. Originally published as *Pour Bourdieu*.
- Jonas, Friedrich. (1968–1969) 2021. *Geschichte der Soziologie*. Edited by Stephan Moebius. 2 vols. Klassiker der Sozialwissenschaften. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.
- Jones, Robert Alun. 1974. 'Durkheim's Response to Spencer: An Essay Toward Historicism in the Historiography of Sociology'. *The Sociological Quarterly* 15 (3): 341–58.
- . 1977. 'On Understanding a Sociological Classic'. *American Journal of Sociology* 83 (2): 279–319.
- . 1981. 'On Camic's Antipresentist Methodology'. *American Journal of Sociology* 86 (5): 1133–38.
- . 1985. 'Second Thoughts on Privileged Access'. *Sociological Theory* 3 (1): 16–19.
- Jureit, Ulrike, and Michael Wildt, eds. 2005. *Generationen. Zur Relevanz eines wissenschaftlichen Grundbegriffs*. Hamburg: Hamburger Edition.
- Kaesler, Dirk. 1984. 'Generationen früher deutscher Soziologen'. In *Die frühe deutsche Soziologie 1909 bis 1934 und ihre Entstehungsmilieus. Eine wissenschaftssoziologische Untersuchung*, 446–76. Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag.
- . 2005. 'Salomon-Delattre, Gottfried'. In *Neue Deutsche Biographie* [Online-Version], 22:393–94.
- . 2014. *Max Weber. Preuße, Denker, Muttersohn. Eine Biographie*. München: C. H. Beck.
- Kaiser, David. 1998. 'A Mannheim for All Seasons: Bloor, Merton, and the Roots of the Sociology of Scientific Knowledge'. *Science in Context* 11 (1): 51–87.
- Kammer, Quentin, Jean-Philippe Narboux, and Henri Wagner, eds. 2021. *C. I. Lewis. The A Priori and the Given*. Routledge Studies in American Philosophy. New York/London: Routledge.
- Kant, Emmanuel. (1798) 2008. 'Anthropologie d'un point de vue pragmatique'. In *Anthropologie d'un point de vue pragmatique. Introduction à l'Anthropologie*, by Emmanuel Kant and Michel Foucault, edited by Daniel Defert, François Ewald, and Frédéric Gros, translated by Michel Foucault, 81–267. Bibliothèque des textes philosophiques. Paris: Vrin.
- Kant, Emmanuel, and Michel Foucault. (1964) 2008. *Anthropologie d'un point de vue pragmatique. Introduction à l'Anthropologie*. Edited by Daniel Defert, François Ewald, and Frédéric Gros. Translated by Michel Foucault. Bibliothèque des textes philosophiques. Paris: Vrin.

- Kant, Immanuel. (1795) 1922a. 'An Samuel Thomas Soemmerring'. In *Kant's Briefwechsel. Band III. 1795-1803. Anhang*, 2nd ed., edited by Königlich Preußische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 30–35. Kant's gesammelte Schriften. Zweite Abteilung: Briefwechsel 12. 2nd ed. Berlin/Leipzig: Walter de Gruyter & Co.
- . (1795) 1922b. 'Anmerkungen zu Brief 671'. In *Kant's Briefwechsel. Band IV. Anmerkungen und Register*, edited by Königlich Preußische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 397–414. Kant's gesammelte Schriften. Zweite Abteilung: Briefwechsel 13. Berlin/Leipzig: Walter de Gruyter & Co.
- . (1800) 1923. 'Immanuels Kants Logik. Ein Handbuch zu Vorlesungen'. In *Logik. Physische Geographie. Pädagogik*, by Immanuel Kant, edited by Gottlob Benjamin Jäsche and Königlich Preußische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1–150. Kant's gesammelte Schriften. Erste Abtheilung: Werke 9. Berlin/Leipzig: Walter de Gruyter & Co.
- . (1781–1787) 1974. *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*. Edited by Wilhelm Weischedel. 2 vols. Werkausgabe 3. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.
- . (1785) 1974. 'Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten'. In *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft. Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*, edited by Wilhelm Weischedel, 7–102. Werkausgabe 7. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.
- . (1787) 1974. 'Vorrede zur zweiten Auflage'. In *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, edited by Wilhelm Weischedel, 1:20-41 (B VII-XLIV). Werkausgabe. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.
- . (1790) 1974. *Kritik der Urteilskraft*. Edited by Wilhelm Weischedel. Werkausgabe 10. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.
- . (1800) 1977. 'Logik'. In *Schriften zur Metaphysik und Logik 2*, edited by Gottlob Benjamin Jäsche and Wilhelm Weischedel, 419–582. Werkausgabe 6. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.
- . (1793) 1992. 'Über den Gemeinspruch: Das mag in der Theorie richtig sein, taugt aber nicht für die Praxis'. In *Über den Gemeinspruch: Das mag in der Theorie richtig sein, taugt aber nicht für die Praxis. Zum ewigen Frieden. Ein philosophischer Entwurf*, edited by Klemme, Heiner F., 3–48. Philosophische Bibliothek 443. Hamburg: Meiner.
- . (1784) 1999. 'Idee zu einer allgemeinen Geschichte in weltbürgerlicher Absicht'. In *Was ist Aufklärung? Ausgewählte kleine Schriften*, edited by Horst D. Brandt, with Ernst Cassirer, 3–19. Philosophische Bibliothek 512. Hamburg: Meiner.
- . (1798) 2000. *Anthropologie in pragmatischer Hinsicht*. Edited by Reinhard Brandt. Philosophische Bibliothek 490. Hamburg: Meiner.
- . (1783) 2001. *Prolegomena zu einer jeden künftigen Metaphysik, die als Wissenschaft wird auftreten können*. Edited by Konstantin Pollok. Philosophische Bibliothek 540. Hamburg: Meiner.
- . (1798) 2005. *Der Streit der Fakultäten*. Edited by Horst D. Brandt and Piero Giordanetti. With Piero Giordanetti. Philosophische Bibliothek 522. Hamburg: Meiner.
- Karádi, Éva, and Erzsébet Vezér, eds. (1980) 1985. *Georg Lukács, Karl Mannheim und der Sonntagskreis*. Translated by Albrecht Friedrich. Frankfurt/Main: Sendler.
- Karady, Victor. 1976. 'Durkheim, les sciences sociales et l'Université: bilan d'un semi-échec'. *Revue française de sociologie* 17 (2): 267–311.
- . 1979. 'Stratégies de réussite et modes de faire-valoir de la sociologie chez les durkheimiens'. *Revue Française de Sociologie* 20 (1): 49–82.
- Karsenti, Bruno. 2015. 'Durkheim et l'Allemagne. Commentaire à vive voix'. In *L'Allemagne au dessus de tout. Commentaire à vive voix*, by Émile Durkheim, edited by Bruno Karsenti, 11–51. Paris: Éditions de l'EHESS.
- Katzmair, Harald. 1999. 'Soziologie und Sozio-Logik symbolischer Formen. Die erkenntnistheoretischen Modelle von Ernst Cassirer, Claude Lévi-Strauss und Pierre Bourdieu'. *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Wissenschaft und Kunst* 54 (2–3): 2–7.

- Katzmair, Harald, and Günter Hefler, eds. 1999. 'Symbol - Struktur - Kultur. Zur erkenntnistheoretischen Grundlegung der Sozial- und Kulturwissenschaften nach Ernst Cassirer, Claude Lévi-Strauss und Pierre Bourdieu'. *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Wissenschaft und Kunst* 54 (2–3).
- Kaufmann, Laurence. 2017. 'Aux sources de la sociologie. Science et politique de la "société" au XVIIIe siècle'. *L'Année sociologique. Troisième série* 67 (2): 333–66.
- Kavoulakos, Konstantinos. 2018. *Georg Lukács's Philosophy of Praxis. From Neo-Kantianism to Marxims*. With Andrew Feenberg. London/New York: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Keck, Frédéric. 2008. *Lévy-Bruhl. Entre philosophie et anthropologie. Contradiction et participation*. Paris: CNRS Éditions.
- . 2010. 'Présentation'. In *La mentalité primitive*, by Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, edited by Frédéric Keck, 7–47. Champs classiques. Paris: Flammarion.
- Keck, Timothy R. 1975a. 'Kant and Socialism. An Exchange of Letters between Paul Natorp and August Bebel'. *Archiv Für Sozialgeschichte*, 323–29.
- . 1975b. *Kant and Socialism. The Marburg School in Wilhelminian Germany*. Diss. University of Wisconsin.
- Keim, Wiebke. 2013. 'Émile Durkheims Programm einer wissenschaftlichen Soziologie in Deutschland'. In *Émile Durkheim. Soziologie - Ethnologie - Philosophie*, edited by Tanja Bogusz and Heike Delitz, 47–72. Frankfurt/New York: Campus Verlag.
- . 2021. 'Frenchman, Jew, Positivist: Reading the *Rules* and Mapping Émile Durkheim in Germany'. *Durkheimian Studies / Études Durkheimiennes* 25: 154–86.
- Kelley, Donald R., ed. 1997. *History and the Disciplines. The Reclassification of Knowledge in Early Modern Europe*. Rochester, New York: University of Rochester Press.
- Kennedy, Emmet. 1979. "'Ideology" from Destutt De Tracy to Marx'. *Journal of the History of Ideas* 40 (3): 353–68.
- Keuth, Herbert. 2015. 'The Positivist Dispute in German Sociology: A Scientific or a Political Controversy?' *Journal of Classical Sociology* 15 (2): 154–69.
- Kilminster, Richard. 1989. 'The Limits of Transcendental Sociology'. *Theory, Culture & Society* 6 (4): 655–63.
- . 1998. *The Sociological Revolution. From the Enlightenment to the Global Age*. New York: Routledge.
- . 2007. *Norbert Elias. Post-Philosophical Sociology*. London/New York: Routledge.
- Kilminster, Richard, and Cas Wouters. 1994. 'Elias and the Neo-Kantians: An Alternative View. A Comment on Benjo Maso'. *Amsterdams Sociologisch Tijdschrift* 20 (3): 98–133.
- . 1995. 'From Philosophy to Sociology: Elias and the Neo-Kantians (A Response to Benjo Maso)'. *Theory, Culture & Society* 12 (3): 81–120.
- Kim, Duk-Yung. 2002. *Georg Simmel und Max Weber. Über zwei Entwicklungswege der Soziologie*. Wiesbaden: Springer.
- Kim, Kyung-Man. 2023. *Bourdieu's Philosophy and Sociology of Science. A Critical Appraisal*. Routledge Studies in Social and Political Thought. Oxon/New York: Routledge.
- Kitcher, Philip. 2000. 'Reviving the Sociology of Science'. *Philosophy of Science* 67 (3): 33–44.
- Klaus, Georg, and Manfred Buhr, eds. 1970. *Philosophisches Wörterbuch*. 7th ed. 2 vols. Leipzig: Bibliographisches Institut.
- Klautke, Egbert. 2013a. 'The French Reception of *Völkerpsychologie* and the Origins of the Social Sciences'. *Modern Intellectual History* 10 (2): 293–316.
- . 2013b. *The Mind of the Nation. Völkerpsychologie in Germany, 1851-1955*. New York/Oxford: Berghahn.
- Kneer, Georg, and Stephan Moebius, eds. 2010. *Soziologische Kontroversen. Beiträge zu einer anderen Geschichte der Wissenschaft vom Sozialen*. Berlin: Suhrkamp.

- Knorr Cetina, Karin. 1991. 'Merton's Sociology of Science: The First and the Last Sociology of Science?' *Contemporary Sociology* 20 (4): 522–26.
- Knorr-Cetina, Karin D. 1981. *The Manufacture of Knowledge. An Essay on the Constructivist and Contextual Nature of Science*. With Rom Harré. Oxford/New York/Toronto/Sydney/Paris/Frankfurt: Pergamon Press.
- Köhnke, Klaus Christian. 1986. *Entstehung und Aufstieg des Neukantianismus. Die deutsche Universitätsphilosophie zwischen Idealismus und Positivismus*. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.
- . 1996. *Der junge Simmel - in Theoriebeziehungen und sozialen Bewegungen*. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.
- Kojève, Alexandre. (1933–1939) 1947. *Introduction à la lecture de Hegel. Leçons sur la Phénoménologie de l'esprit professées de 1933 à 1939 à l'École des hautes études*. Edited by Raymond Queneau. Classiques de la philosophie. Paris: Gallimard.
- König, René. 1961a. 'Einleitung'. In *Die Regeln der soziologischen Methode*, by Émile Durkheim, edited and translated by René König, 21–82. Soziologische Texte 3. Neuwied: Luchterhand.
- . 1961b. 'Zur deutschen Ausgabe'. In *Die Regeln der soziologischen Methode*, by Émile Durkheim, edited and translated by René König, 15–19. Soziologische Texte 3. Neuwied: Luchterhand.
- . (1976) 2013. 'Emile Durkheim. Der Soziologe als Moralist'. In *Emile Durkheim. Zur Bestimmung der französischen Soziologie in Deutschland*, edited by Clemens Albrecht, 215–86. René König Schriften 8. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.
- König-Pralong, Catherine. 2017. 'L'histoire de la philosophie appartient-elle au champ des sciences humaines et sociales?' *Revue d'histoire des sciences humaines*, no. 30 (April): 49–70.
- . 2019. *La colonie philosophique. Écrire l'histoire de la philosophie aux XVIIe et XIXe siècles*. En temps & lieux. Paris: Éditions de l'École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales.
- . 2020. 'Les abîmes de la réflexivité en sciences humaines et sociales'. *Sociologie. Questions de communication* 38 (2): 279–92.
- Kopper, Joachim, and Rudolf Malter, eds. 1974. *Immanuel Kant zu ehren*. suhrkamp taschenbuch wissenschaft 61. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.
- Korsch, Karl. (1923) 1966. *Marxismus und Philosophie*. Edited by Erich Gerlach. Politische Texte. Frankfurt/Main: Europäische Verlagsanstalt.
- . (1930) 1970. 'The Present State of the Problem of "Marxism and Philosophy" - An Anti-Critique'. In *Marxism and Philosophy*, edited and translated by Fred Halliday, 98–144. New York: Monthly Review Press.
- Kortüm, Hans-Henning. 2021. '"I Got Through Those Times Well": Otto Brunner and National Socialism'. Translated by Dona Geyer. *German Yearbook of Contemporary History* 5 (1): 74–114.
- Koselleck, Reinhart. 1972. 'Einleitung'. In *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe. Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, edited by Otto Brunner, Werner Conze, and Reinhart Koselleck, 1: A-D, XIII–XXVII. Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta.
- . 1975. 'Geschichte, Historie'. In *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe. Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, edited by Otto Brunner, Werner Conze, and Reinhart Koselleck, 2 (E-G), 593–717. Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta.
- . 1979. *Vergangene Zukunft. Zur Semantik geschichtlicher Zeiten*. Theorie. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.
- . (1972) 1979. 'Begriffsgeschichte und Sozialgeschichte'. In *Vergangene Zukunft. Zur Semantik geschichtlicher Zeiten*, 107–29. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.

- . (1977) 1979. “Erfahrungsraum” und “Erwartungshorizont” - zwei historische Kategorien’. In *Vergangene Zukunft. Zur Semantik geschichtlicher Zeiten*, 349–75. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.
- Koselleck, Reinhart, and Carl Schmitt. 2019. *Der Briefwechsel 1953-1983 und weitere Materialien*. Edited by Jan Eike Dunkhase. Berlin: Suhrkamp.
- Koyré, Alexandre. 1936. ‘La sociologie française contemporaine’. *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung* 5 (2): 260–64.
- . (1942) 2000. ‘Agnosticisme’. In *Les mots de l’histoire. Le vocabulaire historique du Centre international de synthèse*, edited by Margherita Platania, 57–63. Istituto italiano per gli studi filosofici, Serie Testi, XIV. Napoli: Bibliopolis.
- Kranz, Margarita. (2005) 2017. ‘Widerspruch, performativer; Widerspruch, pragmatischer’. In *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie online*. Basel: Schwabe Verlag.
- Kraus, Katharina T. 2011. ‘Kant and the “Soft Sciences”’. *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science Part A* 42 (4): 618–24.
- Kripke, Saul A. 1972. *Naming and Necessity*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- Krohn, Wolfgang. 1999. ‘Einleitung’. In *Neues Organon. Teilband 1. Lateinisch-Deutsch*, by Francis Bacon, edited by Wolfgang Krohn, translated by Rudolf Hoffmann and Wolfgang Krohn, IX–XL. Philosophische Bibliothek 400a. Hamburg: Meiner.
- Krug, Wilhelm. 1824. [Review of] *Système de politique positive*, par Aug. Comte, ancien élève de l’école polytechnique, élève de Henri Saint-Simon. T. I. P. I. A Paris, chez les principaux libraires. 1824. 189 S. 8.’ *Leipziger Literatur-Zeitung*, no. 231 (September): 1846–47.
- Krüger, Lorenz. 1984. ‘Why Do We Study the History of Philosophy?’ In *Philosophy in History. Essays on the Historiography of Philosophy*, edited by Richard Rorty, Jerome B. Schneewind, and Quentin Skinner, 77–101. Ideas in Context. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kruse, Volker. (2008) 2018. *Geschichte der Soziologie*. UTB basics. 3rd ed. UVK Verlagsgesellschaft: Konstanz/München.
- Kühn, Manfred. (2001) 2007. *Kant. Eine Biographie*. Translated by Martin Pfeiffer. München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag.
- Kuhn, Thomas S. 1961. ‘The Function of Measurement in Modern Physical Science’. *Isis* 52 (2): 161–93.
- . 1977. *The Essential Tension. Selected Studies in Scientific Tradition and Change*. Chicago/London: The University of Chicago Press.
- . (1961) 1977. ‘The Function of Measurement in Modern Physical Science’. In *The Essential Tension. Selected Studies in Scientific Tradition and Change*, 178–224. Chicago/London: The University of Chicago Press.
- . (1968) 1977a. ‘The History of Science’. In *The Essential Tension. Selected Studies in Scientific Tradition and Change*, 105–26. Chicago/London: The University of Chicago Press.
- . (1968) 1977b. ‘The Relations between the History and the Philosophy of Science’. In *The Essential Tension. Selected Studies in Scientific Tradition and Change*, 3–20. Chicago/London: The University of Chicago Press.
- . (1971) 1977. ‘The Relations between History and the History of Science’. In *The Essential Tension. Selected Studies in Scientific Tradition and Change*, 127–61. Chicago/London: The University of Chicago Press.
- . (1974) 1977. ‘Second Thoughts on Paradigms’. In *The Essential Tension. Selected Studies in Scientific Tradition and Change*, 292–319. Chicago/London: The University of Chicago Press.

- . (1976) 1977. ‘Mathematical versus Experimental Traditions in the Development of Physical Science’. In *The Essential Tension. Selected Studies in Scientific Tradition and Change*, 31–65. Chicago/London: The University of Chicago Press.
- . (1984) 1987. ‘Afterword: Revisiting Planck’. In *Black-Body Theory and the Quantum Discontinuity, 1894-1912*, 349–70. Chicago/London: The University of Chicago Press.
- . (1962) 1996. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. 3rd ed. Chicago/London: The University of Chicago Press.
- . (1969) 1996. ‘Postscript - 1969’. In *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 3rd ed., 174–210. 3rd ed. Chicago/London: The University of Chicago Press.
- . (1990) 2000. ‘The Road since *Structure*’. In *The Road since Structure. Philosophical Essays, 1970-1993, with an Autobiographical Interview*, edited by James Conant and John Haugeland, 90–104. Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press.
- Kuhn, Thomas S., Aristides Baltas, Kostas Gavroglu, and Vassiliki Kindi. (1995) 2000. ‘A Discussion with Thomas S. Kuhn’. In *The Road since Structure. Philosophical Essays, 1970-1993, with an Autobiographical Interview*, by Thomas S. Kuhn, edited by James Conant and John Haugeland, 255–323. Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press.
- Kuklick, Bruce. 1977. *The Rise of American Philosophy: Cambridge, Massachusetts 1860-1930*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Kusch, Martin. 1995. *Psychologism. A Case Study in the Sociology of Philosophical Knowledge*. London/New York: Routledge.
- , ed. 2000. *The Sociology of Philosophical Knowledge*. The New Synthese Historical Library 48. Dordrecht/Boston/London: Kluwer.
- . 2003. ‘Psychologism and Sociologism in Early Twentieth-Century German-Speaking Philosophy’. In *Philosophy, Psychology, and Psychologism. Critical and Historical Readings on the Psychological Turn in Philosophy*, edited by Dale Jacquette, 131–55. Dordrecht/Boston/London: Kluwer.
- . 2004. ‘Rule-Scepticism and the Sociology of Scientific Knowledge: The Bloor-Lynch Debate Revisited’. *Social Studies of Science* 34 (4): 571–91.
- . 2010. ‘Hacking’s Historical Epistemology: A Critique of Styles of Reasoning’. *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science Part A* 41 (2): 158–73.
- . 2019. ‘From *Völkerpsychologie* to the Sociology of Knowledge’. *HOPOS: The Journal of the International Society for the History of Philosophy of Science* 9 (2): 250–74.
- . 2023. ‘The Sociology of Philosophical Canons. The Case of Georg Simmel’. In *Historiography and the Formation of Philosophical Canons*, edited by Sandra Lapointe and Erich H. Reck, 97–117. New York/London: Routledge.
- Kuzmics, Helmut, Dieter Reicher, and Jason Hughes. 2020. ‘State, Emotion, Authority, and National Habitus. State-Related Problems of Our Time and Methodological Discourses in Sociology and Historical Sociology’. *Historical Social Research / Historische Sozialforschung* 45 (1 (171)): 7–41.
- LaCapra, Dominick. (1972) 2001. *Emile Durkheim. Sociologist and Philosopher*. Critical Studies in the Humanities. Aurora, Colorado: The Davies Group, Publishers.
- Lacombe, Olivier. 1956. ‘Paul Masson-Oursel (1882-1956)’. *Annuaire de l’École pratique des hautes études* 65: 19–23.
- Laffitte, Pierre. 1882. ‘Matériaux pour la biographie d’Auguste Comte. Relations d’Auguste Comte avec l’Allemagne’. *La Revue occidentale* 8 (94): 224–37.
- , ed. 1896a. ‘Matériaux pour servir à la biographie d’Auguste Comte. Correspondance d’Auguste Comte et de Gustave d’Eichthal’. *La Revue occidentale* 12 (Seconde série) (108, n° 2): 186–276.
- , ed. 1896b. ‘Matériaux pour servir à la biographie d’Auguste Comte. Correspondance d’Auguste Comte et de Gustave d’Eichthal (suite)’. *La Revue occidentale* 12 (Seconde série) (108, n° 3): 345–88.

- Lakatos, Imre. 1968. 'Criticism and the Methodology of Scientific Research Programmes'. *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 69: 149–86.
- . 1970a. 'Falsification and the Methodology of Scientific Research Programmes'. In *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge*, edited by Imre Lakatos and Alan Musgrave, 91–195. Proceedings of the International Colloquium in the Philosophy of Science, London, 1965 4. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- . 1970b. 'History of Science and Its Rational Reconstructions'. *PSA: Proceedings of the Biennial Meeting of the Philosophy of Science Association* 1970: 91–136.
- . 1978. *The Methodology of Scientific Research Programmes. Philosophical Papers. Volume I*. Edited by John Worrall and Gregory Currie. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lakatos, Imre, and Alan Musgrave, eds. 1970. *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge*. Proceedings of the International Colloquium in the Philosophy of Science, London, 1965 4. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lalande, André. 1893. *Lectures sur la philosophie des sciences*. Paris: Hachette.
- . 1898. 'Le langage philosophique et l'unité de la philosophie'. *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale* 6 (5): 566–88.
- . 1900. 'Sur la critique et la fixation du langage philosophique'. In *1er Congrès international de philosophie. Tome 1. Philosophie générale et Métaphysique*, 257–80. Bibliothèque du Congrès international de philosophie. Paris: Armand Colin.
- . 1901. 'Propositions concernant l'emploi de certains termes philosophiques'. *Bulletin de la Société française de philosophie* 1 (3).
- , ed. (1902–1923) 1926. *Vocabulaire technique et critique de la philosophie, paru en fascicule dans le Bulletin de la Société française de Philosophie*. 2 vols. 2 (édition augmentée d'un Supplément). Paris: Alcan.
- , ed. (1902–1923) 2010a. 'A PRIORI et a posteriori'. In *Vocabulaire technique et critique de la philosophie*, 18th ed., 73–74. Quadrige. 18th ed. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
- , ed. (1902–1923) 2010b. *Vocabulaire technique et critique de la philosophie*. Quadrige. 18th ed. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
- Lamont, Michèle. 1987. 'How to Become a Dominant French Philosopher: The Case of Jacques Derrida'. *The American Journal of Sociology* 93 (3): 584–622.
- Lamprecht, Karl. 1900. 'La méthode historique en Allemagne'. Translated by J. Tonnelat. *Revue de Synthèse historique* 1 (1): 21–27.
- Lamy, Jérôme. 2020. 'Ne pas craindre l'histoire: Historicité des concepts et de la matérialité savante'. *Histoire. Questions de communication* 38 (2): 293–310.
- Lamy, Jérôme, and Arnaud Saint-Martin. 2023. 'Hélène Metzger et les mentalités savantes'. *Zilsel* 12 (1): 323–27.
- Lange, Friedrich Albert. 1865. *Die Arbeiterfrage in ihrer Bedeutung für Gegenwart und Zukunft*. Duisburg: Verlag von W. Falk & Volmer.
- . 1866. *J. St. Mill's Ansichten über die sociale Frage und die angebliche Umwälzung der Socialwissenschaft durch Carey*. Duisburg: Verlag von Falk & Lange.
- . (1866) 1914a. *Geschichte des Materialismus und Kritik seiner Bedeutung in der Gegenwart*. Edited by Hermann Cohen. 2 vols. Leipzig: Verlag von Friedrich Brandstetter.
- . (1866) 1914b. *Geschichte des Materialismus und Kritik seiner Bedeutung in der Gegenwart. Zweites Buch. Geschichte des Materialismus seit Kant*. Edited by Hermann Cohen. Vol. 2. Leipzig: Verlag von Friedrich Brandstetter.
- Langlois, Charles-Victor, and Charles Seignobos. 1898. *Introduction aux études historiques*. Paris: Hachette.
- Laplanche, Jean, and Jean-Bertrand Pontalis. (1967) 1972. *Das Vokabular der Psychoanalyse*. Translated by Emma Moersch. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.

- Latour, Bruno. 1987. *Science in Action. How to Follow Scientists and Engineers through Society*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- . 1988. 'The Politics of Explanation: An Alternative'. In *Knowledge and Reflexivity. New Frontiers in the Sociology of Knowledge*, edited by Steve Woolgar, 155–76. London/Newbury Park/Beverly Hills/New Delhi: Sage Publications.
- . (1991) 1997. *Nous n'avons jamais été modernes. Essai d'anthropologie symétrique*. Poche / Sciences humaines et sociales 26. Paris: La Découverte.
- . 2005. *Reassembling the Social. An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- . (1984) 2011. *Pasteur: guerre et paix des microbes'. Suivi de Irréductions*. La Découverte Poche. 2nd ed. Paris: La Découverte.
- Latour, Bruno, and Steve Woolgar. 1979. *Laboratory Life. The Social Construction of Scientific Facts*. Sage Library of Social Research 80. Beverly Hills et al.: Sage.
- . 1986. 'Postscript to Second Edition (1986)'. In *Laboratory Life. The Construction of Scientific Facts*, 2nd ed., 273–86. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- . (1979) 1986. *Laboratory Life. The Construction of Scientific Facts*. 2nd ed. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Laube, Reinhard. 2001. "'Perspektivität": Ein wissenssoziologisches Problem zwischen kulturbedingter Entproblematisierung und kulturwissenschaftlicher Reproblematisierung'. In *Das Problem der Problemgeschichte 1880-1932*, edited by Otto Gerhard Oexle, 129–79. Göttinger Gespräche zur Geschichtswissenschaft 12. Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag.
- . 2004. *Karl Mannheim und die Krise des Historismus. Historismus als wissenssoziologischer Perspektivismus*. Veröffentlichungen des Max-Planck-Instituts für Geschichte 196. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
- Lazarsfeld, Paul F. 1970. 'Sociology'. In *Main Trends of Research in the Social and Human Sciences. Part One: Social Sciences*, edited by UNESCO, with René Maheu, 61–165. Paris/The Hague: Mouton/Unesco.
- . (1960) 1975. 'Vorspruch zur neuen Auflage'. In *Die Arbeitslosen von Marienthal. Ein soziographischer Versuch über die Wirkungen langandauernder Arbeitslosigkeit. Mit einem Anhang zur Geschichte der Soziographie*, by Marie Jahoda, Paul F. Lazarsfeld, and Hans Zeisel, 11–23. edition suhrkamp 769. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.
- . (1934) 2007. 'Prinzipielles zur Soziographie'. In *Empirische Analyse des Handelns. Ausgewählte Schriften*, by Paul F. Lazarsfeld, edited by Christian Fleck and Nico Stehr, translated by Hella Beister, 264–89. suhrkamp taschenbuch wissenschaft 1822. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.
- Lazarsfeld, Paul F., Bernard Berelson, and Hazel Gaudet. (1944) 1960. *The People's Choice. How the Voter Makes up His Mind in a Presidential Campaign*. 5th ed. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Lazarus, Moritz. 1872. 'Vorbemerkung des Herausgebers'. In *Die religiösen, politischen und sozialen Ideen der asiatischen Culturvölker und der Aegypter in ihrer historischen Entwicklung*, by Carl Twesten, edited by Moritz Lazarus, 1:III–VI. Berlin: Ferd. Dümmlers Verlagsbuchhandlung.
- Lazarus, Moritz, and Heymann Steinthal. 1860. 'Einleitende Gedanken über Völkerpsychologie als Einladung zu einer Zeitschrift für Völkerpsychologie und Sprachwissenschaft'. *Zeitschrift für Völkerpsychologie und Sprachwissenschaft* 1: 1–73.
- . 1971. *Moritz Lazarus und Heymann Steinthal. Die Begründer der Völkerpsychologie in ihren Briefen*. Edited by Ingrid Belke. Tübingen: Mohr.
- Le Goff, Jacques. 1974. 'Les mentalités. Une histoire ambiguë'. In *Faire de l'histoire. III. Nouveaux objets*, edited by Jacques Le Goff and Pierre Nora, 106–29. Folio Histoire. Paris: Gallimard.
- . 2014. *Faut-il vraiment découper l'histoire en tranches?* La librairie du XXIe siècle. Paris: Seuil.

- Leblanc, Guillemette. 2023. 'Rickert en France (1890-1940)'. *Les Cahiers philosophiques de Strasbourg* 54: 179–205.
- Lecourt, Dominique. 1969. *L'épistémologie historique de Gaston Bachelard*. Bibliothèque d'histoire de la philosophie. Paris: Vrin.
- Leibniz, Gottfried Wilhelm. (1704) 1882. 'Nouveaux essais sur l'entendement humain'. In *Die philosophischen Schriften von Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz*, by Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, edited by Carl Immanuel Gerhardt, 5:39–509. Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung.
- . (1714) 1887. 'X. Leibniz an Bourguet'. In *Die philosophischen Schriften von Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz*, edited by Carl Immanuel Gerhardt, 3:564–70. Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung.
- Lemaine, Gérard, Roy MacLeod, Michael Mulkay, and Peter Weingart, eds. 1976. *Perspectives on the Emergence of Scientific Disciplines*. Maison Des Sciences de l'Homme, Paris. Publications 4. The Hague/Paris: Mouton/Maison des Sciences de l'Homme.
- Lengermann, Patricia M., and Gillian Niebrugge. 2016. 'Scholarship and Advocacy: Continuing the Feminist Revision of Sociology's History'. *Contemporary Sociology: A Journal of Reviews* 45 (5): 558–62.
- Lengermann, Patricia Madoo, and Gillian Niebrugge. (1998) 2007. 'Present at the Creation - Women in the History of Sociology and Social Theory'. In *The Women Founders: Sociology and Social Theory, 1830-1930. A Text/Reader*, 1–21. Long Grove, Illinois: Waveland Press.
- Lenin, Wladimir Iljitsch. (1895–1911) 1962. *Band 34. November 1895-November 1911*. Edited by Institut für Marxismus-Leninismus beim ZK der KPdSU and Institut für Marxismus-Leninismus beim ZK der SED. Werke 34. Berlin: Dietz Verlag.
- . (1909) 1962. *Materialismus und Empirio-kritizismus. Kritische Bemerkungen über eine reaktionäre Philosophie*. Edited by Institut für Marxismus-Leninismus beim ZK der SED. Werke 14. Berlin: Dietz Verlag.
- Lenoir, Raymond. 1924. *Condillac*. Bibliothèque de philosophie contemporaine. Paris: Alcan.
- . 1930. 'À propos des formes et aires de civilisation'. In *Civilisation. Le mot et l'idée*, edited by Henri Berr and Centre international de Synthèse, with Lucien Febvre, Émile Tonnelat, Marcel Mauss, Alfredo Niceforo, and Louis Weber. Première Semaine internationale de Synthèse (20-25 mai 1929). Deuxième Fascicule. Paris: La Renaissance du livre.
- . 1938. 'Bergsonisme et sociologie'. *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale* 45 (2): 255–68.
- Lepenes, Wolf. 1978. 'Wissenschaftsgeschichte und Disziplingeschichte'. *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 4 (4): 437–51.
- . 1981a. 'Einleitung. Studien zur kognitiven, sozialen und historischen Identität der Soziologie'. In *Geschichte der Soziologie. Studien zur kognitiven, sozialen und historischen Identität einer Disziplin*, edited by Wolf Lepenes, 1:I–XXXV. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.
- , ed. 1981b. *Geschichte der Soziologie. Studien zur kognitiven, sozialen und historischen Identität einer Disziplin*. 4 vols. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.
- . 1983. 'Contribution à une histoire des rapports entre la sociologie et la philosophie'. Translated by Pierre Bourdieu. *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 47 (1): 37–44.
- . 1984. "'Interesting Questions" in the History of Philosophy and Elsewhere'. In *Philosophy in History. Essays on the Historiography of Philosophy*, edited by Richard Rorty, Jerome B. Schneewind, and Quentin Skinner, 141–71. Ideas in Context. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- . (1985) 2006a. 'Deutscher Geist in Gefahr: E.R. Curtius, Karl Mannheim und T.S. Eliot'. In *Die drei Kulturen. Soziologie zwischen Literatur und Wissenschaft*, 3rd ed., 377–401. 3rd ed. Frankfurt/Main: S. Fischer Verlag.
- . (1985) 2006b. *Die drei Kulturen. Soziologie zwischen Literatur und Wissenschaft*. 3rd ed. Frankfurt/Main: S. Fischer Verlag.
- . (1985) 2006c. *Die drei Kulturen. Soziologie zwischen Literatur und Wissenschaft*. 3rd ed. Frankfurt/Main: S. Fischer Verlag.
- Lepetit, Bernard. 1996. 'De l'échelle en histoire'. In *Jeux d'échelles. La micro-analyse à l'expérience*, edited by Jacques Revel, 71–94. Hautes études. Paris: Gallimard/Le Seuil.
- Lepetit, Bernard and Les Annales. 1989. 'Tentons l'expérience'. *Annales. Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations* 44 (6): 1317–23.
- Lepsius, M. Rainer. 2011. 'Max Weber und die Gründung der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Soziologie'. *Soziologie - Forum der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Soziologie*, no. 1 (February): 7–19.
- Leroux, Robert. 1998. *Histoire et sociologie en France. De l'histoire-science à la sociologie durkheimienne*. Le sociologue. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
- . (1998) 2018. *History and Sociology in France. From Scientific History to the Durkheimian School*. Routledge Approaches to History 23. New York/London: Routledge.
- Les Annales, ed. 2015. 'La longue durée en débat'. *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales* (Paris) 70 (2): 285–378.
- Lessing, Hans-Ulrich. 2016. "Empirie und nicht Empirismus". Diltthey und John Stuart Mill'. In *Diltthey als Wissenschaftsphilosoph*, edited by Christian Damböck and Hans-Ulrich Lessing, 41–62. Freiburg/München: Karl Alber.
- Levi, Albert William. 1974. *Philosophy as Social Expression*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Levi, Giovanni. (1991) 2001. 'On Microhistory'. In *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*, 2nd ed., edited by Peter Burke, 93–113. 2nd ed. University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Levine, Donald N. 1995. *Visions of the Sociological Tradition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Levine, Emily J. 2013. *Dreamland of Humanists. Warburg, Cassirer, Panofsky, and the Hamburg School*. Chicago/London: The University of Chicago Press.
- Lévi-Strauss, Claude. 1962. *Le Totémisme aujourd'hui*. Mythes et religions. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
- . 1963. 'Réponses à quelques questions'. *Esprit* 322: 628–53.
- . (1949) 1974. 'Introduction: Histoire et ethnologie'. In *Anthropologie structurale*, 9–39. Agora. Paris: Plon/Pocket.
- . (1958) 1974. *Anthropologie structurale*. Agora. Paris: Plon/Pocket.
- . (1962) 1990. *La Pensée sauvage*. Agora. Paris: Plon.
- . (1960) 1996a. 'Ce que l'ethnologie doit à Durkheim'. In *Anthropologie structurale deux*, 57–62. Agora. Paris: Plon/Pocket.
- . (1960) 1996b. 'Le champ de l'anthropologie'. In *Anthropologie structurale deux*, 11–44. Agora. Paris: Plon/Pocket.
- . (1950) 2013. 'Introduction à l'oeuvre de Marcel Mauss'. In *Sociologie et anthropologie*, 13th ed., by Marcel Mauss, IX–LII. Quadriga. 13th ed. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
- Lévy-Bruhl, Lucien. 1900. *La philosophie d'Auguste Comte*. Bibliothèque de philosophie contemporaine. Paris: Alcan.
- . 1910. *Les fonctions mentales dans les sociétés inférieures*. Travaux de L'Année sociologique, publiés sous la direction de M. E. Durkheim. Paris: Alcan.
- . (1910) 1921. *Das Denken der Naturvölker*. Edited by Wilhelm Jerusalem. Translated by Paul Friedländer. Wien/Leipzig: Braumüller.

- . 1922. *La mentalité primitive*. Travaux de l'Année sociologique. Paris: Alcan.
- . (1910) 1951. *Les fonctions mentales dans les sociétés inférieures*. Bibliothèque de philosophie contemporaine. 9th ed. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
- . (1934) 1952. 'A Letter of E. E. Evans-Pritchard'. *The British Journal of Sociology* 3 (2): 117–23.
- . (1922) 2010. *La mentalité primitive*. Edited by Frédéric Keck. Champs classiques. Paris: Flammarion.
- Lewis, Clarence Irving. 1923. 'A Pragmatic Conception of the A Priori'. *The Journal of Philosophy* 20 (7): 169–77.
- . 1929. *Mind and the World-Order. Outline of a Theory of Knowledge*. New York/Chicago/Boston: Charles Scribner's Sons.
- Lichtblau, Klaus. 2018. 'Anfänge der Soziologie in Deutschland (1871-1918)'. In *Handbuch Geschichte der deutschsprachigen Soziologie. Band 1: Geschichte der Soziologie im deutschsprachigen Raum*, edited by Stephan Moebius and Andrea Ploder, 11–35. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.
- Liebmann, Otto. 1865. *Kant und die Epigonen. Eine kritische Abhandlung*. Stuttgart: Carl Schöber.
- Lightman, Bernard, ed. 2015. *Global Spencerism. The Communication and Appropriation of a British Evolutionist*. Leiden: Brill.
- Linguiti, Gennar Luigi. 1989. 'Il kantismo evoluzionista di Spencer'. *Studi Kantiani* 2: 57–95.
- Lipton, Peter. (2001) 2003. 'Kant on Wheels'. *Social Epistemology* 17 (2–3): 215–19.
- Littre, Émile. 1863. *Auguste Comte et la philosophie positive*. Paris: Hachette.
- Livingston, Eric. 1986. *The Ethnomethodological Foundations of Mathematics*. Studies in Ethnomethodology. London/Boston/Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Lloyd, G.E.R. 1990. *Demystifying Mentalities. Themes in the Social Sciences*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Loison, Laurent. 2016. 'Forms of Presentism in the History of Science. Rethinking the Project of Historical Epistemology'. *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science Part A* 60 (December): 29–37.
- Lovejoy, Arthur O. 1936. *The Great Chain of Being. A Study of the History of an Idea*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- Löwith, Karl. (1941) 1995. *Von Hegel zu Nietzsche. Der revolutionäre Bruch im Denken des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts*. Philosophische Bibliothek 480. Hamburg: Meiner.
- Löwy, Michael. 2012. 'Un malentendu disciplinaire: Note sur la réception allemande des *Formes*'. *Archives de sciences sociales des religions* 159 (September): 63–87.
- Lu-Adler, Huaping. 2023. *Kant, Race, and Racism. Views from Somewhere*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lübbe, Hermann. 1958. 'Die politische Theorie des Neukantianismus und der Marxismus'. *Archiv für Rechts- und Sozialphilosophie* 44 (3): 333–50.
- . 1963a. *Politische Philosophie in Deutschland. Studien zu ihrer Geschichte*. Basel/Stuttgart: Benno Schwabe.
- . 1963b. 'Zweiter Teil. Neukantianischer Sozialismus'. In *Politische Philosophie in Deutschland. Studien zu ihrer Geschichte*, 85–125. Basel/Stuttgart: Benno Schwabe.
- Lucas, Solange. 2020. 'Um der französischen Kritik willen. Pierre Bourdieu liest Peter Szondi's Aufsatz "Über philologische Erkenntnis" (1962)'. In *Geschichte der Philologien*, edited by Christoph König and Anna Kinder, 114–23. Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag.
- Luft, Sebastian. 2015a. 'Philosophical Historiography in Marburg Neo-Kantianism: The Example of Cassirer's Erkenntnisproblem'. In *From Hegel to Windelband*, edited by Gerald Hartung and Valentin Pluder, 181–206. De Gruyter.
- . 2015b. 'The A Priori of Culture: Philosophy of Culture Between Rationalism and Relativism. The Example of Lévi-Strauss' Structural Anthropology'. In *The Philosophy of*

- Ernst Cassirer*, edited by J. Tyler Friedman and Sebastian Luft. Berlin, München, Boston: De Gruyter.
- . 2021. ‘Abhandlungen zur Philosophie Kants’. In *Simmel-Handbuch. Leben - Werk - Wirkung*, edited by Jörn Bohr, Gerald Hartung, Heike Koenig, and Tim-Florian Steinbach, 247–55. Berlin: J.B. Metzler/Springer.
- Luft, Sebastian, and Fabien Capeillères. 2010. ‘Neo-Kantianism in Germany and France’. In *The History of Continental Philosophy*, edited by Alan D. Schrift, 47–85. Durham: Taylor & Francis (Acumen).
- Lukács, Georg. (1954) 1962. *Die Zerstörung der Vernunft*. Georg Lukács Werke 9. Neuwied: Luchterhand.
- . (1923) 1968a. *Geschichte und Klassenbewußtsein*. Georg Lukács Werke 2. Neuwied: Luchterhand.
- . (1923) 1968b. ‘Geschichte und Klassenbewußtsein. Studien über marxistische Dialektik’. In *Geschichte und Klassenbewußtsein*, 161–517. Georg Lukács Werke 2. Neuwied: Luchterhand.
- . (1923) 2013. *Geschichte und Klassenbewußtsein*. Georg Lukács Werke 2. Bielefeld: Aisthesis.
- Lukes, Steven. 1982. ‘Comments on David Bloor’. *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science Part A* 13 (4): 313–18.
- . (1973) 1985. *Emile Durkheim. His Life and Work. A Historical and Critical Study*. 2nd ed. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Lynch, Michael. 1992a. ‘Extending Wittgenstein: The Pivotal Move from Epistemology to the Sociology of Science’. In *Science as Practice and Culture*, edited by Andrew Pickering, 215–65. Chicago/London: The University of Chicago Press.
- . 1992b. ‘From the “Will to Theory” to the Discursive Collage: A Reply to Bloor’s “Left and Right Wittgensteinians”’. In *Science as Practice and Culture*, edited by Andrew Pickering, 283–300. Chicago/London: The University of Chicago Press.
- . 1993. *Scientific Practice and Ordinary Action. Ethnomethodology and Social Studies of Science*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- . 2000. ‘Against Reflexivity as an Academic Virtue and Source of Privileged Knowledge’. *Theory, Culture & Society* 17 (3): 26–54.
- Mach, Ernst. (1905) 2011. ‘Das Problem’. In *Erkenntnis und Irrtum. Skizzen zur Psychologie der Forschung*, edited by Elisabeth Nemeth and Friedrich Stadler, 261–83. Ernst Mach Studienausgabe 2. Berlin: Xenomoi.
- Machhausen, Max. 1937. *Die Problematik des objektiven Geistes und der Begriff des Kollektivbewusstseins bei Émile Durkheim*. Köln: Druckerei W. May.
- Magerski, Christine. 2004. ‘Reaching beyond the Supra-Historical Sphere: From Cassirer’s Philosophy of Symbolic Forms to Bourdieu’s Sociology of Symbolic Forms’. In *Practising Theory. Pierre Bourdieu and the Field of Cultural Production*, edited by Jeff Browitt and Brian Nelson, 21–29. Newark: University of Delaware Press.
- . 2005. ‘Die Wirkungsmacht des Symbolischen. Von Cassirers Philosophie der symbolischen Formen zu Bourdieus Soziologie der symbolischen Formen’. *Zeitschrift für Soziologie* 34 (2): 112–27.
- Maigné, Carole, ed. 2021. *Herbartism in Austrian Philosophy*. Meinong Studies/Meinong Studien 11. Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter.
- Maigné, Carole, Audrey Rieber, and Céline Trautmann-Waller, eds. 2018. ‘La Kulturwissenschaftliche Bibliothek Warburg comme laboratoire’. *Revue germanique internationale* 28.
- Majetschak, Stefan. 2012. ‘Die anthropologische Betrachtungsweise. Zum Einfluss von James George Frazers The Golden Bough auf die Entwicklung der Spätphilosophie Ludwig Wittgensteins’. *Wittgenstein-Studien* 3 (1): 217–32.

- . 2016. 'Survey and Surveyability. Remarks on Two Central Notions in Wittgenstein's Later Philosophy'. *Wittgenstein-Studien* 7 (1): 65–80.
- Malherbe, Michel. 1994. 'Bacon, Diderot et l'ordre encyclopédique'. *Revue de synthèse* 115 (1): 13–37.
- Malter, Rudolf. 1986. 'Kant in der biographischen Forschung'. In *Immanuel Kants Leben*, 4th ed., by Karl Vorländer, edited by Rudolf Malter, XIII–XXX. Philosophische Bibliothek 126. Hamburg: Meiner.
- . 1992. 'Bibliographie zur Biographie Immanuel Kants'. In *Immanuel Kant. Der Mann und das Werk*, 3rd ed., by Karl Vorländer, edited by Rudolf Malter, with Heiner Klemme, 405–29. Hamburg: Meiner.
- Mandelbaum, Maurice. 1976. 'On the Historiography of Philosophy'. *Philosophy Research Archives* 2: 708–44.
- Mandrou, Robert. 1961. *Introduction à la France moderne. Essai de psychologie historique. 1500-1640*. With Paul Chalus. L'Évolution de l'humanité. Paris: Albin Michel.
- Mannheim, Karl. 1925. 'Das Problem einer Soziologie des Wissens'. *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik* 53: 577–652.
- . 1927. 'Das konservative Denken. Soziologische Beiträge zum Werden des politisch-historischen Denkens in Deutschland'. *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik* 57: 68–142, 470–95.
- . 1929. 'Die Bedeutung der Konkurrenz im Gebiete des Geistigen'. In *Verhandlungen des Sechsten Deutschen Soziologentages vom 17. bis 19. September 1928 in Zürich*, edited by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Soziologie, 35–83. Schriften der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Soziologie. 1. Serie: Verhandlungen der Deutschen Soziologentage 6. Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck).
- . 1931. 'Wissenssoziologie'. In *Handwörterbuch der Soziologie*, edited by Alfred Vierkandt, 659–80. Stuttgart: Enke.
- . 1932. *Die Gegenwartsaufgaben der Soziologie. Ihre Lehrgestalt*. Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck).
- . 1964. *Wissenssoziologie. Auswahl aus dem Werk*. Edited by Kurt H. Wolff. Soziologische Texte 28. Berlin/Neuwied: Luchterhand.
- . (1921–1922) 1964. 'Beiträge zur Theorie der Weltanschauungs-Interpretation'. In *Wissenssoziologie. Auswahl aus dem Werk*, edited by Kurt H. Wolff, 91–154. Soziologische Texte 28. Berlin/Neuwied: Luchterhand.
- . (1922) 1964a. 'Die Strukturanalyse der Erkenntnistheorie'. In *Wissenssoziologie. Auswahl aus dem Werk*, edited by Kurt H. Wolff, 166–245. Soziologische Texte 28. Berlin/Neuwied: Luchterhand.
- . (1922) 1964b. 'Zum Problem einer Klassifikation der Wissenschaften'. In *Wissenssoziologie. Auswahl aus dem Werk*, edited by Kurt H. Wolff, 155–65. Soziologische Texte 28. Berlin/Neuwied: Luchterhand.
- . (1925) 1964. 'Das Problem einer Soziologie des Wissens'. In *Wissenssoziologie. Auswahl aus dem Werk*, edited by Kurt H. Wolff, 308–87. Soziologische Texte 28. Berlin/Neuwied: Luchterhand.
- . (1926) 1964. 'Ideologische und soziologische Interpretation der geistigen Gebilde'. In *Wissenssoziologie. Auswahl aus dem Werk*, edited by Kurt H. Wolff, 388–407. Soziologische Texte 28. Berlin/Neuwied: Luchterhand.
- . (1927) 1964. 'Das konservative Denken. Soziologische Beiträge zum Werden des politisch-historischen Denkens in Deutschland'. In *Wissenssoziologie. Auswahl aus dem Werk*, edited by Kurt H. Wolff, 408–508. Soziologische Texte 28. Berlin/Neuwied: Luchterhand.
- . (1928) 1964a. 'Das Problem der Generationen'. In *Wissenssoziologie. Auswahl aus dem Werk*, edited by Kurt H. Wolff, 509–65. Soziologische Texte 28. Berlin/Neuwied: Luchterhand.

- . (1928) 1964b. 'Die Bedeutung der Konkurrenz im Gebiete des Geistigen'. In *Wissenssoziologie. Auswahl aus dem Werk*, edited by Kurt H. Wolff, 566–613. Soziologische Texte 28. Berlin/Neuwied: Luchterhand.
- . (1946) 1971. 'Foreword'. In *The Feminine Character. History of an Ideology*, 2nd ed., by Viola Klein, xxxv–xlii. 2nd ed. Urbana/Chicago/London: University of Illinois Press.
- . (1929) 1982. 'Zur Problematik der Soziologie in Deutschland'. In *Der Streit um die Wissenssoziologie*, edited by Volker Meja and Nico Stehr, 2:427–37. Frankfurt/New York: Suhrkamp.
- . (1929) 1995. *Ideologie und Utopie*. 8th ed. Frankfurt/Main: Vittorio Klostermann.
- . (1931) 1995. 'Wissenssoziologie'. In *Ideologie und Utopie*, 8th ed., 227–67. 8th ed. Frankfurt/Main: Vittorio Klostermann.
- . (1922) 2003. 'Über die Eigenart kultursoziologischer Erkenntnis'. In *Strukturen des Denkens*, edited by Volker Meja and Nico Stehr, 33–154. suhrkamp taschenbuch wissenschaft 298. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.
- . (1924–1925) 2003. 'Eine soziologische Theorie der Kultur und ihrer Erkennbarkeit (Konjunktives und kommunikatives Denken)'. In *Strukturen des Denkens*, edited by Volker Meja and Nico Stehr, 155–322. suhrkamp taschenbuch wissenschaft 298. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.
- . (1917) 2004. 'Karl Mannheim: Rezension von Ernst Cassirer, Freiheit und Form. Studien zur deutschen Geistesgeschichte (Berlin 1917), in: Athenaeum. Új folyam (Neue Folge) 3 (1917), S. 409–413. (Deutsche Übersetzung)'. In *Karl Mannheim und die Krise des Historismus. Historismus als wissenssoziologischer Perspektivismus*, by Reinhard Laube. Veröffentlichungen des Max-Planck-Instituts für Geschichte 196. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
- Manzo, Gianluca, and Mohamed Cherkaoui. (2001) 2015. 'Macrosociology-Microsociology'. In *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences*, 2nd ed., edited by James D. Wright, 414–21. 2nd ed. Oxford: Elsevier.
- Marcel, Jean-Christophe. 2001a. 'Georges Gurvitch: les raisons d'un succès'. *Cahiers internationaux de sociologie* 110 (1): 97–119.
- . 2001b. *Le durkheimisme dans l'entre-deux-guerres*. Sociologie d'aujourd'hui. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
- . 2007. 'Mémoire, espace et connaissance chez Maurice Halbwachs'. In *Maurice Halbwachs, sociologue retrouvé*, edited by Marie Jaisson and Christian Baudelot, 103–26. Paris: Éditions Rue d'Ulm.
- . 2020. 'On Halbwachs's Sociology of Knowledge Program: The Two Hidden Categories of "La doctrine d'Émile Durkheim"'. *Durkheimian Studies*, no. 1: 133–43.
- . 2022. 'Durkheim propagandiste ou la justification sociologique de la guerre'. *Revue de Synthèse* 144 (1–2): 7–30.
- Marcuse, Herbert. (1929) 1982. 'Zur Wahrheitsproblematik der soziologischen Methode'. In *Der Streit um die Wissenssoziologie*, edited by Volker Meja and Nico Stehr, 2:459–73. suhrkamp taschenbuch wissenschaft 361. Frankfurt/New York: Suhrkamp.
- Marica, George E. 1932. *Emile Durkheim. Soziologie und Soziologismus*. Sozialwissenschaftliche Bausteine (ed. by F. K. Mann, Köln) 6. Jena: Fischer.
- Marinelli, Lydia, and Andreas Mayer. 2006. 'Editors' Introduction: Forgetting Freud? For a New Historiography of Psychoanalysis'. *Science in Context* 19 (1): 1–13.
- Martin, John Levi. 2024. *The True, the Good, and the Beautiful. The Rise and Fall and Rise of an Architectonic for Action*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Marx, Karl. 1847. *Misère de la philosophie. Réponse à la Philosophie de la Misère de M. Proudhon*. Paris/Bruxelles: A. Frank/C. G. Vogler.
- . (1867) 1962a. *Das Kapital. Kritik der politischen Ökonomie. Erster Band*. Karl Marx-Friedrich Engels Werke 23. Berlin: Dietz Verlag.

- . (1867) 1962b. ‘Der Fetischcharakter der Ware und sein Geheimnis’. In *Das Kapital. Kritik der politischen Ökonomie. Erster Band*, 85–98. Karl Marx-Friedrich Engels Werke 23. Berlin: Dietz Verlag.
- . (1873) 1962. ‘Nachwort zur zweiten Auflage’. In *Das Kapital. Kritik der politischen Ökonomie. Erster Band*, 18–28. Karl Marx-Friedrich Engels Werke 23. Berlin: Dietz Verlag.
- . (1846) 1977. ‘Karl Marx an P.W. Annenkow’. In *Werke. Band 4*, by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, edited by Institut für Marxismus-Leninismus beim ZK der SED, 547–57. Karl Marx/Friedrich Engels Werke (MEW) 4. Berlin: Dietz Verlag.
- . (1847) 1977. ‘Das Elend der Philosophie. Antwort auf Proudhons “Philosophie des Elends”’. In *Werke. Band 4*, by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, edited by Institut für Marxismus-Leninismus beim ZK der SED, translated by Eduard Bernstein and Karl Kautsky, 63–182. Karl Marx/Friedrich Engels Werke (MEW) 4. Berlin: Dietz Verlag.
- Marx, Karl, and Friedrich Engels. 1962. *Werke. Band 20*. Edited by Institut für Marxismus-Leninismus beim ZK der SED. Karl Marx-Friedrich Engels Werke 20. Berlin: Dietz Verlag.
- . (1848) 1977. ‘Manifest der Kommunistischen Partei’. In *Werke. Band 4*, edited by Institut für Marxismus-Leninismus beim ZK der SED, 459–93. Karl Marx/Friedrich Engels Werke (MEW) 4. Berlin: Dietz Verlag.
- . (1845–1846) 1990. ‘Die deutsche Ideologie. Kritik der neuesten deutschen Philosophie in ihren Repräsentanten Feuerbach, B. Bauer und Stirner, und des deutschen Sozialismus in seinen verschiedenen Propheten’. In *Werke. Band 3*, by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, edited by Institut für Marxismus-Leninismus beim ZK der SED, 9–530. Karl Marx-Friedrich Engels Werke (MEW) 3. Berlin: Dietz Verlag.
- Maso, Benjo. 1992. ‘Elias en de neokantianen. Intellectuele achtergronden van *Het civilisatieproces*’. *Amsterdams Sociologisch Tijdschrift* 19 (1): 22–64.
- . 1995. ‘Elias and the Neo-Kantians: Intellectual Backgrounds of *The Civilizing Process*’. *Theory, Culture & Society* 12: 43–79.
- Massicotte, Guy. 1981. *L’histoire problème. La méthode de Lucien Febvre*. Méthodes des sciences humaines 4. Paris: Maloine.
- Massimilla, Edoardo. 2012. *Max Weber zwischen Heinrich Rickert und Johannes von Kries*. Collegium Hermeneuticum 13. Köln: Böhlau.
- Masson, Philippe, and Cherry Schrecker. 2016. *Sociology in France after 1945*. Sociology Transformed. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Masson-Oursel, Paul. 1923. *La philosophie comparée. Thèse présentée à la Faculté des Lettres de l’Université de Paris*. Presses Universitaires de France.
- . 1926. ‘Instructions pour la rédaction des articles du Vocabulaire’. *Bulletin du Centre international de Synthèse. Section de Synthèse historique* 1 (June): 28–29.
- . 1930. ‘Note sur la civilisation indienne’. In *Civilisation. Le mot et l’idée*, edited by Henri Berr and Centre international de Synthèse, with Lucien Febvre, Émile Tonnellat, Marcel Mauss, Alfredo Niceforo, and Louis Weber. Première Semaine internationale de Synthèse (20–25 mai 1929). Deuxième Fascicule. Paris: La Renaissance du livre.
- . 1936. ‘Les préfixes verbaux en indo-européen et leur influence sur la logique’. In *Actes du Congrès international de philosophie scientifique. Sorbonne. Paris 1935. III. Langage et pseudo-problèmes*, 16–17. Actualités scientifiques et industrielles 390. Paris: Hermann.
- . 1939. ‘Disciples ou élèves de L. Lévy-Bruhl’. *Revue Philosophique de la France et de l’Étranger* 127 (5/6): 258–60.
- Masson-Oursel, Paul, Helena Willman-Grabowska, and Philippe Stern. 1933. *L’Inde antique et la civilisation indienne. L’Évolution de l’humanité*. Bibliothèque de synthèse historique. Première section. Antiquité 26. Paris: La Renaissance du livre.

- Masterman, Margaret. 1970. 'The Nature of a Paradigm'. In *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge*, edited by Imre Lakatos and Alan Musgrave, 59–89. Proceedings of the International Colloquium in the Philosophy of Science, London, 1965 4. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Matonti, Frédérique. 2005. *Intellectuels communistes. Essai sur l'obéissance politique*. La Nouvelle Critique (1967-1980). L'espace de l'histoire. Paris: La Découverte.
- . 2009. 'L'anneau de Möbius: La réception en France des formalistes russes'. *Philosophie. Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 176177 (1): 52–67.
- . 2012. 'Plaidoyer pour une histoire sociale des idées politiques'. *Sociologie. Revue d'histoire moderne & contemporaine* 59–4bis (5): 85–104.
- Maublanc, René. 1930. 'Durkheim professeur de philosophie'. *Europe. Revue mensuelle*, no. 86 (February): 296–303.
- Maublanc, René. (1934) 2011. 'Marx et Durkheim'. *Durkheimian Studies/Études Durkheimiennes* 17: 8–54.
- Mauss, Marcel. 1925. 'Ogden (C. K.) and Richards (I. A.). - The Meaning of Meaning. A study of the Influence of Language upon Thought and of the Science of Symbolism. 1923 - Ranulf (Sv.). - Der Eleatische Satz vom Widerspruch. 1924 - Cassirer (E.) - Philosophie der Symbolischen Formen. I. Die Sprache. 1923'. *L'Année sociologique. Nouvelle série* 1 (1923-1924): 256–60.
- . 1927. 'Divisions et proportions des divisions de la sociologie'. *L'Année sociologique. Nouvelle série* 2 (1924-1925): 98–176.
- . 1930. 'Les civilisations. Éléments et formes'. In *Civilisation. Le mot et l'idée*, edited by Henri Berr, with Lucien Febvre, Émile Tonnelat, Marcel Mauss, A. Niceforo, and Louis Weber, 81–106. Centre international de synthèse. Paris: La Renaissance du livre.
- . (1924) 1950. 'Rapports réels et pratiques de la psychologie et de la sociologie'. In *Sociologie et anthropologie*, 281–310. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
- . (1938) 1950. 'Une catégorie de l'esprit humain: la notion de personne, celle de "moi"'. In *Sociologie et anthropologie*, by Marcel Mauss, with Claude Lévi-Strauss, 333–62. Quadrige. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
- . (1927) 2004. 'Ernst Cassirer. - Philosophie der Symbolischen Formen, vol. 2: Das Mythische Denken. - Vorwort, p. VII-XIV, Berlin, Bruno Cassirer, Darmstadt, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1925, XVI-320 p.' *L'Année sociologique* 54 (1): 77–82.
- . (1925) 2013. 'Essai sur le don. Forme et raison de l'échange dans les sociétés archaïques'. In *Sociologie et anthropologie*, 13th ed., with Claude Lévi-Strauss, 145–279. Quadrige. 13th ed. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
- . (1936) 2013. 'Les techniques du corps'. In *Sociologie et anthropologie*, 13th ed., with Claude Lévi-Strauss, 363–86. Quadrige. 13th ed. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
- . (1947) 2021. *Manuel d'ethnographie*. Petite Bibliothèque Payot. Paris: Payot.
- Mauss, Marcel, and Henri Beuchat. 1906. 'Essai sur les variations saisonnières des sociétés eskimos. Étude de morphologie sociale'. *L'Année sociologique* 9: 26–132.
- Mauss, Marcel, Paul Fauconnet, Dominique Parodi, and Paul Lapie. 1979. 'Correspondance reçue par Célestin Bouglé (de Lapie, Parodi, Fauconnet et Mauss)'. *Revue française de sociologie* 20 (1): 32–48.
- Mauss, Marcel, and Henri Hubert. 1900. 'Review of Baldwin Spencer and F.J. Gillen's Native Tribes of Central Australia (1899)'. *L'Année sociologique* 3 (1898-1899): 205–15.
- . (1904) 2013. 'Esquisse d'une théorie générale de la magie'. In *Sociologie et anthropologie*, 13th ed., by Marcel Mauss, with Claude Lévi-Strauss, 1–141. Quadrige. 13th ed. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
- Mayer, Andreas. 2017. 'Écrire l'histoire de la psychanalyse: le problème du contexte'. *Revue d'histoire des sciences humaines* 30 (April): 30.

- . 2020. ‘Wie schreibt man keine Freud-Biographie?’ *Zeitschrift für Ideengeschichte* 14 (4): 68–84.
- McCarthy, E. Doyle. 2016. ‘Knowledge, Sociology Of’. In *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology*, edited by George Ritzer.
- McMahon, Darrin M., and Samuel Moyn, eds. 2014. *Rethinking Modern European Intellectual History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Meer, Rudolf. 2019. ‘Eingebildete Gegenstände. Kants Konzept des focus imaginarius im Spannungsfeld der Träume eines Geistersehers und der Kritik der reinen Vernunft’. In *Konzepte der Einbildungskraft in der Philosophie, den Wissenschaften und den Künsten des 18. Jahrhunderts: Festschrift zum 65. Geburtstag von Udo Thiel*, edited by Rudolf Meer, Giuseppe Motta, and Gideon Stiening, 411–34. Berlin: De Gruyter.
- Mehring, Franz. 1922. *Deutsche Geschichte vom Ausgange des Mittelalters. Ein Leitfaden für Lehrende und Lernende*. Berlin: Buchhandlung Vorwärts.
- Mehring, Reinhard. 2021. ‘Negativer Kantianismus. Kosellecks sinnkritische “Primärerfahrung”’. In *Reinhart Koselleck als Historiker. Zu den Bedingungen möglicher Geschichten*, edited by Manfred Hettling and Wolfgang Schieder, 347–70. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
- Meillet, Antoine. 1906. ‘Comment les mots changent de sens’. *L’Année sociologique* 9 (1904-1905): 1–38.
- . 1925. ‘Linguistique et sociologie’. *L’Année sociologique. Nouvelle série* 1 (1923-1924): 941–46.
- Meja, Volker. 2015. ‘Knowledge, Sociology Of’. In *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences*, 2nd ed., edited by James D. Wright, 13:111–18. Amsterdam: Elsevier.
- Meja, Volker, and Nico Stehr, eds. 1982a. *Der Streit um die Wissenssoziologie*. 2 vols. Suhrkamp taschenbuch wissenschaft 361. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.
- . 1982b. ‘Zum Streit um die Wissenssoziologie’. In *Der Streit um die Wissenssoziologie*, edited by Volker Meja and Nico Stehr, 1:11–23. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.
- Menger, Carl. 1884. *Die Irrthümer des Historismus in der deutschen Nationalökonomie*. Wien: Alfred Hölder.
- . (1883) 1933. *Untersuchungen über die Methode der Socialwissenschaften und der politischen Oekonomie insbesondere*. The Collected Works of Carl Menger 2. London: Percy Lund, Humphries & Co.
- Menges, Franz. 2005. ‘Salis, Jean von’. In *Neue Deutsche Biographie*, 22:376–77.
- Mennell, Stephen. 1975. ‘Ethnomethodology and the New “Methodenstreit”’. *Acta Sociologica* 18 (4): 287–302.
- Mercier, Hugo. 2017. *The Enigma of Reason*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. (1949–1952) 1988. *Merleau-Ponty à la Sorbonne. Résumé de cours 1949-1942*. Grenoble: Cynara.
- . (1945) 2004. *Phénoménologie de la perception*. Tel. Paris: Gallimard.
- . (1942) 2013. *La structure du comportement*. Quadrige. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
- Mermet, Rémi. 2020. ‘Cassirer et Panofsky: un malentendu philosophique’. *Labyrinth* 22 (1): 56–78.
- Merton, Robert K. 1936. ‘Puritanism, Pietism, and Science’. *The Sociological Review* 28 (1): 1–30.
- . 1937. ‘The Sociology of Knowledge’. *Isis* 27 (3): 493–503.
- . 1938. ‘Science and the Social Order’. *Philosophy of Science* 5 (3): 321–37.
- . 1942. ‘Science and Technology in a Democratic Order’. *Journal of Legal and Political Sociology* 1: 115–26.

- . 1945. 'The Sociology of Knowledge'. In *Twentieth Century Sociology*, edited by Georges Gurvitch and Wilbert E. Moore, 366–405. New York: The Philosophical Library.
- . 1961. 'Social Conflict over Styles of Sociological Work'. In *Transactions of the Fourth World Congress of Sociology. Milan and Stresa, 8-15 September, 1959*, 3:21–44. Louvain/London: International Sociological Association.
- . (1959) 1965. 'Introduction. Notes on Problem-Finding in Sociology'. In *Sociology Today. Volume I. Problems and Prospects*, edited by Robert K. Merton, Leonard Broom, and Leonard S. Cottrell Jr., ix–xxxiv. New York/Evanston: Harper Torchbooks/The Academy Library.
- . (1936) 1968. 'Puritanism, Pietism and Science'. In *Social Theory and Social Structure*, 3rd ed., 628–60. 3rd ed. New York: The Free Press.
- . (1938) 1968a. 'Science and the Social Order'. In *Social Theory and Social Structure*, 3rd ed., 591–603. 3rd ed. New York: The Free Press.
- . (1938) 1968b. 'Social Structure and Anomie'. In *Social Theory and Social Structure*, 3rd ed., 185–214. 3rd ed. New York: The Free Press.
- . (1941) 1968. 'Karl Mannheim and the Sociology of Knowledge'. In *Social Theory and Social Structure*, 3rd ed., 543–62. 3rd ed. New York: The Free Press.
- . (1945) 1968a. 'The Bearing of Sociological Theory on Empirical Research'. In *Social Theory and Social Structure*, 3rd ed., 139–55. 3rd ed. New York: The Free Press.
- . (1945) 1968b. 'The Sociology of Knowledge'. In *Social Theory and Social Structure*, 3rd ed., 510–42. 3rd ed. New York: The Free Press.
- . (1948) 1968. 'The Bearing of Empirical Research on Sociological Theory'. In *Social Theory and Social Structure*, 3rd ed., 156–71. 3rd ed. New York: The Free Press.
- . (1949) 1968a. 'On Sociological Theories of the Middle Range'. In *Social Theory and Social Structure*, 3rd ed., 39–72. 3rd ed. New York: The Free Press.
- . (1949) 1968b. *Social Theory and Social Structure*. 3rd ed. New York: The Free Press.
- . (1967) 1968. 'On the History and Systematics of Sociological Theory'. In *Social Theory and Social Structure*, 3rd ed., 1–38. 3rd ed. New York: The Free Press.
- . 1969. 'Foreword to a Preface for an Introduction to a Prolegomenon to a Discourse on a Certain Subject'. *The American Sociologist* 4 (2): 99.
- . 1970. 'Preface: 1970'. In *Science, Technology and Society in Seventeenth Century England*, vii–xxix. Harper Torchbooks. New York/Evanston/London: Harper & Row.
- . (1938) 1970. *Science, Technology and Society in Seventeenth Century England*. Harper Torchbooks. New York/Evanston/London: Harper & Row.
- . 1971. 'The Precarious Foundations of Detachment in Sociology. Observations of Bendix's "Sociology and Ideology"'. In *The Phenomenon of Sociology. A Reader in the Sociology of Sociology*, edited by Edward A. Tiryakian, 188–99. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts.
- . 1973. *The Sociology of Science. Theoretical and Empirical Investigations*. Edited by Norman W. Storer. Chicago/London: The University of Chicago Press.
- . (1938) 1973. 'Science and the Social Order'. In *The Sociology of Science. Theoretical and Empirical Investigations*, edited by Norman W. Storer, 254–66. Chicago/London: The University of Chicago Press.
- . (1942) 1973. 'The Normative Structure of Science'. In *The Sociology of Science. Theoretical and Empirical Investigations*, edited by Norman W. Storer, 267–78. Chicago/London: The University of Chicago Press.
- . (1945) 1973. 'Paradigm for the Sociology of Knowledge'. In *The Sociology of Science. Theoretical and Empirical Investigations*, edited by Norman W. Storer, 7–40. Chicago/London: The University of Chicago Press.

- . (1952) 1973. 'The Neglect of the Sociology of Science'. In *The Sociology of Science. Theoretical and Empirical Investigations*, edited by Norman W. Storer, 210–20. Chicago/London: The University of Chicago Press.
- . (1957) 1973. 'Priorities in Scientific Discovery'. In *The Sociology of Science. Theoretical and Empirical Investigations*, edited by Norman W. Storer, 286–324. Chicago/London: The University of Chicago Press.
- . (1961) 1973a. 'Singletons and Multiples in Science'. In *The Sociology of Science. Theoretical and Empirical Investigations*, edited by Norman W. Storer, 343–70. Chicago/London: The University of Chicago Press.
- . (1961) 1973b. 'Social Conflict over Styles of Sociological Work'. In *The Sociology of Science. Theoretical and Empirical Investigations*, edited by Norman W. Storer, 47–69. Chicago/London: The University of Chicago Press.
- . (1963) 1973a. 'Multiple Discoveries as Strategic Research Site'. In *The Sociology of Science. Theoretical and Empirical Investigations*, edited by Norman W. Storer, 371–82. Chicago/London: The University of Chicago Press.
- . (1963) 1973b. 'The Ambivalence of Scientists'. In *The Sociology of Science. Theoretical and Empirical Investigations*, edited by Norman W. Storer, 383–412. Chicago/London: The University of Chicago Press.
- . (1968) 1973. 'The Matthew Effect in Science'. In *The Sociology of Science. Theoretical and Empirical Investigations*, edited by Norman W. Storer, 439–59. Chicago/London: The University of Chicago Press.
- . (1975) 1976. 'Structural Analysis in Sociology'. In *Sociological Ambivalence and Other Essays*, 109–44. New York/London: The Free Press.
- . 1979. 'Foreword'. In *Citation Indexing - Its Theory and Application in Science, Technology, and Humanities*, by Eugene Garfield, v–ix. New York: John Wiley & Sons.
- . (1977) 1979. *The Sociology of Science. An Episodic Memoir*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.
- . 1980. 'On the Oral Transmission of Knowledge'. In *Sociological Traditions from Generation to Generation. Glimpses of the American Experience*, edited by Robert K. Merton and Matilda White Riley, 1–35. Modern Sociology. Norwood, New Jersey: Ablex.
- . 1987. 'Three Fragments From a Sociologist's Notebooks: Establishing the Phenomenon, Specified Ignorance, and Strategic Research Materials'. *Annual Review of Sociology* 13: 1–28.
- . (1965) 1993. *On the Shoulders of Giants. A Shandean Postscript. The Post-Italianate Edition*. With Umberto Eco and Denis Donoghue. Chicago/London: The University of Chicago Press.
- . (1985) 1993. 'Preface to The Vicennial Edition'. In *On the Shoulders of Giants. A Shandean Postscript. The Post-Italianate Edition*, with Umberto Eco and Denis Donoghue, xix–xxv. Chicago/London: The University of Chicago Press.
- . (1993–1995) 1997. 'De-Gendering "Man of Science": The Genesis and Epicene Character of the Word *Scientist*'. In *Sociological Visions*, edited by Kai Erikson, 225–53. Lanham/New York/Boulder/Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield.
- . 2004. 'Autobiographic Reflections on *The Travels and Adventures of Serendipity*'. In *The Travels and Adventures of Serendipity. A Study in Sociological Semantics and the Sociology of Science*, by Robert K. Merton and Elinor Barber, 230–98. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- . (1994) 2019. 'Opportunity Structure: The Emergence, Diffusion, and Differentiation of a Sociological Concept, 1930s-1950s'. In *The Legacy of Anomie Theory*, edited by Freda Adler and William S. Laufer, 15–112. Advances in Criminological Theory 6. London/New York: Routledge.

- Merton, Robert K., and Elinor Barber. (1963) 1976. 'Sociological Ambivalence'. In *Sociological Ambivalence and Other Essays*, by Robert K. Merton, 3–31. New York/London: The Free Press.
- . 2004. *The Travels and Adventures of Serendipity. A Study in Sociological Semantics and the Sociology of Science*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Merz, Peter-Ulrich. 1990. *Max Weber und Heinrich Rickert. Die erkenntniskritischen Grundlagen der verstehenden Soziologie*. Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann.
- Merz-Benz, Peter-Ulrich. 2014. 'Soziologie als Erkenntniskritik. Zur Genesis der Soziologie aus der Philosophie des Neukantianismus'. In *Wissenschaftsphilosophie im Neukantianismus: Ansätze-Kontroversen-Wirkungen*, edited by Christian Krijnen and Kurt Walter Zeidler, 317–46. Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann.
- . 2016. *Erkenntnis und Emanation. Ferdinand Tönnies' Theorie soziologischer Erkenntnis*. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.
- Merz-Benz, Peter-Ulrich, and Gerhard Wagner, eds. 2001. *Soziologie und Anti-Soziologie. Ein Diskurs und seine Rekonstruktion*. Theorie und Methode Sozialwissenschaften. Konstanz: UVK.
- Metzger, Hélène. 1918. *La Genèse de la science des cristaux*. Doctorat d'Université. Paris: Alcan.
- . 1930. 'La philosophie de Lucien Lévy-Bruhl et l'histoire des sciences'. *Archeion* 12 (1): 15–24.
- . 1935a. 'Réflexions sur le Congrès international de philosophie scientifique (Paris, Sorbonne, 15-25 Septembre 1935)'. *Archeion* 17 (4): 421–23.
- . 1935b. 'Tribunal de l'histoire et théorie de la connaissance scientifique'. *Archeion* 17 (1): 1–14.
- . 1936. 'L'a priori dans la doctrine scientifique et l'histoire des sciences'. *Archeion* 18 (1): 29–42.
- . (1914–1939) 1987. *La Méthode philosophique en histoire des sciences : textes 1914-1939*. Edited by Gad Freudenthal. Corpus des œuvres de philosophie en langue française. Paris: Fayard.
- . 2023. 'L'historien des sciences doit-il se faire le contemporain des savants dont il parle?' *Zilsel* 12 (1): 329–38.
- Meyer, Thomas. 2005. 'Kant und die Links-Kantianer. Liberale Tradition und soziale Demokratie'. In *Kant im Streit der Fakultäten*, edited by Volker Gerhardt, 171–87. Berlin/New York: De Gruyter.
- Micheli, Giuseppe. (1988) 2015. 'Philosophy and Historiography: The Kantian Turning-Point'. In *Models of the History of Philosophy. Volume III: The Second Enlightenment and the Kantian Age*, edited by Gregorio Piaia and Giovanni Santinello, translated by Hilary Siddons, 697–768 (?). Dordrecht/Heidelberg/New York/London: Springer.
- Mieli, Aldo. 1947. 'Digressions autobiographiques sous forme de préface à un panorama général d'Histoire des Sciences'. *Archives internationales d'histoire des sciences* 1: 494–505.
- Mieli, Aldo, and Centre international de Synthèse, eds. 1935. 'Fondation "Pour la Science". Centre international de Synthèse. Section d'Histoire des Sciences. Communications officielles. Séance du 21 novembre 1934. Séance du 23 janvier 1935. Séance du 30 janvier 1935.' *Archeion* 17 (1): 81–84.
- , eds. 1936. 'Fondation "Pour la Science". Centre international de Synthèse. Section d'Histoire des Sciences. Communications officielles. Séance du 20 novembre 1935'. *Archeion* 18 (1): 75–79.
- Milkov, Nikolay, ed. 2015. *Die Berliner Gruppe. Texte zum Logischen Empirismus*. Philosophische Bibliothek 671. Hamburg: Meiner.

- Milkov, Nikolay, and Volker Peckhaus, eds. 2013. *The Berlin Group and the Philosophy of Logical Empiricism*. Vol. 273. Boston Studies in the Philosophy and History of Science. Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands.
- Mill, John Stuart. (1843) 1974a. *A System of Logic Ratiocinative and Inductive. Being a Connected View of the Principles of Evidence and the Methods of Scientific Investigation*. Edited by J. M. Robson. VIII. Collected Works of John Stuart Mill. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- . (1843) 1974b. ‘On the Logic of the Moral Sciences’. In *A System of Logic Ratiocinative and Inductive. Being a Connected View of the Principles of Evidence and the Methods of Scientific Investigation*, edited by J. M. Robson, VIII, 831–952. Collected Works of John Stuart Mill. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- . (1873) 1981. *Autobiography and Literary Essays*. Edited by J. M. Robson and Jack Stillinger. Collected Works of John Stuart Mill 1. Toronto/Buffalo/London: University of Toronto Press/Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Mills, C. Wright. (1940) 1963. ‘Methodological Consequences of the Sociology of Knowledge’. In *Power, Politics and People. The Collected Essays of C. Wright Mills*, edited by Irving Louis Horowitz, 453–68. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Möckel, Christian. 1993. *Sozial-Apriori: der Schlüssel zum Rätsel der Gesellschaft. Leben, Werk und Wirkung Max Adlers*. Europäische Hochschulschriften 412. Frankfurt am Main/Bern/New York: Peter Lang.
- , ed. 2022. *Ernst Cassirer. Nachgelassene Manuskripte und Texte. Register*. Ernst Cassirer Nachgelassene Manuskripte und Texte (ECN) 19. Hamburg: Meiner.
- Moebius, Stephan. 2003. *Die soziale Konstituierung des Anderen. Grundrisse einer post-strukturalistischen Sozialwissenschaft nach Lévinas und Derrida*. Frankfurt/New York: Campus.
- . 2004. *Praxis der Soziologiegeschichte. Methodologien, Konzeptionalisierung und Beispiele soziologiegeschichtlicher Forschung*. Hamburg: Verlag Dr. Kovac.
- . 2015. *René König und die ‘Kölner Schule’. Eine soziologiegeschichtliche Annäherung*. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.
- . 2018. ‘Schulen, Akteure und regionale Zentren in der frühen bundesrepublikanischen Soziologie’. In *Handbuch Geschichte der deutschsprachigen Soziologie. Band 1: Geschichte der Soziologie im deutschsprachigen Raum*, edited by Stephan Moebius and Andrea Ploder, 391–426. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.
- . 2021a. “‘Die Geschichte ist kein Fiaker, den man nach Belieben besteigen und verlassen kann’”. Zu Friedrich Jonas’ *Geschichte der Soziologie*. In *Geschichte der Soziologie*, by Friedrich Jonas, edited by Stephan Moebius, 1:VII–XXVI. Klassiker der Sozialwissenschaften. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.
- . 2021b. *Sociology in Germany. A History*. Sociology Transformed. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Moebius, Stephan, and Joachim Fischer, eds. 2019. *Soziologische Denkschulen in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.
- Moebius, Stephan, and Andrea Ploder, eds. 2017. *Handbuch Geschichte der deutschsprachigen Soziologie. Band 2: Forschungsdesign, Theorien und Methoden*. Springer Reference Sozialwissenschaften. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.
- Moebius, Stephan, and Andreas Reckwitz, eds. 2008. *Poststrukturalistische Sozialwissenschaften*. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.
- Mohl, Robert von. 1851. ‘Gesellschafts-Wissenschaften und Staats-Wissenschaften’. *Zeitschrift für die gesamte Staatswissenschaft* 7: 3–71.
- . 1855. ‘Die Staatswissenschaften und die Gesellschaftswissenschaften’. In *Die Geschichte und Literatur der Staatswissenschaften*, 1:67–110. Erlangen: Ferdinand Enke.
- Mohler, Armin. (1949) 1989. *Die Konservative Revolution in Deutschland 1918-1932*. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft.

- Molnar, George. 1967. 'Deviant Case Analysis in Social Science'. *Politics* 2 (1): 1–11. world.
- Monod, Gabriel. 1876. 'Introduction. Du progrès des études historiques en France depuis le XVIe siècle'. *Revue historique* 1 (1): 5–38.
- Moog, Willy. 1922. *Die deutsche Philosophie des 20. Jahrhunderts in ihren Hauptrichtungen und ihren Grundproblemen*. Stuttgart: Ferdinand Enke.
- Morel, Charlotte, ed. 2017. *L'Allemagne et la querelle du matérialisme (1848-1866). Une crise oubliée ?* Constitution de la modernité 6. Paris: Classiques Garnier.
- Mormann, Thomas. 2012. 'A Place for Pragmatism in the Dynamics of Reason?' *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science Part A* 43 (1): 27–37.
- Mosbah-Natanson, Sébastien. 2007. "'La sociologie est à la mode". Productions et producteurs de sociologie en France autour de 1900'. Université Paris-Dauphine.
- . 2011. 'La sociologie comme "mode"? Usages éditoriaux du label "sociologie" en France à la fin du XIXe siècle'. *Revue française de sociologie* 52 (1): 103–32.
- . 2017. *Une 'mode' de la sociologie. Publications et vocations sociologiques en France en 1900*. Bibliothèque des sciences sociales. Paris: Classiques Garnier.
- Mouy, Paul. 1927. *L'idée du progrès dans la philosophie de Renouvier*. Bibliothèque d'histoire de la philosophie. Paris: Vrin.
- Moyn, Samuel, and Andrew Sartori, eds. 2013. *Global Intellectual History*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Mozetič, Gerald. 1987. *Die Gesellschaftstheorie des Austromarxismus. Geistesgeschichtliche Voraussetzungen, Methodologie und soziologisches Programm*. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft.
- . 1992. 'Einleitung'. In *Wissenschaft und Weltanschauung. Aufsätze 1929-1933*, by Edgar Zilsel, edited by Gerald Mozetič, with Karl Acham, 15–28. *Klassische Studien zur sozialwissenschaftlichen Theorie, Weltanschauungslehre und Wissenschaftsforschung* 8. Wien/Köln/Weimar: Böhlau.
- . 2018. 'Anfänge der Soziologie in Österreich'. In *Handbuch Geschichte der deutschsprachigen Soziologie. Band 1: Geschichte der Soziologie im deutschsprachigen Raum*, edited by Stephan Moebius and Andrea Ploder, 37–64. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.
- Mucchielli, Laurent. 1995. 'Heurs et malheurs du durkheimisme. Problèmes historiographiques, enjeux épistémologiques et pédagogiques d'une mémoire disciplinaire'. *Politix* 8 (29): 55–79.
- . 1996. 'Psychologie des peuples, races, régions et milieu social. Problèmes scientifiques et enjeux disciplinaires d'une théorie de l'histoire autour d'Henri Berr et de la Revue de synthèse historique (1890–1925)'. *Revue de synthèse* 117 (1): 81–110.
- Muel-Dreyfus, Francine. 2020a. 'Inconscient collectif / historique / social'. In *Dictionnaire international Bourdieu*, edited by Gisèle Sapiro, 441–42. Culture & société. Paris: CNRS Éditions.
- . 2020b. 'Naturalisation'. In *Dictionnaire international Bourdieu*, edited by Gisèle Sapiro, 591–92. Culture & société. Paris: CNRS Éditions.
- Mühlhölzer, Felix. 2005. "'A Mathematical Proof Must Be Surveyable". What Wittgenstein Meant by This and What It Implies'. *Grazer Philosophische Studien* 71: 57–86.
- Müller, Bertrand. 1996. 'Lucien Febvre et Henri Berr: De la synthèse à l'histoire-problème'. *Revue de synthèse* 117: 39–59.
- . 1997. 'Le passé au présent. Tradition, mémoire et histoire dans les sciences sociales'. *Les Annuelles* 8: 173–90.
- . 2002. 'Entre science et culture: L'Encyclopédie française dans l'Œuvre de Lucien Febvre'. Sciences de l'éducation. *Cahiers Jaurès* 163–164 (1): 33–63.
- . 2003. *Lucien Febvre, lecteur et critique*. Bibliothèque Histoire. Paris: Albin Michel.
- Müller, Detlef K., Fritz K. Ringer, and Brian Simon, eds. 1987. *The Rise of the Modern Educational System. Structural Change and Social Reproduction 1870-1920*.

- Cambridge/Paris: Cambridge University Press/Éditions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme.
- Müller, Ernst, and Falko Schmieder. 2016. *Begriffsgeschichte und historische Semantik. Ein kritisches Kompendium*. suhrkamp taschenbuch wissenschaft 2117. Berlin: Suhrkamp.
- Müller, Hans-Peter. 2013. 'Société, morale et individualisme. La théorie morale d'Emile Durkheim'. Translated by Didier Renault. *Trivium. Revue franco-allemande de sciences humaines et sociales - Deutsch-französische Zeitschrift für Geistes- und Sozialwissenschaften* [Online], no. 13 (February).
- . 2019. 'Soziologischer Kantianismus: Die Physik der Sitten und des Rechts'. In *Das soziologische Genie und sein solides Handwerk. Studien zu Émile Durkheims Forschungsprogramm*, 101–25. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.
- Müller, Reinhard. 2001. 'Soziologie reihenweise. Eine Bibliografie der Schriftenreihen österreichischer Soziologen vor dem Zweiten Weltkrieg. Teil 1'. *Archiv für die Geschichte der Soziologie in Österreich - Newsletter* 21: 20–32.
- . 2018. 'Geschichte der Soziologischen Gesellschaft in Wien'. In *Handbuch Geschichte der deutschsprachigen Soziologie. Band 1: Geschichte der Soziologie im deutschsprachigen Raum*, edited by Stephan Moebius and Andrea Ploder, 763–78. Springer Reference Sozialwissenschaften. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.
- . 2021. 'Soziologische Gesellschaft, Wien (SGW)'. In *Soziologie der Zwischenkriegszeit. Ihre Hauptströmungen und zentralen Themen im deutschen Sprachraum*, edited by Karl Acham and Stephan Moebius, 577–95. Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden.
- Mulsow, Martin. 2009. 'Qu'est-ce qu'une constellation philosophique? Propositions pour une analyse des réseaux intellectuels'. *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 64 (1): 81–109.
- Mulsow, Martin, and Marcelo Stamm, eds. 2005. *Konstellationsforschung*. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.
- Nadal, André. 1959. 'Gaston Milhaud (1858-1918)'. *Revue d'histoire des sciences et de leurs applications* 12 (2): 97–110.
- Nagel, Thomas. 1986. *The View from Nowhere*. New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Nastansky, Heinz-Ludwig, and Rüdiger Welter. (1984) 1995. 'Neukantianismus'. In *Enzyklopädie Philosophie und Wissenschaftstheorie*, 2nd ed., edited by Jürgen Mittelstraß, 2:989–90. 2nd ed. Stuttgart/Weimar: Metzler.
- Natorp, Paul. 1896. 'Grundlinien einer Theorie der Willensbildung (Drittes Stück)'. *Archiv für Philosophie. Zweite Abteilung: Archiv für systematische Philosophie* 2: 317–54.
- . 1899. *Sozialpädagogik. Theorie der Willenserziehung auf der Grundlage der Gemeinschaft*. Stuttgart: Fr. Frommanns Verlag (E. Hauff).
- . 1910. *Die logischen Grundlagen der exakten Wissenschaften*. Leipzig/Berlin: Teubner.
- . 1911. *Philosophie. Ihr Problem und ihre Probleme. Einführung in den kritischen Idealismus*. Wege zur Philosophie. Ergänzungsreihe: Einführungen in die Philosophie der Gegenwart 1. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
- . 1912. 'Kant und die Marburger Schule'. *Kant-Studien* 17: 193–221.
- . 1913. 'Recht und Sittlichkeit. Ein Beitrag zur kategorialen Begründung der praktischen Philosophie. Mit besonderem Bezug auf Hermann Cohens "Ethik des reinen Willens" und Rudolf Stammlers "Theorie der Rechtswissenschaft"'. *Kant-Studien* 18 (1–3): 1–79.
- Nau, Heino Heinrich, ed. 2001. *Der Werturteilsstreit. Die Äußerungen zur Werturteilsdiskussion im Ausschuß des Verein für Sozialpolitik (1913)*. Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschsprachigen Ökonomie. Weimar: Metropolis.
- Negt, Oskar. 1964. *Strukturbeziehungen zwischen den Gesellschaftslehren Comtes und Hegels*. Frankfurter Beiträge zur Soziologie 14. Frankfurt/Main: Europäische Verlagsanstalt.

- . (1964) 1974. *Die Konstituierung der Soziologie als Ordnungswissenschaft. Strukturbeziehungen zwischen den Gesellschaftslehren Comtes und Hegels*. Studien zur Gesellschaftstheorie. 2nd ed. Frankfurt am Main/Köln: Europäische Verlagsanstalt.
- Némedi, Dénes. 1991. 'Durkheim and Hamelin'. *Szociológiai Figyelő* 7 (2): 101–18.
- Némedi, Dénes, and W. S. F. Pickering. 1995. 'Durkheim's Friendship with the Philosopher Octave Hamelin: Together with Translations of Two Items by Durkheim'. Translated by H. L. Sutcliffe. *The British Journal of Sociology* 46 (1): 107–25.
- Nemeth, Elisabeth. 1996. 'Institutionalisierte Illusionen: Forschung, Ausbildung und Bildung an der Universität'. *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Wissenschaft und Kunst* 52 (4): 26–35.
- . 2007. 'Philipp Frank und die Verbindung Wien-Paris. Einige Notizen zum Briefwechsel Otto Neurath-Philipp Frank zwischen 1934 und 1938'. *Revue de synthèse* 128 (1–2): 209–17.
- . 2014. 'Überlegungen zum Stellenwert des Neokantianismus in *A Parting of the Ways* von Michael Friedman'. In *Wissenschaftsphilosophie im Neukantianismus: Ansätze-Kontroversen-Wirkungen*, edited by Christian Krijnen and Kurt Walter Zeidler, 131–51. Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann.
- . 2016. 'Ein kritischer Blick auf Neuraths Bildstatistik. Lucien Febvre über *Gesellschaft und Wirtschaft*'. In *Wissenschaft und Praxis. Zur Wissenschaftsphilosophie in Frankreich und Österreich in der ersten Hälfte des 20. Jahrhunderts*, edited by Christian Bonnet and Elisabeth Nemeth, 127–49. Veröffentlichungen des Instituts Wiener Kreis 22. Cham: Springer.
- . 2018. 'Kants Erkenntnisvermögen als historische und soziologische Konzeption. Ein Versuch zu Edgar Zilsel und Michael Friedman'. In *Natur und Freiheit. Akten des XII. Internationalen Kant-Kongresses*, edited by Violetta L. Waibel, Margit Ruffing, and David Wagner, 577–94. Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter.
- Nemeth, Elisabeth, and Nicolas Roudet, eds. 2005. *Paris-Wien. Enzyklopädien im Vergleich*. Veröffentlichungen des Instituts Wiener Kreis 13. Wien/New York: Springer.
- Neri, Marina. 1996. 'Vers une histoire psychologique: Henri Berr et les semaines internationales de synthèse (1929–1947)'. *Revue de synthèse* 117 (1): 205–18.
- Neun, Oliver. 2008. 'Generationen in der Soziologiegeschichte. Das Beispiel der New York Intellectuals'. In *Die Natur der Gesellschaft: Verhandlungen des 33. Kongresses der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Soziologie in Kassel 2006. Teilbd. 1 u. 2*, edited by Karl-Siegbert Rehberg, 5241–51. Frankfurt/Main: Campus.
- . 2017. 'Zum Verhältnis von Ludwik Flecks und Karl Mannheims Wissenssoziologie'. In *Zyklus 3. Jahrbuch für Theorie und Geschichte der Soziologie*, edited by Stephan Moebius, Martin Endreß, and Klaus Lichtblau, 71–89. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.
- Neurath, Otto. 1935a. 'Einheit der Wissenschaft als Aufgabe'. *Erkenntnis* 5: 16–22.
- . 1935b. 'Erster Internationaler Kongress für Einheit der Wissenschaft in Paris 1935 (Congrès international de philosophie scientifique)'. *Erkenntnis* 5: 377–406.
- . 1936. 'L'Encyclopédie comme "modèle"'. Translated by Robert Bouvier. *Revue de Synthèse. Science de la nature et Synthèse générale* XII (2): 187–201.
- . (1930) 1982. 'Bürgerlicher Marxismus'. In *Der Streit um die Wissenssoziologie*, edited by Volker Meja and Nico Stehr, 2:584–93. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.
- . (1936) 2006. 'Die Enzyklopädie als "Modell"'. In *Wiener Kreis. Texte zur wissenschaftlichen Weltauffassung von Rudolf Carnap, Otto Neurath, Moritz Schlick, Philipp Frank, Hans Hahn, Karl Menger, Edgar Zilsel und Gustav Bergmann*, edited by Michael Stöltzner and Thomas Uebel, translated by Brigitte Treschmitzer and Hans Georg Zilian, 375–95. Philosophische Bibliothek 577. Hamburg: Meiner.
- Nicolas, Serge. 2022. 'Psychologie expérimentale et Völkerpsychologie chez Wundt. Un état des lieux'. *Revue germanique internationale* 35 (June): 35.

- Nietzsche, Friedrich. (1874) 1999. 'Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen. Zweites Stück: Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben'. In *Die Geburt der Tragödie. Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen I-IV. Nachgelassene Schriften 1870-1873*, edited by Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari, 243–334. Kritische Studienausgabe 1. München/Berlin/New York: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag/Walter de Gruyter.
- Nizan, Paul. 1932. *Les chiens de garde*. Europe. Paris: Rieder.
- . (1931–1960) 2002. *Aden Arabie. Préface de Jean-Paul Sartre*. With Jean-Paul Sartre. La Découverte Poche. Paris: La Découverte.
- . (1932) 2012. *Les chiens de garde*. Éléments. Marseille: Agone.
- Nolen, Désiré. 1877. *Kant et la philosophie du XIXe siècle. Discours prononcé le 23 décembre 1876. A l'ouverture du cours de philosophie*. Montpellier: J. Martel Ainé.
- Nolte, Helmut. 1984. 'Kommunikative Kompetenz und Leibapriori. Zur philosophischen Anthropologie von Jürgen Habermas und Karl-Otto Apel'. *Archiv für Rechts- und Sozialphilosophie* 70 (4): 518–39.
- Noras, Andrzej J. (2012) 2020. *Geschichte des Neukantianismus*. Polish Contemporary Philosophy and Philosophical Humanities 19. Berlin et al.: Peter Lang.
- Novicow, J., P. de Lilienfeld, G. Tarde, et al. 1898. 'La théorie organique des sociétés'. In *Annales de l'Institut international de sociologie. Tome IV. Contenant les travaux du troisième congrès tenu à Paris en juillet 1897*, by René Worms, 169–339. Paris: Giard et Brière.
- Nowotny, Helga, Peter Scott, and Michael Gibbons. 2001. *Re-Thinking Science. Knowledge and the Public in an Age of Uncertainty*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Nungesser, Frithjof. 2020a. 'Soziale Klassifikationen'. In *Meilensteine der Soziologie*, edited by Christian Fleck and Christian Dayé, 164–82. Frankfurt/Main: Campus.
- . 2020b. 'The Sociality of Mind: Key Arguments, Inner Tensions, and Divergent Appropriations of Durkheim's Sociology of Knowledge'. In *The Oxford Handbook of Émile Durkheim*, edited by Hans Joas and Andreas Pettenkofer, 57–81. Oxford Handbooks. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Nye, Mary Jo. 1979. 'The Boutroux Circle and Poincaré's Conventionalism'. *Journal of the History of Ideas* 40 (1): 107–20.
- Nyíri, J. C. 1974. 'Beim Sternenlicht Der Nichtexistierenden: Zur Ideologiekritischen Interpretation Des Platonisierenden Antipsychologismus'. *Inquiry* 17 (1–4): 399–443.
- Oakes, Guy. 1988. *Weber and Rickert. Concept Formation in the Cultural Sciences*. Studies in Contemporary German Social Thought. Cambridge, Massachusetts/London: MIT Press.
- . 1998. 'On the Unity of Max Weber's Methodology'. *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 12 (2): 293–306. JSTOR.
- Oesterreich, Traugott Konstantin. (1916) 1923a. 'Aus dem Vorwort zur elften Auflage'. In *Friedrich Ueberwegs Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie. Vierter Teil. Die deutsche Philosophie des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts und der Gegenwart*, 12th ed., by Traugott Konstantin Oesterreich, 4:VIII–XI. 12th ed. Berlin: E. S. Mittler & Sohn.
- . (1916) 1923b. *Friedrich Ueberwegs Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie. Vierter Teil. Die deutsche Philosophie des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts und der Gegenwart*. Vol. 4. 12th ed. Berlin: E. S. Mittler & Sohn.
- . (1916) 1923c. 'Neukantianismus und Neokritizismus'. In *Friedrich Ueberwegs Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie. Vierter Teil. Die deutsche Philosophie des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts und der Gegenwart*, 12th ed., by Friedrich Ueberweg and Traugott Konstantin Oesterreich, 4:416–77. 12th ed. Berlin: E. S. Mittler & Sohn.
- Oexle, Otto Gerhard. 1990. 'Marc Bloch et la critique de la raison historique'. In *Marc Bloch aujourd'hui. Histoire comparée et sciences sociales*, edited by Hartmut Atsma and André Burguière, 419–33. *Recherches d'histoire et de sciences sociales* 41. Paris: Éditions de l'EHESS.

- . 1996. *Geschichtswissenschaft im Zeichen des Historismus. Studien zu Problemgeschichten der Moderne*. Kritische Studien zur Geschichtswissenschaft 116. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
- . (1986) 1996. “‘Historismus’”. Überlegungen zur Geschichte des Phänomens und des Begriffs’. In *Geschichtswissenschaft im Zeichen des Historismus. Studien zu Problemgeschichten der Moderne*, 41–72. Kritische Studien zur Geschichtswissenschaft 116. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
- . 1998. ‘Naturwissenschaft und Geschichtswissenschaft. Momente einer Problemgeschichte’. In *Naturwissenschaft, Geisteswissenschaft, Kulturwissenschaft: Einheit - Gegensatz - Komplementarität?*, edited by Otto Gerhard Oexle, 99–151. Göttinger Gespräche zur Geschichtswissenschaft 6. Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag.
- , ed. 2001a. *Das Problem der Problemgeschichte 1880-1932*. Göttinger Gespräche zur Geschichtswissenschaft 12. Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag.
- . 2001b. ‘Max Weber - Geschichte als Problemgeschichte’. In *Das Problem der Problemgeschichte 1880-1932*, edited by Otto Gerhard Oexle, 9–37. Göttinger Gespräche zur Geschichtswissenschaft 12. Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag.
- . 2009. “‘Begriffsgeschichte’ - eine noch nicht begriffene Geschichte’. *Philosophisches Jahrbuch* 116 (2): 381–400.
- . 2011. ‘Begriffsgeschichte und Problemgeschichte’. In *Begriffs-, Ideen- und Problemgeschichte im 21. Jahrhundert*, edited by Riccardo Pozzo and Marco Sgarbi, 13–30. Wolfenbütteler Forschungen 127. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.
- Ogden, C. K., and I. A. Richards. (1923) 1946. *The Meaning of Meaning. A Study of the Influence of Language upon Thought and of the Science of Symbolism*. With Bronislaw Malinowski and Francis Graham Crookshank. A Harvest Book. 8th ed. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World.
- Ogien, Albert. 2007. *Les formes sociales de la pensée. La sociologie après Wittgenstein*. Individu et Société. Paris: Armand Colin.
- Olivesi, Stéphane. 2007. *Référence, déférence. Une sociologie de la citation*. Communication et civilisation. Paris: L’Harmattan.
- Ollig, Hans-Ludwig. 1979. *Der Neukantianismus*. Sammlung Metzler, M 187. Stuttgart: Metzler.
- Orain, Olivier, and Jean-Christophe Marcel, eds. 2018. ‘Penser par Écoles’. *Revue d’histoire des sciences humaines* 32.
- Orth, Ernst Wolfgang. 1991. ‘Georg Simmel als Kulturphilosoph zwischen Lebensphilosophie und Neukantianismus’. *Reports on Philosophy* 14: 105–20.
- Orum, Anthony M. 2015. ‘Case Study: Logic’. In *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences*, 202–7. Elsevier.
- Orwell, George. (1949) 1989. *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. London: Penguin Books.
- Oxford English Dictionary. 2023a. ‘problem, n.’ In *Oxford English Dictionary*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, March 2.
- . 2023b. ‘sociologize, v.’ In *Oxford English Dictionary*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, July.
- . 2023c. *Sociology, n.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, July.
- Oxford English Dictionary* [Online]. 1884–2025. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Pabst, Karl. 1992. *Transzendente Erkenntnis und Gesellschaft. Zur Kritik transzendentaler Begründungsversuche der Gesellschaftstheorie bei Max Adler, Jürgen Habermas und Theodor W. Adorno*. Europäische Hochschulschriften. Frankfurt/Main: Peter Lang.
- Pankoke, Eckart. 1984. ‘Soziologie, Gesellschaftswissenschaften’. In *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe. Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, edited by Otto Brunner, Werner Conze, and Reinhart Koselleck, 5 (Pro-Soz), 997–1032. Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta.

- . (1995) 2017. 'Sozialwissenschaft; Gesellschaftswissenschaft'. In *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie online*. Basel: Schwabe.
- Panofsky, Erwin. 1932. 'Zum Problem der Beschreibung und Inhaltsdeutung von Werken der Bildenden Kunst'. *Logos. Internationale Zeitschrift für Philosophie der Kultur* 21: 103–19.
- . 1951. *Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism*. Wimmer Lecture, 1948. Latrobe, PA: The Archabbey Press.
- . (1939) 1955. 'Iconography and Iconology: An Introduction to the Study of Renaissance Art'. In *Meaning in the Visual Arts*, 26–54. Garden City, NY: Anchor Books.
- . (1940) 1955. 'Introduction. The History of Art as a Humanistic Discipline'. In *Meaning in the Visual Arts*, 1–25. Garden City, NY: Anchor Books.
- . (1951) 1967. *Architecture gothique et pensée scolastique*. Translated by Pierre Bourdieu. With Pierre Bourdieu. *Le sens commun* 4. 1st ed. Paris: Minuit.
- . 1975. *La perspective comme forme symbolique*. Translated by Guy Ballangé. With Marisa Dalai Emiliani. *Le sens commun*. Paris: Minuit.
- . (1932) 1975. 'Contribution au problème de la description d'oeuvres appartenant aux arts plastiques et à celui de l'interprétation de leur contenu'. In *La perspective comme forme symbolique*, translated by Guy Ballangé, with Marisa Dalai Emiliani, 235–55. *Le sens commun*. Paris: Minuit.
- Paoletti, Giovanni. 2000. 'Representation and Belief: Durkheim's Rationalism and the Kantian Tradition'. In *Durkheim and Representations*, edited by W.S.F. Pickering, 118–35. Routledge Studies in Social and Political Thought. London/New York: Routledge.
- . 2012. *Durkheim et la philosophie. Représentation, réalité et lien social*. Bibliothèque des sciences sociales. Paris: Classiques Garnier.
- Pap, Arthur. 1944. 'The Different Kinds of A Priori'. *The Philosophical Review* 53 (5): 465–84.
- . 1946. *The A Priori in Physical Theory*. New York: Russel & Russell.
- Papilloud, Christian, and Cécile Rol. 2019. *Moral - Recht - Nation. Die Soziologie der Solidarität Gaston Richards (1860-1945)*. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.
- Parodi, Dominique. 1919. *La philosophie contemporaine en France. Essai de classification des doctrines*. Paris: Alcan.
- Parsons, Talcott. 1936. '[Review of] Max Webers Wissenschaftslehre. By Alexander von Schelting. Tübingen, J. C. B. Mohr, 1934'. *American Sociological Review* 1 (4): 675–81.
- . 1961. 'An Approach to the Sociology of Knowledge'. In *Transactions of the Fourth World Congress of Sociology. Actes Du Quatrième Congrès Mondial de Sociologie. Milan and Stresa, 8-15 September, 1959*, edited by International Sociological Association and Kurt H. Wolff, 4:25–49. Louvain: Nauwelaerts.
- . (1937) 1968. *The Structure of Social Action. A Study in Social Theory with Special Reference to a Group of Recent European Writers*. 2 vols. New York: The Free Press.
- . 1978a. 'A 1974 Retrospective Perspective'. In *The Theory of Social Action. The Correspondence of Alfred Schutz and Talcott Parsons*, edited by Richard Grathoff, with Maurice Natanson, 115–24. Studies in Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy. Bloomington/London: Indiana University Press.
- . 1978b. 'A Paradigm of the Human Condition'. In *Action Theory and the Human Condition*, 352–433. New York: The Free Press.
- . 1980. 'The Circumstances of My Encounter with Max Weber'. In *Sociological Traditions from Generation to Generation. Glimpses of the American Experience*, edited by Robert K. Merton and Matilda White Riley, 37–43. Modern Sociology. Norwood, New Jersey: Ablex.
- . (1951) 1991. *The Social System*. With Bryan S. Turner. Routledge Sociology Classics. London: Routledge.

- . (1927) 2019. *Kapitalismus bei Max Weber - zur Rekonstruktion eines fast vergessenen Themas*. Edited by Uta Gerhardt. Klassiker der Sozialwissenschaften. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.
- Parsons, Talcott, and Alfred Schutz. 1978. *The Theory of Social Action. The Correspondence of Alfred Schutz and Talcott Parsons*. Edited by Richard Grathoff. With Maurice Natanson. Studies in Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy. Bloomington/London: Indiana University Press.
- Pasquali, Paul. 2023. 'Quand Bourdieu découvrait Panofsky: La fabrique éditoriale d' *Architecture gothique et pensée scolastique* (Paris-Princeton, 1966-1967)'. *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 78 (4): 699–732.
- Paugam, Serge, and Franz Schultheis. 2007. 'Raymond Aron, l'Allemagne et Max Weber. Une étape de la sociologie française'. In *La sociologie allemande contemporaine*, by Raymond Aron, V–XXIX. Quadrige. Paris: Presses universitaires de France.
- Peirce, Charles Sanders. 1906. 'Prolegomena to an Apology for Pragmaticism'. *The Monist* 16 (4): 492–546.
- . (1867) 1992. 'On a New List of Categories'. In *The Essential Peirce. Selected Philosophical Writings. Volume 1 (1867-1893)*, edited by Nathan Houser and Christian Kloesel, 1–10. Bloomington/Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.
- . (1901) 1998. 'On the Logic of Drawing History from Ancient Documents, Especially from Testimonies'. In *The Essential Peirce. Selected Philosophical Writings. Volume 2 (1893-1913)*, edited by Peirce Edition Project, 75–114. Bloomington/Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.
- . (1903) 1998. 'The Ethics of Terminology'. In *The Essential Peirce. Selected Philosophical Writings. Volume 2 (1893-1913)*, edited by Peirce Edition Project, 263–66. Bloomington/Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.
- . (1905) 1998. 'What Pragmatism Is'. In *The Essential Peirce. Selected Philosophical Writings. Volume 2 (1893-1913)*, edited by Peirce Edition Project, 331–45. Bloomington/Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.
- . (1906–1908) 1998. 'Excerpts from Letters to Lady Welby'. In *The Essential Peirce. Selected Philosophical Writings. Volume 2 (1893-1913)*, edited by Peirce Edition Project, 477–91. Bloomington/Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.
- Pelletier, Arnaud. 2005. 'Michel Foucault et les usages de Kant'. In *Kant et la France - Kant und Frankreich*, edited by Jean Ferrari, Margit Ruffing, Robert Theis, and Matthias Vollet, 363–76. Europaea memoria. Hildesheim/Zürich/New York: Georg Olms Verlag.
- Perreau, Laurent. 2019. *Bourdieu et la phénoménologie. Théorie du sujet social*. CNRS Philosophie. Paris: CNRS.
- Perret-Clermont, Anne-Nelly, and Jean-Marc Barrelet, eds. 2008. *Jean Piaget and Neuchâtel. The Learner and the Scholar*. Hove/New York: Psychology Press/Taylor & Francis.
- Perrier, Edmond. 1920. *La terre avant l'histoire. Les origines de la vie et de l'homme*. With Henri Berr. L'Évolution de l'humanité. Bibliothèque de synthèse historique. Première section: Préhistoire, protohistoire 1. Paris: La Renaissance du livre.
- Perrot, Jean-Claude. 1992. 'Quelques préliminaires à l'intelligence des textes économiques'. In *Une histoire intellectuelle de l'économie politique. XVIIe-XVIIIe siècle*, 7–60. Civilisations et Sociétés 85. Paris: Éditions de l'École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales.
- . 1998. 'Histoire des sciences, histoire concrète de l'abstraction'. In *Des sciences et des techniques: un débat*, edited by Roger Guesnerie and François Hartog, 25–37. Paris: Éditions de l'École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales.
- . (1998) 2021. 'Histoire des sciences, histoire concrète de l'abstraction (1998)'. *Revue de Synthèse* 142 (3–4): 492–506.
- Petit, Annie. 1978. 'D'Auguste Comte à Claude Bernard, un positivisme déplacé'. *Romantisme* 21–22: 45–62.

- . 1994. 'Genèse de la classification des sciences d'Auguste Comte'. *Revue de Synthèse* 115 (1–2): 71–102.
- . 1995. 'L'héritage du positivisme dans la création de la chaire d'histoire générale des sciences au Collège de France'. *Revue d'histoire des sciences* 48 (4): 521–56.
- Petzke, Martin. 2022. 'Symbolic Revolutions. Mobilizing a Neglected Bourdieusian Concept for Historical Sociology'. *Theory and Society* 51 (3): 487–510.
- Piaget, Jean. 1923. *Le langage et la pensée chez l'enfant*. With A. Deslex, G. Guex, H. de Meyenburg, V. J. Piaget, L. Veihl, and Édouard Claparède. Collection d'actualités pédagogiques. Neuchâtel/Paris: Delachaux et Niestle.
- . 1926. *La représentation du monde chez l'enfant*. Bibliothèque de psychologie de l'enfant et de pédagogie. Paris: Alcan.
- . 1970. *L'épistémologie génétique*. Que sais-je? 1399. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
- Piaget, Jean, and Bärbel Inhelder. (1966) 2012. *La psychologie de l'enfant*. Quadrige. 3rd ed. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
- Pickering, Mary. 1989. 'New Evidence of the Link between Comte and German Philosophy'. *Journal of the History of Ideas* 50 (3): 443–63.
- . 1993. *Auguste Comte. An Intellectual Biography*. Vol. 1. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- . 2009. *Auguste Comte. An Intellectual Biography*. Vol. 3. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Pina-Cabral, João. 2021. 'Person and Relation as Categories: Mauss' Legacy'. *History and Anthropology* 35 (1): 170–88.
- Pinch, Trevor. 2015. 'Scientific Controversies'. In *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences*, 281–86. Elsevier.
- Pinker, Steven. 2002. *The Blank Slate: The Modern Denial of Human Nature*. London: Penguin.
- Pinto, Louis. 1987. *Les philosophes entre lycée et l'avant-garde. Les métamorphoses de la philosophie dans la France d'aujourd'hui*. Paris: L'Harmattan.
- . 1995. 'La dénégation de l'origine. Hermann Cohen, de la sociologie à la philosophie transcendante'. *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 109 (1): 41–59.
- . 2002. '(Re)traductions: Phénoménologie et « philosophie allemande » dans les années 1930'. *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 145 (5): 21–33.
- . 2007. *La vocation et le métier de philosophe. Pour une sociologie de la philosophie dans la France contemporaine*. Paris: Seuil.
- . 2009. *La théorie souveraine. Les philosophes français et la sociologie au XXe siècle*. Passages. Paris: Éditions du Cerf.
- , ed. 2020. *La construction d'objet en sociologie. Actualité d'une démarche*. Champ social. Vulaines-sur-Seine: Éditions du Croquant.
- Pirenne, Henri. 1923. *De la Methode Comparative en Histoire. Discours prononcé à la Séance d'Ouverture du Ve Congrès International des Sciences Historiques, le 9 avril 1923*. Bruxelles: M. Weissenbruch.
- Plas, Régine. 2022. 'Wundt, figure tutélaire de la psychologie "scientifique" française ?' *Revue germanique internationale*, no. 35 (June): 35.
- Platania, Margherita. 1996. 'Le projet de *Vocabulaire historique*'. *Revue de synthèse* 117 (1): 231–40.
- , ed. 2000a. 'Introduction: Les mots de l'histoire'. In *Les mots de l'histoire. Le vocabulaire historique du Centre international de synthèse*, 11–47. Istituto italiano per gli studi filosofici, Serie Testi, XIV. Napoli: Bibliopolis.
- , ed. 2000b. *Les mots de l'histoire. Le vocabulaire historique du Centre international de synthèse*. Istituto italiano per gli studi filosofici, Serie Testi, XIV. Napoli: Bibliopolis.

- Pleasants, Nigel. 1999. *Wittgenstein and the Idea of a Critical Social Theory. A Critique of Giddens, Habermas and Bhaskhar*. Routledge Studies in Social and Political Thought. London/New York: Routledge.
- Plechanow, Georgi. 1898. 'Konrad Schmidt gegen Karl Marx und Friedrich Engels'. *Die neue Zeit* 17 (5): 133–45.
- Plessner, Helmuth. (1931) 1982. 'Abwandlungen des Ideologiedankens'. In *Der Streit um die Wissenssoziologie*, edited by Volker Meja and Nico Stehr, 2:637–62. suhrkamp taschenbuch wissenschaft 361. Frankfurt/New York: Suhrkamp.
- Pluet-Despatin, Jacqueline. 1996. 'Henri Berr éditeur. Élaboration et production de "L'Évolution de l'humanité"'. *Revue de synthèse* 117 (1): 241–67.
- Pocock, J. G. A. 1987. 'The Concept of a Language and the Métier d'historien: Some Considerations on Practice'. In *The Languages of Political Theory in Early-Modern Europe*, edited by Anthony Pagden, 19–38. Ideas in Context. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Podoksik, Efraim. 2016. 'Neo-Kantianism and Georg Simmel's Interpretation of Kant'. *Modern Intellectual History* 13 (3): 597–622.
- Poincaré, Henri. 1902. *La Science et l'Hypothèse*. Bibliothèque de Philosophie scientifique. Paris: Flammarion.
- Politzer, Georges. 1926. 'Introduction'. *L'Esprit* 1: 70–114.
- Pollak, Michael. 1975. *Les incidences de la politique scientifique sur l'évolution du champ scientifique: le cas de la sociologie et des sciences économiques en France*. Thèse de 3e cycle. Paris: EHESS.
- . 1978. *Gesellschaft und Soziologie in Frankreich. Tradition und Wandel in der neueren französischen Soziologie*. Hochschulschriften Sozialwissenschaften 12. Meisenheim/Glan: Anton Hain.
- . 1979. 'Paul F. Lazarsfeld, fondateur d'une multinationale scientifique'. *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 25 (1): 45–59.
- . 1986. 'Max Weber en France. L'itinéraire d'une oeuvre'. *Cahiers de l'Institut d'Histoire du Temps Présent* 3: 1–70.
- . 1988. 'La place de Max Weber dans le champ intellectuel français'. *Droit et société* 9: 189–201.
- . (1984) 1992. *Vienne 1900. Une identité blessée*. Folio Histoire. Paris: Gallimard.
- Ponge, Francis. (1926–1948) 1967. *Le parti pris des choses. Précédé de Douze petits écrits. Et suivi de Proèmes*. NRF. Paris: Gallimard.
- Popper, Karl. (1945) 2011a. *The Open Society and Its Enemies*. With Václav Havel and E. H. Gombrich. London/New York: Routledge Classics.
- . (1945) 2011b. 'The Sociology of Knowledge'. In *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, with Václav Havel and E. H. Gombrich, 419–29. London/New York: Routledge Classics.
- Popper, Karl R. (1961–1962) 1969. 'Die Logik der Sozialwissenschaften'. In *Der Positivismusstreit in der deutschen Soziologie*, by Theodor W. Adorno, Hans Albert, Ralf Dahrendorf, Jürgen Habermas, Harald Pilot, and Karl R. Popper, 103–23. Soziologische Texte. Neuwied: Luchterhand.
- . 1970. 'Normal Science and Its Dangers'. In *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge*, edited by Imre Lakatos and Alan Musgrave, 51–58. Proceedings of the International Colloquium in the Philosophy of Science, London, 1965 4. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- . 1972. *Objective Knowledge. An Evolutionary Approach*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- . (1976) 1987. 'The Myth of the Framework'. In *Rational Changes in Science*, edited by Joseph C. Pitt and Marcello Pera, 35–62. Boston Studies in the Philosophy of Science 98. Dordrecht: D. Reidel Publishing Company.

- Port, Andrew I. 2015. 'History from Below, the History of Everyday Life, and Microhistory'. In *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences*, 2nd ed., edited by James D. Wright, 108–13. Oxford: Elsevier.
- Potin, Yann, and Jean-François Sirinelli, eds. 2019. *Généralisations historiennes*. Paris: CNRS Éditions.
- Potts, John. 2009. *A History of Charisma*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- . 2019. *Ideas in Time. The Longue Durée in Intellectual History*. In *Ideas in Time : The Longue Durée in Intellectual History*. Sociétés Contemporaines. Aix-en-Provence: Presses universitaires de Provence.
- Poupeau, Franck. 2020. 'Construction de l'objet'. In *Dictionnaire international Bourdieu*, edited by Gisèle Sapiro, 193–97. Culture & société. Paris: CNRS Éditions.
- Poupeau, Franck, and Gisèle Sapiro. 2023a. 'Introduction. Du comparatisme structural à la sociologie des champs internationaux'. In *Impérialismes. Circulation internationale des idées et luttes pour l'universel*, by Pierre Bourdieu, edited by Jérôme Bourdieu, Franck Poupeau, and Gisèle Sapiro, 11–36. Microcosmes 3. Paris: Raisons d'agir.
- . 2023b. 'Repères. Pour un programme de recherche en plein développement'. In *Impérialismes. Circulation internationale des idées et luttes pour l'universel*, by Pierre Bourdieu, edited by Jérôme Bourdieu, Franck Poupeau, and Gisèle Sapiro, 183–88. Microcosmes 3. Paris: Raisons d'agir.
- Prantl, Carl. 1870. *Geschichte der Logik im Abendlande*. Vol. 4. Leipzig: Verlag von S. Hirzel.
- Prochasson, Christophe. 1996. 'Histoire et sociologie: Henri Berr et les durkheimiens (1900–1914)'. *Revue de synthèse* 117 (1): 61–79.
- Pudal, Romain. 2005. '« Sur la réification des collectifs » : à propos de l'école de Chicago'. *Cahiers internationaux de sociologie* 119 (2): 367–76.
- Puech, Henri-Charles. 1927. 'Notes sur O. Hamelin'. *L'Esprit* 2: 41–91.
- , ed. 1970. *Histoire des religions*. 3 vols. Encyclopédie de la Pléiade. Paris: Gallimard.
- . 1978. *En quête de la Gnose*. 2 vols. Bibliothèque des sciences humaines. Paris: Gallimard.
- Pulte, Helmut. 2004. 'Wissenschaftstheorie; Wissenschaftsphilosophie'. In *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie online*. Basel: Schwabe.
- Quetelet, Adolphe. 1835. *Sur l'homme et le développement de ses facultés, ou Essai de physique sociale*. 2 vols. Paris: Bachelier.
- Quine, Willard Van Orman. 1960. *Word and Object*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press.
- . 1969. 'Epistemology Naturalized'. In *Ontological Relativity and Other Essays*, by Willard Van Orman Quine, 69–90. New York: Columbia University Press.
- . (1951) 1980a. 'The Problem of Meaning in Linguistics'. In *From a Logical Point of View. Nine Logico-Philosophical Essays*, 2nd ed., 47–64. 2nd ed. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- . (1951) 1980b. 'Two Dogmas of Empiricism'. In *From a Logical Point of View. Nine Logico-Philosophical Essays*, 2nd ed., 20–46. 2nd ed. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- Ragin, Charles C., and Howard S. Becker, eds. 1992. *What Is a Case? Exploring the Foundations of Social Inquiry*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ragouet, Pascal. 2002. 'Différenciation, antidifférenciation : la sociologie des sciences dans l'impasse?' *Sociologie. Revue européenne des sciences sociales*, no. 3: 9–9.
- Rammstedt, Otthein. 1992. 'Editorischer Bericht'. In *Soziologie. Untersuchungen über die Formen der Vergesellschaftung*, by Georg Simmel, edited by Otthein Rammstedt and Torge Karlsruhen, 877–905. Georg Simmel-Gesamtausgabe 11. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.
- . 1997. *Das Durkheim-Simmelsche Projekt einer 'rein-wissenschaftlichen Soziologie' im Schatten der Dreyfus-Affäre*.
- . 1998. 'Les relations entre Durkheim et Simmel dans le contexte de l'affaire Dreyfus'. *L'Année sociologique*, 139–62.

- Ramsauer, Laurenz. 2023. 'Kant's Racism as a Philosophical Problem'. *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 104 (4): 791–815.
- Ratzenhofer, Gustav. 1902. *Die Kritik des Intellekts. Positive Erkenntnistheorie*. Leipzig: Brockhaus.
- Rawls, Anne Warfield. 2005. *Epistemology and Practice: Durkheim's The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Raynaud, Dominique. (2003) 2018. *Sociologie des controverses scientifiques*. With Mario Bunge. Sciences & philosophie. 2nd ed. Paris: Éditions Matériologiques.
- Redondi, Pietro. 1996. 'Henri Berr, Hélène Metzger et Alexandre Koyré: La religion d'Henri Berr'. *Revue de synthèse* 117 (1): 139–55.
- Reichenbach, Hans. 1920. *Relativitätstheorie und Erkenntnis apriori*. Berlin: Julius Springer.
- . 1935. 'L'Empirisme logique et la désagrégation de l'*a priori*'. *Actes du Congrès international de philosophie scientifique* 1: 28–35.
- . 1936. 'L'empirisme logistique et la désagrégation de l'*a priori*'. In *Actes du Congrès international de philosophie scientifique. Sorbonne. Paris 1935. I. Philosophie scientifique et empirisme logique*, 28–35. Actualités scientifiques et industrielles 388. Paris: Hermann.
- . 1938. *Experience and Prediction. An Analysis of the Foundations and the Structure of Knowledge*. Chicago/London: The University of Chicago Press.
- Reichl, Pavel. 2020. 'Making History Philosophical: Kant, Maimon, and the Evolution of the Historiography of Philosophy in the Critical Period'. *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 28 (3): 463–82.
- Reiners, Stefan. 2020. 'Kritik der historischen Vernunft in Zeitschriftenform: Die Kulturtheorie der Zeitschrift für Völkerpsychologie und Sprachwissenschaft und ihre medialen Bedingungen im mittleren 19. Jahrhundert'. *Internationales Archiv für Sozialgeschichte der deutschen Literatur* 45 (2): 456–70.
- Renan, Ernest. 1882. *Qu'est-ce qu'une nation? Conférence faite en Sorbonne, le 11 mars 1882*. 2nd ed. Paris: Calmann Lévy.
- Renoliet, Jean-Jacques. 1992. 'La genèse de l'Institut international de Coopération intellectuelle'. *Relations internationales* 72: 387–98.
- . 1999. *L'UNESCO oubliée. La Société des Nations et la coopération intellectuelle (1919-1946)*. With René Girault. Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne.
- Renouvier, Charles. (1875) 1912. *Essais de critique générale. Premier Essai. Traité de logique générale et de logique formelle*. 2 vols. 2nd ed. Paris: Armand Colin.
- Revel, Jacques, ed. 1996a. *Jeux d'échelles. La micro-analyse à l'expérience*. Hautes études. Paris: Gallimard/Le Seuil.
- . 1996b. 'Le moment Berr'. *Revue de synthèse* 117 (1): 157–72.
- . 2007. 'Histoire et sciences sociales. Lectures d'un débat français autour de 1900'. *Mil neuf cent* 25 (1): 101–26.
- Revue française de sociologie. 1960. 'Actualité de la recherche. Le Groupe de Recherches sur la Sociologie de la Connaissance et la Sociologie de la Vie morale'. *Revue française de sociologie* 1 (1–2): 219–20.
- Rey, Abel. 1930. *La science dans l'antiquité*. With Henri Berr. 5 vols. L'Évolution de l'humanité. Série complémentaire. Paris: La Renaissance du livre/Albin Michel.
- Rey, Abel, Antoine Meillet, and Paul Montel, eds. 1937. *Encyclopédie française. Tome I. L'outillage mental. Pensée. Langage. Mathématique*. Paris: Société de Gestion de l'Encyclopédie française.
- Rey, Roseline, ed. 1994a. 'La classification des sciences (1750-1850)'. *Revue de Synthèse* 115 (1–2).
- . 1994b. 'La classification des sciences (1750-1850)'. *Revue de Synthèse* 115 (1–2): 5–12.

- Rheinberger, Hans-Jörg. 2007. *Historische Epistemologie zur Einführung*. Zur Einführung 336. Hamburg: Junius.
- Ribot, Théodule. 1879. *La psychologie allemande contemporaine*. École expérimentale. Paris: Baillière.
- . (1873) 1881. *La psychologie anglaise contemporaine*. École expérimentale. Paris: Baillière.
- . 1897. *L'évolution des idées générales*. Paris: Alcan.
- Richard, Nathalie. 2015. 'A "Spencerian Moment" in French Cultural History? Spencer in France (1870-1890)'. In *Global Spencerism. The Communication and Appropriation of a British Evolutionist*, edited by Bernard Lightman, 266–85. Leiden: Brill.
- Richardson, Alan. 1997. 'Toward a History of Scientific Philosophy'. *Perspectives on Science* 5 (3): 418–51.
- . 2004. 'Robert K. Merton and Philosophy of Science'. *Social Studies of Science* 34 (6): 855–58.
- Richardson, Alan W. 2023. *Logical Empiricism as Scientific Philosophy*. Elements in the Philosophy of Science, Cambridge Elements. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Rickert, Heinrich. 1901. 'Les quatre modes de l'universel dans l'histoire'. *Revue de synthèse historique* 2 (5): 121–40.
- . 1902a. *Die Grenzen der naturwissenschaftlichen Begriffsbildung. Eine logische Einleitung in die historischen Wissenschaften*. 2nd ed. Tübingen: Mohr.
- . 1902b. 'Über die Aufgaben einer Logik der Geschichte'. *Archiv für systematische Philosophie* 8 (2): 137–63.
- . 1924. 'Alois Riehl'. *Logos. Zeitschrift für systematische Philosophie* 13: 162–85.
- . (1896–1902) 1929. *Die Grenzen der naturwissenschaftlichen Begriffsbildung. Eine logische Einleitung in die historischen Wissenschaften*. 5th ed. Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck).
- . 1931a. *Die Heidelberger Tradition in der deutschen Philosophie*. Philosophie und Geschichte. Eine Sammlung von Vorträgen und Schriften aus dem Gebiet der Philosophie und Geschichte 33. Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck).
- . 1931b. 'Geschichte und System der Philosophie'. *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 40: 7–46.
- . 1934. 'Die Heidelberger Tradition und Kants Kritizismus'. In *Deutsche systematische Philosophie nach ihren Gestalten*, edited by Hermann Schwarz, 2 vols., 237–301. Berlin: Junker & Dünhaupt.
- . (1921) 2007. 'Vorwort zur dritten und vierten Auflage'. In *Die Grenzen der naturwissenschaftlichen Begriffsbildung. Erster Teilband.*, edited by Rainer A. Bast, XIV–XXVI. Hildesheim/Zürich/New York: Olms-Weidmann.
- . (1899–1926) 2013. *Kulturwissenschaft und Naturwissenschaft*. Berlin: Celtis.
- Ricœur, Paul. 1963. 'Structure et herméneutique'. *Esprit* 322: 596–627.
- Riedel, Manfred. 1978. *Verstehen oder Erklären? Zur Theorie und Geschichte der hermeneutischen Wissenschaften*. Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta.
- Ringer, Fritz. 1969. *The Decline of the German Mandarins. The German Academic Community, 1890-1933*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- . 1979. *Education and Society in Modern Europe*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- . (1969) 1990. *The Decline of the German Mandarins. The German Academic Community, 1890-1933*. Hanover/London: Wesleyan University Press.
- . 1992. *Fields of Knowledge. French Academic Culture in Comparative Perspective, 1890-1920*. Cambridge/Paris: Cambridge University Press/Éditions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme.
- . 1997. *Max Weber's Methodology: The Unification of the Cultural and Social Sciences*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

- Ringer, Fritz K. 1999. 'Commentary. On the Review Symposium of Fritz Ringer's *Max Weber's Methodology: The Unification of the Cultural and Social Sciences*'. *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 12 (4): 653–57.
- Riondet, Xavier. 2020. 'L'Institut international de coopération intellectuelle: comment promouvoir un enseignement répondant à l'idéal internationaliste (1931-1937) ?' *Relations internationales* 183 (3): 77–93.
- Ritchie, Jack, ed. 2012. 'Styles of Thinking'. *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science Part A* 43 (4): 595–665.
- Ritter, Bernhard. 2020. *Kant and Post-Tractarian Wittgenstein. Transcendentalism, Idealism, Illusion*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Ritter, Joachim, Karlfried Gründer, and Gottfried Gabriel, eds. 1971–2008. *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*. 13 vols. Basel: Schwabe.
- Ritzel, Wolfgang. 1971. 'Wie ist eine Kant-Biographie überhaupt möglich?' *Kant-Studien* 62 (1–4): 98–112.
- . 1985a. 'Exkurs II: Wie ist eine Kant-Biographie überhaupt möglich?' In *Immanuel Kant. Eine Biographie*, 473–77. Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter.
- . 1985b. *Immanuel Kant. Eine Biographie*. Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter.
- Riva, Miguel de la. 2022. *Zur Wissenssoziologie Karl Mannheims und Ludwik Flecks. Eine vergleichende Studie zu Kontext, Quellen und Rezeption*. Master's thesis. Vienna: University of Vienna.
- Robbins, Derek. 2005. 'Kant, Cassirer et Bourdieu'. In *Kant et la France – Kant und Frankreich*, edited by J. Ferrari, 377–87. Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag.
- Roberty, Eugène de. 1894. *Auguste Comte et Herbert Spencer. Contribution à l'histoire des idées philosophiques au XIXe siècle*. Bibliothèque de philosophie contemporaine. Paris: Alcan.
- Roberty, Eugène de. 1907. 'La genèse sociale de la raison et les origines rationnelles de l'action. Réponse à quelques objections'. *Revue de Synthèse historique* 15 (43): 1–28.
- Roberty, Eugène de. 1907. 'La nature sociale de l'idée'. *Revue internationale de sociologie* 15 (10): 681–706.
- . 1908. *Sociologie de l'action. La genèse sociale de la raison et les origines rationnelles de l'action*. Bibliothèque de philosophie contemporaine. Paris: Alcan.
- Rock, Paul. 1979. *The Making of Symbolic Interactionism*. London/Basingstoke: Macmillan.
- Roger, Alain. 2001. 'La forme, le schème et le symbole. Pour une théorie de l'artialisation'. In *Formalisme, jeu des formes*, edited by Eveline Pinto, 82–89. Philosophie. Paris: Éditions de la Sorbonne.
- Rohmer, Éric, dir. 1990. *Conte de printemps*. 112.
- Rol, Cécile, ed. 2015. 'Gaston Richard (1860-1945): un sociologue en rébellion'. *Lendemains. Études comparées sur la France* 158–159.
- . 2017. 'Wilhelm Jerusalem lecteur d'Émile Durkheim: méthode, connaissance, morale'. *Revue européenne des sciences sociales*, nos. 55–2: 57–82.
- Romizi, Donata, Monika Wulz, and Elisabeth Nemeth, eds. 2022. *Edgar Zilsel: Philosopher, Historian, Sociologist*. Vienna Circle Institute Yearbook 27. Cham: Springer.
- Rorty, Richard. 1979. *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- . (1989) 1991a. 'Is Derrida a Transcendental Philosopher?' In *Essays on Heidegger and Others. Philosophical Papers*, 119–28. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- . (1989) 1991b. 'Wittgenstein, Heidegger, and the Reification of Language'. In *Essays on Heidegger and Others. Philosophical Papers*, 50–65. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Rorty, Richard M. (1967) 1992. 'Introduction. Metaphilosophical Difficulties of Linguistic Philosophy'. In *The Linguistic Turn. Essays in Philosophical Method. With Two*

- Retrospective Essays*, edited by Richard M. Rorty, 1–39. Chicago/London: The University of Chicago Press.
- Rorty, Richard, Jerome B. Schneewind, and Quentin Skinner, eds. 1984. *Philosophy in History. Essays on the Historiography of Philosophy*. Ideas in Context 1. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Rose, Gillian. (1981) 2009. *Hegel Contra Sociology*. Radical Thinkers. London/New York: Verso.
- Rosemann, Lutz. 1995. ‘Norbert Elias’ Apriorikritik’. In *Jahrbuch für Soziologiegeschichte 1993*, 79–91. Opladen: Leske & Budrich.
- Ross, Sydney. 1962. ‘Scientist: The Story of a Word’. *Annals of Science* 18 (2): 65–85.
- Rothacker, Erich. (1920) 1930. *Einleitung in die Geisteswissenschaften*. 2nd ed. Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck).
- Roueff, Olivier. 2020. ‘Homologie(s) / Homologie(s) structurale(s)’. In *Dictionnaire international Bourdieu*, edited by Gisèle Sapiro, 422–24. Culture & société. Paris: CNRS Éditions.
- Rovira, Rogelio. 2018. ‘Kant’s Classification of the Sciences - Towards a Systematic Reconstruction’. In *Natur und Freiheit. Akten des XII. Internationalen Kant-Kongresses*, edited by Violetta L. Waibel, Margit Ruffing, and David Wagner, 1535–44. Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter.
- Ruffino, Marco. 2022. *Contingent a Priori Truths. Metaphysics, Semantics, Epistemology and Pragmatics*. Synthese Library 443. Cham: Springer.
- Sagnol, Marc. 1987. ‘Le statut de la sociologie chez Simmel et Durkheim’. *Revue française de sociologie*, 99–125.
- Saint-Martin, Arnaud. 2013. *La sociologie de Robert K. Merton*. Repères 617. Paris: La Découverte.
- . 2020. ‘Merton, Robert K (1910-2003)’. In *Dictionnaire international Bourdieu*, edited by Gisèle Sapiro, 565–67. Culture & société. Paris: CNRS Éditions.
- Salis, Jean R. de. 1930. ‘Remarques sur le mouvement sociologique en Allemagne’. *Revue de Synthèse historique* 50 (148–150): 57–69.
- Salis, Jean Rudolf von. 1975. *Grenzüberschreitungen. Ein Lebensbericht. Erster Teil. 1901-1939*. Zürich: Orell Füssli.
- . 1978. *Grenzüberschreitungen. Ein Lebensbericht. Zweiter Teil. 1939-1978*. Zürich: Orell Füssli.
- Salis, Jean-R. de. 1932a. *Sismondi. 1773-1842. La vie et l’oeuvre d’un cosmopolite philosophe*. Bibliothèque de la Revue de littérature comparée 77. Paris: H. Champion.
- . 1932b. *Sismondi. 1773-1842. Lettres et documents inédits, suivis d’une liste des sources et d’une bibliographie*. Bibliothèque de la Revue de littérature comparée 77. Paris: H. Champion.
- Salomon, Gottfried. 1936. ‘Psychologie Sociale. La Sociologie Du Savoir’. *Revue de Synthèse. Science de La Nature et Synthèse Générale* XII (1): 89–96.
- Salomon-Delatour, Gottfried. 1935. ‘Hegel ou Comte’. *Revue positiviste internationale* 52/53: 220-228/110-119.
- . (2010) 2011. *Schriften*. Edited by Christoph Henning. Klassiker der Sozialwissenschaften. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften/Springer.
- Salomone, Jules. 2017. ‘Présentation. L’empirisme rationaliste de Durkheim et Mauss’. In *De quelques formes primitives de classification. Contribution à l’étude des représentations collectives*, by Émile Durkheim and Marcel Mauss, edited by Éric Brian, Florence Weber, and Jules Salomone, 3–25. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
- Sandkühler, Hans Jörg. 1970. ‘Kant, neukantianischer Sozialismus, Revisionismus. Zur Entstehung der Ideologie des demokratischen Sozialismus’. In *Marxismus und Ethik. Texte zum neukantianischen Sozialismus*, edited by Hans Jörg Sandkühler and Rafael De la Vega, 7–44. Theorie. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.

- Sandkühler, Hans Jörg, and Rafael De la Vega, eds. 1970. *Marxismus und Ethik. Texte zum neukantianischen Sozialismus*. Theorie. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.
- Santinello, Giovanni, ed. 1979–2004. *Storia delle storie generali della filosofia*. 5 vols. Brescia: La scuola.
- Santinello, Giovanni, and Gregorio Piaia, eds. (1979–2004) 1993–2022. *Models of the History of Philosophy*. 4 vols. Dordrecht/Heidelberg/New York/London: Springer.
- Sapiro, Gisèle. 2012. ‘Comparaison et échanges culturels : Le cas des traductions’. In *Faire des sciences sociales. Comparer*, edited by Olivier Remaud, Jean-Frédéric Schaub, and Isabelle Thireau, 193–221. Cas de figure. Paris: Éditions de l’École des hautes études en sciences sociales.
- . 2013. ‘Le champ est-il national ? La théorie de la différenciation sociale au prisme de l’histoire globale’. *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 200 (5): 70–85.
- . 2018. ‘Field Theory from a Transnational Perspective’. In *The Oxford Handbook of Pierre Bourdieu*, edited by Thomas Medvetz and Jeffrey J. Sallaz, 161–82. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- . 2019. ‘Repenser le concept d’autonomie pour la sociologie des biens symboliques’. *Biens symboliques / Symbolic Goods [Online]* 4.
- . 2020a. ‘Autonomie/Autonomisation’. In *Dictionnaire international Bourdieu*, edited by Gisèle Sapiro, 59–61. Culture & société. Paris: CNRS Éditions.
- . 2020b. ‘Catégorie(s)/Catégorème(s)’. In *Dictionnaire international Bourdieu*, edited by Gisèle Sapiro, 120–22. Culture & société. Paris: CNRS Éditions.
- , ed. 2020c. *Dictionnaire international Bourdieu*. Culture & société. Paris: CNRS Éditions.
- . 2020d. ‘Hétérodoxie’. In *Dictionnaire international Bourdieu*, edited by Gisèle Sapiro, 402–3. Culture & société. Paris: CNRS Éditions.
- . 2020e. ‘Orthodoxie’. In *Dictionnaire international Bourdieu*, edited by Gisèle Sapiro, 625–26. Culture & société. Paris: CNRS Éditions.
- . 2020f. ‘Projet’. In *Dictionnaire international Bourdieu*, edited by Gisèle Sapiro, 686–87. Culture & société. Paris: CNRS Éditions.
- . 2020g. ‘Schème(s)’. In *Dictionnaire international Bourdieu*, edited by Gisèle Sapiro, 765–67. Culture & société. Paris: CNRS Éditions.
- . 2020h. “‘Sens commun (Le)’ (Collection)”. In *Dictionnaire international Bourdieu*, edited by Gisèle Sapiro, 782–85. Culture & société. Paris: CNRS Éditions.
- . 2022. ‘Les sciences humaines et sociales, entre national et international: Perspective socio-historique, l’exemple de la sociologie’. *Socio-logos* 17 (April).
- Sapiro, Gisèle, and Mauricio Bustamante. 2009. ‘Translation as a Measure of International Consecration. Mapping the World Distribution of Bourdieu’s Books in Translation’. *Sociologica*, nos. 2–3: 1–45.
- Sapiro, Gisèle, and Lucile Dumont. 2020. ‘The International Circulation of Structuralism: Between Appropriations and Rejections’. In *Ideas on the Move in the Social Sciences and Humanities: The International Circulation of Paradigms and Theorists*, edited by Gisèle Sapiro, Marco Santoro, and Patrick Baert, 31–54. Socio-Historical Studies of the Social and Human Sciences. Cham: Springer International Publishing.
- Sapiro, Gisèle, Marco Santoro, and Patrick Baert, eds. 2020. *Ideas on the Move in the Social Sciences and Humanities. The International Circulation of Paradigms and Theorists*. Socio-Historical Studies of the Social and Human Sciences. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Sarton, George. 1927–1948. *Introduction to the History of Science*. 5 vols. Baltimore: Williams and Wilkins.
- Sartre, Jean-Paul. (1960) 2002. ‘Préface’. In *Aden Arabie. Préface de Jean-Paul Sartre*, by Paul Nizan, with Jean-Paul Sartre, 5–52. La Découverte Poche. Paris: La Découverte.

- Savatovsky, Dan. 2007. 'Le *Vocabulaire philosophique* de Lalande (1902-1923): lexicographie spécialisée ou prototerminographie ?' *Langages* 168 (December): 39–52.
- Schaerer, René. 1976. 'Pour le 90e anniversaire de Robert Bouvier'. *Journal de Genève*, August 14.
- Schäfer, Hilmar. 2016. *Praxistheorie. Ein soziologisches Forschungsprogramm*. Sozialtheorie. Bielefeld: Transcript.
- Schatzki, Theodore R. 1996. *Social Practices. A Wittgensteinian Approach to Human Activity and the Social*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Schatzki, Theodore R., Karin Knorr Cetina, and Eike von Savigny, eds. 2001. *The Practice Turn in Contemporary Theory*. London/New York: Routledge.
- Scheler, Max. 1917. *Die Ursachen des Deutschen Hasses. Eine nationalpädagogische Erörterung*. Leipzig: Kurt Wolff Verlag.
- . (1915) 1917. *Der Genius des Krieges und der Deutsche Krieg*. 3rd ed. Leipzig: Verlag der Weißen Bücher.
- . 1921a. 'Die positivistische Geschichtsphilosophie des Wissens und die Aufgaben einer Soziologie der Erkenntnis'. *Kölner Vierteljahreshefte für Sozialwissenschaften* 1 (1): 22–31.
- . 1921b. 'Zu W. Jerusalem's "Bemerkungen"'. *Kölner Vierteljahreshefte für Sozialwissenschaften* 1 (3): 35–39.
- , ed. 1924. *Versuche zu einer Soziologie des Wissens*. Schriften des Forschungsinstituts für Sozialwissenschaften in Köln 2. München/Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot.
- Scheler, Max, and Max Adler. 1925. 'Vorträge von Prof. Dr. Max Scheler-Köln und von Prof. Dr. Max Adler-Wien über: "Wissenschaft und soziale Struktur"'. In *Verhandlungen des Vierten Deutschen Soziologentages am 29. und 30. September 1924 in Heidelberg*, edited by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Soziologie, with Adolf Günther, Ludwig Heyde, Max Scheler, and Max Adler, 118–212. Schriften der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Soziologie. 1. Serie: Verhandlungen der Deutschen Soziologentage 4. Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck).
- Schelsky, Helmut. 1959a. 'Die transzendente Theorie der Gesellschaft'. In *Ortsbestimmungen der deutschen Soziologie*, 93–109. Düsseldorf/Köln: Eugen Diederichs.
- . 1959b. *Ortsbestimmungen der deutschen Soziologie*. Düsseldorf/Köln: Eugen Diederichs.
- . 1981. *Rückblicke eines 'Anti-Soziologen'*. Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag.
- Schelting, Alexander von. 1922. 'Die logische Theorie der historischen Kulturwissenschaft von Max Weber und im besonderen sein Begriff des Idealtypus'. *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik* 49: 623–752.
- . 1934. *Max Webers Wissenschaftslehre*. Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr.
- Schepers, Heinrich, Giorgio Tonelli, Rudolf Eisler, and Redaktion. (1971) 2017. 'A priori/a posteriori'. In *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie online*. Schwabe Verlag.
- Schick, Johannes F.M., Mario Schmidt, and Martin Zillinger, eds. 2022. *The Social Origins of Thought. Durkheim, Mauss, and the Category Project*. Methodology and History in Anthropology 43. New York/Oxford: Berghahn.
- Schlaudt, Oliver, and Françoise Willmann, eds. 2020. 'Alfred Sohn-Rethel (1899-1990). Controverses autour d'un philosophe matérialiste'. *Recherches germaniques* 15.
- Schlossberger, Matthias. 2010. 'Wissenschaft als Schicksal. Der Streit um Max Webers Polytheismus'. *Zeitschrift für Ideengeschichte* 4 (1): 111–14.
- Schluchter, Wolfgang. 2015. *Grundlegungen der Soziologie: Eine Theoriegeschichte in systematischer Absicht*. 2nd ed. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.
- Schmaus, Warren. 1994. *Durkheim's Philosophy of Science and the Sociology of Knowledge. Creating an Intellectual Niche*. Science and Its Conceptual Foundations. Chicago/London: The University of Chicago Press.

- . 2000. 'Representations in Durkheim's Sens Lectures. An Early Approach to the Subject'. In *Durkheim and Representations*, by W.S.F. Pickering, 27–36. Routledge Studies in Social and Political Thought. London/New York: Routledge.
- . 2003. 'Kant's Reception in France: Theories of the Categories in Academic Philosophy, Psychology, and Social Science'. *Perspectives on Science* 11 (1): 3–34.
- . 2004. *Rethinking Durkheim and His Tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- . 2018. *Liberty and the Pursuit of Knowledge. Charles Renouvier's Political Philosophy of Science*. Pittsburgh: Pittsburg University Press.
- Schmidt, Conrad. 1898. 'Einige Bemerkungen über Plechanows letzten Artikel in der "Neuen Zeit"'. *Die neue Zeit* 17: 324–34.
- Schmidt, Mario. 2022. 'Experimenting with Social Matter. Claude Bernard's Influence on the Durkheim School's Understanding of Categories'. In *The Social Origins of Thought. Durkheim, Mauss, and the Category Project*, edited by Johannes F.M. Schick, Mario Schmidt, and Martin Zillinger, 113–27. Methodology and History in Anthropology 43. New York/Oxford: Berghahn.
- Schmitz, H. Walter. 1985. 'Tönnies' Zeichentheorie zwischen Signifik und Wiener Kreis'. *Zeitschrift für Soziologie* 14 (5): 373–85.
- Schmoller, Gustav. 1883. 'Zur Methodologie der Staats- und Socialwissenschaften'. *Jahrbuch für Gesetzgebung, Verwaltung und Volkswirtschaft im Deutschen Reiche* 7: 239–58.
- Schnädelbach, Herbert. 1983. *Philosophie in Deutschland 1831-1933*. suhrkamp taschenbuch wissenschaft 401. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.
- . 1997. 'Was ist eigentlich ein relatives Apriori?' In *Cognitio humana - Dynamik des Wissens und der Werte. XVII. Deutscher Kongreß für Philosophie. Leipzig, 23.-27. September 1996. Vorträge und Kolloquien*, edited by Christoph Hubig, 491–502. Berlin: Akademie Verlag.
- Scholem, Gershom. 1975. *Walter Benjamin - Die Geschichte Einer Freundschaft*. Bibliothek Suhrkamp 467. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.
- Scholtz, Gunter. (1974) 2017. 'Historismus, Historizismus'. In *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie online*. Basel: Schwabe.
- Schöttler, Peter. 1996. 'Henri Berr et l'Allemagne'. *Revue de synthèse* 117 (1): 189–203.
- . 1997. 'Lucien Febvre ou la démystification de l'histoire rhénane'. In *Le Rhin. Histoire, mythes et réalités*, by Lucien Febvre, edited by Peter Schöttler, 11–56. Paris: Perrin.
- . 2005. '13, rue du Four - Die "Encyclopédie française" als Mittlerin französischer Wissenschaft in den 1930er Jahren'. In *Paris-Wien. Enzyklopädien im Vergleich*, edited by Elisabeth Nemeth and Nicolas Roudet, 179–204. Veröffentlichungen des Instituts Wiener Kreis 13. Wien/New York: Springer.
- . 2006. 'Le Centre International de Synthèse et l'Autriche. Notes pour une enquête'. *Austriaca. Cahiers universitaires d'information sur l'Autriche* 63: 99–117.
- . 2012a. 'Sur la réception de l'"épistémologie française" en Allemagne'. In *Epistemology and History. From Bachelard and Canguilhem to Today's History of Science*, edited by Henning Schmidgen, Peter Schöttler, and Jean-François Braunstein, 41–46. Preprint 434. Berlin: Max-Planck-Institut für Wissenschaftsgeschichte.
- . 2012b. 'Szientismus: Zur Geschichte eines schwierigen Begriffs'. *NTM Zeitschrift für Geschichte der Wissenschaften, Technik und Medizin* 20 (4): 245–69.
- . 2013. 'Scientisme. Sur L'histoire d'un concept difficile'. *Revue de Synthèse* 134 (1): 89–113.
- . 2015a. *Die 'Annales'-Historiker und die deutsche Geschichtswissenschaft*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.
- . 2015b. 'From Comte to Carnap. Marcel Boll and the Introduction of the Vienna Circle in France'. *Revue de Synthèse* 136 (1–2): 207–36.

- . 2016. 'Marcel Boll et l'introduction du Cercle de Vienne en France'. In *Wissenschaft und Praxis. Zur Wissenschaftsphilosophie in Frankreich und Österreich in der ersten Hälfte des 20. Jahrhunderts*, edited by Christian Bonnet and Elisabeth Nemeth, 203–21. Veröffentlichungen des Instituts Wiener Kreis 22. Cham: Springer.
- . (2002) 2016. 'Marc Blochs Testament'. In *Apologie der Geschichtswissenschaft oder Der Beruf des Historikers*, 3rd ed., by Marc Bloch, edited by Peter Schöttler, translated by Wolfram Bayer, with Jacques Le Goff, 215–80. 3rd ed. Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta.
- . 2017. 'Die frühen *Annales* und der Übergang von der "historischen" zur "strukturellen" Linguistik'. In *Un/Ordnungen denken. Beiträge zu den Historischen Kulturwissenschaften. Festschrift für Reinhard Blänker*, edited by Anne Gräfe and Johannes Menzel, 91–102. Berlin: Quintus.
- Schuetz, Alfred. 1953. 'Common-Sense and Scientific Interpretation of Human Action'. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 14 (1): 1–38.
- Schuhl, Pierre-Maxime. 1956. 'Paul Masson-Oursel (Paris, 5 septembre 1882-18 mars 1956)'. *Revue Philosophique de la France et de l'Étranger* 146: 168–77.
- Schütz, Alfred. 1932. *Der sinnhafte Aufbau der sozialen Welt. Eine Einleitung in die verstehende Soziologie*. Wien: Julius Springer.
- . (1932) 1974. *Der sinnhafte Aufbau der sozialen Welt. Eine Einleitung in die verstehende Soziologie*. suhrkamp taschenbuch wissenschaft 92. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.
- Schütz, Alfred, and Thomas Luckmann. 1975. *Strukturen der Lebenswelt*. Soziologische Texte 82. Neuwied/Darmstadt: Luchterhand.
- Sciortino, Luca. 2017. 'On Ian Hacking's Notion of Style of Reasoning'. *Erkenntnis* 82 (2): 243–64.
- Searle, John R. 1983. *Intentionality. An Essay in the Philosophy of Mind*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- . 1995. *The Construction of Social Reality*. New York: The Free Press.
- . 2002. 'Skepticism about Rules and Intentionality'. In *Consciousness and Language*, 251–64. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- . 2010. *Making the Social World. The Structure of Human Civilization*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Seidman, Steven. 1977. 'The Durkheim / Weber "Unawareness Puzzle"'. *European Journal of Sociology / Archives Européennes de Sociologie* 18 (2): 356–356.
- . 1985. 'The Historicist Controversy: A Critical Review with a Defense of a Revised Presentism'. *Sociological Theory* 3 (1): 13–16.
- Seignobos, Charles. 1901. *La méthode historique appliquée aux sciences sociales*. Bibliothèque générale des Sciences sociales. Paris: Alcan.
- Sellars, Wilfrid. 1968. *Science and Metaphysics. Variations on Kantian Themes*. International Library of Philosophy and Scientific Method. London/New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Selow, Edith. 1959. 'Eisler, Rudolf'. In *Neue Deutsche Biographie*, 4:421–22.
- Serrus, Charles. 1929. *L'Esthétique transcendantale et la science moderne*. Bibliothèque de philosophie contemporaine. Paris: Alcan.
- . (1944) 1990. 'Préface. La théorie kantienne de la connaissance: exposé et critique'. In *Critique de la raison pure*, by Emmanuel Kant, translated by A. Tremesaygues and B. Pacaud, V–XXXI. Quadrige. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
- Sgarbi, Marco. 2008. 'Theory of the History of Problems: A Re-Contextualization'. In *Transnational Concepts Transfer and the Challenge of the Peripheries*, edited by Gürcan Koçan, 107–25. Istanbul: Istanbul Technical University Press.
- . 2010. 'Umriss der Theorie der Problemgeschichte'. In *Eine Typologie der Formen der Begriffsgeschichte*, edited by Riccardo Pozzo and Marco Sgarbi, 185–99. Archiv für Begriffsgeschichte. Sonderheft 7. Hamburg: Meiner.

- . 2011. 'Concepts vs. Ideas vs. Problems: Historiographical Strategies in Writing History of Philosophy'. In *Begriffs-, Ideen- und Problemgeschichte im 21. Jahrhundert*, edited by Riccardo Pozzo and Marco Sgarbi, 69–80. Wolfenbütteler Forschungen 127. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.
- Shapin, Steven. 1988. 'Understanding the Merton Thesis'. *Isis* 79 (4): 594–605.
- . 1992. 'Discipline and Bounding: The History and Sociology of Science as Seen Through the Externalism-Internalism Debate'. *History of Science* 30 (4): 333–69.
- . 1996. *The Scientific Revolution*. Science Culture. Chicago/London: The University of Chicago Press.
- Shapin, Steven, and Simon Schaffer. 2011. 'Introduction to the 2011 Edition. Up for Air: *Leviathan and the Air-Pump* a Generation On'. In *Leviathan and the Air-Pump. Hobbes, Boyle, and the Experimental Life*. Princeton Classics. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- . (1985) 2011. *Leviathan and the Air-Pump. Hobbes, Boyle, and the Experimental Life*. Princeton Classics. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Shimony, Abner, and Debra Nails, eds. 1987. *Naturalistic Epistemology. A Symposium of Two Decades*. Boston Studies in the Philosophy of Science 100. Dordrecht: D. Reidel Publishing Company.
- Shinn, Terry. 2002. 'Nouvelle production du savoir et Triple hélice. Tendances du prêt-à-penser les sciences'. *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 141–142: 21–30.
- Shinn, Terry, and Pascal Ragouet. 2005. *Controverses sur la science. Pour une sociologie transversaliste de l'activité scientifique*. Cours et travaux. Paris: Raisons d'agir.
- Sichirrollo, Livio. 1994. 'Eric Weil lecteur de Kant'. In *La réception de la philosophie allemande en France aux XIXe et XXe siècles*, edited by Jean Quillien, 277–88. Philosophie. Villeneuve d'Ascq: Presses universitaires du Septentrion.
- Sieg, Ulrich. 1994. *Aufstieg und Niedergang des Marburger Neukantianismus. Die Geschichte einer philosophischen Schulgemeinschaft*. Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann.
- Simiand, François. 1903. 'Méthode historique et Science sociale. Étude critique d'après les ouvrages récents de M. Lacombe et de M. Seignobos'. *Revue de Synthèse historique* VI (1–2): 1–22, 130–57.
- Simmel, Georg. 1897. 'Ueber den Unterschied der Wahrnehmungs- und der Erfahrungsurteile. Ein Deutungsversuch'. *Kant-Studien* 1 (1–3): 416–25.
- . 1898. 'Comment les formes sociales se maintiennent'. *L'Année sociologique* 1: 71–109.
- . 1899. 'Il problema della sociologia'. *La Riforma Sociale* 6 (9): 629–37.
- . 1902. 'Tendencies in German Life and Thought Since 1870'. *The International Monthly* 5: 93–111, 166–84.
- . 1903. 'De la religion au point de vue de la théorie de la connaissance'. *Bibliothèque du Congrès International de Philosophie* 2: 319–37.
- . 1904a. 'The Sociology of Conflict. I'. Translated by Small. *American Journal of Sociology* 9 (4): 490–525.
- . 1904b. 'The Sociology of Conflict. II'. Translated by Albion Woodbury Small. *American Journal of Sociology* 9 (5): 672–89.
- . 1904c. 'The Sociology of Conflict. III'. Translated by Albion Woodbury Small. *American Journal of Sociology* 9 (6): 798–811. JSTOR.
- . (1904) 1913. *Kant. Sechzehn Vorlesungen gehalten an der Berliner Universität*. 3rd ed. München/Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot.
- . (1892) 1989. 'Die Probleme der Geschichtsphilosophie (1892)'. In *Aufsätze 1887 bis 1890. Über soziale Differenzierung. Die Probleme der Geschichtsphilosophie (1892)*, edited by Heinz-Jürgen Dahme, 2:297–421. Georg Simmel-Gesamtausgabe 2. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.

- . 1989–2016. *Georg Simmel-Gesamtausgabe*. Edited by Otthein Rammstedt. 24 vols. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.
- . (1894) 1992. ‘Das Problem der Sociologie’. In *Aufsätze und Abhandlungen 1894–1900*, edited by Heinz-Jürgen Dahme and David P. Frisby, 52–61. Georg Simmel-Gesamtausgabe 5. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.
- . (1896) 1992. ‘Was ist uns Kant?’ In *Aufsätze und Abhandlungen 1894–1900*, edited by Heinz-Jürgen Dahme and David P. Frisby, 145–77. Georg Simmel-Gesamtausgabe 5. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.
- . (1899) 1992. ‘Kant und Goethe’. In *Aufsätze und Abhandlungen 1894–1900*, edited by Heinz-Jürgen Dahme and David P. Frisby, 445–78. Georg Simmel-Gesamtausgabe 5. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.
- . (1908) 1992a. ‘Der Streit’. In *Soziologie. Untersuchungen über die Formen der Vergesellschaftung*, edited by Otthein Rammstedt and Torge Karlsruhen, 284–382. Georg Simmel-Gesamtausgabe 11. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.
- . (1908) 1992b. ‘Exkurs über das Problem: Wie ist Gesellschaft möglich?’ In *Soziologie. Untersuchungen über die Formen der Vergesellschaftung*, 42–62. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.
- . (1908) 1992c. *Soziologie. Untersuchungen über die Formen der Vergesellschaftung*. Edited by Otthein Rammstedt and Torge Karlsruhen. Georg Simmel-Gesamtausgabe 11. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.
- . 1995. *Philosophie der Mode (1905). Die Religion (1906/1912). Kant und Goethe (1906/1916). Schopenhauer und Nietzsche (1907)*. Edited by Michael Behr, Volkhard Krech, and Gert Schmidt. Georg Simmel-Gesamtausgabe 10. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.
- . 1997. *Kant. Die Probleme der Geschichtsphilosophie (Zweite Fassung 1905/1907)*. Edited by Guy Oakes and Kurt Röttgers. Georg Simmel-Gesamtausgabe 9. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.
- . (1904) 1997. ‘Kant. Sechszehn Vorlesungen gehalten an der Berliner Universität’. In *Kant. Die Probleme der Geschichtsphilosophie (Zweite Fassung 1905/1907)*, edited by Guy Oakes and Kurt Röttgers, 7–226. Georg Simmel-Gesamtausgabe 9. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.
- . (1881–1901) 1999. *Das Wesen der Materie nach Kant’s Physischer Monadologie. Abhandlungen 1882–1884. Rezensionen 1883–1901*. Edited by Klaus Christian Köhnke. Georg Simmel-Gesamtausgabe 1. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.
- . (1896) 1999. ‘Zur Methodik der Socialwissenschaft [Stammler, R.: Wirtschaft und Recht, 1896]’. In *Das Wesen der Materie nach Kant’s Physischer Monadologie. Abhandlungen 1882–1884. Rezensionen 1883–1901*, by Georg Simmel, edited by Klaus Christian Köhnke, 363–77. Georg Simmel-Gesamtausgabe 1. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.
- . 2005. *Briefe 1880–1911*. Edited by Klaus Christian Köhnke. Georg Simmel-Gesamtausgabe 22. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.
- . (1902) 2008. ‘Tendencies in German Life and Thought Since 1870’. In *Georg Simmel Gesamtausgabe*, edited by David Frisby, 18:167–202. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.
- Simon, Walter Michael. 1963a. *European Positivism in the Nineteenth Century. An Essay in Intellectual History*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- . 1963b. ‘Positivism in Germany’. In *European Positivism in the Nineteenth Century. An Essay in Intellectual History*, 238–63. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Sirinelli, Jean-François. 1988. *Génération intellectuelle. Khâgneux et normaliens dans l’entre-deux-guerres*. Paris: Fayard.
- Skinner, Quentin. 1969. ‘Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas’. *History and Theory* 8 (1): 3–53.

- Smith, Joseph Wayne. 1984. 'Primitive Classification and the Sociology of Knowledge: A Response to Bloor'. *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science Part A* 15 (3): 237–43.
- Société française de philosophie, ed. 1902a. 'Constitution d'un vocabulaire philosophique (Fascicule 1 de A à Agir)'. *Bulletin de la Société française de philosophie* 2 (7).
- , ed. 1902b. 'Constitution d'un vocabulaire philosophique (Fascicule 2 de Agnosticisme à Axiome)'. *Bulletin de la Société française de philosophie* 2 (8).
- , ed. 1906a. 'La détermination du fait moral (Séance du 11 février 1906)'. *Bulletin de la Société française de philosophie* 6 (4).
- , ed. 1906b. 'La détermination du fait moral (suite) (Séance du 22 mars 1906)'. *Bulletin de la Société française de philosophie* 6 (5).
- , ed. 1909. 'Science et religion (Séance du 19 novembre 1908)'. *Bulletin de la Société française de philosophie* 9 (2).
- , ed. 1913. 'Le problème religieux et la dualité de la nature humaine (Séance du 4 février 1913)'. *Bulletin de la Société française de philosophie* 13 (3).
- , ed. 1923. 'La mentalité primitive (Séance du 15 février 1923)'. *Bulletin de la Société française de philosophie* 23 (2): 631–62.
- , ed. 1929. 'L'âme primitive (Séance du 1er juin 1929)'. *Bulletin de la Société française de philosophie* 29 (3): 663–98.
- Sodoma, Katharina Anna. 2022. 'Interne Relation'. In *Wittgenstein-Handbuch. Leben - Werk - Wirkung*, edited by Anja Weiberg and Stefan Majetschak, 275–77. Berlin: J.B. Metzler.
- Sohn-Rethel, Alfred. 1970. *Geistige und körperliche Arbeit. Zur Theorie gesellschaftlicher Synthesis*. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.
- . (1937) 1971. 'Zur kritischen Liquidierung des Apriorismus. Eine materialistische Untersuchung'. In *Warenform und Denkform. Aufsätze. Kritische Studien zur Philosophie*. Frankfurt/Wien: Europäische Verlagsanstalt/Europa Verlag.
- . 1978. *Warenform und Denkform*. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.
- . (1936) 1985. *Soziologische Theorie der Erkenntnis*. With Jochen Hörisch. edition suhrkamp 1218. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.
- . 1990. *Das Geld, die bare Münze des Apriori*. Kleine Kulturwissenschaftliche Bibliothek 27. Berlin: Wagenbach.
- . (1947–1990) 2018. *Geistige und körperliche Arbeit. Theoretische Schriften 1947–1990*. Edited by Carl Freytag, Oliver Schlaudt, and Françoise Willmann. 2 vols. Schriften, IV. Freiburg/Wien: Ça ira.
- . Forthcoming. *Exposés zur materialistischen Kritik der Erkenntnis. Luzern - Paris - Birmingham. 1936–1943*. Edited by Carl Freytag, Agnès Grivaux, and Oliver Schlaudt. Schriften, III. Freiburg/Wien: Ça ira.
- Sokal, Alan, and Jean Bricmont. 1997. *Impostures intellectuelles*. Paris: Odile Jacob.
- Sorokin, Pitirim A., and Robert K. Merton. 1937. 'Social Time: A Methodological and Functional Analysis'. *American Journal of Sociology* 42 (5): 615–29.
- Soulié, Stéphan. 2009. *Les philosophes en République. L'aventure intellectuelle de la Revue de métaphysique et de morale et de la Société française de philosophie (1891–1914)*. Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes.
- Souriau, Étienne, ed. (1990) 2010. *Vocabulaire d'esthétique*. Quadrige. Dicos poche. 3rd ed. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
- Spadafora, Andrew. 2017. 'Georg Jellinek on Values and Objectivity in the Legal and Political Sciences'. *Modern Intellectual History* 14 (3): 747–76.
- Spann, Othmar. 1902. 'Die Lehre Stämmers vom sozialpsychologischen Standpunkte aus betrachtet'. *Zeitschrift für die gesamte Staatswissenschaft* 58 (4): 699–719.
- . 1907. *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft. Eine dogmenkritische Untersuchung*. Dresden: Verlag von O. V. Böhmert.
- Specht, Benjamin. 2017. 'Kunst und Erfahrung um 1900: Die ›Empirisierung des Transzendentalen‹ und die ästhetische Moderne. Eine Einleitung'. *KulturPoetik* 17 (1): 4–20.

- Speier, Hans. (1930) 1982. 'Soziologie oder Ideologie? Bemerkungen zur Soziologie der Intelligenz'. In *Der Streit um die Wissenssoziologie*, edited by Volker Meja and Nico Stehr, 2:532–50. Suhrkamp taschenbuch wissenschaft 361. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.
- Spencer, Baldwin, and Francis James Gillen. 1899. *The Native Tribes of Central Australia*. London: Macmillan.
- . 1904. *The Northern Tribes of Central Australia*. London/New York: Macmillan.
- Spencer, Herbert. 1864. *The Classification of the Sciences: To Which Are Added Reasons for Dissenting from the Philosophy of M. Comte*. New York: D. Appleton and Company.
- . (1855) 1870a. *The Principles of Psychology*. 2 vols. 2nd ed. London: Williams and Norgate.
- . (1855) 1870b. *The Principles of Psychology*. Vol. 1. 2nd ed. London: Williams and Norgate.
- . (1855) 1872. *The Principles of Psychology*. Vol. 2. 2nd ed. London: Williams and Norgate.
- . (1870) 1875. *Principes de psychologie*. Translated by Théodule Ribot and Alfred Espinas. 2 vols. Paris: Germer-Baillière.
- . (1854) 1891. 'The Genesis of Science'. In *Essays: Scientific, Political, & Speculative*, by Herbert Spencer, 2:1–73. London: Williams and Norgate.
- . (1864) 1891. 'The Classification of the Sciences'. In *Essays: Scientific, Political, & Speculative*, by Herbert Spencer, 2:74–117. London: Williams and Norgate.
- Sperber, Dan. 1996. *Explaining Culture. A Naturalistic Approach*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- Spillman, Lyn. 2012. *Solidarity in Strategy: Making Business Meaningful in American Trade Associations*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Srubar, Ilja. 1988. *Kosmion. Die Genese der pragmatischen Lebenswelttheorie von Alfred Schütz und ihr anthropologischer Hintergrund*. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.
- Stadler, Friedrich. 1982. *Vom Positivismus zur 'Wissenschaftlichen Weltauffassung'. Am Beispiel der Wirkungsgeschichte von Ernst Mach in Österreich von 1885 bis 1934*. Wien/München: Löcker.
- . 1997. *Der Wiener Kreis. Ursprung, Entwicklung und Wirkung des Logischen Empirismus im Kontext*. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.
- . (1997) 2015. *Der Wiener Kreis. Ursprung, Entwicklung und Wirkung des Logischen Empirismus im Kontext*. 2nd ed. Dordrecht: Springer.
- Stammler, Rudolf. (1896) 1924. *Wirtschaft und Recht nach der materialistischen Geschichtsauffassung. Eine sozialphilosophische Untersuchung*. 5th ed. Berlin/Leipzig: Walter de Gruyter & Co.
- Stark, Werner. 1958. *The Sociology of Knowledge. An Essay of a Deeper Understanding of the History of Ideas*. The International Library of Sociology - Social Theory and Methodology 17. Oxon: Routledge.
- Staudinger, Franz. 1897. 'Stammler, Rudolf, Prof. an der Universität Halle, Wirtschaft und Recht nach der materialistischen Geschichtsauffassung. Eine sozialphilosophische Untersuchung. Leipzig, Veit & Co. 1895. 668 S.' *Kant-Studien* 1 (1–3): 132–37.
- Stedman Jones, Gareth. 2016. *Karl Marx. Greatness and Illusion*. London: Allen Lane.
- Stedman Jones, Susan. 1980. 'Kantian Philosophy and Sociological Methodology'. *Sociology* 14 (1): 99–111.
- . 2001. *Durkheim Reconsidered*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- . 2012. 'Forms of Thought and Forms of Society: Durkheim and the Question of the Categories'. *L'Année Sociologique* 62 (2): 387–407.
- Steinmetz, George. 2007. 'The Historical Sociology of Historical Sociology. Germany and the United States in the Twentieth Century'. *Sociologica. Italian Journal of Sociology* [Online], no. 3/2007.

- . 2008. 'La sociologie historique en Allemagne et aux États-Unis : un transfert manqué (1930-1970)'. *Sociologie*. Translated by Chloé Degois. *Genèses* 71 (2): 123–47.
- . 2011. 'Bourdieu, Historicity, and Historical Sociology'. *Cultural Sociology* 5 (1): 45–66.
- . 2020. 'Sociologie historique'. In *Dictionnaire international Bourdieu*, edited by Gisèle Sapiro, 803–5. Culture & société. Paris: CNRS Éditions.
- . 2023. *The Colonial Origins of Modern Social Thought. French Sociology and the Overseas Empire*. Princeton Modern Knowledge. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Stern, Günther. (1930) 1982. 'Über die sog. "Seinsverbundenheit" des Bewußtseins'. In *Der Streit um die Wissenssoziologie*, edited by Volker Meja and Nico Stehr, 2:497–514. suhrkamp taschenbuch wissenschaft 361. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.
- Stern, Robert. 2019. 'Transcendental Arguments'. In *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Summer 2019 Edition, edited by Edward N. Zalta.
- Sternberg, Kurt. 1920. 'Der Neukantianismus und die Forderung der Gegenwart'. *Kant-Studien* 25: 396–410.
- . 1930. *Neukantianische Aufgaben*. 2nd ed. Pan-Bücherei, Gruppe Philosophie 6. Berlin: Pan-Verlagsgesellschaft.
- Sterne, Laurence. (1759–1767) 2009. *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*. Edited by Ian Campbell Ross. Oxford World's Classics. Revised edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Stichweh, Rudolf. 1984. *Zur Entstehung des modernen Systems wissenschaftlicher Disziplinen. Physik in Deutschland 1740-1890*. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.
- . 1992. 'The Sociology of Scientific Disciplines: On the Genesis and Stability of the Disciplinary Structure of Modern Science'. *Science in Context* 5 (1): 3–15.
- . (1994) 2013. *Wissenschaft, Universität, Professionen. Soziologische Analysen*. Science Studies. Bielefeld: Transcript.
- . (2001) 2015. 'Scientific Disciplines, History Of'. In *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences*, 2nd ed., edited by James D. Wright, 21:287–90. 2nd ed. Oxford: Elsevier.
- Stock, Kathleen. 2021. *Material Girls: Why Reality Matters for Feminism*. London: Fleet.
- Stöckel, Tommy. 2022. *Wissenschaftsorganisatoren in den Sozialwissenschaften 1890-1940*. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.
- Stocking, George W. 1965. 'On the Limits of "Presentism" and "Historicism" in the Historiography of the Behavioral Sciences'. *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 1 (3): 211–18.
- Stoppelkamp, Bastian. 2015. 'Kant und der Wiener Kreis - Wer hat Angst vor dem synthetischen Apriori?' In *Umwege. Annäherungen an Immanuel Kant in Wien, in Österreich und in Osteuropa*, edited by Violetta L. Waibel, 430–43. Vienna: Vienna University Press.
- Storer, Norman W. 1973. 'Introduction'. In *The Sociology of Science. Theoretical and Empirical Investigations*, by Robert K. Merton, edited by Norman W. Storer, xi–xxxi. Chicago/London: The University of Chicago Press.
- Strauss, Martin. 2016. *'La règle faite corps': Regeln, Regularitäten und Regelfolgen bei Pierre Bourdieu*. Master's thesis. Universität Wien.
- . 2018a. 'Reconsidering Simmel's Participation in *L'Année Sociologique*. A Transnational Controversy over the Status of Sociology Vis-à-Vis Psychology, Philosophy and the Social Sciences'. Paper presented at Workshop 'A Science of Society?', University of Vienna, Department of Philosophy. April 13.
- . 2018b. 'The Reception of Durkheim's Sociological Theory of the *a Priori* in France and German-Speaking Countries, 1900s–1930s'. Paper presented at Congress of the

- International Society for the History of Philosophy of Science (HOPOS), University of Groningen. July 12.
- . 2020a. ‘Cassirer, Ernst (1874-1945)’. In *Dictionnaire international Bourdieu*, edited by Gisèle Sapiro, 117–20. Culture & société. Paris: CNRS Éditions.
- . 2020b. ‘D’un renouveau de l’historiographie de la sociologie germanophone : le *Handbuch Geschichte der deutschsprachigen Soziologie*’. *Revue d’histoire des sciences humaines* 37: 319–29.
- . 2021. ‘Towards a Reflexive Intelligence of Emerging Sociology in France around 1900’. *Revue de Synthèse* 142 (3–4): 516–79.
- . 2022. ‘From “*Volksgeist*” to “*Mentalité*”: On Émile Durkheim’s Reception of German *Völkerpsychologie*’. Paper presented at ‘National Traditions in the Social and Cultural Sciences’, University of Graz, Department of Sociology. April 26.
- . 2024a. ‘Forgetting Merton: Reexamining His Marginalization in the Sociology of Science’. Paper presented at Congress of the International Society for the History of Philosophy of Science (HOPOS), University of Vienna. July 9.
- . 2024b. ‘Max Adler et l’a priori social. De la critique néo-kantienne du matérialisme historique à la sociologie de la connaissance’. Paper presented at ‘Un kantisme rouge? Néokantisme, socialisme et marxisme dans l’espace germanophone des années 1860 aux années 1920’, University of Strasbourg, Centre de recherches en philosophie allemande et contemporaine (CRePhAC). February 13.
- . (forthcoming) 2024. ‘Néo-kantisme’. In *Dictionnaire de la philosophie française du XIXe siècle*, edited by Delphine Antoine-Mahut, Pierre-François Moreau, Renzo Raghianti, and Patrice Vermeren. Paris: Classiques Garnier.
- . 2025. ‘Historiciser ou sociologiser l’a priori? Cassirer en dialogue avec les durkheimiens’. *Les Cahiers philosophiques de Strasbourg* 57: 57.
- Strauss, Martin, and Stephan Moebius. 2020. ‘« Créer ensemble un nouveau champ d’études ». Entretien avec Stephan Moebius sur l’historiographie de la sociologie germanophone. Propos recueillis, traduits et annotés par Martin Strauss’. *Revue d’histoire des sciences humaines* 37: 293–318.
- Stump, David. 2011. ‘Arthur Pap’s Functional Theory of the A Priori’. *HOPOS: The Journal of the International Society for the History of Philosophy of Science* 1 (2): 273–90.
- . 2015. *Conceptual Change and the Philosophy of Science. Alternative Interpretations of the A Priori*. New York: Routledge.
- Sturm, Thomas. 2009. *Kant und die Wissenschaften vom Menschen*. Paderborn: Mentis.
- . 2012. ‘What’s Philosophical about Kant’s Philosophy of the Human Sciences?’ *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science Part A* 43 (1): 203–7.
- Suárez, Mauricio, and Thomas Uebel, eds. 2012. ‘Reconsidering the Dynamics of Reason: A Symposium in Honour of Michael Friedman’. *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science Part A* 43 (1): 1–53.
- Šuber, Daniel. 2003. *Die Begründung der deutschen Soziologie zwischen Neukantianismus und Lebensphilosophie*. Hamburg: Kovač.
- . 2007. *Die soziologische Kritik der philosophischen Vernunft. Zum Verhältnis von Soziologie und Philosophie um 1900*. Bielefeld: Transcript.
- . 2010. ‘Social Science Between Neokantianism and Philosophy of Life: The Cases of Weber, Simmel, and Mannheim’. In *Historical Perspectives on Erklären and Verstehen*, edited by Uljana Feest, 267–90. New Studies in the History of Science and Technology. Archimedes 21. Dordrecht: Springer.
- Swedberg, Richard. 2012. ‘History of Sociology as the Working Memory of Sociology’. *Time-lines. Newsletter of the ASA History of Sociology Section* 20: 1, 11–12.
- Tardieu, Michel. 1985. ‘Henri-Charles Puech (1902-1986)’. *Annuaire de l’École pratique des hautes études* 94: 31–38.

- Taylor, Charles. 1979. 'The Validity of Transcendental Arguments'. *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 79 (June): 151–66.
- . 1989. *Sources of the Self. The Making of the Modern Identity*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- . 1995. 'Suivre une règle'. Translated by Christian Fournier and Christiane Chauviré. *Critique*, nos. 579–580: 554–72.
- . (1992) 1995. 'To Follow a Rule'. In *Philosophical Arguments*, 165–80. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- . 2004. *Modern Social Imaginaries*. Durham/London: Duke University Press.
- Tenbruck, Friedrich H. 1977. 'Abschied von Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft'. *Zeitschrift für die gesamte Staatswissenschaft / Journal of Institutional and Theoretical Economics* 133 (4): 703–36.
- . 1988. 'Geschichte und Geschichtsschreibung der Philosophie am Beispiel des Neukantianismus'. *Philosophische Rundschau* 35: 1–15.
- . (1992) 2015. 'Wie schreibt und warum revidiert die Soziologie ihre Geschichte?' In *Soziologiegeschichte. Wege und Ziele*, edited by Christian Dayé and Stephan Moebius, 23–33. Berlin: Suhrkamp.
- Terzi, Pietro. 2020. *Images de Kant et formes du criticisme dans la philosophie française contemporaine, 1854-1986*. Thèse de doctorat. Paris: Université Paris Nanterre/Fondazione Collegio San Carlo di Modena.
- . 2022a. 'L'esprit collectif entre philosophie scientifique et sociologie : Brunschvicg contra Durkheim'. *Revue philosophique de la France et de l'étranger* (Paris cedex 14) 147 (3): 323–40.
- . 2022b. *Rediscovering Léon Brunschvicg's Critical Idealism. Philosophy, History and Science in the Third Republic*. London: Bloomsbury.
- . 2023. *La philosophie française au miroir de Kant (1854-1986)*. Travaux de philosophie. Paris: Honoré Champion.
- . 2024. 'Léon Brunschvicg and the Development of French Neo-Kantianism'. In *The Oxford Handbook of Modern French Philosophy*, edited by Mark Sinclair and Daniel Whistler, 151–68. Oxford Handbooks. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Thackray, Arnold, and Robert K. Merton. 1972. 'On Discipline Building: The Paradoxes of George Sarton'. *Isis* 63 (4): 473–95.
- 'Thèses de doctorat'. 1899. *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale* 7 (2, Supplément): 7–20.
- Thimann, Michael, and Thomas Gilbhard, eds. Forthcoming. *Bücherkatalog der Kulturwissenschaftlichen Bibliothek Warburg*. Aby Warburg Gesammelte Schriften - Studienausgabe 6. Berlin: De Gruyter.
- Thomas, Louis-Vincent. 1975. *Anthropologie de la mort*. Paris: Payot.
- Thouard, Denis. 2017. 'Une pensée du tiers'. In *Simmel, le parti-pris du tiers*, edited by Denis Thouard and Bénédicte Zimmermann, 113–33. Paris: CNRS Éditions.
- Tiryakian, Edward A. 1966. 'A Problem for the Sociology of Knowledge. The Mutual Unawareness of Emile Durkheim and Max Weber'. *Archives Européennes de Sociologie* 7 (2): 330–36.
- , ed. 1971. *The Phenomenon of Sociology. A Reader in the Sociology of Sociology*. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts.
- Tolédano, André D. 1925. 'L'éthologie collective. Esquisse d'un programme de travail'. *Revue de Synthèse historique* 39 (Nouvelle Série 13) (115–117): 5–14.
- . 1929. 'La première "semaine" de Synthèse'. *Bulletin du Centre international de synthèse. Section de synthèse historique* 7 (June): 46–48.
- . 1943. *La vie de famille sous la Restauration et la Monarchie de juillet*. Paris: Albin Michel.
- . 1964. 'Henri Berr, le maître et l'ami au jour le jour'. *Revue de synthèse* 85: 39–50.

- Tomasello, Michael. 2014. *A Natural History of Human Thinking*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- Tonelli, Giorgio. 1959. *Elementi metodologici e metafisici in Kant dal 1745 al 1768. Saggio di sociologia della conoscenza*. Studi e ricerche di storia della filosofia, XXIX. Torino: Edizioni di 'Filosofia'.
- . 1964. 'Das Wiederaufleben der deutsch-aristotelischen Terminologie bei Kant während der Entstehung der "Kritik der reinen Vernunft"'. *Archiv für Begriffsgeschichte* 9: 233–42.
- . 1975. 'The Problem of the Classification of the Sciences in Kant's Time'. *Rivista Critica Di Storia Della Filosofia* 30 (3): 243–94.
- . 1994. *Kant's Critique of Pure Reason within the Tradition of Modern Logic*. Edited by David H. Chandler. Studien und Materialien zur Geschichte der Philosophie 37. Hildesheim/Zürich/New York: Georg Olms Verlag.
- Tönnies, Ferdinand. 1899a. 'Philosophical Terminology (I.)'. Translated by Mrs. B. Bosanquet. *Mind* 8 (31): 289–332.
- . 1899b. 'Philosophical Terminology (II.)'. Translated by Mrs. B. Bosanquet. *Mind* 8 (32): 467–91.
- . 1900. 'Philosophical Terminology (III. Conclusion)'. Translated by Mrs. B. Bosanquet. *Mind* 9 (33): 46–61.
- . 1902. 'Zur Theorie der Geschichte (Exkurs)'. *Archiv für systematische Philosophie* 8 (1): 1–38.
- . 1906. 'Vorrede (1906)'. In *Philosophische Terminologie in psychologisch-soziologischer Ansicht*, IX–XII. Leipzig: Verlag von Theod. Thomas.
- . (1897) 1906. *Philosophische Terminologie in psychologisch-soziologischer Ansicht*. Leipzig: Verlag von Theod. Thomas.
- . 1907. 'Ethik und Sozialismus. Erster Artikel'. *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik* 25: 573–612.
- . 1908. 'Ethik und Sozialismus. Erster Artikel. (Schluß.)'. *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik* 26: 56–95.
- . 1909. 'Ethik und Sozialismus. (Zweiter Artikel.)'. *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik* 29: 895–930.
- . 1929. 'Statistik und Soziographie'. *Allgemeines Statistisches Archiv. Organ der Deutschen Statistischen Gesellschaft* 18: 546–58.
- . (1887) 1991. 'Vorrede zur ersten Auflage'. In *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft. Grundbegriffe der reinen Soziologie*, Reprint of 8th edition from 1935, XV–XXIV. Bibliothek klassischer Texte. Reprint of 8th edition from 1935. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft.
- . (1887–1935) 1991. *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft. Grundbegriffe der reinen Soziologie*. Bibliothek klassischer Texte. Reprint of 8th edition from 1935. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft.
- . (1912) 1991. 'Vorrede zur zweiten Auflage'. In *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft. Grundbegriffe der reinen Soziologie*, Reprint of 8th edition from 1935, XXV–XXXV. Bibliothek klassischer Texte. Reprint of 8th edition from 1935. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft.
- . (1929) 2011. 'Statistique et sociographie'. *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 188 (3): 32–43.
- Tönnies, Ferdinand, and Friedrich Paulsen. 1961. *Briefwechsel. 1876–1908*. Edited by Olaf Klose, Eduard Georg Jacoby, and Irma Fischer. Veröffentlichungen der Schleswig-Holsteinischen Universitätsgesellschaft 27. Kiel: F. Hirt.
- Tönnies, Ferdinand, Alfred Weber, and Francesco Consentini. 1925. 'Begrüßungsansprachen am Montag den 29. September 1924'. In *Verhandlungen des Vierten Deutschen Soziologentages am 29. und 30. September 1924 in Heidelberg*, edited by Deutsche

- Gesellschaft für Soziologie. Schriften der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Soziologie. 1. Serie: Verhandlungen der Deutschen Soziologentage 4. Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck).
- Topalov, Christian. 2001. 'Des livres et des enquêtes: pour un historicisme réflexif'. In *La ville des sciences sociales*, by Bernard Lepetit and Christian Topalov, 307–13. Paris: Belin.
- . 2015. *Histoires d'enquêtes. Londres, Paris, Chicago (1880-1930)*. Bibliothèque des sciences sociales. Paris: Classiques Garnier.
- Trautmann-Waller, Céline. 2002. 'Victor Basch: l'esthétique entre la France et l'Allemagne'. *Revue de métaphysique et de morale* 34 (2): 227–40.
- , ed. 2004. 'La Zeitschrift für Völkerpsychologie und Sprachwissenschaft (1859-1890): entre Volksgeist et Gesamtgeist'. In *Quand Berlin pensait les peuples. Anthropologie, ethnologie, psychologie 1850-1890*, 105–19. Paris: CNRS Éditions.
- Treibtsch, Michel. 2009. 'FELDMAN Valentin (version mise en ligne le 8 avril 2009, dernière modification le 13 octobre 2022)'. In *Dictionnaire biographique du mouvement ouvrier, mouvement social* [online].
- Treitschke, Heinrich von. 1859. *Die Gesellschaftswissenschaft. Ein kritischer Versuch*. Leipzig: G. Hirzel.
- Troeltsch, Ernst. 1921. 'Der historische Entwicklungsbegriff in der modernen Geistes- und Lebensphilosophie. II. Die Marburger Schule, die südwestdeutsche Schule, Simmel'. *Historische Zeitschrift* 124 (3): 377–447.
- Turner, Stephen. 1994. *The Social Theory of Practices. Tradition, Tacit Knowledge and Pre-suppositions*. Cambridge: Polity.
- . 1998. 'A Weber for the Right-Thinking'. *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 12 (2): 253–75. JSTOR.
- . 1999. 'Response to Fritz Ringer'. *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 12 (4): 658–61.
- . 2014. *American Sociology. From Pre-Disciplinary to Post-Normal*. Sociology Transformed. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- . 2017. 'Durkheim as a Neo-Kantian Philosopher'. In *The Sacred and the Law: The Durkheimian Legacy*, edited by Werner Gephart and Daniel Witte, 49–69. *Recht Als Kultur* 20. Frankfurt/Main: Klostermann.
- . 2021. 'From Neo-Kantianism to Durkheimian Sociology: Hermann Cohen and the Problem of Sacrifice'. *Durkheimian Studies*. *Durkheimian Studies* 25 (1): 135–53.
- Turner, Stephen P. 1985. 'Weltgeist, Intention, and Reproduction: A Code'. *Sociological Theory* 3 (1): 23–28. JSTOR.
- Twisten, Carl. 1859. *Woran uns gelegen ist. Ein Wort ohne Umschweife*. Published anonymously. Kiel: Schwerssche Buchhhandlung.
- . 1872. *Die religiösen, politischen und socialen Ideen der asiatischen Culturvölker und der Aegypter in ihrer historischen Entwicklung*. Edited by Moritz Lazarus. 2 vols. Berlin: Ferd. Dümmlers Verlagsbuchhandlung.
- Twisten, Karl. 1859. 'Lehre und Schriften August Comte's'. *Preußische Jahrbücher* 4: 279–307.
- Tylor, Edward B. 1871. *Primitive Culture. Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Art, and Custom*. 2 vols. London: John Murray.
- Uebel, Thomas. 2012a. 'But Is It Sociology of Knowledge? Wilhelm Jerusalem's "Sociology of Cognition" in Context'. *Studies in East European Thought* 64 (1–2): 5–37.
- . 2012b. 'De-Synthesizing the Relative a Priori'. *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science Part A* 43 (1): 7–17.
- . 2013. '"Logical Positivism" - "Logical Empiricism": What's in a Name?' *Perspectives on Science* 21 (1): 58–99.

- . 2019. 'Wilhelm Jerusalem, the Social Element in His Pragmatism, and Its Antecedent in Völkerpsychologie'. *European Journal of Pragmatism and American Philosophy* XI (1): 1–18.
- UNESCO, ed. 1970. *Main Trends of Research in the Social and Human Sciences. Part One: Social Sciences*. With René Maheu. Paris/The Hague: Mouton/Unesco.
- Vaihinger, Hans. 1876. *Hartmann, Dühring und Lange. Zur Geschichte der deutschen Philosophie im XIX. Jahrhundert. Ein kritischer Essay*. Iserlohn: Verlag von J. Baedeker.
- Vailati, Giovanni. 1899. *Alcune osservazioni sulle questioni di parole nella storia della scienza e della cultura. Prolusione al corso libero di storia della meccanica letta il 12 dicembre 1898 nell'università di Torino*. Torino: Fratelli Bocca Editori.
- Van Gennep, Arnold. (1909) 1981. *Les rites de passage. Étude systématique des rites*. Paris: Picard.
- Vandenbergh, Frédéric. 1996. 'Comparing Neo-Kantians: Ernst Cassirer and Georg Simmel'. *Occasional Papers in Sociology, Department of Sociology, University of Manchester* 49.
- . 2001. 'From Structuralism to Culturalism. Ernst Cassirer's Philosophy of Symbolic Forms'. *European Journal of Social Theory* 4 (4): 479–97.
- Verein Ernst Mach, Hans Hahn, Otto Neurath, and Rudolf Carnap. (1929) 2006. 'Wissenschaftliche Weltauffassung. Der Wiener Kreis'. In *Wiener Kreis. Texte zur wissenschaftlichen Weltauffassung von Rudolf Carnap, Otto Neurath, Moritz Schlick, Philipp Frank, Hans Hahn, Karl Menger, Edgar Zilsel und Gustav Bergmann*, edited by Michael Stöltzner and Thomas Uebel, 3–29. Philosophische Bibliothek 577. Hamburg: Meiner.
- Viola, Tullio. 2024. 'Philosophy of Culture: Naturalistic or Transcendental? A Dialogue between Edgar Wind and Ernst Cassirer'. In *Edgar Wind. Art and Embodiment*, edited by Jaynie Anderson, Bernardino Branca, and Fabio Tononi, 101–23. Cultural Memories 20. Oxford/Berlin/Bruxelles/Chennai/Lausanne/New York: Peter Lang.
- Vogt, W. Paul. 1979. 'Un durkheimien ambivalent: Célestin Bouglé, 1870-1940'. *Revue française de sociologie* 20 (1): 123–39.
- . 1982. 'Identifying Scholarly and Intellectual Communities: A Note on French Philosophy, 1900-1939'. *History and Theory* 21: 267–78.
- Voller, Christian. 2022. *In der Dämmerung. Studien zur Vor- und Frühgeschichte der Kritischen Theorie*. Berlin: Matthes & Seitz.
- Vorländer, Franz. 1853. 'Die Grundlage der Wissenschaft der Gesellschaft (sociologie) von Aug. Comte'. *Allgemeine Monatsschrift für Wissenschaft und Literatur* 1853 (November): 937–58.
- Vorländer, Karl. 1897. 'Eine Sozialphilosophie auf Kantischer Grundlage'. *Kant-Studien* 1 (1–3): 197–216.
- . 1900. *Kant und der Sozialismus unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der neuesten theoretischen Bewegung innerhalb des Marxismus*. Reuther und Reichard.
- . 1911. *Kant und Marx. Ein Beitrag zur Philosophie des Sozialismus*. Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck).
- . (1903) 1911. *Geschichte der Philosophie. II. Band. Philosophie der Neuzeit*. 3 vols. Leipzig: Verlag der Dürr'schen Buchhandlung.
- . 1918. *Die ältesten Kant-Biographien*. Kant-Studien. Ergänzungshefte 41. Berlin: Reuther und Reichard.
- . (1911) 1986. *Immanuel Kants Leben*. Edited by Rudolf Malter. Philosophische Bibliothek 126. 4th ed. Hamburg: Meiner.
- . (1924) 1992. *Immanuel Kant. Der Mann und das Werk*. Edited by Rudolf Malter. With Heiner Klemme. 3rd ed. Hamburg: Meiner.
- Vries, Jan de. 2019. 'Playing with Scales: The Global and the Micro, the Macro and the Nano'. *Past & Present* 242 (Supplement 14): 23–36.

- Vuillemin, Jules. 1949. *L'être et le travail. Les conditions dialectiques de la psychologie et de la sociologie*. Bibliothèque de philosophie contemporaine. Psychologie et sociologie. Paris: Presses universitaires de France.
- . 1954. *L'héritage kantien et la révolution copernicienne: Fichte, Cohen, Heidegger*. Bibliothèque de philosophie contemporaine. Histoire de la philosophie et philosophie générale. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
- . 1955. *Physique et métaphysique kantienne*. Bibliothèque de philosophie contemporaine. Histoire de la philosophie et philosophie générale, section dirigée par P.-M. Schuhl. Paris: Presses universitaires de France.
- Vuillerod, Jean-Baptiste. 2022. *La naissance de l'anti-hégélianisme. Louis Althusser et Michel Foucault, lecteurs de Hegel*. La croisée des chemins. Lyon: ENS Éditions.
- Wagner, Gerhard. 1987. *Geltung und normativer Zwang. Eine Untersuchung zu den neukantianischen Grundlagen der Wissenschaftslehre Max Webers*. Freiburg/München: Alber.
- Wagner, Gerhard, and Claudius Härpfer. 2015. 'Neo-Kantianism and the Social Sciences: From Rickert to Weber'. In *New Approaches to Neo-Kantianism*, edited by Nicolas de Warren and Andrea Staiti, 171–85. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wagner, Gerhard, and Heinz Zipprian. 1985. 'Max Weber und die neukantianische Epistemologie'. *Zeitschrift für Soziologie* 14: 115–30.
- Wagner, Helmut R. (1976) 1981. 'Der Einfluß der deutschen Phänomenologie auf die amerikanische Soziologie'. In *Geschichte der Soziologie. Studien zur kognitiven, sozialen und historischen Identität einer Disziplin*, edited by Wolf Lepenies, 4:202–36. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.
- Wagner, Peter, Björn Wittrock, and Richard Whitley, eds. 1991. *Discourses on Society. The Shaping of the Social Science Disciplines*. Sociology of the Sciences Yearbook 15. Dordrecht/Boston/London: Kluwer.
- Wagner, Timo. 2010. 'Gottfried Salomon-Delattre - Ein kosmopolitischer Soziologe der älteren Generation'. In *Soziologie in Frankfurt. Eine Zwischenbilanz*, edited by Klaus Lichtblau and Felicia Herrschaft, 71–84. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.
- Wallon, Henri. 1928. 'La mentalité primitive et celle de l'enfant'. *Revue philosophique de la France et de l'étranger* 53: 82–105.
- Walter, Martin. 2022. 'Zur begrifflichen Herkunft von „Neukantianismus“: Eine Streitsache der Hegel-Schule zwischen Rosenkranz, Michelet und Lassalle (Königsberg/Berlin 1858/1862)'. *Kant-Studien* 113 (3): 487–95.
- Warner, R. Stephen. 1985. 'Sociological Theory and History of Sociology: Autonomy and Interdependence'. *Sociological Theory* 3 (1): 20–23. JSTOR.
- Warren, Nicolas de, and Andrea Staiti. 2015. 'Introduction: Towards a Reconsideration of Neo-Kantianism'. In *New Approaches to Neo-Kantianism*, edited by Nicolas de Warren and Andrea Staiti, 1–15. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wartofsky, Marx W. 1987. 'Epistemology Historicized'. In *Naturalistic Epistemology. A Symposium of Two Decades*, edited by Abner Shimony and Debra Nails, 357–74. Boston Studies in the Philosophy of Science 100. Dordrecht: D. Reidel Publishing Company.
- Watkins, Eric, ed. 2001. *Kant and the Sciences*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Weber, Max. (1921) 1984. *Soziologische Grundbegriffe*. Edited by Johannes Winckelmann. Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck).
- . (1904) 1988. 'Die "Objektivität" sozialwissenschaftlicher und sozialpolitischer Erkenntnis'. In *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Wissenschaftslehre*, 7th ed., edited by Johannes Winckelmann, 146–214. 7th ed. Tübingen: Mohr.
- . (1907) 1988. 'R. Stammlers "Überwindung" der materialistischen Geschichtsauffassung'. In *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Wissenschaftslehre*, 7th ed., edited by Johannes Winckelmann, 291–359. 7th ed. Tübingen: Mohr.

- . (1913) 1988. 'Ueber einige Kategorien der verstehenden Soziologie'. In *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Wissenschaftslehre*, 7th ed., edited by Johannes Winkelmann, 427–74. 7th ed. Tübingen: Mohr.
- . (1916) 1988. 'Zwischenbetrachtung: Theorie der Stufen und Richtungen religiöser Weltablehnung'. In *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie*, 1:536–73. Uni-Taschenbücher 1488. Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck).
- . (1917) 1988. 'Der Sinn der "Wertfreiheit" der soziologischen und ökonomischen Wissenschaften'. In *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Wissenschaftslehre*, 7th ed., edited by Johannes Winkelmann, 489–540. 7th ed. Tübingen: Mohr.
- . (1917–1919) 1988. 'Wissenschaft als Beruf'. In *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Wissenschaftslehre*, 7th ed., edited by Johannes Winkelmann, 582–613. 7th ed. Tübingen: Mohr.
- . (1920) 1988a. *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie*. 3 vols. Uni-Taschenbücher 1488. Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck).
- . (1920) 1988b. 'Vorbemerkung'. In *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie*, 1:1–16. Uni-Taschenbücher 1488. Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck).
- . (1922) 1988a. *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Wissenschaftslehre*. Edited by Johannes Winkelmann. 7th ed. Tübingen: Mohr.
- . (1922) 1988b. 'Nachtrag zu dem Aufsatz über R. Stammlers "Überwindung" der materialistischen Geschichtsauffassung'. In *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Wissenschaftslehre*, 7th ed., edited by Johannes Winkelmann, 360–83. 7th ed. Tübingen: Mohr.
- . (1921–1922) 2005. *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft. Die Wirtschaft und die gesellschaftlichen Ordnungen und Mächte. Nachlaß. Teilband 2: Religiöse Gemeinschaften*. Edited by Hans G. Kippenberg. Max Weber-Studienausgabe, I/22-2. Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck).
- . (1921) 2014. 'Soziologische Grundbegriffe'. In *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft. Soziologie. Unvollendet. 1919-1920*, by Max Weber, edited by Knut Borchardt, Edith Hanke, and Wolfgang Schluchter, 1–41. Max Weber-Gesamtausgabe, I/23. Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck).
- . 2015. *Briefe 1895-1902. I. Halbband*. Edited by Rita Aldenhoff-Hübinger. With Uta Hinz. Max Weber-Gesamtausgabe II/3. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.
- . (1902) 2018. 'Die "Nervi"-Notizen'. In *Zur Logik und Methodik der Sozialwissenschaften. Schriften 1900–1907*, edited by Gerhard Wagner, 623–68. Max Weber-Gesamtausgabe I/7. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.
- . (1907) 2018. 'R. Stammlers "Überwindung" der materialistischen Geschichtsauffassung'. In *Zur Logik und Methodik der Sozialwissenschaften. Schriften 1900–1907*, by Max Weber, edited by Gerhard Wagner, I/7, 481–571. Max Weber-Gesamtausgabe. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.
- . (1913) 2018. 'Über einige Kategorien der verstehenden Soziologie'. In *Verstehende Soziologie und Werturteilsfreiheit. Schriften und Reden 1908-1917*, edited by Johannes Weiß, I/12, 383–440. Max Weber-Gesamtausgabe. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.
- . (1922) 2018. 'Nachtrag zu dem Aufsatz über R. Stammler's "Überwindung" der materialistischen Geschichtsauffassung'. In *Zur Logik und Methodik der Sozialwissenschaften. Schriften 1900–1907*, by Max Weber, edited by Gerhard Wagner, I/7, 572–619. Max Weber-Gesamtausgabe. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.
- Weininger, Otto. (1903) 1904. *Geschlecht und Charakter. Eine prinzipielle Untersuchung*. 3rd ed. Wien/Leipzig.
- Welby, Victoria. 1896a. 'Sense, Meaning and Interpretation (I)'. *Mind* 5 (17): 24–37.
- . 1896b. 'Sense, Meaning and Interpretation (II)'. *Mind* 5 (18): 186–202.
- . 1903. *What Is Meaning? Studies in the Development of Significance*. London: Macmillan and Co.

- . 1911. *Significs and Language. The Articulate Form of Our Expressive and Interpretative Resources*. London: Macmillan and Co.
- Werner, Michael, and Bénédicte Zimmermann. 2002. ‘Vergleich, Transfer, Verflechtung’. *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 28: 607–36.
- . 2003. ‘Penser l’histoire croisée. Entre empirie et réflexivité’. *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 58 (1): 7–36.
- , eds. 2004a. *De la comparaison à l’histoire croisée. Le genre humain*. Paris: Seuil.
- . 2004b. ‘Introduction’. In *De la comparaison à l’histoire croisée*, edited by Michael Werner and Bénédicte Zimmermann, 7–14. Le genre humain. Paris: Seuil.
- . 2006. ‘Beyond Comparison: *Histoire Croisée* and the Challenge of Reflexivity’. *History and Theory* 45 (1): 30–50.
- Whatmore, Richard, and Brian Young, eds. 2016. *A Companion to Intellectual History*. Blackwell Companions to History. Chichester: Wiley Blackwell.
- Whewell, William. 1840a. *The Philosophy of the Inductive Sciences Founded upon Their History*. 2 vols. London: John W. Parker.
- . 1840b. *The Philosophy of the Inductive Sciences Founded upon Their History*. Vol. 1. London: John W. Parker.
- White, Hayden. (1973) 1979. *Metahistory. The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe*. Baltimore/London: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Whitehead, Alfred North. (1925) 1948. *Science and the Modern World*. Pelican Mentor Books. New York: Macmillan.
- Whorf, Benjamin Lee. 1956. *Language, Thought, and Reality. Selected Writings of Benjamin Lee Whorf*. Edited by John B. Carroll. With Stuart Chase. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press.
- Widmer, Elisabeth. 2021a. *Die Entstehung des Marburger Linkskantianismus. Anfänge und Entwicklungen, 1865-1919*. Doctoral dissertation. Vienna: University of Vienna.
- . 2021b. ‘Elements of *Völkerpsychologie* in Hermann Cohen’s Mature Ethical Idealism’. *Idealistic Studies* 51 (3): 149–72.
- . forthcoming. “‘Left-Kantianism’ and the ‘Scientific Dispute’ between Rudolf Stammler and Hermann Cohen”. *Archiv Für Geschichte Der Philosophie*.
- Widmer, Elisabeth Theresia. 2024. *Left-Kantianism in the Marburg School*. New Studies in the History and Historiography of Philosophy 13. Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter.
- Wilken, Anne. 2022a. *Kant als Klassiker der Philosophie. Zur Produktion philosophischer Klassiker und zu ihren Editionsbedingungen um 1900*. Alber Thesen Philosophie 84. Baden-Baden: Karl Alber.
- . 2022b. ‘Kant edieren. Zum institutionellen Kontext der Akademie-Ausgabe von Kants Schriften’. In *Kant um 1900*, edited by Hauke Heidenreich and Friedemann Stengel, 43–58. Hallesche Beiträge zur Europäischen Aufklärung. Berlin: De Gruyter.
- Wiley, Thomas E. 1978. *Back to Kant. The Revival of Kantianism in German Social and Historical Thought, 1860-1914*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press.
- Wilson, Nicholas Hoover, and Julia Adams. (2001) 2015. ‘Historical Sociology’. In *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences*, 2nd ed., 27–30. 2nd ed. Oxford: Elsevier.
- Wimmer, Andreas, and Nina Glick Schiller. 2003. ‘Methodological Nationalism, the Social Sciences, and the Study of Migration: An Essay in Historical Epistemology’. *The International Migration Review* 37 (3): 576–610.
- Winch, Peter. (1958) 2008. *The Idea of a Social Science and Its Relation to Philosophy*. Routledge Classics. London/New York: Routledge.
- Wind, Edgar. 1936. ‘Some Points of Contact between History and Natural Science’. In *Philosophy and History. Essays Presented to Cassirer*, edited by Raymond Klibansky and H.J. Paton, 255–64. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- . (1929) 2000. *Das Experiment und die Metaphysik. Zur Auflösung der kosmologischen Antinomien*. Edited by Bernhard Buschendorf. With Brigitte Falkenburg. suhrkamp taschenbuch wissenschaft 1478. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.
- . (1936) 2000. ‘Über einige Berührungspunkte zwischen Naturwissenschaft und Geschichte’. In *Das Experiment und die Metaphysik. Zur Auflösung der kosmologischen Antinomien*, by Edgar Wind, edited by Bernhard Buschendorf, with Brigitte Falkenburg, 254–69. suhrkamp taschenbuch wissenschaft 1478. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.
- . (1929) 2001. *Experiment and Metaphysics. Towards a Resolution of the Cosmological Antinomies*. Translated by Cyril Edwards. With Matthew Rampley. Oxford: Legenda.
- . (1936) 2005. ‘L’argumentation circulaire’. In *Le métier de sociologue. Préalables épistémologiques*, 5th ed., by Pierre Bourdieu, Jean-Claude Chamboredon, and Jean-Claude Passeron, 281–85. 5th ed. Berlin/New York: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Windelband, Wilhelm. 1875. ‘Die Erkenntnisslehre unter dem völkerpsychologischen Gesichtspunkte’. *Zeitschrift für Völkerpsychologie und Sprachwissenschaft* 8: 166–78.
- . 1892. *Geschichte der Philosophie*. Freiburg/Breisgau: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck).
- . 1904. ‘La science et L’histoire devant la logique contemporaine’. *Revue de Synthèse historique* 9 (2): 125–40.
- . (1889) 1908. ‘Prospekt zur ersten Lieferung der ersten Auflage’. In *Lehrbuch der Geschichte der Philosophie*, 3rd ed., III–IV. 3rd ed. J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck).
- . (1892) 1908. *Lehrbuch der Geschichte der Philosophie*. 3rd ed. J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck).
- . (1894) 1924. ‘Geschichte und Naturwissenschaft (Straßburger Rektoratsrede. 1894.)’. In *Präludien. Aufsätze und Reden zur Philosophie und ihrer Geschichte*, 9th ed., 2:136–60. 9th ed. Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr.
- . (1892) 1957. *Lehrbuch der Geschichte der Philosophie*. Edited by Heinz Heimsoeth. 15th ed. Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck).
- Winkin, Yves. 1986. ‘George Stocking, Jr. et l’histoire de l’anthropologie’. *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 64: 81–84.
- Winock, Michel. 1989. ‘Les générations intellectuelles’. *Vingtième Siècle, revue d’histoire* 22 (1): 17–38.
- Wittgenstein, Ludwig. (1931) 1967. ‘Bemerkungen über Frazers *The Golden Bough*’. *Synthese* 17 (3): 233–53.
- . 1977. ‘Remarques sur “Le Rameau d’or” de Frazer’. *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 16 (1): 35–42.
- . 1980. *Vermischte Bemerkungen. Culture and Value*. Edited by Georg Henrik von Wright. With Heikki Nyman and Peter Winch. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- . (1953) 1984. ‘Philosophische Untersuchungen’. In *Tractatus logico-philosophicus. Tagebücher 1914-1916. Philosophische Untersuchungen*, 225–580. Werkausgabe 1. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.
- . (1956) 1984. *Bemerkungen über die Grundlagen der Mathematik*. Edited by G. E. M. Anscombe, Rush Rhees, and G. H. von Wright. Werkausgabe 6. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.
- . (1953) 1999. *Philosophische Untersuchungen. Philosophical Investigations*. Translated by G. E. M. Anscombe. 2nd ed. Oxford.
- Wöhrle, Patrick. 2019. ‘Wirklichkeitskontrolle. Konturen der Münsteraner Soziologie in den 1960er Jahren’. In *Soziologische Denkschulen in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, edited by Stephan Moebius and Joachim Fischer, 249–76. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.
- Wolandt, Gerd. 1972. ‘Hönigswald, Richard’. In *Neue Deutsche Biographie [Online-Version]*, 9:345–46.
- Woolgar, Steve, ed. 1988a. *Knowledge and Reflexivity. New Frontiers in the Sociology of Knowledge*. London/Newbury Park/Beverly Hills/New Delhi: Sage Publications.

- . 1988b. 'Reflexivity Is the Ethnographer of the Text'. In *Knowledge and Reflexivity. New Frontiers in the Sociology of Knowledge*, edited by Steve Woolgar, 14–34. London/Newbury Park/Beverly Hills/New Delhi: Sage Publications.
- Woolgar, Steve, and Malcolm Ashmore. 1988. 'The Next Step: An Introduction to the Reflexive Project'. In *Knowledge and Reflexivity. New Frontiers in the Sociology of Knowledge*, edited by Steve Woolgar, 1–11. London/Newbury Park/Beverly Hills/New Delhi: Sage Publications.
- Wright, Georg Henrik von. 1971. *Explanation and Understanding*. Ithaca/London: Cornell University Press.
- Wundt, Wilhelm. 1900. *Völkerpsychologie. Eine Untersuchung der Entwicklungsgesetze von Sprache, Mythos und Sitte. Erster Band. Die Sprache. Erster Theil*. Vol. 1. Leipzig: Wilhelm Engelmann.
- Yin, Robert K. 2015. 'Case Studies'. In *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences*, 194–201. Elsevier.
- Younes, Nadja, and Ulf-Dietrich Reips. 2019. 'Guideline for Improving the Reliability of Google Ngram Studies: Evidence from Religious Terms'. *PLoS ONE* 14 (3): e0213554.
- Zambelli, Paola. 1995. 'Alexandre Koyré versus Lucien Lévy-Bruhl: From Collective Representations to Paradigms of Scientific Thought'. *Science in Context* 8 (3): 531–55.
- Zammito, John H. 2002. *Kant, Herder, and the Birth of Anthropology*. Chicago/London: The University of Chicago Press.
- . 2004. *A Nice Derangement of Epistemes. Post-Positivism in the Study of Science from Quine to Latour*. Chicago/London: The University of Chicago Press.
- Zanfi, Caterina. 2013. *Bergson et la philosophie allemande. 1907-1932*. Paris: Armand Colin.
- Zeisel, Hans. (1933) 1975. 'Zur Geschichte der Soziographie'. In *Die Arbeitslosen von Marienthal. Ein soziographischer Versuch über die Wirkungen langandauernder Arbeitslosigkeit. Mit einem Anhang zur Geschichte der Soziographie*, by Marie Jahoda, Paul F. Lazarsfeld, and Hans Zeisel, 113–42. edition suhrkamp 769. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.
- Zékian, Stéphane. 2020. 'Les mots en partage: Notes sur les langues de l'histoire littéraire'. *Littérature. Questions de communication* 38 (2): 311–32.
- Zhavoronkov, Alexey. 2022. 'Kant's Pragmatic Use of Reason from a Sociological Point of View: Third Way or Methodological Impasse?' *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science* 94 (August): 1–7.
- Ziche, Paul. 2015. 'Respondenz auf Michael Heidelberger: Naturalisierung des Transzendentalen in der Sinnesphysiologie von Hermann von Helmholtz'. *Scientia Poetica* 19 (1): 234–36.
- Zilsel, Edgar. 1942. 'The Sociological Roots of Science'. *American Journal of Sociology* 47 (4): 544–62.
- . 1945. 'The Genesis of the Concept of Scientific Progress'. *Journal of the History of Ideas* 6 (3): 325–49.
- . 1976. *Die sozialen Ursprünge der neuzeitlichen Wissenschaft*. Edited by Wolfgang Krohn. suhrkamp taschenbuch wissenschaft 152. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.
- . 1992. *Wissenschaft und Weltanschauung. Aufsätze 1929-1933*. Edited by Gerald Mozetič. With Karl Acham. Klassische Studien zur sozialwissenschaftlichen Theorie, Weltanschauungslehre und Wissenschaftsforschung 8. Wien/Köln/Weimar: Böhlau.
- . (1929) 1992. 'Philosophische Bemerkungen'. In *Wissenschaft und Weltanschauung. Aufsätze 1929-1933*, edited by Gerald Mozetič, with Karl Acham, 31–44. Klassische Studien zur sozialwissenschaftlichen Theorie, Weltanschauungslehre und Wissenschaftsforschung 8. Wien/Köln/Weimar: Böhlau.
- . (1931) 1992a. 'Materialismus und marxistische Geschichtsauffassung'. In *Wissenschaft und Weltanschauung. Aufsätze 1929-1933*, edited by Gerald Mozetič, with Karl

- Acham, 77–87. *Klassische Studien zur sozialwissenschaftlichen Theorie, Weltanschauungslehre und Wissenschaftsforschung* 8. Wien/Köln/Weimar: Böhlau.
- . (1931) 1992b. ‘Partei, Marxismus, Materialismus, Neukantianismus’. In *Wissenschaft und Weltanschauung. Aufsätze 1929-1933*, edited by Gerald Mozetič, with Karl Acham, 88–98. *Klassische Studien zur sozialwissenschaftlichen Theorie, Weltanschauungslehre und Wissenschaftsforschung* 8. Wien/Köln/Weimar: Böhlau.
- . (1930) 2001. ‘Soziologische Bemerkungen zur Philosophie der Gegenwart’. *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie* 49 (3): 441–58.
- . 2003. *The Social Origins of Modern Science*. Edited by Diederick Raven, Wolfgang Krohn, and Robert S. Cohen. Boston Studies in the Philosophy of Science 200. Dordrecht: Kluwer.
- Zimmermann, Bénédicte. 2011. ‘Ferdinand Tönnies, sociologue empiriste’. *Sociologie. Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 188 (3): 44–53.
- . 2020. ‘Histoire Croisée: A Relational Process-Based Approach’. *Footprint. Delft Architecture Theory Journal* 14 (1): 1.
- Zimmermann, Robert. 1874. *Kant und die positive Philosophie*. Wien: In Commission bei Karl Gerold’s Sohn.
- Žižek, Slavoj. 2006. *The Parallax View*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press.
- Zuckerman, Harriet. 2010. ‘On Sociological Semantics as an Evolving Research Program’. In *Robert K. Merton. Sociology of Science and Sociology as Science*, edited by Craig Calhoun, 253–72. New York: Columbia University Press.

INTRODUCTION : VERS UNE HISTOIRE LONGUE DE LA SOCIOLOGISATION DE L'*A PRIORI*

L'objet « sociologisation de l'a priori »

Cette thèse étudie l'histoire du problème de la « sociologisation de l'*a priori* » : l'idée que les domaines de connaissance qualifiés d'*a priori* depuis Kant – catégories de pensée, concepts d'espace et de temps, idées générales – puissent devenir l'objet d'une science de la société appelée « sociologie ». Ce problème fut débattu explicitement autour de 1900 en France et dans le monde germanophone par des figures comme Durkheim, Simmel et Weber. Toutefois, son histoire s'étend de la première moitié du XIX^e siècle, commençant par la confrontation entre la philosophie transcendantale de Kant et la « sociologie » de Comte, jusqu'à nos jours, avec les controverses autour du constructivisme et du relativisme depuis les années 1970.

Histoire et épistémologie du raisonnement transcendantal dans les sciences humaines et sociales

Les sciences sociales contemporaines utilisent couramment des expressions comme « *a priori* social ou historique », « transcendantal historique ou social », « catégories socialement construites », « temps social », « espace social » et « conditions sociales de possibilité ». Ces façons de parler suggèrent une reformulation du raisonnement transcendantal kantien en sciences sociales. Ni l'histoire ni l'épistémologie de ce type de raisonnement – qu'on peut appeler « socio-transcendantal » – ne sont clairement comprises aujourd'hui. La thèse cherche à contribuer à une meilleure compréhension historique et épistémologique de ce « style de raisonnement ». Cette perspective « présentiste » se combine avec une orientation « historiciste » : comprendre l'épistémologie du raisonnement socio-transcendantal exige d'étudier son histoire, et inversement.

¹ The following comprehensive French summary of the thesis responds to a requirement of the *co-tutelle* agreement on the part of the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (EHESS): “Si la thèse est rédigée dans une autre langue que le français (disposition prévue à la convention de cotutelle) l'exemplaire définitif déposé sur la plateforme devra comporter un résumé en français d'un volume de 15 % de la thèse (hors annexes et bibliographie) et de 50 pages au minimum. Ce résumé devra être visé par le directeur de thèse de l'EHESS.” (according to the official document “École doctorale de l'EHESS (ED 286) – Procédure de soutenance 2023-2024”). Fifteen percent of the 550 pages that make up the main body of the present thesis amount to around 83 pages. I have opted for a summary that follows closely each chapter with its sections and subsections. This should enable readers to connect the summary directly to the body of the thesis. Of course, the summary must omit most citations, references and information about historical agents and authors.

Une histoire-problème interdisciplinaire, transnationale et de longue durée

L'étude présente trois dimensions: interdisciplinaire, transnationale et de longue durée. Elle se situe à l'intersection de quatre sous-domaines : l'histoire et la sociologie des sciences sociales ; l'histoire et la sociologie de la philosophie ; la philosophie et l'épistémologie des sciences sociales ; et l'histoire transnationale des sciences sociales entre la France et le monde germanophone.

Parler simultanément aux sociologues, historiens et philosophes constitue un défi majeur, chaque discipline ayant ses propres préférences, approches et vocabulaires. Mais la perspective interdisciplinaire est requise par la nature même de l'objet : la sociologisation de l'*a priori* désigne le passage d'un objet (l'*a priori*) d'une discipline (philosophie) vers une autre (sociologie), impliquant des controverses sur les divisions disciplinaires établies. Et d'autres disciplines étaient aussi concernées — psychologie, histoire, anthropologie, ethnographie, ethnologie, linguistique, parfois même histoire de l'art, philologie classique, études littéraires ou sinologie.

La perspective transnationale s'impose puisque le problème résulte largement de la confrontation entre la philosophie transcendantale allemande et la philosophie positive française. Une fois apparu, il fut discuté dans les contextes français, allemand et anglophone, avec des formes nationales relativement indépendantes mais connectées par des processus transnationaux de transfert et de circulation.

La perspective de longue durée, enfin, couvre environ 250 ans, des années 1780 aux années 2000. Elle est nécessaire car les termes mêmes du problème – « *a priori* » et « sociologie » – furent établis entre les années 1780 et 1830 dans les classifications des sciences et des savoirs de Kant et de Comte. Comprendre les débats autour de 1900 nécessite de remonter au tournant du XVIII^e siècle, tandis que les représentations contemporaines de cette période trouvent leurs racines entre les années 1930 et 2000. Une double extension des bornes chronologiques était donc nécessaire.

Pour combiner les différentes dimensions, la thèse développe une approche méthodologique appelée « histoire-problème sociologique » (*sociological problem history*), inspirée de la tradition germanophone de la *Problemgeschichte* et de la tradition française de l'histoire-problème, reformulées dans le cadre de la sociologie générale de Bourdieu.

Le récit global

Le processus retracé passe par plusieurs étapes majeures :

(1) L'émergence du problème (1780-1840) : Le problème surgit de la confrontation entre la « philosophie transcendantale » de Kant et la « philosophie positive » de Comte, dans le

contexte des transformations structurelles des champs académiques et scientifiques en Allemagne et en France. La tension entre « criticisme » et « positivisme » devait persister tout au long du XIX^e siècle.

(2) Des naturalisations variées (1840-1880) : Diverses propositions émergent pour « naturaliser » l'*a priori* – réinterprétations empiriques, matérialistes, physiologiques, psychologiques et sociologiques précoces – chez des auteurs comme Mill, Spencer, Marx, Engels, Helmholtz, Lazarus, Steinthal ou Wundt.

(3) L'*a priori* sociologisé entre à l'université (1870-1940) : La sociologisation de l'*a priori* – professée par exemple par Durkheim en France, Simmel en Allemagne, Adler en Autriche – apparaît comme une stratégie ambiguë d'hybridation accompagnant l'entrée de la sociologie à l'université. Cette ambiguïté reflétait « l'ambivalence sociologique » (Merton et Barber [1963] 1976) des premiers sociologues, issus généralement d'une formation philosophique dominée par les néo-kantiens.

(4) Transformation et éclipse (1930-1960) : On observe des transformations importantes sous l'impact de mouvements anti-néo-kantiens, de migrations savantes et de l'autonomisation des sciences sociales vis-à-vis de la philosophie. On constate l'éclipse relative du problème dans sa formulations philosophique kantienne. En même temps, cette période voit la création de récits durables sur la relation entre néo-kantisme et sociologie.

(5) Réémergence et prolifération (1960-2000) : Le problème resurgit dans le contexte des critiques du « positivisme », « fonctionnalisme » et « structuralisme ». La stratégie de sociologiser l'*a priori* se diffuse largement et s'associe à des projets hétérogènes incluant Kuhn, Foucault, Habermas, Rorty et Bourdieu.

(6) Entre diffusion et réflexion historico-épistémologique (1990-présent) : On observe la propagation à grande échelle de tropes transcendants dans les sciences humaines et sociales, liée à la circulation internationale d'auteurs comme Kuhn, Foucault et Bourdieu. En même temps, il y a les débuts d'une réflexion historico-épistémologique sur ce mode de raisonnement, notamment après les *Science Wars* des années 1990. La thèse prolonge ce dernier mouvement réflexif.

Stratégie

La thèse suit un schéma chronologique, procédant principalement par études de cas relativement indépendantes et approfondies d'épisodes spécifiques. Cette stratégie traduit la « grande question » de la sociologisation de l'*a priori* en objets empiriquement explorables, établissant un dialogue entre théorie et recherche empirique. Les cas ont été sélectionnés en fonction de

leur qualité de « matériaux de recherche stratégiques » (Merton 1987), c'est-à-dire pour leur capacité à éclaircir les dimensions principales du problème.

Vue d'ensemble

La Partie I « établit le phénomène » (Merton 1987) de la sociologisation de l'*a priori*, exposant la stratégie méthodologique et examinant la recherche existante. Le Chapitre 1 introduit l'objet à partir des préoccupations contemporaines. Le Chapitre 2 défend l'approche d'une « histoire-problème sociologique » dans le cadre bourdieusien. Le Chapitre 3 propose une discussion critique de la littérature sur les relations entre néo-kantisme et sociologie.

La Partie II présente quelques études de cas sur des épisodes cruciaux. Le Chapitre 4 esquisse l'émergence du problème dans le conflit entre les classifications des sciences de Kant et Comte. Le Chapitre 5 examine une discussion sur l'usage d'« *a priori* » au Centre international de Synthèse d'Henri Berr dans l'entre-deux-guerres. Le Chapitre 6, enfin, est à la fois conclusif et prospectif, présentant synthétiquement d'autres études de cas, esquissant une typologie des différentes versions de sociologiser l'*a priori*, et identifiant une position épistémologique défendable aujourd'hui, l'« instrumentalisme symbolique ».

Limitations

Le programme de recherche formulé ici s'est révélé trop vaste pour être exécuté seul dans un projet de thèse. Ce qui est présenté comprend : (1) un cadre général basé sur de nombreuses études de cas ; (2) quelques études de cas sélectionnées sur des moments stratégiques ; (3) une liste de cas à étudier ultérieurement. Le résultat est une esquisse ou un « essai » au sens expérimental.

Aspects formels

La thèse, conduite en *co-tutelle* entre des établissements germanophone et français sur des sources principalement germanophones et françaises, est rédigée en anglais pour favoriser le dialogue entre communautés de recherche relativement isolées linguistiquement. Toutes les citations sont données en langue originale sans traduction. Les individus historiques sont systématiquement présentés avec dates, nationalité et profession lors de la première mention. Les notes de bas de page, parfois longues, remplissent plusieurs fonctions : preuves documentaires, références bibliographiques, faits contextuels et développements possibles. La longue bibliographie, enfin, reflète l'exploration de réseaux de textes publiés dans diverses langues et disciplines. L'objectif est la transparence maximale concernant les matériaux et sources, permettant l'appropriation partielle du travail par d'autres.

CHAPITRE 1. DU RAISONNEMENT TRANSCENDANTAL DANS LES SCIENCES SOCIALES CONTEMPORAINES À LA SOCIOLOGISATION DE L'A PRIORI

1. Introduction : Vers une histoire du raisonnement transcendantal dans les sciences humaines et sociales

Le raisonnement transcendantal dans les sciences humaines et sociales contemporaines

Le point de départ de l'enquête historique est la présence dans les sciences sociales contemporaines d'expressions typiques : « catégories sociales », « temps social », « *a priori* historiques », « conditions sociales de possibilité », « *x* rend *y* possible ». Ces expressions suggèrent une transformation sociologique du raisonnement « transcendantal » développé par Kant, concernant les conditions indépendantes de l'expérience qui « rendent l'expérience possible ». Ces « conditions de possibilité » semblent désormais être devenues elles-mêmes un objet empirique pour les sciences sociales.

Ces expressions indiquent un type de raisonnement distinct que l'on peut appeler « transcendantal », « quasi-transcendantal » ou « socio-transcendantal ». Il semble essentiel d'en comprendre l'épistémologie et la méthodologie. Quelle est la différence entre ces « conditions sociales de possibilité » et des catégories explicatives établies comme « causes » et « raisons » ? Comment ces conditions diffèrent-elles des conditions « nécessaires » et « suffisantes » ? Comment sont-elles censées rendre compte des phénomènes empiriquement observables ? La thèse soutient qu'en retraçant ce raisonnement jusqu'à ses origines, on arrive au problème de la sociologisation de l'*a priori* : l'*a priori* kantien devenant l'objet de la « sociologie ». Cette sociologisation est une partie essentielle de l'histoire du raisonnement socio-transcendantal actuel.

Le plan

Le chapitre remonte des formes présentes du raisonnement socio-transcendantal vers le problème historique de la sociologisation de l'*a priori*. La deuxième section présente des exemples contemporains et identifie différentes traditions dans les aires linguistiques francophone, germanophone et anglophone. La troisième section élabore leur unité via les notions wittgensteiniennes d'« air de famille » (*Familienähnlichkeit*) et de « représentation synoptique » (*übersichtliche Darstellung*). La quatrième section offre une définition du problème de la sociologisation de l'*a priori*, clarifiant son statut analytique et ses conditions socio-historiques.

2. Instances du raisonnement transcendantal en sciences humaines et sociales

Exemples récents en sociologie

Avant de caractériser plus largement le raisonnement socio-transcendantal, citons quelques exemples récents en sociologie.

(1) Dans le domaine de la sociologie du temps, Darmon et al. (2019) affirment que le temps, autrefois considéré comme une structure *a priori* de l'esprit humain, est désormais conçu comme « institution sociale ». Les instruments de mesure du temps sont pensés comme rendant possibles différents rapports au temps, qui auraient des « conditions sociales de possibilité » explorables empiriquement.

(2) Dujarier (2021) propose une étude socio-historique de la notion de « travail » conçue explicitement comme une « catégorie de pensée ». Elle propose une généalogie de cette catégorie, la considérant comme une « fiction réelle » ayant ses propres « conditions sociales de possibilité » historiques.

(3) Illouz (2012) analyse les formes contemporaines de l'amour romantique, soutenant que les expériences sont toujours « contenues et organisées par des institutions » et doivent suivre « des modèles culturels établis » pour être intelligibles. Les expériences romantiques ont ainsi leurs propres conditions sociales et institutionnelles de possibilité.

(4) Spillman (2012) étudie comment les associations professionnelles américaines créent des intérêts économiques communs, posant explicitement la question de ce qui « rend possible » l'action stratégique intéressée. Abend (2014c) a décrit ces arguments chez Spillman explicitement comme des « arguments transcendants » (*transcendental sociological arguments*), identifiant des « préconditions culturelles » du comportement économique.

(5) Abend lui-même, dans *The Moral Background* (2014b), développe le concept d'« arrière-plan moral » (*moral background*) qui « rend possible » une moralité de premier ordre. Il plaide explicitement pour un « projet transcendantal empirique » dans les sciences sociales, où l'arrière-plan moral identifie un niveau quasi-transcendantal tout en étant un « outil empirique ».

Une définition préliminaire du raisonnement socio-transcendantal

On peut dire dans un premier temps que le raisonnement transcendantal en sciences sociales repose sur la notion de « conditions socio-transcendantales ». Il contient deux éléments distincts : (1) l'élément transcendantal – les expériences, connaissances, émotions, pratiques ont des conditions qui les rendent possibles, cette dépendance étant différente des relations causales ; (2) l'élément socio-historique – ces conditions de possibilité sont des « choses dans le monde », ni objectives ni subjectives au sens psychologique, mais sociales et historiques, variables selon les sociétés humaines.

Sources et courant du raisonnement socio-transcendental dans le contexte français

Dans le contexte français, la plupart des traces remontent à Durkheim et Mauss (1903) qui établirent des relations entre la classification des choses et les catégories de pensée, d'une part, et l'organisation sociale, d'autre part. Ce programme de recherche fut poursuivi collectivement pendant cinquante ans par les sociologues durkheimiens. Il inspira les débats historiographiques autour de Berr et influença Febvre et Bloch, fondateurs des *Annales*, qui s'intéressèrent aux conditions socio-historiques rendant certaines croyances possibles ou impossibles.

Depuis les années 1960, Lévi-Strauss raviva l'intérêt durkheimien pour la classification sociale dans son « anthropologie structurale ». Foucault développa une « archéologie » de l'« épistémè », désignant le niveau de l'« *a priori* historique ». Bourdieu élaborait sa sociologie du « *habitus* », du « champ » et du « pouvoir symbolique », se présentant comme une « sociologie des formes symboliques ». Les références foucauldiennes et bourdieusiennes sont aujourd'hui les sources françaises les plus importantes pour parler de « conditions sociales de possibilité ».

... dans le contexte germanophone

Dans le contexte germanophone, le raisonnement quasi-transcendental remonte aux références kantienne et néo-kantienne de Tönnies, Simmel et Weber. Simmel transposa la question kantienne des conditions de possibilité de la « nature » à la « société », identifiant les « *a priori* sociologiques ». Weber utilisa le travail épistémologique de Rickert pour argumenter que les valeurs culturelles changeantes étaient constitutives des objets des sciences sociales et culturelles.

Ces débats furent poursuivis dans la controverse sur la *Wissenssoziologie* des années 1920-1930 avec Scheler et Mannheim. Jerusalem (1908) introduisit la notion de « sociologie de la connaissance » (*Soziologie des Erkennens*) et établit un lien avec le programme durkheimien. Max Adler poursuivit l'idée de fournir un fondement transcendantal au marxisme tout en socialisant la notion d'*a priori*, élaborant la notion d'« *a priori* social » (*Sozial-Apriori*).

La « Théorie critique », avec Horkheimer et Adorno, poursuivit des solutions sociologiques à des questions soulevées par la philosophie kantienne. Habermas intégra des éléments de philosophie transcendantale dans sa « théorie de l'action communicative », conduisant à une relativisation sociale particulière de l'*a priori* aux « communautés communicatives » et leurs « mondes vécus » (*Lebenswelt*). Indépendamment, Elias poursuivit des thèmes de la *Wissenssoziologie* dans ses études sur le « processus de civilisation », cherchant une approche sociologique naturaliste des ingrédients relativement stables de l'expérience.

... dans le contexte anglophone

Dans le contexte anglophone, le raisonnement en termes de « conditions sociales de possibilité » a aujourd'hui deux sources principales : la philosophie du langage du second Wittgenstein, notamment ses considérations sur le suivi des règles comme pratique ; et diverses formes de phénoménologie husserlienne, spécialement chez Heidegger, Schütz et Merleau-Ponty. Ces références opèrent dans les « familles » des « théories de la pratique » et des « théories de l'arrière-plan » (*background*).

Les « théories de l'arrière-plan » assument un arrière-plan « implicite », « non-représentationnel », « incorporé » qui « rend possibles » les représentations, significations linguistiques, pratiques et institutions sociales. Le concept de « l'Arrière-plan » de Searle et la notion d' « arrière-plan » ou d'« imaginaires sociaux » de Taylor sont des cas importants.

Dans la lignée phénoménologique, Schütz joua un rôle éminent comme intermédiaire entre la phénoménologie européenne et les sciences sociales américaines. Sa phénoménologie sociale alimenta depuis les années 1960 des mouvements critiques en sociologie américaine, notamment le programme pour une sociologie phénoménologique de la connaissance sous l'étiquette de la « construction sociale de la réalité » (Berger et Luckmann) et l'ethnométhodologie (Garfinkel, Cicourel, Sacks).

Un dernier courant important concerne les débats en philosophie, histoire et sociologie des sciences depuis les années 1960, commençant par la théorie des révolutions scientifiques de Kuhn. La notion centrale de « paradigme » indiquait un ensemble de croyances, valeurs et pratiques partagées dans une communauté scientifique historique spécifique, pensées comme « rendant possibles » des activités concrètes dans la « science normale ». Kuhn, d'ailleurs, se décrivit plus tard comme un « kantien aux catégories mobiles ».

Le travail de Kuhn contribua à ouvrir l'histoire et la philosophie des sciences aux considérations sociologiques, inspirant plusieurs mouvements dans les *social studies of science* : du « programme fort » pour une « sociologie de la connaissance scientifique » aux études de laboratoire ethnographiques. Plus récemment, une discussion a émergé sur la notion d'un « *a priori* relatif ou relativisé », lancée principalement par Friedman, visant à offrir une approche rationnelle des changements radicaux dans les cadres intellectuels à travers les révolutions scientifiques.

3. L'unité problématique du raisonnement socio-transcendental

Une famille de positions en représentation synoptique

L'aperçu fourni dans la section précédente peut être conçu comme une « vue synoptique » (*übersichtliche Darstellung*) au sens de Wittgenstein. L'unité du phénomène n'est pas celle

d'un ensemble commun de propositions, mais celle des « airs de famille » (*Familienähnlichkeiten*) : « un réseau compliqué de similitudes se chevauchant et s'entrecroisant ». Les diverses positions sont unies précisément par les points sur lesquels elles s'opposent.

Le problème du raisonnement socio-transcendental

En termes bourdieusiens, ces positions constituent un « espace de prises de position » uni par une « *doxa* » commune : un ensemble de problèmes pris pour acquis et jugés dignes de solution. Le problème du raisonnement transcendantal dans les sciences sociales a les conditions suivantes que toute solution doit satisfaire :

(1) La distinction entre deux niveaux : toute solution doit offrir une approche de la distinction entre deux « niveaux » ou « couches » différents – l'un « constitué », l'autre « constitutif ».

(2) La dépendance du niveau constitué à l'égard du niveau constitutif : toute solution doit offrir une approche de la dépendance du niveau constitué du niveau constitutif, cette dépendance étant différente des relations causales.

(3) La dépendance du niveau constitutif à l'égard du niveau constitué : toute solution doit fournir une approche de la manière dont le niveau constitutif dépend du niveau constitué, introduisant la possibilité d'un changement du niveau constitutif en fonction du niveau constitué.

Ces trois conditions, prises ensemble, posent une énigme apparemment impossible. Les tensions entre elles forment le problème auquel répondent les diverses positions du raisonnement transcendantal dans les sciences sociales.

Une unité problématique

L'unité du raisonnement socio-transcendantal est « problématique » en deux sens. Premièrement, pour les acteurs historiques impliqués, qui s'opposent sur les différentes conditions selon leurs perspectives respectives. Deuxièmement, pour l'historien intellectuel qui cherche à identifier l'unité du problème autour duquel ces positions peuvent être groupées dans un espace commun de prises de position observables. Parler de « raisonnement socio-transcendantal » désigne une manière possible de construire un tel espace, cherchant une « grammaire » qui rendrait possibles les différentes prises de position observables.

Bourdieu sur les conditions socio-transcendantales de la connaissance

Mais pourquoi utiliser le terme « socio-transcendantal » ? Bourdieu utilisa l'expression « conditions socio-transcendantales » dans son dernier cours au Collège de France (2001). Il substitua aux conditions universelles et *a priori* de Kant des conditions et *a priori* socialement constitués. Bourdieu attribua à Durkheim la paternité de l'idée de « conditions socio-

transcendantales ». Le « processus d'historicisation de l'interrogation kantienne » devait s'achever dans une objectivation scientifique du sujet de l'objectivation, une sociologie du sujet connaissant – une entreprise de « réflexivité ». Bourdieu présente l'*habitus* comme un « transcendantal historique » qui est à la fois *a priori* (comme structure structurante organisant la perception et l'appréciation de toute expérience) et *a posteriori* (comme structure structurée produite par la socialisation). Bourdieu voit clairement la tension entre cette conception de conditions socio-transcendantales et la doctrine kantienne : « C'est pourtant dans une perspective kantienne, mais totalement exclue par Kant, au nom de la coupure entre le transcendantal et l'empirique, que je me suis placé, en me donnant pour objet la recherche des *conditions socio-transcendantales de la connaissance* » (Bourdieu 2001b, 155).

Abend sur les questions what-makes-it-possible en sociologie

Abend (2022) a récemment systématisé les « arguments sociologiques transcendants » sous l'étiquette des questions *what-makes-it-possible* en sciences sociales. Il distingue clairement entre questions philosophiques et sociologiques (empiriques) sur ce qui rend les phénomènes sociaux possibles. Les questions sociologiques sont empiriques et appellent des réponses empiriques sur les relations *enabling* entre objets sociaux empiriques. Ces questions *what-makes-it-possible* sont distinctes du type d'enquête empirique le plus important : les questions causales. La présence d'un facteur *enabling* *x* ne rend pas le phénomène *y* nécessaire ou plus probable (comme dans les relations causales), mais seulement possible. Les facteurs *enabling* ne produisent pas ce qui *enabled* comme conséquence nécessaire, mais le rendent seulement possible.

Un style de raisonnement ?

La notion de « style de raisonnement » pourrait sembler appropriée pour capturer le raisonnement socio-transcendantal contemporain, car elle pointe vers le caractère souvent implicite des engagements épistémologiques et permet une certaine imprécision. Cependant, défendre sérieusement l'existence d'un style socio-transcendantal spécifique de raisonnement aujourd'hui demanderait non seulement une opérationnalisation convaincante du concept « style de raisonnement », mais aussi une étude empirique systématique sur les sciences sociales et humaines contemporaines. La question peut rester ouverte sans empêcher de maintenir qu'il existe aujourd'hui une famille d'expressions et d'outils linguistiques interconnectés suggérant un certain type de raisonnement.

4. Retour à la sociologisation de l'*a priori*

La formation historique du problème

Les manières de parler citées au début et le raisonnement socio-transcendantal qu'elles expriment sont loin d'être évidents. Ils apparaissent plutôt comme un véritable accomplissement historique : le produit d'un processus historique complexe à long terme.

Voici une version simpliste de l'histoire. Jusqu'en 1780 environ, il y avait deux options pour concevoir l'espace, le temps et nos concepts les plus généraux. Premièrement, l'option « empiriste » (Bacon, Locke, Hume) : nos notions générales étaient pensées comme résultat d'une confrontation entre un sujet humain individuel et ses expériences. Deuxièmement, l'option « rationaliste » (Descartes, Leibniz, Wolff) : nos concepts généraux étaient pensés comme existant dans l'esprit individuel avant toute expérience, bien que de manière indistincte. En réponse à ces deux alternatives, Kant formula une troisième option qu'il appela « philosophie transcendante ». Le temps, l'espace et nos concepts les plus généraux – les « catégories » – étaient antérieurs et indépendants de toute expérience, caractérisés comme « *a priori* ». Kant conçut ces formes et catégories comme formes subjectives de l'esprit en général – le « sujet transcendantal » en opposition au « sujet empirique » psychologique individuel. L'*a priori* était conçu comme universel, nécessaire et – par implication – immuable, inaccessible à l'investigation empirique.

Au cours du XIX^e siècle, ces qualifications de l'*a priori* devinrent problématiques. En mathématiques et sciences naturelles, les géométries non-euclidiennes semèrent le doute sur l'universalité et la nécessité de l'espace tridimensionnel newtonien. La théorie de la relativité d'Einstein et la physique quantique étendirent ces doutes au concept de temps et à la catégorie de causalité. Pendant ce temps, la physiologie, la biologie, les théories de l'évolution, la psychologie expérimentale ainsi que l'histoire et la philosophie des sciences enquêtèrent sur la perception sensorielle et la genèse de nos concepts généraux.

Au début du XX^e siècle, cette transformation trouva son expression la plus paradigmatique en sociologie, dans l'article de Durkheim et Mauss sur les « formes primitives de classification » (1903) et la « théorie sociologique de la connaissance » de Durkheim dans les *Formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse* (1912). Durkheim proposa une théorie sociologique de tous les principaux catégories de l'esprit humain, concevant le domaine de l'*a priori* comme constitué de « représentations collectives » qui varient selon les sociétés, les lieux et les périodes historiques.

Le problème de la sociologisation de l'a priori

Le problème de la sociologisation de l'*a priori* peut être caractérisé en ajoutant aux trois conditions du problème du raisonnement socio-transcendantal une quatrième condition :

(4) La compétence de la sociologie : c'est la tâche d'une science générale de la société appelée « sociologie » de fournir une approche empirique et théorique des conditions (1)-(3).

La différence entre le problème du raisonnement socio-transcendantal et celui de la sociologisation de l'*a priori* est donc une condition supplémentaire que les solutions doivent remplir. « Sociologiser l'*a priori* » signifie faire de l'*a priori* l'objet d'une science relativement autonome de la « sociologie ».

Une caractérisation plus courte du problème comprendrait deux affirmations : (1) Les structures et concepts cognitifs de base – catégories, concepts de temps et d'espace, idées, et autres éléments précédemment caractérisées comme « *a priori* » – dépendent de et donc varient avec les groupes sociaux historiques ou sociétés ; (2) l'explication de ces structures cognitives de base relève du domaine d'une science relativement autonome de la société appelée « sociologie ».

L'espace des logisations de l'a priori

Depuis le XIX^e siècle, il y a eu de multiples formes de « logisation » ou « scientisation » de l'*a priori*, y compris des approches physiologiques, psychologiques, biologiques, évolutionnistes, historiques, culturelles, anthropologiques, linguistiques ou sémiotiques. La sociologisation de l'*a priori* doit être placée dans ce contexte plus large. Elle fait partie d'une tendance plus générale vers une « naturalisation » des conditions de la connaissance.

D'une part, il y a des liens indéniables avec ces entreprises connexes. D'autre part, les discussions sur la sociologisation de l'*a priori* peuvent être isolées comme un problème relativement indépendant, ayant sa logique propre, sa chronologie, ses conditions socio-historiques et son espace de références. L'expression « sociologisation de l'*a priori* » est suffisamment large pour englober différentes approches sociologiques de l'*a priori* à différentes époques et en différents lieux, mais suffisamment spécifique pour distinguer un problème particulier des autres problèmes connexes. Elle contextualise et singularise un processus spécifique dans le champ lexical plus large des « logisations de l'*a priori* ».

La sociologisation de l'*a priori* montre des aspects à la fois de continuité et de discontinuité avec les approches transcendentalistes antérieures. Elle maintient la distinction de deux niveaux, l'un constituant, l'autre constitué. Mais elle est aussi apparentée à d'autres logisations de l'*a priori* cherchant à relativiser, naturaliser ou empiriciser cette distinction. En même temps, elle est en discontinuité fondamentale avec la conception classique kantienne où de telles

approches empiriques de l'*a priori* sont exclues par définition. Elle est aussi en rupture avec d'autres relativisations en insistant que la discipline effectuant cette empiricisation de l'*a priori* est une science générale spécifique de la société appelée « sociologie ».

À la source du raisonnement socio-transcendantal d'aujourd'hui

Le raisonnement quasi-transcendantal en sciences sociales et humaines aujourd'hui a certainement plusieurs sources dans l'espace des logisations et relativisations de l'*a priori*. Néanmoins, nous pouvons explorer l'hypothèse que la sociologisation de l'*a priori* était importante pour les formes actuelles de raisonnement. En effet, la vue synoptique des courants et des sources du raisonnement socio-transcendantal contemporain a montré que nombre de discours sur les « conditions de possibilité » ou les « *a prioris* historiques » étaient, d'une manière ou d'une autre, connectés au programme durkheimien pour l'étude des catégories. Deux des principales sources françaises – Foucault et Bourdieu – remontent directement à ces discussions. D'autres liens ont été identifiés parmi les sources germanophones et anglophones.

L'avantage stratégique de se concentrer sur ce problème plus limité est qu'il permet de faire des études socio-historiques empiriques concrètes sur l'origine du mode de raisonnement actuel. La sociologisation de l'*a priori* désigne un épisode ou un aspect spécifique dans la longue histoire de l'émergence du raisonnement quasi-transcendantal. Elle est liée au processus socio-historique concret de l'émergence de la « sociologie » comme entreprise scientifique relativement autonome.

Un multiple, un problème, un processus

Plutôt que de parler de la sociologisation de l'*a priori*, il serait plus approprié de parler de sociologisations au pluriel. Historiquement, on rencontre une multiplicité d'approches sociologiques de l'*a priori*. La sociologisation de l'*a priori* est un « multiple » au sens de Merton : une « découverte indépendante multiple ». Ces découvertes multiples indiquent un arrière-plan culturel socio-historique partagé, la dimension collective du travail savant et scientifique.

L'unité de la sociologisation de l'*a priori* à travers ses réalisations multiples et divergentes réside dans le fait que ces différentes approches sont tous (ou peuvent tous être construits comme étant) des réponses à un problème commun défini par les quatre conditions mentionnées. L'unité réside dans ce problème qui ouvre un champ de réponses possibles. Ces solutions multiples varient selon les positions respectives des auteurs dans des contextes nationaux, disciplinaires et sociaux particuliers. Ensemble, elles forment un espace de positions intellectuelles au sens bourdieusien d'un espace de prises de position.

Il faut aussi distinguer la sociologisation de l'*a priori* au sens étroit – l'espace créé par les projets positifs – et le problème au sens large – l'espace plus large de discussion comprenant aussi ceux qui réagissent au problème sans souscrire à une solution ou aux termes mêmes du problème. On peut concevoir la sociologisation de l'*a priori* à la fois comme problème et comme processus : un processus dans lequel un objet spécifique – l'*a priori* – transite d'une discipline (philosophie) à une autre (sociologie).

Les conditions intellectuelles et sociales du problème

Les conditions intellectuelles du problème concernent principalement les manières dont la connaissance et les sciences ont été ordonnées et classifiées. La tension définissant le problème consistait en un conflit entre des classifications de la connaissance inspirées de Kant qui persistèrent tout au long du XIX^e siècle, et des classifications plus récentes considérant que les éléments relativement indépendants de l'expérience étaient accessibles à l'étude empirique. La sociologisation de l'*a priori* opéra un réarrangement symbolique dans la classification et la catégorisation de la connaissance et des disciplines scientifiques qui entra en conflit avec les manières antérieures de procéder.

Ces préconditions intellectuelles du problème peuvent être connectées à des conditions socio-historiques spécifiques et empiriquement observables. Les classifications de la connaissance et de la science sont intimement connectées aux conditions dans le champ académique à des moments particuliers. Elles reflètent un état spécifique de la division académique du travail en disciplines, un « régime disciplinaire » spécifique. Les changements dans ces classifications répliquent aux transformations de ce champ avec sa différenciation en disciplines, les processus d'autonomisation et l'émergence de nouvelles disciplines.

La classification kantienne de la connaissance était étroitement connectée à l'autonomisation de la philosophie académique vis-à-vis des « facultés supérieures ». La classification comtienne, d'autre part, se situait dans le contexte de réformes françaises antérieures de l'enseignement supérieur qui avaient favorisé l'essor de disciplines scientifiques spécialisées relativement indépendantes. Prenant en compte ces contextes, les classifications de la connaissance qui soutiennent les diverses conditions du problème de la sociologisation de l'*a priori* peuvent être connectées à des processus socio-historiques concrets.

Les conditions sociales, institutionnelles et intellectuelles établies à la fin du XVIII^e et au début du XIX^e siècle – en particulier les questions de démarcation entre philosophie et sociologie – sont restées relativement stables. C'est pourquoi il semble légitime d'adopter une perspective de longue durée concernant ce problème. Une fois les conditions sociales du problème identifiées, il devient aussi plausible de centrer l'étude de cette question sur les champs

académiques francophones et germanophones, où les ingrédients de base – philosophie transcendante et sociologie – furent principalement élaborés.

Une catégorie analytique

Cependant, les syntagmes spécifiques « sociologisation de l'*a priori* », « sociologiser l'*a priori* » ou « *a priori* sociologisé » ne sont utilisés par aucun des acteurs historiques pendant la période considérée. L'expression « sociologisation de l'*a priori* » doit être comprise ici comme une « catégorie d'analyse » ou une « catégorie analytique », servant principalement à l'analyse de données historiques. Autrement dit, il s'agit d'une catégorie « étique », non « émique ».

L'analyse linguistique montre que la structure de l'expression « sociologisation de l'*a priori* » est complexe. « *A priori* » a une longue histoire compliquée remontant à la fin du Moyen Âge. Avec Kant et sa nouvelle terminologie philosophique, le sens épistémologique qui fait référence aux sources de la connaissance devint dominant. Seulement au cours du XIX^e siècle « *a priori* » commença à être utilisé dans la forme nominalisée « l'*a priori* ».

Quant à « sociologiser », la condition de son apparition est l'existence du mot « sociologie ». En anglais, la première occurrence documentée de « *sociology* » en 1842 est clairement liée à Comte. La première occurrence de « *sociologize* » est attestée en 1851. En allemand et français, « *soziologisieren* » et « sociologiser » étaient disponibles au début du XX^e siècle, dans le sens transitif d'« étudier du point de vue de la sociologie ».

Bien que les acteurs historiques n'aient pas utilisé précisément l'expression « sociologiser l'*a priori* », ils utilisèrent des expressions similaires comme « *a priori* sociologique », « *a priori* social » ou « théorie sociologique des catégories ». La catégorie analytique « étique » proposée semble donc suffisamment proche du langage « émique » des acteurs pour capturer le sens qu'ils pouvaient donner à leurs projets intellectuels, tout en étant suffisamment distante pour englober une plus grande variété de propositions similaires.

5. Conclusion : Du présent au passé, du passé au présent

Ce chapitre a établi le point de départ de la thèse : l'existence aujourd'hui d'un type relativement répandu de raisonnement quasi-transcendantal dans les sciences humaines et sociales. Nous avons dégagé le problème sous-jacent : tenir ensemble l'existence de conditions rendant possibles les expériences, croyances et actions, avec la notion que ces conditions peuvent varier socialement et historiquement – sans perdre la distinction entre niveau constituant et constitué.

Une source de ce raisonnement est le problème de la « sociologisation de l'*a priori* ». L'analyse de ce problème peut se faire dans une perspective socio-historique en considérant les évolutions dans les classifications des sciences et leur connexion avec les dynamiques des

champs académiques. Les termes mêmes du problème sont liés à l'autonomisation de la philosophie académique et à l'émergence de la sociologie.

Étudier les débats sur la sociologisation de l'*a priori* permet de mieux comprendre historiquement et épistémologiquement les formes actuelles de raisonnement transcendantal dans les sciences sociales. Le mouvement de ce chapitre consistait d'aller du présent au passé. Ce qui manque est de clarifier l'approche théorique et méthodologique permettant de corroborer empiriquement l'hypothèse interprétative. La question est maintenant : comment étudier la sociologisation de l'*a priori* en tant que « problème » dans ses dimensions intellectuelles et sociales ?

CHAPITRE 2. VERS UNE HISTOIRE-PROBLÈME SOCIOLOGIQUE

1. Introduction : Comment enquêter sur la sociologisation de l'*a priori* ?

Étudier un problème

Ce chapitre présente l'orientation théorique et la stratégie méthodologique pour étudier la sociologisation de l'*a priori*, formulées comme « histoire-problème sociologique ». Il s'agit de concevoir cette sociologisation comme un « problème » et de l'étudier dans une perspective transnationale, interdisciplinaire et de long terme. Cela soulève des interrogations méthodologiques : qu'est-ce qu'un problème ? quels avantages et risques présente cette perspective ? quelles ressources peut-on mobiliser pour la réaliser ?

Le plan

Le chapitre examine d'abord les orientations historiographiques disponibles, de l'histoire intellectuelle à la sociologie des sciences. La théorie du *habitus* et du champ de Bourdieu apparaît particulièrement adaptée pour intégrer les différentes dimensions du problème. Toutefois, la conception de « problèmes » dans ce cadre n'est pas immédiatement évidente. Le développement d'une « histoire-problème sociologique » s'impose, en s'appuyant sur les traditions allemande et française d'histoire-problème.

2. Options historiographiques : vers une approche bourdieusienne

L'espace des options méthodologiques

Il y a plusieurs options méthodologiques pour traiter notre objet. L'histoire intellectuelle présente diverses approches : l'« histoire des idées » de Lovejoy, le contextualisme de l'école de Cambridge, la *Begriffsgeschichte* de Koselleck ou l'« archéologie » de Foucault. En histoire des sciences, il y a l'institutionnalisme de Merton et Ben-David, la théorie de Kuhn, les diverses approches en *science and technology studies*. En sociologie de la connaissance, il y a les

sociologies durkheimienne et allemande, la sociologie mertonienne et les approches bourdieusiennes. Quelle option choisir ?

Cinq dimensions clés de l'objet d'étude

La perspective méthodologique doit être adéquate aux cinq dimensions principales de l'objet :

(1) Interdisciplinarité : La sociologisation de l'*a priori* concerne le passage de l'*a priori* de la philosophie vers la sociologie, provoquant des controverses sur les divisions disciplinaires. D'autres disciplines furent impliquées : psychologie, histoire, biologie, anthropologie. L'objet requiert une approche du système des disciplines scientifiques, avec attention à la relation variable entre philosophie et sociologie.

(2) Transnationalité : Le problème résulte de la confrontation entre philosophie transcendante allemande et philosophie positive et sociologie françaises. Il prit différentes formes selon les contextes nationaux. La question des contextes nationaux et des transferts entre eux est centrale.

(3) Longue durée : La sociologisation de l'*a priori* comprend une période d'environ 250 ans. Le topos de faire de l'*a priori* kantien l'objet d'une science sociale revient régulièrement. Les débats ultérieurs se réfèrent constamment aux questions émergeant vers 1800. Il est nécessaire de tenir compte de cette dimension de longue durée.

(4) Au-delà de l'internalisme et de l'externalisme : Le problème ne peut être considéré de manière purement internaliste (arguments intellectuels, philosophiques) ni purement externaliste (conditions sociales). Une approche intégrant ou dépassant cette opposition est nécessaire.

(5) Réflexivité : Si l'*a priori* en général devient l'objet de sociologie, cela concerne aussi les *a prioris* propres à la sociologie. Le problème entraîne la question de l'application réflexive de la sociologie à elle-même.

(1) Disciplines et relations disciplinaires

Depuis la fin du XVIII^e siècle, les disciplines sont devenues l'unité de base de la production scientifique. Plusieurs approches des disciplines existent : fonctionnalisme, théorie des systèmes, Foucault, Abbott. L'approche de Bourdieu présente plusieurs avantages : elle est capable d'intégrer les perspectives des acteurs tout en les analysant dans leur relation avec les évolutions structurelles ; elle prête attention aux systèmes d'éducation ; elle rend compte des processus symboliques et des conditions sociales.

Dans l'approche bourdieusienne, les disciplines apparaissent comme un principe structurant des champs académiques. Les acteurs acquièrent un « *habitus* disciplinaire » par leur socialisation. Quant à la sociologisation de l'*a priori*, on peut se demander : dans quel état du champ

académique et avec quels schèmes perceptuels disciplinaires une théorie sociologique de l'*a priori* devient-elle possible ? Beaucoup d'acteurs proposant des théories sociologiques vers 1900 avaient reçu leur socialisation en philosophie, dans un contexte saturé de doctrines kantienne et néo-kantienne. On peut supposer qu'ils étaient équipés d'un « *habitus* néo-kantien », incluant des oppositions symboliques telles que transcendantal-empirique ou *a priori-a posteriori*. Que devait-il se passer pour que la dichotomie empirique-transcendantale devienne assez poreuse pour permettre l'idée d'un *a priori* sociologisé ?

(2) Contextes nationaux et histoire transnationale

La dimension transnationale comporte plusieurs niveaux. Premièrement, le problème en question est intrinsèquement transnational : l'élément « *a priori* » et l'élément « sociologie » émergent dans deux contextes nationaux différents. Deuxièmement, le problème fut discuté dans des contextes francophone, germanophone et anglophone, prenant chaque fois des formes différentes. Troisièmement, ces débats furent connectés par divers processus de transfert transnational.

Le programme de Bourdieu sur la « circulation internationale des idées » (Bourdieu [1990] 2002) propose une synthèse des perspectives comparatives, de transfert et d'histoire croisée. Partant du fait que « les textes circulent sans leur contexte », Bourdieu analyse les processus de sélection, d'étiquetage et de lecture. Pour comprendre ces processus, il faut prêter attention aux structures tant du champ d'origine que du champ de réception et analyser les homologues structurales. L'enquête critique sur les « catégories nationales de pensée » occupe une place centrale. Dans le cadre bourdieusien, les acteurs internalisent des schèmes nationaux, notamment par l'éducation. Ces « catégories nationales de pensée » constituent un « *habitus* national » dans lequel s'emboîtent les schèmes disciplinaires. Dans le champ académique se rencontrent des oppositions secondaires dérivées des distinctions nationales : compréhension-explication, *Geisteswissenschaften-Naturwissenschaften*. Ces schèmes disciplinaires ont une composante spécifiquement nationale.

Ces différences nationales jouèrent un rôle dans la trajectoire de la sociologisation de l'*a priori*. Les théories sociologiques de l'*a priori* en France furent préparées par des interprétations psychologiques de Kant par des philosophes spiritualistes, assouplissant la frontière entre empirique et transcendantal. En Allemagne, plusieurs débats (*Materialismusstreit*, *Psychologismusstreit*) contribuèrent à rigidifier cette frontière.

(3) Longue durée

Le troisième élément clé est la dimension de long terme, couvrant environ 250 ans. La période principale étudiée reste les années 1870-1930, avec des extensions vers le passé (l'émergence au début du XIX^e siècle) et vers le présent (la littérature des années 1970-2000). La perspective de long terme apparut nécessaire pour comprendre les termes mêmes du problème et pour contrôler notre point de vue de façon réflexive.

Une « sociologie historique des sciences sociales » dans la veine bourdieusienne a été développée de façon convaincante (Heilbron, Steinmetz). Son but est de combiner histoire sociale et intellectuelle, perspectives macro et micro, par l'usage d'outils conceptuels bourdieusiens. Cette orientation peut être combinée avec les propositions récentes pour un « contextualisme sériel » (Armitage 2012).

Il s'agit ici d'une histoire plus longue que la plupart des discussions disponibles. Cette perspective intermédiaire ne doit pas être confondue avec une analyse micro ou macro. Ce sont les concepts de niveau « méso » comme le « champ » bourdieusien qui établissent la connexion entre niveaux. La perspective de long terme permet d'identifier certains « cadres mentaux » fonctionnant comme des « prisons de long terme » (Braudel 1958).

(4) Au-delà de la distinction interne-externe

Les trois aspects considérés semblent concerner des facteurs « externes ». Comment le problème est-il apparu en termes d'idées, arguments, raisons ? Il faut clarifier la relation entre facteurs externes et internes. La réponse est de chercher à dépasser cette opposition en s'appuyant sur la conception bourdieusienne de l'« autonomie relative ».

Le débat sur internalisme et externalisme remonte loin en histoire des sciences. Merton s'opposait tant à l'idée que la science était complètement déterminée par des facteurs externes qu'à la notion inverse. Après la Seconde Guerre mondiale, la distinction devint un élément du *boundary work* entre histoire et philosophie des sciences. Dès les années 1960, plusieurs tentatives d'aller au-delà émergèrent.

La stratégie de Bourdieu semble convaincante. Par la notion d'« autonomie relative », il réussit à joindre perspectives internaliste et externaliste. Depuis son premier article sur la littérature, Bourdieu s'opposait à la distinction interne-externe, insistant sur la « réfraction » des forces externes par la logique interne propre au champ intellectuel. L'opposition interne-externe fonctionne comme un « obstacle épistémologique ».

La clé est le concept d'« autonomie relative ». Les champs ont des degrés variables d'autonomie. Plus un champ est autonome, moins il est sujet aux influences externes. Selon leur degré

d'autonomie, les champs sont gouvernés par une logique interne, elle-même résultat de relations sociales spécifiques entre acteurs.

Dans la conception bourdieusienne, la distinction entre interne et externe perd son sens. Ce qui était conçu comme « interne » apparaît aussi comme « externe » : la logique interne est résultat d'un processus socio-historique d'autonomisation. Ce qui était conçu comme « externe » devient aussi « interne » : il entre dans le champ seulement réfracté selon sa logique interne. Le capital spécifique, les intérêts, les stratégies sont tous de nature double : inséparablement sociaux et intellectuels. Ils doivent être soumis à une « double lecture » : une analyse rendant compte simultanément de l'autonomie de la production culturelle et du caractère relatif de cette autonomie. Deux systèmes doivent être construits – l'espace des positions intellectuelles et l'espace des positions sociales – et être reliés systématiquement en passant par les niveaux intermédiaires de l'*habitus* et du champ. C'est dans la rencontre entre champ et *habitus* qu'émerge l'« espace de possibles » des acteurs.

Le niveau intermédiaire du champ est central pour le dépassement bourdieusien. Externalistes et internalistes négligent ce niveau avec son autonomie relative. La présente étude cherche à appliquer une perspective similaire, évitant les pièges de l'internalisme et de l'externalisme. Le but est de tenir ensemble l'analyse des positions intellectuelles et sociales. Concernant la sociologisation de l'*a priori*, cela signifie de considérer tant les dimensions logique que socio-structurale : construire la logique du problème comme une « logique proprement socio-logique ».

(5) Réflexivité

La dernière dimension est la réflexivité. Faire de l'*a priori* l'objet d'analyse sociologique a des conséquences pour la conception de la sociologie elle-même. Sociologiser les *a prioris* implique de sociologiser aussi les *a prioris* de l'activité sociologique. La proposition « l'*a priori* est sociologique » a une qualité auto-référentielle particulière.

Le défi de la réflexivité est inévitable. Il s'agit d'appliquer le raisonnement socio-transcendantal à lui-même, à sa propre histoire. Cette stratégie constitue un pari méthodologique : explorer ce type de raisonnement simultanément comme objet historique et comme méthode.

Plusieurs raisons soutiennent ce pari. Le raisonnement socio-transcendantal est devenu une condition socio-transcendantale de certains courants en sciences sociales. Les idées de « conditions sociales de possibilité » font partie du répertoire conceptuel contemporain. Si penser en *a prioris* socio-historiques fonctionne lui-même comme *a priori* socio-historique, il y a raison de l'investiguer comme tel.

Trois modèles prometteurs existent pour une telle histoire réflexive. Bourdieu créditait Durkheim de la « paternité de l'idée de conditions socio-transcendantales » et plaça son travail dans cette lignée. Il présenta l'*habitus* comme « transcendantal historique » et conçut sa sociologie des sciences comme point final du « processus d'historicisation de l'interrogation kantienne ». Foucault, dans *Les mots et les choses* (1966), investiga comment l'organisation de la connaissance s'était transformée pour soutenir l'émergence des sciences humaines. Il utilisa le même type de raisonnement « empirique-transcendantal » qu'il prit comme objet. Enfin, plus récemment, Thomas Hirsch, dans *Le Temps des sociétés* (2016), retrace l'émergence de l'idée de « temps social », montrant qu'elle apparaît comme ayant ses propres « conditions de possibilité » sociales.

La demande de réflexivité est devenue ubiquitaire en sciences sociales depuis les années 1960. Le problème est que toute tentative de comprendre des phénomènes sociaux est elle-même un phénomène social. Le thème devint éminent avec l'émergence de la sociologie de la connaissance au tournant du XX^e siècle. À partir des années 1970, le thème fut associé au déclin du structuro-fonctionnalisme. Dans les études sociales des sciences, la réflexivité fut ardemment débattue, figurant comme principe du « programme fort » de Bloor. Latour argumenta que celui-ci n'avait pas été suffisamment réflexif. La réflexivité fut poussée le plus loin par Woolgar et Ashmore, mais cette conception fut accusée de stérilité.

Le présent projet implique une notion différente, inspirée par Bourdieu. Celui-ci n'intégra le mot « réflexivité » dans son vocabulaire qu'à la fin des années 1980. Selon lui, la réflexivité ne conduit pas au relativisme. Il distingue entre interprétation relativiste (« narcissique ») et interprétation « réaliste » ou « réformiste ». Selon cette dernière, les sciences sociales peuvent appliquer leurs méthodes à leurs méthodes mêmes sans auto-réfutation, permettant un contrôle accru des outils. Bourdieu conçoit l'historicisation des outils comme stratégie pour les « déshistoriciser ». L'intention réformiste est de comprendre les déterminations socio-historiques des concepts pour mieux les contrôler. Il caractérisa sa sociologie comme « redéfinition scientifique et résolument historiciste du projet kantien ». Un ingrédient décisif, distinguant Bourdieu des autres avocats de réflexivité, est la notion d'autonomie relative de la science. Lorsqu'une science relativement autonome se retourne sur elle-même, elle peut identifier, critiquer et éliminer des éléments relativement hétéronomes dans sa pratique.

Pour le cas présent, l'interprétation réformiste signifie qu'écrire l'histoire du raisonnement socio-transcendantal en utilisant ses outils n'invalide pas ces outils. En investiguant les origines historiques et sociales de l'idée de « conditions socio-transcendantales », une meilleure saisie des conditions, limites et intérêt potentiel de cette notion peut être obtenue. En étudiant l'histoire du raisonnement socio-transcendantal en utilisant ses propres outils, une contribution à

une meilleure compréhension des expressions ubiquitaires telles que « catégories socialement construites » ou « conditions sociales de possibilité » devient possible. La conception réformiste de la réflexivité de Bourdieu semble la plus prometteuse.

Pour le cadre bourdieusien

Concernant les cinq dimensions clés – disciplines, contextes nationaux, longue durée, dépassement de la dichotomie interne-externe et réflexivité –, chacune peut être convenablement conçue dans le cadre bourdieusien. Bourdieu fournit une perspective théorico-méthodologique cohérente et unifiée rendant compte de toutes les principales dimensions de l'objet d'investigation simultanément. Cela permet de construire les différents aspects du problème de manière homogène.

Une question demeure : comment concevoir des « problèmes » tels que la sociologisation de l'*a priori* dans le cadre bourdieusien ? Qu'implique une histoire sociologique de tels problèmes ? Pour y répondre, il faut prêter attention à la tradition méthodologique de l'« histoire-problème » et chercher à l'intégrer dans la perspective bourdieusienne.

3. L'histoire-problème sociologique : un profil historique et méthodologique

Le problème franco-allemand de l'histoire-problème

Cette étude propose une « histoire-problème sociologique » de la sociologisation de l'*a priori*. Cependant, on constate l'absence d'une tradition historiographique cohérente. Il existe deux traditions distinctes : l'« histoire-problème » française (surtout dans la tradition des *Annales*) et la « *Problemgeschichte* » allemande (surtout dans l'historiographie néo-kantienne la philosophie). Nous examinerons l'histoire du concept « problème », esquisserons les deux traditions, puis proposerons un renouvellement sociologique.

Qu'est-ce qu'un problème ?

L'usage ordinaire de « problème » s'avère trop ambigu. L'usage scientifique offre davantage d'indications. Le mot vient du grec « πρόβλημα » (« projeter en avant »). Dès le IV^e siècle avant J.-C., il apparaît comme terme technique en géométrie, logique et physique.

Dans les *Éléments* d'Euclide, le « problème » désigne une proposition exigeant qu'une action soit effectuée, opposé au « théorème ». Dans la logique aristotélicienne, il désigne une question sur la vérité d'un énoncé. Au Moyen Âge, le sens logique domina via la *quaestio* médiévale. Le sens géométrique réapparut chez Descartes et dans la *Logique de Port-Royal*.

Chez Kant, référence cruciale pour la *Problemgeschichte*, plusieurs traditions convergent. Il définit les problèmes au sens géométrique comme propositions démontrables et au sens

logique-dialectique comme jugements où l'affirmation reste simplement possible. Dans la philosophie transcendantale, il appelle « problèmes » les idées transcendantales (monde, âme, Dieu) : inévitables mais sans réponse. Kant associe « problème », « tâche » et « hypothèse ». Les idées transcendantales ont un usage « régulateur » apportant une unité systématique à l'expérience. Cette unité reste un « problème », une « unité projetée ».

La tradition germanophone de la Problemgeschichte

La *Problemgeschichte* néo-kantienne (entre environ 1870 et 1930) se développa dans l'école de Marbourg (Cohen, Natorp, Cassirer) et l'école du Sud-Ouest (Windelband, Rickert, Lask).

À Marbourg, le « problème » devint central. Cohen insista sur les présupposés systématiques des interprétations historiques, rejetant toute « conception objective-historique ». Dans son introduction à l'*Histoire du matérialisme* de Lange (1896), il souligna que la philosophie obtenait ses « problèmes » de la science et de la culture. Cassirer poursuivit cette orientation dans son *Erkenntnisproblem*. Cette *Problemgeschichte* refusa les projections incontrôlées et l'illusion d'une histoire objective.

Dans l'école du Sud-Ouest, le *Lehrbuch der Geschichte der Philosophie* de Windelband (1892) opposa la focalisation sur des problèmes à l'historiographie centrée sur des philosophes. Windelband concevait les problèmes comme « tâches » éternelles, reconnaissant que la philosophie « reçoit » ses problèmes de l'histoire.

Hartmann proposa la réflexion la plus explicite sur la méthode de la *Problemgeschichte*. Il plaida pour transformer l'histoire de la philosophie en une histoire des problèmes, argumentant contre l'« histoire des faits ». Les problèmes constituaient les « conditions transcendantales de la possibilité de l'histoire », assimilés aux « hypothèses ».

Gadamer critiqua cette conception (1924), insistant sur l'historicité des problèmes. Dans *Wahrheit und Methode* (1960), il reprocha que l'identité des problèmes était une « abstraction vide ». Avec le déclin du néo-kantianisme la *Problemgeschichte* devint marginale.

Néanmoins, un courant souterrain exista en histoire générale et en sociologie. Max Weber joua ici un rôle crucial (selon Oexle). Dans son article sur l'« objectivité » (1904), il souligna que la recherche présupposait des « problèmes culturels » (*Kulturprobleme*) changeants qui constituaient la « condition transcendantale de toute science de la culture ». Les concepts dépendent des problèmes, qui dépendent à leur tour du contenu changeant de la culture. Cette tradition fut poursuivie par Mannheim.

La tradition française de l'histoire-problème

En France, « histoire-problème » renvoie aux innovations historiographiques du mouvement des *Annales*, fondé par Lucien Febvre (1878-1956) et Marc Bloch (1886-1944). La paternité est souvent attribuée à Febvre, bien qu'il n'ait fourni aucun exposé méthodologique élaboré. Les écrits de Febvre montrent l'importance centrale du « problème ». Les problèmes constituaient le point de départ, l'objet et le but de toute histoire. C'était par les problèmes que l'histoire construisait ses faits. Febvre concevait l'histoire comme une « science de problèmes à poser ».

Cette insistance servait un objectif polémique contre l'« École méthodique » qui concevait l'histoire comme une collection de faits. Berr avait déjà dénoncé cette « histoire historisante ». Febvre substituait au mot d'ordre de « synthèse » celui de « problèmes » spécifiques. Il contestait la conception du « fait » et réintroduisait hypothèses et théorie. Les « faits » présupposaient problèmes et hypothèses – des « formes de notre esprit ». L'histoire « construisait » son objet en fonction des questions du présent. Cela concernait toutes les sciences – Febvre se référait notamment à Berthelot qui avait dit que la chimie « fabriquait son objet ».

L'étude de Febvre de 1942, *Le problème de l'incroyance au XVI^e siècle. La religion de Rabelais*, constitue l'exemple paradigmatique. Febvre y réexaminait si Rabelais était « athée ». Deux tiers du livre critiquent les interprétations antérieures. La littérature – notamment Lefranc – avait commis, selon Febvre, un « anachronisme » : projeter des catégories contemporaines sur le XVI^e siècle. Ces projections présentaient un « problème mal posé ». La critique permettait de formuler un « problème mieux posé ». L'étape décisive était pour Febvre de passer des questions de fait aux questions de possibilité. Était-il possible pour Rabelais d'être athée ? Febvre insistait sur un raisonnement en termes de « structures de possibilité ». Febvre analysait ainsi l'« outillage mental » des hommes du XVI^e siècle. Chaque civilisation possédait selon lui un équipement mental définissant ce qui était possible de penser. Le langage était crucial. Ainsi, les intellectuels du XVI^e siècle n'avaient pas les mots pour penser comme ceux du XX^e. Parler de l'« athéisme » de Rabelais revenait à lui attribuer quelque chose d'impensable.

Analyser en termes d'histoire-problème signifiait donc : partir d'un « problème » ; critiquer les projections ; établir ce qui était possible ; reconstruire l'outillage mental. Le « problème » de Febvre était historiquement conditionné. Néanmoins, cela ne conduisait pas à un « relativisme ». Un progrès était possible – une « adaptation au temps ».

On pourrait résumer la conception de Febvre en quelques principes : (1) « problème » : les problèmes surgissent dans un présent particulier ; (2) « construction » : les faits sont des « constructions » à partir de problèmes et d'hypothèses ; (3) « hypothèse » : il faut formuler des hypothèses explicites ; (4) « anachronisme » : il y a le risque de projeter des préoccupations

contemporaines ; (5) « critique » : il faut critiquer les constructions antérieures ; (6) « structures de possibilité » : il faut raisonner en termes de possibilités historiques ; (7) « adaptation progressive » : par ce procédé, il est possible d'arriver à des constructions plus adéquates.

Comparaisons et contacts entre les deux traditions

Les deux traditions d'histoire-problème présentent plusieurs différences fondamentales. (1) Le domaine d'application constitue la distinction la plus évidente : l'histoire de la philosophie pour la tradition allemande, l'histoire générale pour la tradition française. (2) Concernant les problèmes des observateurs vs. des acteurs, la tradition allemande se concentrait sur des problèmes considérés comme « donnés » avec des structures invariables, tandis que la tradition française insistait sur la méthode de l'historien construisant sa recherche selon des problèmes. (3) L'historicité des problèmes les divise : Windelband et Hartmann tendaient vers l'idée d'une éternité des problèmes philosophiques, alors que pour Febvre, les problèmes variaient historiquement. (4) Les positions épistémologiques différaient : la tradition allemande assurait l'objectivité en insistant sur le caractère transhistorique des problèmes ; la tradition française embrassait leur historicité mais maintenait l'objectivité par la critique réflexive.

Malgré ces différences, des parallèles stables existent aussi. (1) Les deux traditions acceptent que l'histoire soit écrite depuis une perspective présente définie par des problèmes, s'opposant à la notion historiciste d'un « passé objectif » tout en rejetant le présentisme incontrôlé. (2) Elles ont relié l'approche par problèmes à l'usage d'hypothèses, insistant que problèmes et hypothèses sont les conditions des faits, suivant une méthode « hypothético-déductive ». (3) Le raisonnement en termes de possibilités caractérise les deux traditions. (4) Enfin, les deux traditions présentent une réflexivité accrue, cherchant à contrôler les éléments « subjectifs » de la connaissance historique.

Les contacts historiques concrets restent à explorer. La « galaxie Berr » (*Revue de Synthèse historique*, Centre international de Synthèse) offre un point de contact plausible où Febvre forgea ses instruments intellectuels et où furent publiés Windelband, Rickert et Cassirer. Le contact Febvre-Cassirer de 1938 est documenté : Febvre fit une recension élogieuse du livre de Cassirer sur la Renaissance, louant sa capacité à montrer comment les conditions d'existence amenaient à concevoir « un nouvel univers de la pensée ». Ce contact suggère une convergence à partir de conditions initiales différentes.

L'intérêt contemporain de l'histoire-problème

L'enquête sur la sociologisation de l'*a priori* se veut un exemple d'une histoire-problème. Mais quelle peut être la pertinence de ces traditions vieilles de 80 à 150 ans ?

Je propose un raisonnement par analogie. Les deux traditions ont émergé en cherchant une troisième voie en réponse à l'opposition entre « présentisme » et « historicisme » : éviter la projection du présent sur le passé tout en échappant à l'idée d'un passé objectif indépendant de l'observateur. L'argument consisterait à montrer que nous sommes aujourd'hui dans une impasse analogue et que l'histoire-problème pourrait offrir une issue.

En Allemagne (1880-1930), l'alternative était présente depuis Nietzsche (1874) qui distinguait trois types d'histoire : « monumentale » (présentisme), « antiquaire » (historicisme) et « critique » (guidé par des intérêts présents pour juger le passé). En France (1900-1950), le projet de « synthèse » de Henri Berr, par exemple, tentait de dépasser cette même opposition. Enfin, dans l'histoire des sciences sociales depuis les années 1960, cette opposition est restée vitale. L'impulsion contre une historiographie mesurant le passé aux standards présents (*whig history*) vint de Kuhn (1962) et de Stocking (1966). Les répercussions furent importantes, produisant une véritable « controverse historiciste » en histoire des sciences sociales dans les années 1980.

Si l'histoire-problème a servi pour aller au-delà du présentisme et de l'historicisme dans les deux contextes antérieurs, elle pourrait, par analogie, être une option intéressante pour l'histoire actuelle des sciences sociales.

Sociologiser l'histoire-problème

Comment concevoir une version contemporaine de l'histoire-problème, sans reprendre les hypothèses controversées de « problèmes pérennes » ou de « mentalités » ? Je suggère de sociologiser l'histoire-problème, c'est-à-dire de l'intégrer dans la théorie sociologique, la théorie de l'action sociale et la sociologie des sciences. Plusieurs liens historiques vont dans ce sens (les liens avec Weber ou la notion durkheimienne de « mentalité » chez Febvre). Nous pouvons nous appuyer pour cette sociologisation sur Karl Mannheim et Pierre Bourdieu.

De la Problemgeschichte à la sociologie de la connaissance chez Mannheim

Dans l'Allemagne des années 1920, Mannheim a continué la tradition de la *Problemgeschichte* néo-kantienne en sociologie en s'appuyant sur Cassirer, le néo-kantisme et Weber. Dans sa thèse de 1918 (publiée en 1922), il souscrivait à une vision néo-kantienne de la *Problemgeschichte*, tentant une « analyse structurelle » (*Strukturanalyse*) d'épistémologies conçues comme solutions au « problème de la connaissance ».

Après son tournant sociologique, son article de 1925 sur le « problème » de la sociologie de la connaissance s'interroge de façon réflexive sur les conditions socio-historiques qui ont rendu possible ce problème – une sociologie de la connaissance de la sociologie de la connaissance.

Mannheim insiste sur le fait que la dynamique des problèmes ne peut être comprise qu'en les reliant à la « problématique de la vie », envisageant une « analyse structurelle des formulations possibles de problèmes » en connexion avec les relations sociales concrètes. Il gravite ainsi vers une réinterprétation sociologique de la *Problemggeschichte*.

Enfin, dans son article de 1926 sur l'interprétation des formations mentales, la *Problemggeschichte* devient un type d'interprétation parmi d'autres, opposée à l'« interprétation sociologique ». Mannheim présente ainsi un cas de transformation de la *Problemggeschichte* en une approche sociologique.

Une histoire-problème bourdieusienne

Pour sociologiser l'histoire-problème, les ressources chez Bourdieu sont encore plus importantes. Bien que Bourdieu ne théorise pas explicitement la notion de « problème », il thématise dans sa sociologie régulièrement « problèmes » et « problématiques ».

Trois traces indiquent des connexions historiques. Bourdieu reconnut une convergence avec Febvre concernant les « structures de possibilité » et les traduisit dans sa conception d'« espace des possibles ». De l'« épistémologie historique » de Bachelard et Canguilhem, Bourdieu hérita l'insistance sur des problèmes. Dans *Le métier de sociologue* (1968), les auteurs accordent une primauté épistémologique à la « construction », équivalent à une « problématique théorique ». Ces problématiques sont « historiquement et socialement constituées », impliquant le risque de « fausses problématiques ». Avec la tradition allemande, enfin, la « construction de l'objet » implique un raisonnement circulaire que Bourdieu défend dans sa confrontation avec Panofsky et Wind, tous les deux liés à Cassirer.

Le statut des « problèmes » chez Bourdieu peut se comprendre sur deux niveaux. Du point de vue des acteurs, problèmes et problématiques sont une dimension cruciale de la « théorie de la pratique ». Les problèmes des acteurs résultent de la rencontre entre un champ (structure objective, distribution du capital) et un *habitus* (dispositions incorporées). Les problèmes ne sont ni purement « objectifs » ni purement « subjectifs », mais émergent de cette rencontre. Du point de vue des observateurs, pour comprendre la production intellectuelle des acteurs, nous devons concevoir leurs prises de position comme réponses à leurs problématiques.

Mais si les observateurs sont eux-mêmes des acteurs, comment s'assurer que la reconstruction des problèmes des acteurs est appropriée ? La réponse implique la notion de « réflexivité ». Il faut une « objectivation du sujet objectivant » à trois niveaux (position dans l'espace social, dans le champ scientifique, statut d'observateur externe « scholastique »). En contrôlant ces conditions, nous augmentons les chances que nos reconstructions soient adéquates. Si les

historiens combinent leurs constructions des problèmes avec une histoire réflexive de leurs propres problèmes, ils ont une chance de progrès.

Peut-on jamais parler « objectivement » de problèmes ? Les dispositions conditionnant les problèmes ne sont jamais totalement individuelles mais collectives, partagées avec d'autres acteurs. Elles font partie d'« *habitus* de classe » plus larges. Le partage des dispositions peut concerner les cohortes d'âge, l'appartenance nationale, l'affiliation disciplinaire. Nous pouvons concevoir des problèmes persistant au-delà d'un *habitus* et d'un champ particulier si les conditions structurelles (côté champ et côté *habitus*) présentent une continuité ou stabilité. Pour parler du « même problème » à travers les contextes, il faut montrer que les conditions « subjectives » et « objectives » sont similaires ou « homologues ».

Le problème de la sociologisation de l'*a priori* peut-il satisfaire cette condition sur une durée de 250 ans ? Il existe des continuités structurelles à grande échelle qui le justifient. Au niveau des structures de champ, une continuité institutionnelle remarquable existe entre l'émergence du champ philosophique professionnel en Allemagne vers 1800 et aujourd'hui (Collins 1998). Au niveau des dispositions, il existe une identité sociale-intellectuelle relativement stable des philosophes professionnels avec des schèmes de pensée durables liés au « style transcendantal » kantien. Dans ces conditions, des conflits récurrents depuis les années 1830 ont opposé philosophie et sciences sociales. Bien sûr, la forme du problème et les manières d'en discuter ont varié, mais ce n'est pas une objection de principe.

Bourdieu offre donc des ressources pour formuler une histoire-problème sociologique. Sa sociologie est compatible avec les traditions allemande et française et aide à expliciter et généraliser leurs intentions dans une théorie sociologique globale. Inversement, il est possible d'intégrer la focalisation sur un problème intellectuel spécifique dans le cadre bourdieusien.

Principes d'une histoire-problème sociologique

On peut synthétiser les principes d'une histoire-problème sociologique contemporaine comme suit :

(1) « Les problèmes sont pratiques » : Les problèmes sont intrinsèquement pratiques pour les acteurs. Ils possèdent une temporalité reliant passé et futur dans un présent particulier et constituent des « appels à agir ». Les réponses – solutions, théorèmes, concepts – doivent être conçues comme des façons d'agir.

(2) « Les problèmes ont des conditions structurelles de possibilité » : La permanence de ces conditions permet de parler d'un « même problème ».

(3) « Les problèmes présupposent une construction par les acteurs » : Par leurs dispositions acquises (langage, concepts, schèmes, *habitus*) émerge la perception d'une situation comme problématique.

(4) « Les problèmes présupposent des contextes socio-historiques » : Les dispositions ont été acquises dans des contextes antérieurs ; et un contexte particulier est construit comme problème.

(5) « Les problèmes des observateurs sont un type spécifique de problèmes des acteurs » : La différence est que les observateurs cherchent à rendre explicites leurs problèmes, à les contrôler intersubjectivement et à les corroborer empiriquement.

(6) « L'histoire-problème implique le risque de fausses constructions » : Les problèmes construits par les observateurs et attribués aux acteurs risquent de ne pas correspondre aux constructions effectives des derniers, d'où le danger d'ethnocentrisme et d'anachronisme.

(7) « L'histoire-problème nécessite de la réflexivité » : Une observation de second ordre permet de contrôler ces risques. Cette réflexivité « réformatrice » s'oriente vers une construction scientifique plus appropriée.

Avantages et limitations méthodologiques

L'histoire-problème sociologique présente plusieurs avantages généraux :

(1) « Présentisme réflexif » au-delà du présentisme et de l'historicisme : Cette approche reconnaît le point de départ contemporain et le caractère construit de la connaissance, s'opposant au positivisme historique comme à l'universalisation non contrôlée du présent.

(2) « Autonomie relative » au-delà de l'internalisme et de l'externalisme : Les problèmes apparaissent comme interface pour connecter perspectives internes et externes, obligeant à considérer à la fois la logique interne d'un champ et ses conditions externes.

(3) « Rationalisme réaliste » au-delà du réalisme et du constructivisme : Il s'agit d'une position clairement constructiviste mais avec une intention réaliste, inspirée du « rationalisme appliqué » de Bachelard, apparentée à un « kantisme sociologisé ».

(4) « Réflexivité réformatrice » au-delà de l'autoréfutation et de l'exceptionnalisme : C'est par la critique réflexive des problèmes mal posés qu'on arrive à des problèmes mieux posés. Connaître les conditions du sujet scientifique devient la condition pour progresser dans la connaissance de l'objet.

Les avantages spécifiques pour le problème de la sociologisation de l'*a priori* sont les suivants :

(1) Cohérence avec les cinq dimensions du problème : L'histoire-problème sociologique est cohérente avec le caractère interdisciplinaire, transnational et de long terme, ainsi qu'avec

l'autonomie relative et la réflexivité. Pour la sociologisation de l'*a priori*, la stabilité des conditions structurelles (position de la philosophie, auteurs de référence, conflits entre philosophie et sciences sociales) en France et en Allemagne rend plausible l'exploration du « même problème » dans une durée longue.

(2) Unification et intégration des perspectives : L'approche permet de construire de manière contrôlée un objet et de le suivre à travers ses contextes. La sociologisation de l'*a priori* fonctionne comme un point focal permettant d'identifier similitudes et différences entre contextes. Ce problème constitue une « hypothèse » offrant des avantages pour comprendre passé et présent, mais restant provisoire.

Cela dit, l'histoire-problème a aussi ses conditions limite. Elle doit coopérer avec d'autres approches, car elle s'appuie sur leur travail. Trois compétences sont nécessaires : (1) Une compétence spécifique : maîtriser le langage et techniques des acteurs ; (2) une compétence sociologique : reconstruire l'espace des positions pour comprendre les conditions des constructions des problèmes ; (3) une compétence historique : connaître les dispositions acquises par les acteurs au cours de leur trajectoire.

4. Opérationnaliser l'histoire-problème pour la sociologisation de l'*a priori*

Il convient de préciser l'opérationnalisation de l'histoire-problème sociologique à propos de l'objet de la sociologisation de l'*a priori*. L'approche doit rendre compte des perceptions et solutions des acteurs historiques ainsi que des conditions et des effets sociaux de ces perceptions et solutions, dans une perspective de longue durée couvrant plusieurs générations de chercheurs dans divers contextes disciplinaires et nationaux.

Sites de recherche stratégiques

Face à l'infinité d'objets, auteurs, textes et contextes possibles, une sélection s'impose selon l'objectif stratégique global. La tactique privilégiée consiste à mener une série d'études de cas. Seul ce cadre localisé permet de satisfaire les préceptes de l'histoire-problème sociologique : analyser en détail les perceptions et solutions des acteurs tout en reconstruisant leurs conditions sociales ; acquérir les compétences nécessaires ; articuler différents niveaux micro et macro ; exercer une réflexivité critique sur les catégories appliquées. La sérialisation de telles études de cas, avec variation temporelle, spatiale et disciplinaire, permet de construire une histoire transdisciplinaire et transnationale du problème.

Les cas doivent constituer des « matériaux de recherche stratégiques » au sens de Merton, c'est-à-dire des sites, objets ou événements qui exhibent les phénomènes à expliquer de manière

avantageuse et accessible, permettant l'investigation de problèmes et la découverte de nouveaux questionnements.

L'utilisation de ces cas implique une logique circulaire cohérente avec l'orientation épistémologique de l'histoire-problème sociologique. Les cas et les énoncés généraux auxquels ils se rapportent s'informent mutuellement. La sélection et l'analyse des cas sont guidées par les hypothèses à explorer ; inversement, les hypothèses sont spécifiées et corroborées par l'exploration des cas. L'objectif est d'approximer deux systèmes de relations : celui des hypothèses et celui des faits construits par les hypothèses. La « preuve » attendue sera une preuve par « cohérence » entre la construction générale du problème et les cas censés l'exhiber.

Cette logique s'accorde avec la méthodologie mertonienne orientée vers les problèmes et les hypothèses. Les cas doivent permettre de révéler les perceptions et solutions des acteurs, leurs catégories et schèmes pratiques sous-jacents, leurs dispositions acquises socialement, et la structure du champ dans lequel ils agissent, tout en pratiquant une « réflexivité réformatrice » concernant les catégories analytiques de l'observateur. Deux types d'objets satisfont particulièrement ces critères : les controverses scientifiques et les processus de circulation.

Controverses

L'étude des controverses constitue un élément constant des études en histoire et sociologie des sciences depuis les années 1970. Dans la perspective de l'histoire-problème sociologique, elle doit être conçue comme partie intégrante de la sociologie du conflit, c'est-à-dire l'étude sociologique d'interactions sociales antagonistes en général. Merton avait appliqué une telle perspective conflictuelle aux controverses scientifiques dès la fin des années 1950. De même, Bourdieu a insisté depuis le milieu des années 1970 sur la dimension essentiellement conflictuelle du champ scientifique.

Les questions centrales sont de savoir si les controverses scientifiques sont des types de conflits sociaux, si elles sont spécifiques et comment comprendre cette spécificité. La conception bourdieusienne de « l'autonomie relative » du champ scientifique permet une position intermédiaire. Les controverses doivent être conçues comme des conflits sociaux « relativement autonomes », suivant au moins en partie les règles internes d'un champ relativement autonome.

L'étude des controverses remplit plusieurs fonctions pour l'histoire-problème sociologique : (1) relier les positions intellectuelles des acteurs en conflit ; (2) relier leurs positions sociales ; (3) établir des relations entre ces deux systèmes de positions ; (4) reconstruire les espaces des possibles et les problématiques spécifiques des acteurs ; (5) révéler les schèmes pratiques conditionnant leurs perceptions et solutions ; (6) retracer l'origine des catégories de l'observateur, souvent produites par la polarisation et les stéréotypes résultant des controverses.

En vertu de ces fonctions, les controverses constituent un moyen important d'accès aux informations intellectuelles et socio-historiques nécessaires à la construction d'une histoire-problème sociologique. Elles permettent de construire une conception « relationnelle » de l'activité intellectuelle et de combiner analyses « internes » et « externes ».

Transferts, réceptions, circulations

Le second type de cas étudié concerne les processus de transfert, traduction, réception et circulation d'idées, textes et acteurs entre contextes nationaux et disciplinaires. Ces phénomènes de circulation remplissent un rôle heuristique analogue aux controverses, mais spécifient davantage les dimensions nationales et disciplinaires.

Comme les controverses, les processus de circulation permettent d'établir des relations entre positions intellectuelles et sociales, reconstruire les espaces des possibles, révéler les schèmes pratiques. La différence tient à ce que les controverses se déroulent généralement entre acteurs partageant des schèmes similaires et participant au même champ, tandis que les circulations introduisent une variation sur ces niveaux, obligeant à reconstruire la position des acteurs dans différents champs et à questionner les similitudes et dissimilitudes structurelles entre ces champs.

La valeur ajoutée principale des cas de circulation réside dans leur capacité à révéler les schèmes spécifiquement nationaux et disciplinaires sous-jacents aux problèmes des acteurs. Cela devient apparent dans les situations de malentendus ou d'appropriations déviantes, exposant des « malentendus structurels » enracinés dans des schèmes nationaux ou disciplinaires renvoyant à la structure et l'histoire des contextes respectifs. Les cas de non-réception ou de perceptions divergentes d'un même problème selon les contextes révèlent également cette dépendance aux conditions structurelles nationales et disciplinaires.

La critique des obstacles mémoriels

Le travail réflexif sur les catégories de l'observateur constitue une partie essentielle de l'histoire-problème sociologique. Il s'agit d'enquêter sur les représentations des problèmes des acteurs par les historiens et autres acteurs, de reconstruire l'origine de ces représentations, leurs mécanismes de diffusion et leurs fonctions, et d'évaluer leur adéquation comme représentations du passé.

Souvent les représentations communes d'un épisode historique deviennent des « obstacles mémoriels » : des représentations collectives du passé qui empêchent sa représentation historique adéquate. Ces images partagées peuvent servir les intérêts présents de divers acteurs mais sont devenues inappropriées comme interprétations du passé. L'histoire-problème implique

nécessairement une « anamnèse » réflexive de ces représentations routinisées, dans le but de poser le problème en termes historiquement plus adéquats. Cette critique est un aspect essentiel de la « conquête » de l'objet.

Dans l'histoire de la sociologisation de l'*a priori*, nous rencontrons fréquemment de tels obstacles, par exemple concernant le sujet de recherche « néo-kantisme et sociologie », diverses représentations de Kant, la notion d'un « néo-kantisme français », ou la marginalisation de la sociologie des sciences de Merton dans les années 1970. Dans tous ces cas, c'est en traversant ces obstacles que nous chercherons à arriver à des problèmes « mieux posés ».

Étudier l'émergence du problème

Une part essentielle de la compréhension de la sociologisation de l'*a priori* consiste à reconstruire la structure du problème, sa « grammaire » relativement stable, et à retracer comment cette structure a émergé et s'est transformée historiquement. Les circonstances historiques dans lesquelles un problème surgit semblent particulièrement importantes d'un point de vue heuristique. C'est dans cette situation que la structure de base du problème apparaît pour la première fois. Elle permet d'étudier *in vivo* les conditions intellectuelles et sociales fondamentales qui ont dû être remplies pour que la formulation du problème devienne possible. Ces moments d'inception revêtent une signification stratégique décisive pour toute histoire-problème sociologique.

Pour le cas spécifique de la sociologisation de l'*a priori*, l'enquête sur l'émergence historique mènera au conflit entre les classifications des sciences et des connaissances de Kant et de Comte et leurs contextes socio-historiques respectifs. Nous chercherons à comprendre l'émergence du problème à partir de la relation dynamique entre la division du travail intellectuel et la vision de cette division par ceux qui proposent des classifications des connaissances et des sciences.

Une fois les origines historiques établies, il deviendra possible de construire les récits sociologiques ultérieurs de catégories, concepts d'espace et de temps comme des solutions au même problème, et de connecter les transformations dans la structure du problème aux conditions socio-historiques changeantes.

Études de cas circonscrites et ignorance spécifiée

Étant donné la nécessité de combiner diverses compétences disciplinaires, les études de cas d'histoire-problème sont chronophages, ce qui impose des restrictions sur le nombre de cas analysables. Ne pouvant offrir qu'un nombre limité d'études, elles se concentreront sur trois moments prioritaires : l'émergence du problème entre les années 1780 et 1830 ; sa culmination

dans plusieurs récits sociologiques explicites de l'*a priori* vers 1900 ; son point d'aboutissement provisoire dans la période 1960-2020 qui a informé la construction présente du problème.

Même limitée, l'approche d'histoire-problème produit ce que Merton a appelé « l'ignorance spécifiée » (*specified ignorance*), c'est-à-dire « la reconnaissance expresse de ce qui n'est pas encore connu mais doit l'être pour fonder davantage de connaissance ». Notre construction du problème « sociologisation de l'*a priori* » fournit une grille de lecture permettant d'interroger l'histoire avec un questionnaire en tête. Même si nous ne pouvons appliquer ce questionnaire à toutes les parties pertinentes de cette histoire, notre cadrage permet d'identifier d'autres sites de recherche stratégiques et des questions spécifiques à investiguer, servant ainsi de point de départ pour d'autres études de cas.

5. Conclusion : De la construction à la confirmation

En résumé, le phénomène de la sociologisation de l'*a priori* peut être conçu comme un « problème » au sens défini ici et peut être étudié dans la perspective d'une histoire-problème sociologique. Cette approche, informée par les traditions allemande et française, permet d'intégrer les cinq dimensions principales du problème (interdisciplinarité, transnationalité, transtemporalité, autonomie relative, réflexivité) dans le cadre de la sociologie bourdieusienne.

Dans *Le métier de sociologue*, Bourdieu et ses coauteurs insistaient sur le fait que les faits scientifiques sont « conquis », « construits » et « constatés ». Ces trois « actes épistémologiques » sont inséparables mais exhibent un ordre hiérarchique. Le premier chapitre s'est concentré sur la « conquête » de l'objet d'étude tandis que le présent chapitre a cherché sa « construction » explicite comme problème. Ce qui reste est la « confirmation ».

Les prochaines étapes consistent à critiquer les obstacles mémoriels et à investiguer l'émergence historique du problème. L'un des principaux obstacles pour une histoire de la sociologisation de l'*a priori* concerne les récits établis sur la relation prétendue entre « néo-kantisme » et « sociologie ». Une critique réflexive de cette littérature s'avère nécessaire avant de pouvoir se tourner vers les origines historiques du problème dans le conflit entre les classifications des sciences de Kant et de Comte. Pour prouver la pertinence de l'histoire-problème sociologique, il faut la mettre en œuvre de manière aussi convaincante que possible.

CHAPITRE 3. NÉO-KANTISME ET SOCIOLOGIE : UNE ANAMNÈSE DES OBSTACLES MÉMORIELS

1. Introduction : Reconsidérer un objet de recherche

De la sociologisation de l'a priori à la thématique néo-kantisme et sociologie

Après avoir défini le problème de la « sociologisation de l'a priori » et exposé l'approche d'une « histoire-problème sociologique », ce chapitre étudie la relation avec la recherche existante. Dans la littérature, le problème en question a été principalement associé à la relation entre « néo-kantisme » et sociologie naissante autour de 1900 en Allemagne et en France. Le lien n'est guère surprenant : le terme *a priori* reste fortement associé à Kant ; et lorsque de nombreux auteurs proposèrent autour de 1900 de rendre compte sociologiquement de l'a priori, divers groupes « néo-kantiens » dominaient la philosophie académique.

Toutefois, aucun consensus n'existe sur cette relation. Les récits divergent : certains présentent le néo-kantisme comme arrière-plan commun de la sociologie européenne ; d'autres affirment que la sociologie s'est établie précisément contre le néo-kantisme. Ces visions contradictoires fonctionnent comme des « obstacles mémoriels » : selon le récit que l'on adopte, la sociologisation de l'a priori apparaît soit en continuité, soit en rupture radicale avec la tradition néo-kantienne.

Le plan

Le chapitre examine d'abord les fonctions des histoires disciplinaires dans la perspective de la sociologie de la mémoire collective d'Halbwachs. Il présente ensuite une typologie de cinq récits sur le rapport entre néo-kantisme et sociologie. La quatrième section examine pourquoi les labels « néo-kantisme » et « sociologie » sont hautement ambigus. Sur cette base, quelques propositions sont formulées : abandonner la question générique et étudier les usages effectifs des références à Kant, en se concentrant sur le sous-groupe de références concernant l'a priori.

2. Histoire disciplinaire, mémoire collective et obstacles mémoriels

La force illocutoire des histoires disciplinaires

Les récits sur la relation entre néo-kantisme et sociologie sont produits dans le cadre des histoires des disciplines concernées. Ces « histoires disciplinaires » peuvent construire des identités de groupe, effectuer un « travail de frontière » (Gieryn), promouvoir certaines approches et intervenir dans les luttes pour la définition légitime de la discipline.

Les histoires disciplinaires possèdent une dimension « performative » ou « illocutoire » : elles contribuent à produire une situation présente ou future au lieu de simplement décrire le passé. Elles peuvent initier, construire ou modifier des représentations spécifiques d'un

domaine savant, avec parfois des effets pratiques considérables. Nous devons les considérer non comme de simples énoncés descriptifs, mais comme des interventions à part entière au sein de la discipline.

Quelques exemples

Plusieurs exemples illustrent ces fonctions. L'« Appréciation sommaire » de Comte (1839) introduisit le terme « sociologie » tout en légitimant sa vision par une théorie sociologique de l'erreur de ses prédécesseurs (et en passant sous silence Saint-Simon). Les états de la discipline de Durkheim (1895, 1900, 1915) utilisèrent le silence de façon stratégique envers ses concurrents pour imposer sa conception de la discipline. Le rapport UNESCO de Lazarsfeld (1970) réécrivit l'histoire pour présenter la sociologie comme une « science américaine ». L'« école de Chicago » fut inventée dans les années 1960 par des nouveaux entrants légitimant leur « interactionnisme symbolique » contre le récit parsonsiens dominant. Ces exemples montrent que les histoires disciplinaires traversent l'histoire de la sociologie, légitimant à chaque fois la position de l'auteur en imposant une vision particulière de la discipline.

Appliquer la sociologie de la mémoire de Halbwachs

On peut concevoir les histoires disciplinaires dans le cadre de la sociologie de la mémoire collective de Halbwachs. Dans cette perspective, on peut construire les histoires et récits disciplinaires de la façon suivante :

(1) « Reconstructions disciplinaires » : La sociologie de la mémoire de Halbwachs permet de concevoir les récits du passé d'une discipline comme « reconstructions disciplinaires ». Selon un principe fondamental, dans le souvenir, le passé n'est pas simplement « reproduit », mais « reconstruit ». Essentielle pour cette « reconstruction » est une relation de dépendance vis-à-vis du présent dans lequel le souvenir a lieu. Ce travail de reconstruction implique des « cadres sociaux de la mémoire », fonctionnant comme « instruments dont la mémoire collective se sert pour recomposer une image du passé qui s'accorde à chaque époque avec les pensées dominantes de la société ». Dans les récits du passé d'une discipline, le passé n'est pas simplement « reproduit », mais « reconstruit » en fonction des préoccupations, besoins et intérêts présents.

(2) « Mémoire disciplinaire » : Les mémoires collectives sont spécifiques aux groupes sociaux. De même, les histoires disciplinaires dépendent de la mémoire collective spécialisée des membres d'une discipline. On peut appeler leur mémoire spécifique une « mémoire disciplinaire ». Les reconstructions disciplinaires s'appuient sur les « cadres » de la mémoire collective des membres d'une discipline. Selon Halbwachs, ces cadres possèdent une stabilité plus grande que les souvenirs particuliers et peuvent servir d'« instruments » pour « reconstruire » d'autres

souvenirs. Il n'y a pas de différence de principe entre les représentations particulières et les cadres globaux de mémoire disciplinaire.

(3) « Remanier la mémoire disciplinaire » : Les souvenirs peuvent modifier et remodeler les cadres de mémoire collective. Pour de telles modifications, Halbwachs utilisait les termes « remanier » et « remaniement ». Les changements dans les cadres sociaux de mémoire répondaient au « besoin fondamental d'unité sociale » : lorsque le présent de la société change, les cadres de mémoire tendent à s'adapter. Les remaniements surviennent fondamentalement parce que les groupes impliqués changent et que le passé est reconstruit en termes d'un nouveau présent. Appliqué aux histoires disciplinaires, le « remaniement » de la mémoire disciplinaire signifie une modification des représentations collectives concernant le passé d'un certain champ de connaissance.

Cette conception des histoires disciplinaires comme parties de mémoires collectives disciplinaires a été développée par d'autres auteurs. Friedrich Tenbruck insista sur le fait que toute science reposait sur sa propre mémoire. Richard Swedberg a défendu la pertinence de l'histoire de la sociologie en concevant cette histoire comme une « mémoire de travail » de la discipline. La tentative la plus remarquable fut réalisée par Donald N. Levine dans son ouvrage de 1995 *Visions of the Sociological Tradition*, qui souligna le rôle crucial des « récits » pour les disciplines, conçus comme des « autobiographies collectives ».

Il convient d'ajouter que la reproduction et le remodelage de la mémoire disciplinaire ne se produisent pas exclusivement dans des textes prenant explicitement pour objet l'histoire de la discipline, mais également dans la routine quotidienne. On pourrait distinguer les reconstructions disciplinaires au sens étroit et au sens large. Toutes les reconstructions ne sont pas équivalentes : les conditions sociales dans lesquelles elles sont produites diffèrent considérablement, leur donnant des chances différentes de se répandre et de devenir une partie stable de la mémoire d'une discipline.

Parmi les reconstructions disciplinaires se trouve un sous-genre remarquable : les reconstructions disciplinaires transnationales qui prennent pour objet des traditions nationales différentes, comme *La sociologie allemande contemporaine* de Raymond Aron (1935). La dimension nationale n'est pas propre à ces histoires transnationales. Par exemple, le texte « Sociologie » de Durkheim faisait partie d'un volume intitulé *La science française*, publié pour l'Exposition internationale de San Francisco en 1915, où Durkheim décrivit la sociologie comme « une science essentiellement française ».

Les obstacles mémoriels et leur anamnèse

Comment concevoir ce que j'ai appelé « obstacles mémoriels » dans la perspective halbwach-sienne esquissée ? Les « obstacles mémoriels » ont été définis comme des représentations collectives du passé qui, à un certain moment, commencent à inhiber une représentation historique plus précise de ce passé. Je suggère que les reconstructions du passé d'une discipline, lorsqu'elles deviennent partie des cadres de la mémoire collective, peuvent parfois fonctionner comme de tels obstacles.

Le problème fondamental n'est pas nouveau : les représentations officielles ou « intéressées » du passé peuvent entrer en conflit avec des représentations scientifiques. Le passé constitue une part essentielle de l'« interprétation publique de la réalité » et un enjeu majeur dans les luttes entre groupes. Les obstacles mémoriels semblent apparaître fréquemment dans le conflit entre des groupes extra-scientifiques intéressés par l'usage du passé à des fins présentes et des groupes scientifiques intéressés par une représentation précise du passé.

Toutefois, les obstacles mémoriels semblent également émerger au sein de l'activité scientifique elle-même. Il vaut la peine de reconsidérer la notion initiale d'« obstacles épistémologiques » chez Bachelard. Dans *La formation de l'esprit scientifique* (1938), Bachelard comprenait ces obstacles non comme « externes » à la connaissance, mais comme résultant du processus de cognition lui-même. Connaître signifie surmonter la connaissance antérieure : « on connaît contre une connaissance antérieure ». Ce qui est connaissance à un moment peut devenir obstacle à la connaissance à un autre moment.

On peut traduire ces idées dans la conception sociologique halbwach-sienne : ce que Bachelard appelle « obstacles épistémologiques » pourrait être reformulé en termes de « cadres » de la mémoire collective. Ces cadres permettent aux membres d'un groupe de se souvenir du passé, mais obscurcissent également des aspects du passé. Ainsi, la manière même dont un objet passé est mémorisé peut devenir un obstacle pour le mémoriser différemment et plus précisément.

Comment se fait-il que les souvenirs puissent devenir un obstacle au souvenir ? Ces reconstructions adaptent toujours le passé à un présent spécifique. Lorsque le présent change, ces reconstructions deviennent obsolètes. Les cadres sociaux de mémoire établis n'apparaissent plus ajustés à ce que nous pouvons connaître dans le présent. Il faut alors réadapter le passé au présent. Lorsque les reconstructions antérieures persistent, elles deviennent des obstacles pour des reconstructions adaptées au nouveau présent.

Le cas spécifique qui nous intéresse est celui où les obstacles mémoriels fonctionnent comme obstacles épistémologiques proprement dits, c'est-à-dire lorsqu'ils constituent des obstacles pour une meilleure connaissance du passé. Cela présuppose l'existence d'une activité scientifique orientée vers la connaissance objective du passé : la recherche historique. Les obstacles

mémoriels font partie des cadres collectifs de mémoire d'un groupe. Ils sont essentiellement collectifs et relativement stables. C'est en devenant automatisés qu'ils se développent en obstacles d'une meilleure connaissance historique.

Les obstacles mémoriels apparaissent comme la forme spécifique que prennent les obstacles épistémologiques dans l'histoire. Comment peut-on dépasser les obstacles mémoriels ? Bachelard avait suggéré une « psychanalyse de la connaissance objective ». Bourdieu recommandait plutôt la « sociologie de la connaissance », plus tard une « histoire sociale des sciences sociales ». Vers la fin de sa carrière, Bourdieu utilisa de plus en plus le terme « anamnèse » pour l'opération consistant à rappeler et étudier les conditions historiques et sociales des instruments que nous employons dans l'activité scientifique.

Cette « anamnèse » était dirigée contre l'« amnésie » impliquée dans les constructions routinisées d'objets scientifiques. L'« anamnèse » devait jouer un rôle central dans la conception réflexive-réformiste de Bourdieu de l'histoire des sciences sociales. C'est à travers cette opération que des « obstacles spécifiques au progrès de la conscience et de la connaissance » pouvaient être surmontés.

Traduite en termes halbwachsien, une « anamnèse des obstacles mémoriels » signifierait retracer ce qui est invisible dans les reconstructions antérieures routinisées du passé : chercher à comprendre les conditions socio-historiques dans lesquelles ces récits ont émergé et comment ils se sont stabilisés comme cadres de mémoire collective. La tâche serait de comprendre dans quel sens ces cadres sont devenus des obstacles effectifs pour une meilleure compréhension du passé.

Cependant, Halbwachs nous met en garde. Proposer une alternative aux cadres de mémoire entravants ne peut signifier sortir de la mémoire collective. La reconstruction alternative aura un groupe alternatif comme base. Une façon de répondre est de distinguer entre membres praticiens d'une discipline et historiens étudiant l'histoire d'une discipline. Les praticiens sont intéressés à utiliser le passé de la discipline à des fins présentes. Les historiens, en revanche, sont intéressés à reconstruire ce passé pour lui-même. Cette division est la base sociale pour l'opposition entre « présentisme » et « historicisme » dans l'histoire des sciences sociales.

Les différents intérêts de ces deux groupes créent des conflits. Les reconstructions intéressées des praticiens peuvent devenir de véritables obstacles mémoriels pour une compréhension historique appropriée. Dans les sciences sociales et humaines, les deux rôles du praticien et de l'historien coïncident souvent dans les mêmes acteurs. Bien que je plaide pour surmonter certains obstacles mémoriels, je ne prétendrais pas que la mémoire des historiens soit dans toutes les circonstances « supérieure » à la mémoire des praticiens. Mais la mémoire des historiens tend définitivement à être plus précise.

Il devrait être clair pourquoi nous devons être attentifs à la façon dont l'histoire de la relation entre néo-kantisme et sociologie a été écrite. Les histoires disciplinaires ne sont pas un « luxe ». Être attentif aux façons dont ces histoires ont été écrites permet d'engager une « anamnèse » des obstacles mémoriels – obstacles qui entravent aujourd'hui une image meilleure et plus précise de ce passé. Nous devons travailler à travers les obstacles présentés par les récits sur le néo-kantisme et la sociologie pour mieux saisir le problème que nous cherchons à comprendre : la sociologisation de l'*a priori*.

3. Récits sur le néo-kantisme et la sociologie

Vers une typologie des récits

La relation entre néo-kantisme et sociologie européenne naissante a été fréquemment discutée depuis les années 1970, mais aucune image cohérente n'émerge de la littérature. Les récits disponibles fonctionnent comme des « obstacles mémoriels ». Pour clarifier cette situation, il faut cartographier l'espace des interprétations possibles, en tenant compte de trois difficultés : (1) deux mémoires disciplinaires (sociologie et philosophie) sont impliquées ; (2) deux mémoires nationales (Allemagne et France) interviennent ; (3) les récits diffèrent dans la portée de leurs prétentions.

Je distingue cinq types de récits : positif, négatif, indifférent, idéologique et sociologique. Ces types ne sont pas mutuellement exclusifs et forment ensemble un espace relationnel d'interprétations possibles. Dans chaque cas, je trace ces récits jusqu'à leurs sources historiques, souvent la période de l'entre-deux-guerres.

(1) Le récit positif

Le récit positif affirme une relation positive entre philosophies néo-kantiennes et sociologies européennes naissantes, souvent exprimée par des métaphores d'« influence » ou d'« héritage ». Ce récit est quantitativement dominant. Par exemple, Gillian Rose a soutenu que Weber et Durkheim appartenaient au même « paradigme néo-kantien » ; Wolf Lepenies a suggéré que Kant pourrait être « le père fondateur de la sociologie européenne » ; Peter-Ulrich Merz-Benz a proposé un programme de recherche sur « la genèse de la sociologie à partir de la philosophie du néo-kantisme ».

Les récits positifs locaux concernent principalement la relation de Max Weber avec Rickert, les liens de Durkheim avec Renouvier, Boutroux et Hamelin, les rapports de Simmel avec l'école du Sud-Ouest, et divers autres sociologues comme Jellinek, Adler, Lukács, Mannheim, Elias ou Schütz.

Les sources historiques de ces récits remontent aux débats contemporains. Pour Weber, Troeltsch l'appelait « le troisième protagoniste principal » du néo-kantisme du Sud-Ouest, tandis que Rickert contestait cette description. Pour Durkheim, les premiers cadrages comme « kantien » remontent aux nécrologies après 1917, notamment par Davy et Bouglé. L'idée d'une relation positive a également été utilisée à des fins diverses. Schelsky a promu dans les années 1950 une « théorie transcendantale de la société ». Bourdieu a critiqué le « Weber kantianisé » d'Aron, tout en « re-kantianisant » Durkheim par des références à Cassirer.

(2) Le récit négatif

Le récit négatif soutient qu'il existait une relation négative entre sociologie et néo-kantisme : la sociologie a émergé en se définissant contre le néo-kantisme. Cette « rupture » aurait été constitutive de l'identité disciplinaire de la sociologie. Quantitativement moins fréquent, ce récit a récemment gagné du terrain, notamment en France avec les travaux de Marc Joly sur *La révolution sociologique*. Joly affirme qu'une révolution fondamentale dans l'ordre des savoirs s'est produite au XIX^e siècle. La philosophie néo-kantienne n'était qu'une « idéologie professionnelle » reflétant le déclin du statut de la philosophie.

Joly s'appuie sur Richard Kilminster qui, dans *The Sociological Revolution*, présentait le néo-kantisme comme un repoussoir négatif pour la sociologie authentique promue par Elias. Les sources historiques de ce récit négatif remontent au débat des années 1990 sur la relation d'Elias avec le néo-kantisme. Selon le témoignage d'Elias, c'est la question de l'*a priori* kantien qui a conduit à un conflit avec son directeur de thèse Hönigswald. Cette expérience négative a influencé le tournant d'Elias de la philosophie vers la sociologie.

(3) Le récit indifférent

Le récit indifférent affirme qu'il n'y avait pas de relation significative entre néo-kantisme et sociologie. Le néo-kantisme n'a simplement pas fait une grande différence pour la sociologie lors de sa naissance. Après le récit positif, il s'agit peut-être du récit le plus courant aujourd'hui.

Le récit indifférent peut prendre différentes formes. Il peut souligner d'autres forces intellectuelles jugées plus décisives : Dilthey, l'herméneutique, la *Lebensphilosophie*, la phénoménologie husserlienne ou le marxisme. Gerhardt a qualifié le néo-kantisme de « fausse piste » concernant l'origine de la notion d'idéaltype chez Weber. Dans le contexte français, l'importance de l'éclectisme, le spiritualisme ou le positivisme a été soulignée.

Le récit indifférent peut aussi consister en une méta-critique qui remet en question les étiquettes des récits positifs. Rawls a questionné la caractérisation de Durkheim comme « néo-kantien ». Les récits indifférents peuvent également prendre une forme « anti-philosophique »

qui souligne l'émancipation de la sociologie vis-à-vis de la philosophie. Lazarsfeld a soutenu que la sociologie n'est devenue une science sérieuse qu'en abandonnant toute forme de « philosophie sociale ».

(4) *Le récit idéologique*

Le récit idéologique cherche à expliquer les relations entre néo-kantisme et sociologie en termes de connexion « idéologique » directe entre classe sociale et production intellectuelle. Selon ce récit, le néo-kantisme dans les sciences sociales était une idéologie bourgeoise, expression de la position socio-économique de la bourgeoisie déclinante s'opposant au « matérialisme historique » marxiste. Bien que ce récit ait perdu de sa force aujourd'hui, il a été remarquablement bien institutionnalisé jusqu'à la fin des années 1980.

Sandkühler en 1970 présentait les tentatives d'introduire des éléments kantien dans les sciences sociales comme un « cheval de Troie » introduit par la bourgeoisie. Les sources historiques remontent à plusieurs textes canoniques du marxisme-léninisme et surtout à la controverse intense sur le « socialisme néo-kantien » au tournant du XX^e siècle, opposant des philosophes néo-kantiens socialistes à des marxistes et matérialistes.

Cette controverse a fourni des ressources argumentatives pour la critique marxiste du néo-kantisme dans les années 1920-1940. Dans le contexte français, Paul Nizan dans *Les chiens de garde* (1932) combinait une critique féroce des kantien français avec une critique idéologique de Durkheim. Le récit idéologique mérite attention car il a contribué de manière décisive à l'éclipse du néo-kantisme après les années 1930, devenant un obstacle mémoriel majeur.

(5) *Le récit sociologique*

Le cinquième récit – « sociologique » ou « socio-historique » – est plutôt marginal. Il a rarement été élaboré spécifiquement pour la relation entre néo-kantisme et sociologie, mais a émergé aux marges d'interprétations socio-historiques du néo-kantisme en général. Selon le récit sociologique, la sociologie a émergé dans des contextes académiques où le « néo-kantisme » occupait des positions dominantes, tant intellectuellement qu'institutionnellement. Le kantisme formait quelque chose comme une « orthodoxie ». Les premiers sociologues étaient obligés de définir leurs entreprises par rapport à ces positions dominantes. L'orthodoxie kantienne exerçait un « effet de champ » sur la sociologie naissante. La relation restait cependant complexe – ni univoquement positive ni négative.

Par exemple, Ringer, dans son étude de 1997 sur la méthodologie de Weber, a situé les philosophies néo-kantiennes allemandes dans le contexte du « champ intellectuel » plus large. L'étude de Bourdieu de 1975 sur l'« ontologie politique » de Heidegger présentait le néo-

kantisme comme la position dominante, une orthodoxie légitime dans le champ philosophique allemand. Michael Friedman, dans *The Parting of the Ways* (2000), a retracé la division en philosophie analytique et continentale à la rencontre de 1929 entre Cassirer et Heidegger, soulignant que tous les protagonistes avaient reçu leurs socialisations académiques dans un cadre néo-kantien.

Les sources d'inspiration de ces récits sociologiques se trouvent souvent dans la sociologie elle-même. Ringer a trouvé des éléments dans la méthode des idéaltypes de Weber ou dans la sociologie de la connaissance de Mannheim. Bourdieu appliquait ses outils sociologiques à la sociologie et à la philosophie. Le récit sociologique du néo-kantisme et de la sociologie est aujourd'hui encore plus une tâche qu'une réalité.

Expliquer les désaccords

Pourquoi existe-t-il tant d'approches contradictoires ? Selon la sociologie des mémoires collectives, la diversité des groupes et des intérêts explique en partie cette situation. Cependant, il semble y avoir plus. Il ne semble même pas clair à quoi pourrait ressembler un récit cohérent intégrant toutes les interprétations existantes. Un tel récit serait-il possible compte tenu des termes (« néo-kantisme », « sociologie ») dans lesquels le problème a été posé jusqu'à présent ?

4. Problèmes historiographiques et suggestions

« Néo-kantisme » et « sociologie »

Les termes « néo-kantisme » et « sociologie » sont hautement ambigus. Qui compte comme « néo-kantien » ou « sociologue » ? Les définitions varient considérablement selon les sources. Le terme « néo-kantisme » fut utilisé dès les années 1860, dans différents contextes polémiques. Ces labels sont contestables et contestés. Le problème est que de nombreux récits prennent les catégorisations particulières des acteurs pour des catégories analytiques historiques, risquant ainsi l'anachronisme.

La classification en sept « orientations » du néo-kantisme par Oesterreich ([1916] 1923b) est devenue la référence la plus citée, mais elle pose plusieurs problèmes : elle ne définit pas clairement ce qu'est le « néo-kantisme », elle classe comme néo-kantiens des auteurs qui ne se désignaient pas ainsi tout en excluant des figures cruciales du mouvement kantien.

Le terme « néo-kantisme » présente trois sources de polysémie : l'isme (suggérant une entité discrète), la référence à « Kant » (impliquant des interprétations historiquement situées), et le préfixe « néo » (indiquant un retour mais aussi un renouvellement). On peut distinguer plusieurs usages de « néo-kantisme » : (1) une doctrine philosophique définie ; (2) une méthode

philosophique ; (3) une orientation générale de recherche ; (4) une « école » académique ; (5) un « mouvement » hétérogène ; (6) la totalité des références à Kant à un moment donné.

Ces significations peuvent être distribuées selon deux axes : phénomène intellectuel vs. social, et sens étroit vs. large. Les équivoques résultent de glissements entre ces types d'usages. La situation est similaire pour « sociologie ». Max Weber n'utilisa le terme pour désigner son propre projet qu'après 1909/1910. Autour de 1900, « sociologie » avait des significations variées. Feuerhahn a montré la résistance allemande spécifique au label « *Soziologie* ». En France, Mosbah-Natanson a démontré que le mouvement sociologique était bien plus large que le suggère le « durkheimocentrisme » dominant.

Comprendre la relation

Un troisième élément introduit de l'ambiguïté : la relation supposée elle-même. Qu'est-ce qui compte comme « relation » ? Contacts personnels ? Références explicites ? Réception d'« idées » ? Socialisation ? Les récits existants utilisent des métaphores vagues (« influence », « impact », « transmission »), négligeant les critiques méthodologiques de ces notions en histoire intellectuelle.

La polysémie des labels se transmet à la relation entre eux. La façon dont nous concevons la relation dépend de la façon dont nous concevons les entités reliées. Un exemple illustre le problème : la plupart des commentateurs se sont focalisés sur l'« école du Sud-Ouest », accordant peu d'attention à l'« école de Marbourg ». Pourtant, ce sont Cohen et Natorp qui signèrent en faveur de la création de la Deutsche Gesellschaft für Soziologie en 1910. Les relations entre néo-kantisme marbourgeois et sociologie sont restées presque inexplorées.

Sélection et généralisation

Deux problèmes se posent dès lors : comment les cas individuels sont-ils sélectionnés ? Comment peut-on généraliser à partir de ces cas locaux ?

Concernant la sélection, les auteurs considérés ont surtout été des « grands noms » – des « pères fondateurs de la sociologie » comme Weber, Durkheim ou Simmel. Cette sélection selon des critères « présentistes » a introduit un biais en faveur des intérêts actuels. Des acteurs historiquement plus importants ont été négligés. Un exemple révélateur est Rudolf Stammler, juriste et philosophe du droit qui publia une critique néo-kantienne très discutée du « matérialisme historique », fournissant une fondation pour la « science sociale ». À la fin du XIX^e siècle, Stammler était probablement l'auteur le plus éminent associé à la tentative de fonder les sciences sociales sur le néo-kantisme. Pourtant, il fut rapidement oublié.

Le second problème est la généralisation. De l'importance supposée d'un auteur « néo-kantien » pour un « sociologue » particulier, certains ont conclu à l'importance de la relation entre sociologie et néo-kantisme en général. Cette transition du niveau local au niveau global est rarement garantie par les cas individuels étudiés.

Combinaisons malheureuses

Ces trois problèmes se combinent malheureusement, produisant une représentation *pars pro toto* de la relation entre « néo-kantisme » et « sociologie » sans clarifier ce que signifient réellement ces termes.

Un exemple récent est le récit de Joly sur la « révolution sociologique » (2017). Basé sur une représentation particulière actuelle de ce qu'est la « sociologie », Joly construit une version caricaturale du « néo-kantisme », s'appuyant essentiellement sur la philosophie des valeurs de Rickert. Cet échantillon non-représentatif conduit à des caricatures, comme l'imputation à toutes les philosophies néo-kantiennes de l'idée qu'il existerait un *a priori* invariant. La simple inclusion de l'école de Marbourg aurait suffi à corriger cette représentation erronée.

Ces trois problèmes expliquent pourquoi les opinions divergentes sur néo-kantisme et sociologie sont si persistantes. Étant donné l'ambiguïté des termes, il y aura toujours une échappatoire pour introduire des interprétations opposées – souvent sur la base des intérêts de groupes spécifiques.

Reconfigurer les études sur le néo-kantisme et la sociologie

Je voudrais faire trois propositions pour répondre à ces problèmes historiographiques :

(1) Abandonner les questions génériques sur néo-kantisme et sociologie : Nous devons abandonner les questions génériques concernant une relation générale entre « néo-kantisme » et « sociologie ». Nous ne pouvons donner aucun sens univoque à cette question au niveau général. Nous devrions plutôt comprendre « néo-kantisme » et « sociologie » de manière relationnelle, définis par leurs relations avec d'autres positions dans les champs de la philosophie, de la sociologie émergente et de l'académie au sens large. Cela rejoint l'insistance de Bourdieu sur la « pensée relationnelle ». Dans une perspective bourdieusienne, la signification du « néo-kantisme » serait définie par la totalité de ses relations avec d'autres éléments du champ philosophique et académique. Nous devrions laisser derrière nous la focalisation quasi-exclusive sur les auteurs canoniques. Dans un tournant « historiciste », nous devrions prendre un regard neuf sur diverses sources contemporaines et récupérer le point de vue des contemporains. L'image résultante irait au-delà de la focalisation habituelle sur quelques « grands noms », mettant en avant des figures relativement négligées comme Stammler, Wilhelm

Jerusalem, Eugène de Roberty ou Hélène Metzger. Mais la notion même de « néo-kantisme » pourrait finalement devenir superflue, se dissolvant dans une pluralité d'usages de Kant.

(2) Vers une typologie des usages et fonctions des références à « Kant » dans les sciences sociales : Je suggère de reformuler toute la question en termes d'usages et de fonctions des références à Kant, à la philosophie kantienne et néo-kantienne dans les sciences sociales. Ces usages pourraient être identifiés à travers les références explicites et implicites à Kant. Les fonctions de ces usages pourraient être localisées par l'étude des contextes dans lesquels ils apparaissent – controverses, débats, processus de transfert. Parallèlement, nous pourrions compiler des informations socio-biographiques sur les auteurs de ces usages. Nous pourrions alors établir des relations entre certains usages de références à la philosophie kantienne, leurs fonctions et les positions sociales de leurs promoteurs. Nous pourrions parvenir à un « espace des usages » relationnel de Kant dans les sciences sociales. Cet espace devrait d'abord être construit au niveau national. Dans un second temps, deux ou plusieurs de ces espaces nationaux pourraient être mis en relation.

(3) Se concentrer sur des problèmes et controverses spécifiques : Je suggère de se concentrer dans un premier temps sur des études de problèmes, sujets ou controverses spécifiques où des références à Kant apparaissent dans les sciences sociales. Les domaines concernés vont de la philosophie, l'épistémologie et la méthodologie des sciences sociales aux questions de morale, d'éducation et de politique. Avec mon investigation du problème de la sociologisation de l'*a priori*, j'entends offrir une étude de ce dernier type, concernant un domaine spécifique où il y a eu des contacts entre (néo-)kantisme et sociologie. Je ne m'engage donc pas dans une reconstruction systématique de tous les usages de Kant dans les sciences sociales. Je me restreins à un sous-groupe spécifique de ces références : ceux qui impliquaient la question de l'*a priori* kantien et ses reformulations. Mon travail est certes plus limité que les récits existants, mais il va aussi au-delà de ce sujet, l'étudiant dans une perspective diachronique, au-delà des frontières chronologiques, géographiques et disciplinaires habituelles.

5. Conclusion : Au-delà de l'obstacle

J'ai tenté de dissiper des ambiguïtés persistantes qui pèsent sur la recherche sur le néo-kantisme et la sociologie et – indirectement – sur la question de la sociologisation de l'*a priori*. La typologie des récits proposée montre que les récits actuels sont souvent enracinés dans des controverses historiques, exprimant les intérêts de groupes spécifiques. Ils témoignent aussi des problèmes historiographiques fondamentaux concernant les labels « néo-kantisme » et « sociologie » et leur relation.

Situer les différents récits nous permet d'aller au-delà d'idées trompeuses sur la sociologisation de l'*a priori* : qu'elle aurait été en continuité avec le néo-kantisme, diamétralement opposée, sans relation significative, ou une simple expression idéologique. Par ce travail d'« anamnèse » nous pouvons parvenir à un récit plus satisfaisant.

Se concentrer sur la sociologisation de l'*a priori* signifie aller au-delà des relations entre néo-kantisme et sociologie autour de 1900. Ce dernier problème est à la fois plus spécifique (concernant un sous-groupe de références à Kant impliquant l'*a priori*) et plus général (nécessitant d'élargir la perspective au niveau national et chronologique).

Enfin, la notion d'« obstacle » utilisée ici repose sur le point de vue d'une connaissance historique évoluée. Cette connaissance améliorée reste à élaborer dans les éléments suivants sur l'histoire du problème de la sociologisation de l'*a priori*.

PARTIE II. EXPLORATIONS DANS L'HISTOIRE ET L'ÉPISTÉMOLOGIE DE LA SOCIOLOGISATION DE L'*A PRIORI*, ANNÉES 1780-2020

CHAPITRE 4. ENTRE KANT ET COMTE : UN CONFLIT DE CLASSIFICATIONS

1. Introduction : Un problème dans la classification des sciences et des savoirs

Aux racines du problème

Cette enquête examine la « sociologisation de l'*a priori* », soit la possibilité que le domaine de l'*a priori* devienne objet de la sociologie. Contrairement à ce que suggère la littérature sur le néo-kantisme, ce problème apparaît dès les premières décennies du XIX^e siècle. Le présent chapitre le construit comme un conflit entre deux modes de classification des sciences et des savoirs : la « philosophie transcendantale » de Kant et la « philosophie positive » de Comte. C'est de cette tension qu'émergea la première sociologisation de l'*a priori* chez Comte.

Un barbarisme tenace

Une réaction courante face à l'idée d'un « *a priori* sociologisé » est d'y voir une contradiction ou un barbarisme. Comment quelque chose d'« *a priori* » peut-il être « sociologique » ? Même Foucault et Bourdieu – proposant chacun à sa façon une historicisation et une sociologisation de l'*a priori* – reconnaissent le caractère « barbare » ou « détonnant » de telles expressions. Le problème réside dans l'incompatibilité apparente des classifications sous-jacentes : comment quelque chose classé comme « *a priori* » pourrait-il être simultanément classé comme « sociologique » ? C'est là la structure fondamentale du problème comme un conflit de classifications.

Retour à Kant et Comte

La localisation historique du problème est indiquée par l'histoire des concepts : l'« *a priori* » stabilisé dans la philosophie transcendantale de Kant (Allemagne, années 1780) ; la « sociologie » dans la philosophie positive de Comte (France, années 1830). L'énoncé « L'*a priori* ne peut être sociologique » peut être considéré, avec Kripke, comme une « vérité *a priori* contingente » reposant sur des stipulations linguistiques contingentes. Le problème devient ainsi un phénomène socio-historique plutôt qu'une énigme intemporelle. Ces termes faisaient partie de systèmes conceptuels développés pour répondre à des problèmes spécifiques : pour Kant, la Révolution scientifique et la crise universitaire allemande ; pour Comte, la Seconde Révolution scientifique et la spécialisation disciplinaire.

Le plan

La section suivante esquisse une « sociologie historique des classifications des sciences ». La troisième section examine la classification kantienne vers 1780, cherchant à surmonter la polarisation entre lectures « sacralisantes » et « profanatrices » de Kant. J'indique une stratégie pour étudier sociologiquement la philosophie transcendantale de Kant et sa classification des sciences. Concernant Comte, l'accent porte sur sa réception partielle de Kant et leurs différences fondamentales sur la classification des sciences. Comte produisit ainsi la première sociologisation de l'*a priori*, établissant un conflit qui nourrira les débats ultérieurs. En tout, le chapitre prépare le terrain pour des études ultérieures.

2. Vers une sociologie historique des classifications des sciences chez Kant et Comte

Prédécesseurs

La perspective d'une sociologie historique des sciences a ses sources dans le passé récent et lointain des sciences sociales. Un antécédent important se trouve chez Durkheim et Mauss avec leur idée que « la classification des choses reproduit la classification des hommes ». Toutefois, ils n'appliquèrent pas systématiquement ce programme aux sciences elles-mêmes. Edgar Zilsel franchit un pas dans cette direction vers 1940 avec sa « thèse Zilsel » : la science moderne émergea au XVI^e siècle par la fusion de trois groupes socio-professionnels dont la division correspondait à la classification antique des arts « libéraux » et « mécaniques ». Cette transformation sociale permit une transformation cognitive.

Merton développa ensuite une analyse de la science du XVII^e siècle, étudiant son émergence comme institution sociale avec son « ethos » propre. Ben-David poursuivit une orientation historique-comparative étudiant les transformations institutionnelles et le mécanisme d'« hybridation de rôles ». Toutefois, ces approches explorèrent peu les controverses sur la

classification des sciences ni les connexions entre structure institutionnelle et actions concrètes des acteurs.

Un modèle plus fructueux se trouve chez Bourdieu, résumé dans sa caractérisation des acteurs comme « classeurs classés par leurs classements ». Les classifications des acteurs sont reliées à leur classe sociale via l'*habitus*, ont un « pouvoir symbolique » propre et constituent l'enjeu de « luttes symboliques ». Bourdieu propose l'hypothèse d'une homologie entre positions sociales et prises de position intellectuelles. Appliquée aux classifications des sciences, cette perspective permet de comprendre comment positions et trajectoires se traduisent en stratégies classificatoires répondant à un état du champ scientifique.

Une sociologie historique comparative des classifications pourrait explorer les conditions et effets socio-intellectuels de ces classifications, la dynamique entre divisions du travail intellectuel et visions de cette division. Pour le problème de la sociologisation de l'*a priori*, l'analyse s'appuie sur Heilbron (Comte et la Seconde Révolution scientifique) et Collins (Kant et la révolution universitaire allemande).

Comte et la Seconde Révolution scientifique

Heilbron argumente que le *Cours de philosophie positive* (1830-1842) doit être conçu comme une réponse aux processus de différenciation disciplinaire de la « Seconde Révolution scientifique ». Le but principal de Comte était d'exposer une « théorie historico-différentielle de la science » dans sa classification hiérarchique des sciences selon la complexité croissante. Comte cherchait à rendre compte de l'unité et des différences entre sciences, proposant une « défense systématique de l'autonomie relative des différentes sciences ».

Heilbron relie cette classification à la position sociale d'insider-outsider de Comte : capital scientifique élevé (École polytechnique) et implication avec Saint-Simon. Cette position ne fut possible que grâce aux transformations structurelles du champ scientifique français, notamment la formation de disciplines indépendantes avec l'abolition des universités (1793) et la fondation d'écoles spécialisées. La théorie comtienne tentait de rendre compte de cette différenciation sans abandonner l'unité des sciences.

Méthodologiquement, Heilbron relie produits intellectuels, producteurs et conditions de production, appliquant le cadre bourdieusien. Son hypothèse joue un rôle clé : elle permet d'élaborer les conséquences de la classification comtienne pour sa conception de l'*a priori*, de l'étendre à Kant, et de comprendre le conflit entre leurs classifications comme résultat de la Seconde Révolution scientifique.

Kant et la révolution universitaire allemande

Collins analyse Kant dans le contexte de la « révolution universitaire allemande » vers 1800, dont la pièce centrale fut la revalorisation de la faculté philosophique par rapport aux facultés « supérieures ». La philosophie transcendantale kantienne fonctionna comme idéologie et moteur de cette révolution, rendant la philosophie autonome et l'élevant comme discipline fondamentale. L'université de Berlin (1809/1810) incarna cette réorganisation avec des effets durables.

Collins propose une analyse causale à trois niveaux : (1) micro (acteurs, réseaux, contenus) ; (2) méso (structures institutionnelles) ; (3) macro (contexte politique, économique). Ces niveaux ne se réduisent pas mais sont médiés par la compétition dans l'« espace d'attention » créé par les réseaux. Le contenu philosophique est intimement lié aux transformations institutionnelles : les protagonistes furent aussi « leaders du mouvement de réforme ».

Kant occupe une position exceptionnelle comme créateur du style « transcendantal » durable, mais ambiguë : initiateur du mouvement idéaliste sans être pleinement idéaliste, contributeur aux débats sur la réforme tout en restant dans l'ancien système. Kant est un « hybride de rôle » (*role hybrid*) situé entre réseaux opposés, ancien et nouveau système. Son innovation majeure dans la *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (1781) résulta de sa position à l'intersection de réseaux opposés (rationalistes, piétistes, newtoniens). La distinction entre connaissance *a priori* « analytique » et « synthétique » devint la clé de la philosophie critique, fournissant les fondements des sciences tout en limitant métaphysique et théologie.

Cette conception réalisa une revalorisation décisive de la philosophie, principalement aux dépens de la théologie. Cela se matérialisa dans *Der Streit der Fakultäten* (1798), où Kant développa la vue que la faculté philosophique devrait être libre de régulations gouvernementales. L'analyse de Collins montre comment divisions institutionnalisées interagirent avec débats classificatoires. La classification kantienne peut être interprétée comme réponse à un état historique de la division sociale des savoirs, complémentaire à l'analyse de Heilbron sur Comte.

Méthodologiquement, Collins et Heilbron cherchent à rendre compte sociologiquement des contenus mêmes, défiant la distinction internaliste-externaliste. Ils relient produits, positions, transformations et contexte, assumant une structure relativement autonome comme espace de compétition. Ensemble, leurs travaux permettent de situer Kant et Comte dans le contexte de la Seconde Révolution scientifique et de la révolution universitaire allemande.

Deux révolutions en une : la disciplinarisation des sciences

Les deux révolutions auxquelles Kant et Comte répondirent pourraient être une seule transformation du champ scientifique. Il existe d'importantes liens entre la Seconde Révolution

scientifique et la révolution universitaire. Roger Hahn souligna le caractère transnational de la Seconde Révolution, voyant un équivalent au développement français dans la réforme allemande. Collins nota que la conséquence majeure de la révolution universitaire fut la spécialisation disciplinaire. Cette convergence est plausible : les deux résultèrent de réformes quasi contemporaines en France (abolition des universités 1793) et Prusse (université de Berlin 1809/1810). Le terme commun est la formation de disciplines spécialisées. Je suggère « révolution disciplinaire » ou « disciplinarisation », terme suffisamment large pour couvrir les développements français et germanophones.

Révolutionnaires symboliques dans la classification des sciences

Kant se trouvait au début de la séquence allemande (années 1780), au commencement de l'académisation de la philosophie impliquant autonomisation et disciplinarisation. Comte se trouvait à la fin de la séquence française (années 1820), produit du développement français, mais au début de l'autonomisation intellectuelle de la « sociologie ». Comte fut le premier à concevoir la sociologie comme « autonome », contestant le modèle kantien basé sur le « synthétique *a priori* ».

Malgré leurs différences, Kant et Comte occupaient des positions analogues comme initiateurs intellectuels d'une autonomisation dont ils n'ont pas pu voir les conséquences de leur vivant. Tous deux initièrent ces processus par de nouvelles classifications répondant à leur crise historique respective. Ces classifications furent « révolutionnaires » en faisant tourner les classifications disponibles autour d'un nouveau pivot. Ils peuvent être appelés « classificateurs révolutionnaires », leurs classifications étant deux résultats différents de la même transformation dans deux scénarios nationaux.

Kant et Comte furent aussi des révolutionnaires dans un sens plus profond, ayant des propriétés d'initiateurs de « révolutions symboliques » (Bourdieu) : capital initial élevé avec propriétés les singularisant, position d'insider-outsiders avec « *habitus* clivé » ; innovations subvertissant les règles de l'intérieur ; révolutions correspondant à l'autonomisation d'un champ ; opération sur les catégories de base avec impact transformant durablement nos perceptions. Qui plus est, tous deux deviennent révolutionnaires symboliques en étant des classificateurs révolutionnaires. C'est à travers de nouvelles classifications qu'ils accomplissent leurs révolutions symboliques. Par le succès de ces révolutions, leurs classifications sont devenues évidentes en tant que produit de ces révolutions.

Le dilemme de l'*a priori* sociologisé résulte des deux révolutions symboliques initiées par Kant et Comte et institutionnalisées dans la structure du champ académique. Le problème

émerge d'un conflit entre ces révolutions produites sous conditions différentes dans des contextes nationaux différents.

3. Sociologiser Kant : Au-delà de l'opposition sacralisation-profanaion

Questions sur Kant et l'autonomisation de la philosophie académique

Pour comprendre comment la classification kantienne des connaissances et des sciences répondait aux transformations scientifiques et institutionnelles de son époque, il convient d'examiner le rôle des distinctions kantiennees fondamentales – *a priori-a posteriori*, transcendantal-empirique, analytique-synthétique. Ces oppositions devaient devenir centrales pour le problème ultérieur de la sociologisation de l'*a priori*. Une telle investigation doit répondre à plusieurs groupes de questions : comment rendre compte sociologiquement de la production intellectuelle de Kant ? Comment son projet de « philosophie transcendantale » a-t-il émergé dans le contexte scientifique et institutionnel de son temps ? Quelle place Kant accordait-il à la philosophie dans sa classification des sciences ? Comment concevait-il les « sciences humaines et sociales » de son époque ? Et finalement : qu'impliquait tout cela pour la possibilité d'une approche sociologique de l'*a priori* ?

Quelques obstacles

L'idée d'une approche socio-historique de la classification kantienne des connaissances se heurte immédiatement à plusieurs difficultés. Au-delà des doutes habituels sur les explications sociologiques de la production intellectuelle, il existe des problèmes spécifiques à « sociologiser Kant », liés à la mémoire collective de Kant et à la manière dont les représentations collectives de sa vie et de son œuvre se sont cristallisées. Un premier obstacle est d'ordre matériel : Kant a refusé de parler de lui-même (« De nobis ipsis silemus »), ne tenait pas de journal intime, et sa correspondance révèle peu sur sa vie personnelle. Cette lacune a déplacé le poids vers les récits biographiques contemporains, notamment ceux de Borowski, Jachmann et Wasianski (1804), qui étaient problématiques. Ces premiers biographes, tous théologiens de Königsberg, ont produit une image duale de Kant : d'un côté, une œuvre révolutionnaire de génie atemporel ; de l'autre, une vie sans événements réduite à des anecdotes ridicules. Cette représentation a eu des effets durables, comme en témoigne la déclaration de Heine selon laquelle Kant n'avait « ni vie ni histoire ».

Les récits kantienens de Kant

La situation change après le déclin de l'idéalisme allemand, avec le renouveau kantien dans la seconde moitié du XIX^e siècle et l'émergence de la *Kant-Philologie*. Le débat Fischer-

Trendelenburg dans les années 1860 a révélé la nécessité de distinguer entre l'analyse historico-philologique de la position de Kant et la réinterprétation de sa philosophie à des fins systématiques contemporaines. Des recherches historiques plus sérieuses ont suivi, créant paradoxalement un nouveau problème : ce qui manquait désormais était une vue synthétique de la vie de Kant et une vision unifiée de sa vie et de son œuvre. Les biographies de Vorländer (1924) et Cassirer (1918), écrites dans le contexte du néo-kantisme de Marbourg, ont cherché à démontrer l'unité entre la vie et l'œuvre de Kant, mais elles excluaient largement les conditions sociales, affirmant que les « circonstances externes » ne pouvaient finalement pas révéler grand-chose sur l'œuvre de Kant. L'image d'un « double Kant » a persisté. Cette situation s'explique en partie par une certaine « idéologie kantienne de la vie et de l'œuvre de Kant » : les distinctions forgées par Kant lui-même – entre *quid facti* et *quid iuris*, entre genèse empirique et validité de la connaissance, entre l'empirique et le transcendantal – ont informé la manière dont les biographes ont conçu la relation entre sa vie et son œuvre. Le vocabulaire kantien a fréquemment resurgi chez les biographes de Kant réfléchissant sur leur propre pratique, produisant ce qu'on pourrait appeler des « biographies kantiennes de Kant ».

Profaner Kant

En opposition à cette orthodoxie, il existe depuis la fin du XIX^e siècle un mouvement hétérodoxe qui consiste à replacer l'œuvre de Kant dans le contexte de ses conditions historiques et sociales. Différentes orientations ont motivé ces appels à une perspective historique et sociologique sur Kant. Deux exemples illustrent les options et arrière-plans politiques divergents pour une image historicisée hétérodoxe de Kant autour de la Première Guerre mondiale. D'une part, Max Scheler (1917) a développé une approche socio-politique de l'épistémologie kantienne, établissant une « analogie » directe entre les éléments de base de la théorie de la connaissance de Kant et les strates sociales de la Prusse de l'époque. Son intention était de démontrer la particularité des conditions sociales de l'épistémologie kantienne et ainsi de miner sa prétendue validité universelle. D'autre part, Otto Bauer (1924), depuis une perspective austro-marxiste, a esquissé une explication socio-économique de la philosophie de Kant, le présentant comme un « enfant du capitalisme ». Selon Bauer, Kant a universalisé l'« entendement » bourgeois en « entendement humain normal », et ses formes d'intuition et de compréhension prétendument universelles étaient en réalité des « catégories historiques ». Depuis lors, d'autres interprétations socio-historiques ont suivi cette veine hétérodoxe, notamment les approches marxistes de Goldmann et Sohn-Rethel, ou l'interprétation psychanalytique controversée de Gernot et Hartmut Böhme (1983).

Interprétations polarisées

Il semble y avoir eu deux camps opposés concernant la biographie de Kant et la relation entre sa vie et son œuvre : d'un côté, les biographies kantiennes orthodoxes de Kant, s'appuyant sur une idéologie kantienne ou « kantoïde » ; de l'autre, les historicisations hétérodoxes radicales de Kant, s'accordant sur un lien direct entre l'œuvre de Kant et ses conditions sociales, économiques, historiques ou psychologiques. Ces deux extrêmes peuvent être mieux compris à l'aide de la distinction durkheimienne entre le « sacré » et le « profane ». Les lectures orthodoxes tendent à sacraliser leur objet en appliquant les catégories sacrées qui en émanent, réitérant la division entre la sphère philosophique et les sphères externes, empiriques ou profanes. Les historicisations radicales, en revanche, profanent l'objet sacré « Kant » en le mettant en contact immédiat avec d'autres objets profanes et en rejetant les séparations protectrices. Cette polarisation entre sacralisation et profanation n'est pas propre à Kant, mais peut être observée avec ce qu'on pourrait appeler des auteurs « hyper-canoniques » – d'une stature comparable à Kant, comme Marx ou Freud. Le « paradoxe des auteurs hyper-canoniques » est que les obstacles à une historicisation ou sociologisation appropriée de leurs vies et projets intellectuels sont beaucoup plus élevés que pour des auteurs moins connus.

Au-delà de l'opposition sacralisation-profanation

Du point de vue de l'approche sociologique des classifications des connaissances et des sciences, sacralisation et profanation sont toutes deux également erronées. Méthodologiquement, le problème est qu'aucune des deux stratégies n'a une vision appropriée de l'« autonomie relative » de la production intellectuelle. Les sacralisations de Kant s'appuient sur l'idée d'une autonomie totale de son travail intellectuel, tandis que les profanations tendent à reposer sur l'idée d'une hétéronomie totale. L'opposition entre sacralisation et profanation fonctionne en fait comme un « couple épistémologique » qui devient un « obstacle épistémologique » pour une conception historico-sociologique réaliste de l'œuvre de Kant.

L'approche historico-sociologique peut offrir une troisième voie au-delà de cette opposition, en s'appuyant sur la notion d'« autonomie relative » des champs de production culturelle. C'est le champ scientifique, philosophique et académique de Kant qui fournit le « terme intermédiaire » central qui relie son contexte social, religieux et politique avec ses problèmes, concepts, arguments et solutions philosophiques et scientifiques. Il ne faut pas présupposer ici de distinctions entre l'« interne » et l'« externe », entre la vie de Kant et son œuvre philosophique. Au contraire, pour établir la connexion entre l'œuvre de Kant et ses conditions socio-historiques, il faut partir du champ académique et scientifique comme d'une « réalité totale » ou « concrète » – un « fait social total » dans l'expression de Mauss. Les approches sociologiques-

historiques de Heilbron et Collins sont de bons exemples récents d'une approche au-delà de la sacralisation et de la profanation. L'idée n'est pas de proposer une « sociologie de Kant » exhaustive, mais de « particulariser » sa classification des connaissances et des sciences. Il s'agit de « dénaturer » la classification de Kant pour comprendre correctement le conflit entre la classification kantienne et la classification comténne des connaissances et des sciences, et pour pouvoir adopter une position « impartiale » et « symétrique » sur la question de la sociologisation de l'*a priori*.

4. Perspectives pour des études futures sur Kant, Comte et la sociologisation de l'*a priori*

L'étape suivante consisterait à examiner la classification de la connaissance qui émergea vers 1780 dans la philosophie transcendantale de Kant, réponse philosophique à la première « révolution scientifique » newtonienne. La *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (1781/1787) devait fonder cette science en expliquant comment les « jugements synthétiques *a priori* » sont possibles. Kant introduisit la distinction entre connaissance *a priori* et *a posteriori*, ainsi qu'entre enquêtes transcendantales et empiriques, fondamentale pour l'autonomisation philosophique. Dans le système kantien, il n'existait aucune place pour un *a priori* empirique, ce qui s'appliquait également à la « sociologie » apparaissant vingt ans après sa mort.

Nous pourrions ensuite examiner la classification qui émergea dans les années 1820-1830 avec la « philosophie positive » de Comte, qui consista à mettre en ordre les sciences de la simplicité à la complexité. Elle répondait aux transformations du champ scientifique : la « seconde révolution scientifique » avec la différenciation disciplinaire entre 1770 et 1830. Comte présenta la sociologie comme la science couvrant les domaines que Kant avait considérés *a priori* ou transcendants.

La classification positiviste ne s'opposait pas simplement à la classification criticiste. Des connexions historiques concrètes existaient, évidentes dans la réception kantienne par Comte dès les années 1820, médiée par Gustave d'Eichthal. Comte interpréta Kant comme « relativiste » et « phénoménaliste », pensant compléter sa distinction entre « subjectif » et « objectif » par la théorie biologique organisme/milieu et par sa théorie sociologique du développement intellectuel. Comte proposa ainsi une relativisation, dynamisation et sociologisation du domaine kantien *a priori* ou transcendantal : la première version historique d'une sociologisation de l'*a priori*.

Contrairement aux idées reçues, la classification comténne ne constituait pas une « régression » empiriste « précritique ». Comte cherchait à incorporer et compléter la philosophie transcendantale kantienne par la « sociologie », rendant compte de la différenciation scientifique vers 1800. L'émergence du problème de la sociologisation de l'*a priori* fut liée aux

transformations académiques et scientifiques du début du XIX^e siècle et aux échanges franco-allemands. Dès les années 1840, ce problème avait trouvé son premier modèle dans la sociologie comtienne. Kant et Comte établirent la tension constitutive entre « criticisme » et « positivisme » tout au long du XIX^e siècle.

5. Conclusion : établir les termes du problème

Ce chapitre a cherché à clarifier la structure intellectuelle du problème de la sociologisation de l'*a priori* et à identifier les conditions sociales sous lesquelles ce problème put émerger.

Premièrement, le problème peut être reconstruit comme un conflit entre deux classifications des sciences et des connaissances, incarnées par la philosophie transcendantale kantienne et la philosophie positive comtienne. Cette perspective permet de relier ce problème aux réformes de l'enseignement supérieur en France et en Allemagne vers 1800.

Deuxièmement, nous devons retracer les connexions entre trois niveaux chez Kant : son nouveau style philosophique transcendantal, sa classification des sciences dans son « architectonique », et sa théorie de la fonction institutionnelle de la philosophie. Bien que Kant ait développé une « anthropologie pragmatique », la place qu'il attribua à cette discipline rendit impossible un *a priori* historiquement et socialement variable.

Troisièmement, le contexte de Comte était différent. Par une lecture phénoménaliste, relativiste et sociologique de Kant, Comte parvint à une forme précoce de sociologisation de l'*a priori*. La science qui établissait la « loi encyclopédique » organisant les sciences était la sociologie – non pas la philosophie. La sociologisation comtienne de l'*a priori* constituait une tentative d'intégrer les découvertes kantienne aux développements scientifiques récents.

Quatrièmement, Kant et Comte devinrent dès les années 1850 les symboles de deux visions opposées : « criticisme » et « positivisme ». C'est à l'intersection de ces lignées que devaient émerger les tentatives ultérieures de sociologiser l'*a priori*.

CHAPITRE 5. LE 27 FÉVRIER 1929, 17H15, 2 RUE DE MONTPENSIER : L'HISTOIRE LONGUE DE L'A PRIORI DE ROBERT BOUVIER AU CENTRE INTERNATIONAL DE SYNTHÈSE

1. Introduction : Une clarification collective de l'*a priori* dans les sciences humaines et sociales

27 février 1929, 17h15, 2 rue de Montpensier

Le 27 février 1929, un groupe de savants se réunit au Centre international de Synthèse (CIS), fondé par Henri Berr en 1925, pour discuter d'un projet d'article du philosophe suisse Robert Bouvier (1886-1978) sur les notions « *a priori* » et « *a posteriori* » destiné au *Vocabulaire*

historique. Le texte de Bouvier et le débat qui s'ensuivit révèlent la transformation de la notion d'*a priori* au cours du XIX^e siècle. Ces documents constituent une source précieuse pour une histoire-problème de la sociologisation de l'*a priori* et montrent la diffusion de la sociologie durkheimienne de la connaissance en histoire et en philosophie des sciences francophones.

Le plan

Le chapitre examine le réseau d'institutions créé par Henri Berr et le *Vocabulaire historique*, puis la trajectoire de Robert Bouvier comme médiateur entre la France et le monde germanophone. J'analyse ensuite le projet d'article et la discussion au CIS, avant d'explorer le rapport entre cette approche terminologique et la sociologisation de l'*a priori*, notamment via les discussions sur les propositions d'Hélène Metzger dans les années 1930.

2. La « galaxie » d'Henri Berr et le *Vocabulaire historique*

Berr en tant qu'entrepreneur scientifique

Pour comprendre l'interprétation de l'*a priori* de Bouvier, il faut d'abord la situer dans le réseau d'institutions et de projets intellectuels créé par Henri Berr. Originaire de Lunéville, Berr étudia à l'ENS, obtint son agrégation de lettres en 1884 et soutint en 1899 sa thèse d'État *La Synthèse des connaissances et l'histoire*, annonçant son idée fixe de « synthèse ». Avec deux candidatures infructueuses au Collège de France, il resta professeur au lycée Henri-IV pendant vingt-neuf ans.

À partir de 1900, Berr fut surtout un infatigable entrepreneur scientifique, créant une infrastructure institutionnelle appelée souvent la « galaxie Berr ». Celle-ci comprenait la *Revue de Synthèse historique* (1900, rebaptisée *Revue de Synthèse* en 1931), la collection éditoriale « L'Évolution de l'humanité » (premier volume en 1920, une cinquantaine de volumes jusqu'en 1954), le Centre international de Synthèse (1925) et les *Semaines internationales de Synthèse* (à partir de 1929). D'autres projets échouèrent, notamment le *Vocabulaire historique* (1925-1945, abandonné en 1954) et *Science. L'Encyclopédie annuelle* (1936-1938). Le réseau de Berr était connecté avec *L'Année sociologique* de Durkheim, les *Annales* de Febvre et Bloch (1929), l'*Encyclopédie française*, l'Institut d'histoire et de philosophie des sciences d'Abel Rey et plusieurs revues d'histoire des sciences.

Le projet de « synthèse » de Berr

Ces projets étaient liés par l'idée œcuménique de « synthèse ». La *Revue de Synthèse historique* visait à définir une position médiane entre deux extrêmes de l'historiographie française. Le premier pôle était représenté par la *Revue historique* et l'« École méthodique » (Monod,

Seignobos, Langlois), focalisée sur l'établissement méthodique des faits historiques à partir de sources de première main – ce que Berr appelait polémiquement « érudition ». Le second pôle était la « philosophie de l'histoire », associée à l'idéalisme allemand et au positivisme comtien, qui partait de principes *a priori* et construisait des « systèmes » par déduction.

Bien que plus proche de Monod que de l'ancienne philosophie de l'histoire, Berr refusa ces deux extrêmes, incarnant les excès d'« analyse » et de « synthèse ». Il insista sur leur interdépendance : l'analyse nécessitait la synthèse, la synthèse nécessitait l'analyse. Cela impliquait une ambivalence concernant la spécialisation disciplinaire : nécessaire au progrès scientifique, elle devait être organisée par l'« unification » ou la « synthèse ».

Les idées de Berr s'inspiraient de la sociologie d'Émile Durkheim. Berr expliquait le succès de la sociologie émergente par le besoin de perspectives générales en histoire. Cependant, il critiquait la sociologie durkheimienne, insistant sur l'importance de l'individualité et de l'« histoire des idées » dans une « psychologie historique ». Il envisageait une collaboration étroite entre histoire et sociologie, sans prédominance de cette dernière, les concevant comme des « points de vue » complémentaires à réunir dans la « synthèse historique ». Cette collaboration se concrétisa avec les contributions de membres de *L'Année sociologique* aux projets de Berr, Durkheim publiant notamment dans la *Revue de Synthèse* la préface de la deuxième édition de ses *Règles de la méthode sociologique* (1901).

Par la « synthèse », Berr promouvait une « interdisciplinarité » *avant la lettre* sous l'appellation d'« interscience ». La *Revue* affichait également un internationalisme, Berr s'engageant à importer le *Methodenstreit* allemand en France. La *Revue* attira des contributeurs éminents comme Boutroux, Durkheim, Simiand, Febvre, Bloch, Lamprecht, Lacombe, Windelband, Rickert, Croce et Gentile.

Le Centre international de Synthèse

Le projet de Berr devint encore plus ambitieux avec la fondation du Centre international de Synthèse fin 1925, créé avec le soutien de Paul Doumer. L'objectif officiel était « de développer et coordonner les recherches de science pure, de remédier ainsi à l'inconvénient des spécialisations trop étroites ». La « Synthèse » concernait désormais toutes les sciences – mathématiques, physiques, biologiques, historiques, psychologiques et sociologiques. L'idée d'« unité » et de « connexion fondamentale » de toutes les sciences était un « postulat » des activités du Centre.

Le Centre se divisa en quatre sections : « Synthèse historique » (1926, dirigée par Berr et Febvre), « Sciences de la nature » (1926, dirigée par Abel Rey puis Paul Langevin), « Histoire des sciences » (1929, dirigée par Aldo Mieli) et « Synthèse générale » (1931, dirigée par Abel Rey). Le réseau international de Berr incluait Lévy-Bruhl, Lalande, Brunschvicg, Bachelard,

Metzger, Koyré, Sarton, Mauss, Halbwachs, Granet, Frazer, Huizinga, Cassirer, Einstein, Rutherford et Volterra.

Le Vocabulaire historique

L'une des premières tâches de la section « Synthèse historique » fut le *Vocabulaire historique*, dictionnaire des termes des sciences historiques – une sorte de précurseur des *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe* de Brunner, Conze et Koselleck. L'objectif était d'établir une « unité de conception scientifique » en histoire et sciences sociales par une « unité de langage » – « unifier, par le langage, la pensée même des historiens ». Le *Vocabulaire* avait une ambition descriptive (retracer l'évolution des mots et idées) et normative (établir un consensus sur le sens approprié des termes).

Le projet, organisé par Berr et le philosophe Paul Masson-Oursel, consistait en discussions collectives régulières au CIS concernant la sélection des mots, la structure des entrées et les articles définitifs. La méthode s'inspirait du *Vocabulaire technique et critique de la philosophie* d'André Lalande, résultat d'un travail collectif au sein de la Société française de philosophie pendant vingt ans. L'idée était qu'une « critique du langage » créerait une « communauté mentale » nécessaire à l'établissement de la « vérité ».

Ce programme s'inscrivait dans un mouvement international de recherche terminologique, un « réformisme terminologique », impliquant Victoria Welby, Charles S. Peirce, Rudolf Eucken, Ferdinand Tönnies, Rudolf Eisler, Giovanni Vailati et James Mark Baldwin. Ces projets furent repris par des membres du Cercle de Vienne, notamment Rudolf Carnap et Otto Neurath.

Le *Vocabulaire historique* fut intensément poursuivi entre 1925 et 1939, continua difficilement pendant la Seconde Guerre mondiale, puis fut finalement abandonné en 1954 après la mort de Berr. Sur les 852 articles projetés, environ 200 entrées furent au moins à moitié terminées, partiellement publiées dans le *Bulletin du Centre international de Synthèse* et la *Revue de Synthèse*. Les quelque 90 contributeurs incluaient Koyré, Metzger, Bachelard, Bloch, Febvre et Henri Lévy-Bruhl.

3. Robert Bouvier comme médiateur entre la France et le monde germanophone

Un philosophe suisse au Centre international de Synthèse

Le philosophe suisse Robert Bouvier (1886-1978), auteur du projet d'article sur l'*a priori* présenté le 27 février 1929, fut l'un des nombreux collaborateurs du *Vocabulaire historique*. Remarquable médiateur entre le monde germanophone et la France à partir des années 1920, Bouvier étudia la philosophie et les sciences à l'Université de Genève avec Adrien Naville et

Théodore Flournoy, ainsi qu'à Berlin (avec Alois Riehl et Georg Simmel), Leipzig (avec Wilhelm Wundt) et Paris (avec Victor Delbos, Léon Brunschvicg, André Lalande et Gaston Milhaud).

En 1912, Bouvier découvrit les écrits du physicien et philosophe autrichien Ernst Mach (1838-1916) et en fit le sujet de sa thèse doctorale, défendue à Genève en 1922 et publiée en 1923 sous le titre *La Pensée d'Ernst Mach* – première étude de ce type en français. Après un échec à Neuchâtel face à Jean Piaget, Bouvier s'installa à Paris et entra au CIS lors de sa fondation. Pendant vingt-cinq ans, il contribua activement à la « galaxie Berr » : articles pour la *Revue de Synthèse*, secrétaire de la section « Synthèse générale » (1931) et huit articles pour le *Vocabulaire historique*.

Bouvier entre le Centre international de Synthèse et le Cercle de Vienne

Bouvier fut dans les années 1930 le plus important agent de liaison entre le Centre de Berr et le « Cercle de Vienne » (« École de Vienne » en France). Le CIS et la *Revue de Synthèse* constituèrent les principales plateformes de réception du Cercle de Vienne en France. Entre 1932 et 1939, la *Revue* publia traductions et recensions d'œuvres de Schlick, Frank, Carnap, Neurath, Hempel et Juhos. Bouvier servit comme principal recenseur et traducteur.

Le CIS co-organisa le Congrès international de philosophie scientifique de Paris en 1935. Otto Neurath rencontra alors Berr et Bouvier. Une correspondance s'ensuivit (environ vingt lettres, janvier 1936-juin 1938) montrant que Bouvier informa Neurath sur la réception du Cercle de Vienne en France. La référence commune à Mach et le *Vocabulaire historique* – auquel Neurath s'intéressait particulièrement – constituaient des sources d'affinité entre les deux groupes.

Une convergence autour de l'encyclopédisme et des valeurs des Lumières

Les contacts entre la « galaxie Berr » et le Cercle de Vienne reposaient sur une convergence intellectuelle : engagement envers l'« unification » des sciences comme tâche collective, « critique du langage » et terminologie. Les deux groupes participaient au mouvement plus large de « réformisme terminologique » et d'« encyclopédisme » renouvelé, notamment dans l'entre-deux-guerres. Leurs efforts visaient à raviver les idéaux du rationalisme des Lumières, contrastant avec les entreprises ultérieures de *Begriffsgeschichte* et de sémantique historique en Allemagne (Rothacker, Ritter, Brunner, Conze, Koselleck), ancrées dans la critique romantique des Lumières, l'historicisme et l'herméneutique (Dilthey, Heidegger, Schmitt, Gadamer).

4. « *A priori* » et « *a posteriori* » au Centre international de Synthèse

L'histoire de l'a priori et de l'a posteriori par Bouvier

L'article de Bouvier présentait des caractéristiques remarquables issues des instructions du *Vocabulaire historique*. Il distinguait « Histoire du mot » (étymologie, première apparition) et « La vie de l'idée » (évolution du sens) – distinction innovante entre signifiant et signifié. Bouvier s'appuya sur des dictionnaires français pour la graphie d'*a priori* et identifia la première occurrence du couple chez le scolastique Albert de Saxe (XIV^e siècle), désignant deux modes de démonstration : des causes aux effets (*a priori*) et des effets aux causes (*a posteriori*). Le rôle décisif dans la diffusion aux XVIII^e-XIX^e siècles revint à Kant et à « l'influence universelle du kantisme ». Dès lors, « *a priori* » fut utilisé dans toutes les sciences, y compris l'histoire.

Bouvier distingua deux sens : « méthodologique » et « gnoséologique ». Le sens méthodologique, chronologiquement premier, désignait deux méthodes de raisonnement déductif entre causes et effets, remontant aux *Analytica Posteriora* d'Aristote. Leibniz marqua un tournant : dans ses *Nouveaux essais*, « *a priori* » et « *a posteriori* » désignaient non plus deux modes de raisonnement mais deux sources de connaissance (raison et expérience) – un « transfert [...] de la méthodologie à la gnoséologie ».

Le sens gnoséologique fut établi par Kant dans sa *Critique de la raison pure*. Chez Kant, « *a priori* » signifiait « indépendant de la perception » mais « indispensable pour rendre l'expérience possible », incluant les formes pures de l'intuition (espace, temps) et les catégories de l'entendement. Cet usage kantien restait le plus répandu en philosophie.

La partie la plus intéressante concernait l'évolution après Kant, au XIX^e siècle. Bouvier observa deux tendances : un retour au sens méthodologique (*a priori* = procédure spéculative ; *a posteriori* = procédure expérimentale) et une inversion de la « valeur relative » (l'*a posteriori* est valorisé, lié à l'« esprit plutôt réaliste et empiriste »). Bouvier discuta Claude Bernard chez qui « idée *a priori* » signifiait « hypothèse expérimentale », idée préconçue à confirmer ou infirmer. L'*a priori* devint « l'élément problématique et révisable de la recherche scientifique ».

Concernant les sciences historiques, Bouvier souligna l'existence d'éléments *a priori* (« principes directeurs [...] hors d'atteinte des faits ») et *a posteriori* (« matériel des faits ») en histoire comme dans toutes les sciences, mais se garda de les confondre avec la méthode *a priori* de la « philosophie de l'histoire » (exemplifiée par Fichte). L'orientation empirique des historiens expliquait le sens négatif et polémique d'*a priori* en histoire (idée préconçue injustifiée). Bouvier conclut qu'en 1929, « *a priori* » avait un « sens confus », combinaison « corrompue » des sens méthodologique et gnoséologique, prenant principalement le sens d'« idée préconçue ».

La discussion au Centre international de Synthèse

Le 27 février 1929 étaient présents – outre Bouvier et Berr – Paul Masson-Oursel, André D. Tolédano, Aldo Mieli, Robert Eisler, Jean-Rodolphe de Salis, Raymond Lenoir et Henri-Charles Puech. L’auditoire était international (cinq Français, deux Suisses, un Italien, un Autrichien), interdisciplinaire (formations philosophiques, historiques, scientifiques) et très impliqué dans le CIS.

La discussion porta sur trois thèmes. Premièrement, l’usage d’*a priori* en histoire : Berr souligna le manque de matériel sur l’usage spécifique en histoire. De Salis demanda si un *Vocabulaire historique* avait besoin d’un terme philosophique technique. Eisler chercha des exemples d’*a priori* nécessaires en histoire (négation des miracles, principe d’identité). Berr formula sa position : dans la « synthèse historique », l’« *a priori* légitime » était l’« hypothèse contrôlée par les faits » – une notion remontant à Claude Bernard.

Deuxièmement, le sens propre et l’évolution historique d’*a priori* : Lenoir distingua un sens vague et précis, voyant une rupture décisive avec Kant (réagissant à la physique newtonienne). Puech observa que le sens était « devenu confus », proposant d’examiner Leibniz et Kant. Au XIX^e siècle, il observa une « historicisation » : l’*a priori* avait pris un sens « chronologique » au lieu de « logique ». Masson-Oursel s’interrogea sur l’usage chez Hegel et la relation avec « transcendantal ».

Troisièmement, la relation entre les usages dans différentes sciences : Masson-Oursel proposa de comparer systématiquement les usages d’*a priori* dans les sciences naturelles et en histoire, voyant un « *a priori* relatif » dans les deux domaines. Il suggéra d’examiner comment « l’évolution historique de l’*a priori* dépend de son évolution scientifique ». Berr demanda à Bouvier de compléter l’article par « une histoire parallèle de l’*a priori* dans les sciences de la nature et les sciences de l’homme ».

Bouvier répondit en soulignant que « toutes les sciences » utilisent des formes de raisonnement *a priori*, se positionnant selon la vision de Berr de l’« unité » des sciences. Il insista sur les « transformations historiques décisives » et le « renversement de la pensée scientifique » au début du XIX^e siècle, soulignant le besoin d’écrire l’histoire d’*a priori* dans une perspective interdisciplinaire « longue ».

Les suites : la note additionnelle de Valentin Feldman

L’article fut conservé dans le *Vocabulaire* malgré les critiques. Bouvier le retravailla en 1941. Le dossier à l’IMEC contient une « note additionnelle » du philosophe russo-français Valentin Feldman (1909-1942), second membre de la rédaction de la section « Synthèse historique »

depuis 1931 et contributeur au *Vocabulaire (Anthropomorphisme, Bolchevisme)*. Ces notes furent probablement des « remarques additionnelles » prévues pour l'entrée finale.

Feldman distingua un « sens méthodologique » (« procédé qui va du principe au fait ») et un « sens Kantien » (« ce qui est en dehors de l'expérience »), ajoutant un sens « dérivé » : *a priori* étant « ce avec quoi on juge ». En histoire, le problème était « méthodologique », mais les sens se confondaient : « est *a priori* le principe au nom duquel on juge l'expérience ».

Feldman s'engagea dans une réflexion sur la relation entre *a priori* et « hypothèse ». Les hypothèses pouvaient être *a posteriori* ou *a priori* selon leur fonction : suggérées par l'expérience ou précédant les jugements d'expérience. Feldman formula ainsi une « conception fonctionnelle » de l'*a priori*. La distinction concernait non la « nature » des concepts mais leur relation fonctionnelle dans les jugements.

De là, Feldman expliqua la transition vers « idée préconçue » et « dogme ». En histoire, les « lois historiques » « veulent être jugées *a priori* ». D'où un troisième sens péjoratif : « l'*apriori* = le préconçu = le dogme ». Son exemple était le matérialisme historique : « expression la plus fidèle de la loi » pour les uns, « hypothèse *a priori* » pour d'autres. Le second sens menait à *a priori* signifiant « dogme » : « l'homme qui juge *a priori* semble être l'homme imperméable à l'expérience » – termes de Lévy-Bruhl pour la « mentalité primitive ».

Feldman formula aussi une recommandation : « Pour éviter l'*a priori* dans l'histoire il faut soumettre les hypothèses + [?] les 'lois' au contrôle de l'histoire. » Cette vue limitait le sens d'*a priori* en histoire : « l'*a priori* étant 'ce avec quoi on juge l'expérience' – ne peut être considéré comme *apriori* [sic] – que retrospectivement [sic]. » Cet « *a priori* rétrospectif » indiquait que ce qui est engagé dans le jugement d'expérience ne pouvait être isolé qu'*ex post*. En histoire, il n'y avait – et ne devait y avoir – aucun *a priori* indépendant des jugements d'expérience.

L'interprétation de Feldman faisait écho à la vue de Berr selon laquelle l'« *a priori* légitime » était l'« hypothèse contrôlée par les faits » – la conception de Claude Bernard. Les « idées *a priori* » étaient des hypothèses fonctionnant comme « idées préconçues » pouvant devenir « dogmes », « imperméables à l'expérience ». La différence était que le scientifique soumettait ces *a priori* au contrôle de l'expérience. Dans ce sens méthodologique – partagé par Bernard, Berr et Feldman – l'usage des *a priori* en histoire était « légitime ».

Particularités de la vision de l'a priori au CIS

L'article de Bouvier et la discussion au Centre constituaient « la vision du CIS » à l'égard de la question de l'*a priori*, présentant des caractéristiques originales comparé aux articles terminologiques contemporains (Franck, Eucken, Goblot, Lalande, Eisler). La vision du CIS se distinguait à cinq égards :

(1) Bouvier offrit une « longue histoire » de l'*a priori* allant au-delà de Kant, examinant les usages avant et après la fixation kantienne. Il évita ainsi l'« oblitération par incorporation » (Merton) : la notion kantienne devenue si répandue qu'elle n'est plus associée à Kant. La perspective de *longue durée* permit une « particularisation » de la compréhension kantienne et situa l'usage kantien dans des évolutions à long terme.

(2) Bouvier proposa une histoire descriptive visant une clarification conceptuelle, dirigée contre une approche normative anachronique. L'orientation historico-descriptive n'excluait pas l'objectif réformiste de clarification pour l'usage futur dans les disciplines historiques.

(3) Bouvier adopta une perspective « interdisciplinaire » allant au-delà des usages philosophiques pour examiner les usages scientifiques, historiques et extra-académiques d'*a priori*, innovante comparé aux entrées contemporaines.

(4) L'article aborda les débats dans les sciences sociales et humaines sur le statut des éléments *a priori*, considérant à la fois les évolutions dans les sciences naturelles et sociales.

(5) Enfin, notons ce que l'approche du CIS ne fit pas. La dimension sociologique des changements historiques dans les significations – formation et transformation de groupes sociaux, conflits – ne fut pas abordée. Malgré une proximité avec la sociologie durkheimienne, le *Vocabulaire historique* n'utilisa pas les instruments de la sociologie. Il n'y eut aucune tentative de « sémantique sociologique » (Merton). Les ressources intellectuelles pour une histoire sociologisée des concepts auraient été disponibles : tradition durkheimienne soulignant la dimension sociale du langage (Meillet), des « concepts » et « symboles » (Durkheim) ; et *Wissenssoziologie* de Mannheim avec intention réformiste compatible avec la perspective berrienne. Comment expliquer ce mépris pour une histoire sociologique des concepts ? Cela était cohérent avec l'attitude critique envers la sociologie de la connaissance prévalant au Centre international de Synthèse.

Malgré tout, les discussions retracées méritent attention comme documents historiques. Elles reflètent les changements et problèmes dans le sens d'*a priori* et *a posteriori* au XIX^e et début XX^e siècles en réponse aux développements scientifiques. Elles montrent que le sens de ces termes était devenu problématique au point qu'une clarification collective semblait nécessaire. Le fait même que le couple terminologique « *a priori-a posteriori* » fût jugé approprié pour un *Vocabulaire historique* montre que sa signification était devenue un problème non seulement pour les philosophes et scientifiques, mais aussi pour les historiens et sociologues. Dans la perspective d'une histoire-problème sociologique, nous devons en rendre compte comme d'un fait historique et social.

5. Entre sociologie durkheimienne de la connaissance et histoire et philosophie des sciences

La querelle de Berr avec la sociologie durkheimienne de la connaissance

Plusieurs indices témoignent des relations entre la conception de l'*a priori* au CIS et la sociologie durkheimienne. Le *Vocabulaire historique* devait contenir un article sur « Catégories, classifications » rédigé en 1942 par Charles Serrus, spécialiste de Kant, dont le titre renvoyait à l'article fondateur de Durkheim et Mauss de 1903.

Berr s'engagea durant près de cinquante ans (1906-1953) avec le programme durkheimien de sociologisation de l'*a priori*, dans une position ambivalente de reconnaissance, coopération et critique, caractéristique de la « collaboration-concurrence » entre ces deux tentatives d'innovation. Dès 1904, Berr critiquait Simiand sur le rôle des idées, jugeant excessive l'affirmation que l'importance de l'individu reposait sur une « illusion ». En 1906, il objecta à l'idée que les catégories étaient des « représentations collectives » d'origine sociale, insistant sur un besoin individuel « inné » de classer. Prétendre que toutes les représentations étaient collectives équivalait à un « parti-pris » risquant une philosophie de l'histoire non scientifique.

Mauss et Hubert répondirent en 1909, interprétant le conflit comme portant sur le droit de la sociologie d'étudier des objets philosophiques. Ils soulignaient la nature collective des « façons de penser » : calendriers, signes, notions du sacré, de l'âme, du temps étaient des « institutions » reçues par la société.

Dans *La Synthèse en histoire* (1911), Berr répliqua que la querelle portait sur la relation entre facteurs social et individuel. Expliquant l'organisation intellectuelle par l'organisation sociale, les durkheimiens peinaient à expliquer cette dernière. Berr insistait sur l'opposition relative entre société et raison : « il faut se garder de confondre l'autorité de la société et l'autorité de la raison ». En science, il distinguait « pression sociale » et « coopération rationnelle ».

En 1953, Berr maintint sa position. En science, « la société ne pense pas » : elle encadre l'activité mentale mais n'en est pas le sujet. La critique comportait trois dimensions : (1) l'extension légitime de la sociologie, Berr plaidant pour sa subordination à la « synthèse historique » ; (2) l'importance du facteur individuel, Berr proposant une intégration complexe en termes de « contingence » et « nécessité » ; (3) l'absence d'une approche durkheimienne convaincante de la science moderne.

Ces critiques touchaient des points sensibles. Mauss reconnut ultérieurement le problème de l'absence d'une approche sociologique de la science. La question de l'innovation devait être reconsidérée : Bourdieu insista avec son « structuralisme génétique » sur l'*habitus* pour les « révolutions symboliques ». Trois aspects méritent attention :

(1) Même la « galaxie Berr », réceptive aux innovations durkheimiennes, restait critique du projet de sociologisation de l'*a priori*, illustrant la résistance des disciplines établies.

(2) Berr s'en tenait au sens « méthodologique » d'*a priori*. Suivant Bernard, l'*a priori* demeure une « hypothèse » devant être transformée en « idée *a posteriori* » par le test empirique. Il n'y avait pas de frontière de principe entre *a priori* et *a posteriori*. Les durkheimiens incluaient le sens « gnoséologique » : les catégories rendaient l'expérience possible dans des sociétés spécifiques. La condition était de remplacer la théorie philosophique par une « théorie sociologique de la connaissance » rendant compte de la généralité, nécessité et variabilité historico-sociale de l'*a priori*. Le sens bernardien revenait dans la théorie durkheimienne. L'*a priori* transcendantal reposait sur l'expérience. Pour éviter la contradiction, les durkheimiens distinguaient expérience individuelle et « collective », représentations individuelles et « collectives ». L'*a priori* dépendait de l'expérience collective et était indépendant des expériences individuelles. La frontière devenait poreuse. Les durkheimiens combinaient sens kantien gnoséologique et sens bernardien méthodologique.

(3) Berr et Durkheim se référaient positivement à Bernard, mais Berr maintenait une vision négative de l'*a priori* scientifique. Durkheim faisait des prénotions des objets empiriques pour la sociologie : des « faits sociaux ». Durkheim sociologisait les idées *a priori* bernardiennes. Tous deux partageaient un « rationalisme empiriste », avec des accents différents (empiriste pour Berr, rationaliste pour Durkheim).

Metzger sur l'a priori en sciences, histoire et philosophie des sciences

Le 20 novembre 1935, Hélène Metzger, historienne et philosophe des sciences spécialiste de la chimie, présenta au CIS une conférence sur « L'*a priori* dans la doctrine scientifique et l'histoire des sciences ». Ce débat prolongeait les discussions sur le *Vocabulaire historique* et incluait d'importantes références aux études sur les « mentalités primitives » de Lévy-Bruhl.

Metzger, nièce de Lévy-Bruhl, avait acquis une formation en cristallographie et soutenu une thèse sous Lalande en 1918. En contact avec Brunschvicg et Milhaud à la Sorbonne, elle se tourna vers l'histoire de la chimie. Sans poste académique stable malgré la reconnaissance reçue, elle devint en 1930 secrétaire de la section « Histoire des sciences » du CIS. Elle introduisit Koyré dans la section en 1935. Arrêtée en février 1944, elle mourut à Auschwitz en mars.

Berr avait incité Metzger à traiter l'*a priori* après une conférence en janvier 1935 où elle avait souligné que l'histoire des sciences ne devait pas abandonner l'idée d'*a priori*. Dans la discussion, Berr s'opposa à l'idée que la philosophie opérait avec des « idées *a priori* », arguant que l'*a priori* n'existait en science que comme hypothèse à tester. Metzger souligna que philosophie, science et histoire des sciences nécessitaient une forme d'*a priori*. Koyré soutint

Metzger, soulignant l'importance de l'histoire des sciences pour confronter différentes « mentalités ». Serrus introduisit la référence à Brunschvicg et la variation historique des catégories.

Une semaine plus tard, Berr revint sur l'*a priori*, référant à une « philosophie positive » contemporaine rejetant l'*a priori* – allusion au Cercle de Vienne. Le CIS avait publié des traductions de l'École de Vienne depuis 1932 et coorganisait le premier Congrès international de philosophie scientifique de septembre 1935. Berr introduisit la conception bernardienne de l'*a priori*, assisté par Mouy qui clarifiait qu'« idée *a priori* » signifiait hypothèse nécessitant vérification et soulignait la nature variable de l'*a priori*.

Entre janvier et novembre, eut lieu le Congrès de philosophie scientifique (septembre 1935). Metzger y assista et écrivit une recension critique pour Archeion, prenant ses distances avec l'École de Vienne, notamment sa prétention à la nouveauté et son insistance logique. Elle critiqua surtout le rejet de l'*a priori*. Reichenbach avait présenté l'idée de « désagrégation de l'*a priori* » dans l'histoire des sciences, définissant l'empirisme logique par son rejet du synthétique *a priori* kantien. Metzger ironisa que, malgré cette désagrégation, les empiristes logiques entretenaient un autre *a priori* désastreux : l'ignorance des œuvres originales en philosophie et histoire des sciences.

La conférence de Metzger en novembre 1935 questionnait si l'*a priori* jouait obligatoirement un rôle de premier plan dans l'élaboration scientifique. Elle évitait les débats philosophiques sur l'*a priori*, partant de la pratique de l'historien confronté aux textes du passé. Ces textes présentaient un dilemme : projeter la « mentalité actuelle » sur la « mentalité d'autrefois » (anachronisme) ou accepter l'incompréhensibilité totale.

Comme alternative, Metzger proposait que l'histoire des sciences impliquait un *a priori* plus fort que l'« hypothèse ». Cet *a priori* était inévitable dans le travail historique. Les historiens cherchaient à comprendre les *a priori* des scientifiques passés – leur « mentalité » – en utilisant une méthode elle-même partiellement *a priori*. L'historien supposait pouvoir pénétrer dans les mentalités diverses des penseurs et savait devoir ressusciter dans son âme les états d'âme des savants, ne disposant d'aucun autre réactif que lui-même.

Cette notion d'*a priori* nécessitait une extension du sens usuel. Metzger se référait à la définition de Lalande distinguant sens « gnoséologique » (Kant) et « méthodologique » (Bernard). Elle introduisait un sens différent sur deux plans : plus fondamental que le sens gnoséologique – l'*a priori* représentait non seulement les notions préalables mais les tendances fondamentales les engendrant ; et impliquant la variabilité historique – il n'y avait pas un *a priori* unique mais de multiples *a priori* différents, parfois hétérogènes et incompatibles. Metzger identifiait ce sens avec le terme lévy-bruhlien de « mentalité ».

Elle distinguait deux types fondamentaux d'*a priori* : la « pensée expansive » (connectée à la « mentalité primitive » de Lévy-Bruhl, caractérisée par l'« analogie agissante ») et la « pensée réfléchie » (pensée logique moderne, caractérisée par son « attitude polémique », sa critique constante de l'erreur). L'implication était que la pensée scientifique avait ses *a priori* spécifiques et inévitables, contrastant avec la croyance bernardienne de Berr que l'*a priori* scientifique n'était que provisoire.

Metzger conclut en s'opposant à la « désagrégation de l'*a priori* » de l'École de Vienne, arguant qu'elle négligeait la productivité de la pensée expansive, nécessaire à la pensée réfléchie. Le résultat ne pouvait être qu'un dogmatisme violent : « la plus barbare des scolastiques ». L'intelligence humaine était « productrice de lumière en même temps qu'organe de vision » ; l'empêcher d'apporter sa propre clarté la rendrait aveugle. Mesurée aux résultats de l'histoire des sciences, la vision empiriste logique était descriptivement fausse.

La discussion révéla les divergences. Berr insista sur les fonctions contrastées de l'*a priori* en science et en histoire des sciences. En science, il n'acceptait que l'*a priori* bernardien provisoire comme « hypothèse ». Il n'y avait pas de place pour des « *a priori* mentaux » fondamentaux et variables. Metzger souligna l'incompatibilité de leurs vues : sa conception impliquait variabilité et indépendance relative de l'expérience.

Les autres participants exprimèrent une résistance depuis la conception méthodologique. Laignel-Lavastine réintroduisit Bernard et l'*a priori* comme « hypothèse ». Serrus insista sur la nécessité de réviser les *a priori* et « illusions » scientifiques, prenant comme exemple la « grande illusion kantienne » des « formes *a priori* » basées sur la géométrie euclidienne et la physique newtonienne, devenue elle-même un *a priori* à corriger. Hauser avertit que l'histoire ne devait pas devenir « la servante de l'*a priori* ». Face à ces réactions, Metzger se retira sur son refus initial de discuter des conceptions philosophiques.

Les références de Metzger à Lévy-Bruhl jouèrent un rôle marginal. Seul Hauser aborda la question, employant « *a priori* » très largement : « nous baignons dans l'*a priori* » – plus encore que Lévy-Bruhl. Il définissait l'*a priori* en histoire comme « une affirmation qui dépasse, en les devançant, les résultats de l'observation et de l'expérience ». Il critiquait l'histoire marxiste comme exemple. Hauser avait une notion purement négative de l'*a priori* : sous la guidance d'*a priori*, l'histoire risquait la fragmentation et perdait la possibilité de progresser dans la connaissance empirique du passé.

Plusieurs enseignements émergent : (1) L'épisode révèle l'« espace de possibilités » concernant l'*a priori* dans la « galaxie Berr ». Metzger définit sa conception contre plusieurs vues concurrentes : la « désagrégation » des empiristes logiques négligeant le rôle habilitant de l'*a priori* ; la vision méthodologique bernardienne de Berr concevant l'*a priori* comme hypothèse

provisoire ; et une « philosophie *a priori* de la science » maintenant le sens transcendantal et l'indépendance de l'expérience. Elle puisa dans l'approche sociologique de Lévy-Bruhl, mais insista sur la continuité entre mentalités primitive et moderne. Elle combina aspects des sens « gnoséologique » et « méthodologique » d'*a priori* – non dissemblable aux durkheimiens.

(2) Metzger continua les débats antérieurs sur le rôle de l'*a priori* en histoire commencés avec Bouvier. L'opposition entre notion méthodologique de Berr et notion fondamentale de Metzger persista. Metzger pensait que l'historien utilisait ses propres *a priori* fondamentaux pour comprendre les *a priori* divergents du passé. Pour Berr et la plupart des membres, l'*a priori* de l'historien ne pouvait signifier qu'une « idée *a priori* » bernardienne, hypothèse provisoire testée par l'expérience. Toute notion plus forte semblait compromettre l'unité de l'histoire et la possibilité de progrès.

(3) Le cas de Metzger ouvre des perspectives sur le rôle des approches sociologiques de l'*a priori* dans l'univers Berr. Sa notion d'*a priori* était un fait de sociologie ou de « psychologie collective » ou « historique ». Elle réintroduisait une approche sociologique de l'*a priori* dans l'histoire des sciences, remarquable car la science était pour Berr le domaine où la sociologie de la connaissance touchait ses limites avec le rôle croissant du facteur individuel. L'opposition de Berr à Metzger était cohérente avec son rejet de l'approche durkheimienne. En termes méthodologiques, la « psychologie collective » de Berr était plus compatible avec la théorie lévy-bruhlienne des « mentalités » qu'avec la « théorie sociologique de la connaissance » durkheimienne. En termes épistémologiques, Berr était plus proche des durkheimiens qui avaient souligné contre Lévy-Bruhl la continuité entre pensée « prélogique » et logique et imaginé une autonomisation progressive de l'organisation logique.

Metzger affichait convergences et divergences avec le programme durkheimien. Comme les durkheimiens, elle combinait éléments des sens gnoséologique et méthodologique : l'*a priori* habilitait l'expérience et variait historiquement et socialement. Sa critique de Lévy-Bruhl – l'insistance sur la continuité – allait dans le sens de la critique durkheimienne. Mauss avait reconnu en 1927 le besoin d'étendre les études aux formes avancées de classification, incluant la science. Metzger réalisait ce que Mauss appelait « l'histoire naturelle et sociale des sciences ».

D'autre part, Metzger restait proche de l'approche largement descriptive de Lévy-Bruhl et n'enquêtait pas sur les conditions sociales des mentalités. Cela demeurait une ligne de division majeure entre durkheimiens et Lévy-Bruhl, révélée aux débats de 1923 et 1929. Les durkheimiens insistaient que, avant de parler de « mentalités » entières, il fallait investiguer sociologiquement des « catégories » particulières et reprocher à Lévy-Bruhl de négliger l'explication sociologique des mentalités, i.e. l'investigation des relations entre psychologie (ou

« physiologie ») sociale et morphologie sociale des groupes. Metzger ne suivait pas cette direction. Sa théorie restait plus proche d'une « psychologie historique » ou « collective ».

Metzger occupait des positions intermédiaires : avec son application de l'approche sociologique lévy-bruhlien à l'histoire des sciences, elle se situait entre sociologie durkheimienne de la connaissance et Berr ; avec son focus sur le « primitif » dans la mentalité scientifique moderne, entre Lévy-Bruhl, Berr et les durkheimiens. Elle ne trouva guère d'alliés au Centre. Koyré, ayant souligné l'importance de la sociologie durkheimienne pour l'histoire des sciences, était peut-être le plus proche. Avec son rejet tranché de l'École de Vienne, Metzger affichait une position plus radicale que Berr, Bouvier et autres membres demeurés largement positifs. On rencontre déjà chez Metzger une combinaison d'insistance sur des éléments sociaux quasi-aprioriques variables en science et de critique du « positivisme » – combinaison devenant populaire à partir des années 1960 avec Kuhn.

Continuités en histoire et en philosophie et histoire des sciences

La « galaxie Berr » et le CIS furent une plaque tournante importante dans l'histoire de la sociologisation de l'*a priori*. Via ce contexte, des idées de la sociologie française de la connaissance, durkheimienne et lévy-bruhlienne, diffusèrent dans divers domaines des sciences sociales et humaines, en France et internationalement.

Deux aires se distinguent : l'histoire et la philosophie et l'histoire des sciences. Dans la « galaxie Berr », on rencontre des acteurs instrumentaux dans la promotion de traditions jugées ultérieurement spécifiquement « françaises » : en histoire l'« école des Annales » avec Febvre et Bloch ; en philosophie et histoire des sciences l'« épistémologie historique » ou « française » avec Rey, Metzger, Koyré ou Bachelard – ce dernier devenant, par la promotion de Canguilhem, la figure fondatrice de ce courant. Ces traditions continuèrent des problèmes rencontrés au CIS.

L'« école des *Annales* » fut identifiée à une « histoire des mentalités ». Febvre et Bloch continuèrent le projet terminologique du *Vocabulaire historique*. Febvre, impliqué dans les entreprises de Berr, contribua au *Vocabulaire* et aux Semaines internationales avec sa contribution sur le terme « civilisation ». Bloch proposa un programme pour une terminologie internationale en histoire, une « réconciliation de nos terminologies et de nos questionnaires ». Il poursuivit cet intérêt dans l'*Apologie de l'histoire* posthume où il recommandait l'étude des « nomenclatures », soutenait l'idée d'une « sémantique historique » et se référait positivement au *Vocabulaire historique* : « On doit beaucoup en attendre ».

L'« épistémologie historique » continua à lutter avec le problème d'un « transcendantal historique » – résultat de la fusion des sens « méthodologique » et « gnoséologique » d'*a priori*.

Cette tension trouva son expression la plus influente chez Bachelard, étudiant de Rey et Brunschvicg, contributeur au *Vocabulaire* avec son article « Causalité » de 1944. Bachelard s'engagea critiquement avec la tradition kantienne et la notion d'*a priori*, proposant une forme de « non-kantisme ». Cette position, non confondue avec l'anti-kantisme, s'entendait en analogie avec « non-euclidien » en géométrie non-euclidienne. Elle indiquait une généralisation rendant la position initiale (kantisme) un cas spécial d'une conception plus large (non-kantisme). Le « non » était inclusif, visant une généralisation de la critique « particularisant » la critique initiale kantienne. On peut rencontrer de fortes similitudes avec cette idée dans les discussions sur l'*a priori* au CIS.

Enfin, le plus important pour la circulation internationale des idées présentes au CIS et dans l'« épistémologie historique » fut Alexandre Koyré. Contributeur au *Vocabulaire* avec « Agnosticisme », introduit au CIS par Metzger, il soutint son approche en termes de mentalités. Par sa mobilité vers les États-Unis, des éléments intellectuels du CIS circulèrent internationalement et resurgirent ultérieurement dans le travail de Kuhn. Si Kuhn promut un « kantisme post-darwinien » ou se dit « kantien avec des catégories mobiles », cela était dû, au moins partiellement, à la tradition française en histoire et philosophie des sciences avec laquelle Koyré l'avait familiarisé.

Dans cette perspective, les discussions sur l'*a priori* au CIS apparaissent moins éloignées qu'on pourrait le supposer. Le CIS fut un site stratégiquement important, un carrefour où de nombreuses relativisations, historicisations, sociologisations – et même « désagréations » – de l'*a priori* se rencontrèrent, s'échangèrent, se combinèrent et d'où elles se diffusèrent dans différentes disciplines et contextes nationaux.

6. Conclusion : Leçons d'une discussion toujours actuelle

L'article de Bouvier sur l'*a priori* et les débats au CIS fournissent d'importantes leçons pour l'histoire de la sociologisation de l'*a priori* :

Ces documents constituent des sources précieuses témoignant d'une situation historique où l'*a priori* – le terme et le concept –, sa relativisation et sa sociologisation, étaient devenus problématiques. L'épisode révèle l'« espace des possibles » associé à la notion avec des références inattendues (Claude Bernard, le Cercle de Vienne, Hélène Metzger), l'opposition de Berr à la théorie durkheimienne au nom d'une « psychologie collective » valorisant l'individu ou la théorie metzgerienne des « *a priori* mentaux » s'opposant tant à la « désagrégation » empiriste logique qu'à la conception méthodologique bernardienne. Ces questions continuèrent après la guerre chez les historiens des *Annales* et dans l'« épistémologie historique » française.

Enfin, certains aspects de l'approche descriptive et interdisciplinaire de Bouvier méritent d'être poursuivie aujourd'hui : la perspective de longue durée ; l'attention pour les usages concrets d'« *a priori* » ; la « fonctionnalisation » et « particularisation » de la notion kantienne, évitant anachronismes et présupposés issus de la domination de la tradition kantienne ; la perspective interdisciplinaire couvrant sciences naturelles, sciences sociales, histoire et philosophie ; et le but ultime de clarifier le discours actuel sur les *a priori* sociaux, les conditions sociales de possibilité et le raisonnement socio-transcendental.

CHAPITRE 6. OUVERTURES : VERS DES ÉTUDES ULTÉRIEURES SUR LA SOCIOLOGISATION DE L'*A PRIORI*

1. Introduction : Perspectives d'avenir

L'histoire de la sociologisation de l'*a priori* présentée ici demeure fragmentaire. Ce chapitre synthétise les résultats selon la notion d'« ignorance spécifiée » de Merton, identifiant des travaux à entreprendre. Il interprète la trajectoire du problème dans l'optique d'une « ambivalence sociologique » de longue terme et il propose une stratégie pour établir une typologie des approches sociologiques de l'*a priori*. Enfin, il esquisse une position épistémologique nommée « instrumentalisme symbolique » qui ressort de cette tradition.

2. La trajectoire d'une stratégie d'hybridation ambivalente

Comblant les lacunes

L'introduction générale distinguait six périodes différentes : (1) l'émergence du problème entre la philosophie transcendantale et la philosophie positive (1780-1840) ; (2) les naturalisations extra-académiques (1840-1880) ; (3) l'entrée de l'*a priori* sociologisé à l'université (1870-1940) ; (4) la transformation du problème sous l'effet de l'autonomisation des sciences sociales (1930-1960) ; (5) la réémergence en réaction aux programmes « scientistes » (1960-2000) ; (6) la diffusion et les débuts d'une réflexion méthodologique (1990-aujourd'hui).

Nous avons pu étudier plus en détail l'émergence du problème entre Kant et Comte (Chapitre 4) et les débats dans la période 1900-1945 (Chapitre 5). Les nombreux aspects qui restent à éclaircir peuvent être transformés en des questions à étudier à l'avenir.

1840-1910 : De Kant et Comte aux sociologisations académiques de l'*a priori*

L'hypothèse directrice pour cette période était que les théories sociologiques de l'*a priori* furent préparées par des positions philosophiques hybrides entre « criticisme » (Kant) et « positivisme » (Comte). Il faudrait continuer à croiser les réceptions de Kant en France et de Comte en Allemagne dans le cadre d'études de cas spécifiques.

(1) Les naturalisations de l'a priori au milieu du XIX^e siècle entre positivisme et premier néo-kantisme

Une première investigation devrait couvrir les tentatives de « naturaliser » l'*a priori* vers le milieu du XIX^e siècle, dont émergèrent les sociologisations ultérieures. Mill constitue un point de départ avec sa critique de toute conception *a priori* et sa traduction empiriste de Comte. Spencer développa une approche évolutionniste considérant ce qui était *a priori* pour l'individu comme *a posteriori* pour l'espèce, influençant directement Durkheim via Espinas et Ribot. Dans le contexte allemand, les controverses sur le matérialisme et le darwinisme formèrent le contexte de la première phase du néo-kantisme. La *Geschichte des Materialismus* de Lange fournit une réinterprétation physiologico-psychologique de l'*a priori* kantien. Aussi les liens entre Cohen, Windelband et la *Völkerpsychologie* allemande méritent attention. Enfin, Marx et Engels développèrent dès les années 1840 une critique matérialiste concevant les catégories comme des « produits historiques transitoires » des relations sociales. Toutes ces différentes naturalisations fournirent les ressources intellectuelles utilisées dans les débats sur l'*a priori* sociologique au tournant du XX^e siècle.

(2) Néo-kantisme français et sociologie ? Usages et fonctions de Kant en France

Une autre investigation pourrait étudier le rôle de la réception de Kant dans les sociologisations de l'*a priori*. L'existence d'un « néo-kantisme français » peut être mise en doute. Il faudrait plutôt cartographier les divers usages de Kant dans la philosophie française du XIX^e siècle. Les références à Kant sont omniprésentes, mais le label « néo-kantisme » est extrêmement rare chez les philosophes de l'époque. Le *Vocabulaire* de Lalande ne contenait aucune entrée sur « néo-kantisme ». Il faut concevoir la référence à Kant non comme un « mouvement », mais comme indicateur d'un « problème » impliquant la communauté philosophique. On peut distinguer sept types d'usages : (1) sensualistes-empiristes ; (2) spiritualistes-éclectiques ; (3) positivistes-évolutionnistes ; (4) néo-criticistes (Renouvier) ; (5) spiritualistes-idéalistes (Lachelier, Boutroux, Brunschvicg) ; (6) scientifiques-épistémologiques ; (7) culturels-politiques. Cinq cas d'interactions avec la sociologie précoce méritent attention : (1) Renouvier et ses interactions avec Durkheim, Mauss, Parodi ; (2) la lignée Lachelier-Boutroux, leur enseignement sur Kant et leurs réactions à la sociologie émergente ; (3) les connexions avec les usages positivistes-évolutionnistes, notamment Ribot et Espinas introduisant Spencer et leur impact sur Durkheim ; (4) les usages scientifiques-épistémologiques, particulièrement le vocabulaire kantien chez Bernard et les « conventions » de Poincaré ; (5) Brunschvicg et sa critique du « sociologisme » durkheimien. Les positions les plus pertinentes tentèrent de combler le fossé entre positivisme

et criticisme. Il n'existe pas de « néo-kantisme » français au sens historique précis comme source des sociologisations de l'*a priori*.

(3) La première dispute allemande sur le positivisme (1859-1863) : Carl Twesten, Rudolf Haym et l'introduction de Comte en Allemagne

La première controverse savante sur Comte en Allemagne (1859-1863) opposa Twesten, partisan de Comte et compté par Lange parmi les « kantien », et Haym, néo-kantien défendant une métaphysique criticiste contre la « philosophie positive ». Le débat contenait déjà les schèmes argumentatifs durables utilisés ultérieurement contre le positivisme : identification avec l'empirisme, confusion avec les auteurs britanniques, argument de *petitio principii*, objection de *contradictio in adiecto*. L'intérêt réside dans les conditions de réception de la sociologie de Comte en Allemagne. L'opposition de Haym révèle des schèmes persistant jusqu'à la « dispute sur le positivisme » (*Positivismusstreit*) des années 1960. Entre Twesten et Haym, il s'agit littéralement la première « dispute sur le positivisme » allemande.

(4) Le spectre du positivisme : la sociologie dans les disputes néo-kantiennes sur la classification des sciences

Le rôle de la sociologie dans les disputes allemandes sur la classification des sciences mérite investigation. Les classifications néo-kantiennes sont rarement mises dans le contexte de l'histoire longue impliquant Kant et Comte. Ces débats reflétaient l'émergence des sciences sociales et humaines et peuvent être conçus comme des « luttes symboliques » concernant la « vision et division » légitime du champ académique.

Dilthey lança les débats à grande échelle avec sa distinction entre *Geisteswissenschaften* et *Naturwissenschaften*, résultat d'un dialogue critique avec Comte et Mill. Sa « philosophie des *Geisteswissenschaften* » fut conçue comme concurrent allemand direct de la « philosophie positive » de Comte. Sa solution en termes de « psychologie descriptive » comportait des aspects anti-kantiens. La solution anti-kantienne de Dilthey provoqua des réponses néo-kantiennes. L'« école du Sud-Ouest » offrit plusieurs réponses dans les années 1890. Simmel distingua « *Wirklichkeitswissenschaft* » et « *Gesetzeswissenschaft* » avec une théorie d'un « *a priori* relatif » dans l'histoire. Windelband proposa une distinction méthodologique entre sciences « nomothétiques » et « idiographiques ». Rickert développa l'opposition entre science naturelle (*Naturwissenschaft*) et science culturelle (*Kulturwissenschaft*) en termes de formation de concepts (*Begriffsbildung*).

Contrairement à l'historiographie dominante, l'« école de Marbourg » dialogua aussi avec la classification positiviste et la sociologie. Cohen et Natorp signèrent l'appel pour la *Deutsche*

Gesellschaft für Soziologie en 1910. Lange avait abordé les sciences sociales en se référant à Comte. À partir de 1896, les relations prirent un tournant politique, créant une convergence entre néo-kantisme et socialisme réformiste. Cohen affirma que Kant était « le fondateur du socialisme allemand ». Bernstein s'inspira de Lange pour un programme socialiste réformiste. Stammer publia une critique néo-kantienne du matérialisme historique, introduisant le marxisme dans le débat académique. Max Adler formula son projet de rapprocher Kant et Marx dans une théorie de l'« *a priori* social ». Après 1918, Cassirer reprit la question de la classification dans la tradition de Marbourg. Sa *Philosophie der symbolischen Formen* se présenta comme réponse néo-kantienne à Dilthey. Il identifia la sociologie de Weber et de Mannheim comme « science de la forme » (*Formwissenschaft*) culturelle, développant une conception relativisée, historicisée et culturalisée de l'*a priori* en dialogue avec la sociologie durkheimienne.

Les sociologues allemands précoces furent directement impliqués dans les débats néo-kantiens. Simmel développa sa théorie des « *a priori* sociologiques » à partir de sa théorie des « *a priori* relatifs » historiques. Tönnies fut impliqué dans une controverse avec Rickert. Weber réutilisa l'insistance de Rickert sur les « rapports de valeur », le conduisant aux « idées de valeur culturelle » (*Kulturwertideen*) changeant socio-historiquement, fonctionnant comme des *a priori* sociologisés. Les trois furent engagés dans une controverse sur Stammer.

Les débats allemands furent déterminés *ex negativo* par la « menace » du positivisme. La philosophie positive de Comte était symptôme et thérapie de la différenciation disciplinaire. Les classifications allemandes y répondirent différemment : Comte aboutissait à la « sociologie », tandis que les classificateurs allemands maintinrent la philosophie comme arbitre autonome, stratégie ambiguë pouvant être défensive (Sud-Ouest) ou progressive (Marbourg). En Allemagne comme en France, le problème de la sociologisation de l'*a priori* émergea d'une confrontation entre criticisme et positivisme.

En somme, ces quatre investigations contribueraient à éclairer la préhistoire philosophique des approches sociologiques de l'*a priori* émergeant vers 1900. Suivre les tensions entre criticisme et positivisme en se concentrant sur les cas où Kant et Comte se croisent fournit une stratégie viable.

Autour de 1900 : Explorer l'apogée

Les décennies autour de 1900 virent l'émergence de diverses approches sociologiques de l'*a priori*. On pourrait approfondir cette période à travers plusieurs études de cas.

(1) L'a priori nationalisé ? Du « Volksgeist » à la « mentalité » dans la réception française de la Völkerpsychologie allemande

Une première investigation pourrait examiner les continuités entre psychologie collective et sociologie de la connaissance. Le concept de « mentalité », relatif à des époques ou nations spécifiques, a soutenu le raisonnement « socio-transcendental » en présentant des structures mentales collectives rendant possibles les expériences et croyances. Si l'histoire du concept « mentalité » est généralement associée aux sources ethnographiques, elle était également enracinée dans la réflexion sur les traditions nationales. L'étude établirait un lien entre « *Volksgeist* » et « mentalité » dans la sociologie durkheimienne dès les années 1900. Ces concepts étaient liés à la sociologisation de l'*a priori*. Les projets de « psychologie collective » opéraient une « nationalisation » de l'*a priori* en reliant les structures mentales à l'État-nation. Il faudrait examiner la *Völkerpsychologie* de Lazarus et Steinthal, puis la version de Wundt préférant « *Volksseele* ».

La réception durkheimienne s'inscrit dans le contexte de l'importation de la psychologie expérimentale par Ribot et de la conception volontariste de la nation chez Renan. « Mentalité » remplaça « *Volksgeist* » dans la sociologie durkheimienne. La Première Guerre mondiale révéla une autre dimension. Dans *L'Allemagne au-dessus de tout* (1915), Durkheim attaqua la « mentalité allemande » tout en défendant Lazarus et Steinthal contre Treitschke, soutenant une tradition « proto-sociologique » contre la tradition anti-sociologique.

Les problèmes liés à ces concepts continuèrent après Durkheim, via Lévy-Bruhl et les utilisations en ethnologie et en histoire des sciences. Bien que le projet de « psychologie collective » nationale fut abandonné après 1945, le problème des traditions nationales persista chez Elias et Bourdieu avec la notion d'un « *habitus* national ». En enquêtant sur la transition de « *Volksgeist* » à « mentalité », on peut retracer la route menant de la *Völkerpsychologie* allemande à la sociologie française, avec des versions d'un *a priori* sociologisé appliqué aux sociétés à l'échelle nationale.

(2) La sociologie durkheimienne de la connaissance dans son contexte : émergence, exécution et diffusion d'un programme de recherche collectif sur les origines sociales des catégories de pensée

En 1903, Durkheim et Mauss publièrent « De quelques formes primitives de classification ». L'article formulait un programme pour étudier dans une perspective socio-historique les « catégories de pensée » et les concepts de temps et d'espace, faisant de l'*a priori* l'objet d'investigations empiriques. Ce programme fut poursuivi collectivement pendant quarante ans. Il faudrait reconstruire l'histoire de cet article via la correspondance Durkheim-Mauss,

illustrant une division du travail théorique-empirique. Les sources incluent la psychologie expérimentale de Ribot, les sources ethnographiques anglophones et les théories néo-criticistes de Renouvier et Hamelin. Il faudrait ensuite explorer l'exécution collective jusqu'à *Les formes élémentaires* (1912). La phase 1903-1914 est importante pour positionner le projet face aux concurrents : évolutionnistes (Fouillée, Guyau), néo-positivistes (de Roberty), pragmatistes (Chide), conventionnaliste (Dupréel). Il faudrait aussi considérer la réception philosophique et les tensions internes. L'entre-deux-guerres transforma le programme : extension par Mauss, transformation par Halbwachs en « mémoires collectives », recherche de Lévy-Bruhl sur la « mentalité primitive ». Finalement, le programme survécut dans d'autres disciplines (ethnologie, linguistique, histoire), prêt à être ravivé par le structuralisme après 1945.

(3) Une controverse transnationale sur la sociologisation de l'a priori : reconsidérer la participation de Simmel à L'Année sociologique

Une autre enquête se concentrerait sur la confrontation entre le programme durkheimien et une tentative allemande. Simmel et Durkheim proposèrent tous deux des récits sociologiques de l'*a priori*. Simmel contribua au premier numéro de *L'Année sociologique* (1898), mais la collaboration se transforma en controverse. Cet épisode créa divers mythes : fin en « éclat », exclusion de Simmel, empêchement de sa réception française. Pour démystifier ces récits, il faudrait reconsidérer la collaboration via les archives. On pourrait soutenir que : (1) la coopération ne fut jamais conçue à long terme ; (2) il n'y a pas d'indications d'une rupture isolée ; (3) le succès sporadique s'explique par une convergence de stratégies. On pourrait ensuite reconstruire ce conflit (1894-1918) selon plusieurs dimensions : (1) le statut d'une sociologie scientifique ; (2) la formulation d'une approche sociologique de l'*a priori* ; (3) la tension épistémologique ; (4) un « conflit sur les styles de travail » entre modèle collectiviste (Durkheim) et individualiste (Simmel).

(4) L'a priori dans les débats germanophones sur la sociologie de la connaissance, années 1900-1940

Cette investigation devrait examiner le débat germanophone sur la *Wissenssoziologie* (1900-1940) et le problème de la sociologisation de l'*a priori* – une dimension importante selon les contemporains. Il faudrait cartographier le champ des positions (années 1880-1900). On rencontre deux espaces séparés en Autriche et en Allemagne. Dans le contexte autrichien, les forces pertinentes étaient l'évolutionnisme, le wundtianisme, le positivisme machien, le marxisme et la sociologie durkheimienne. Il faudrait considérer Gumplowicz et Ratzenhofer, puis le groupe

de la Soziologische Gesellschaft in Wien (1907-1934) : Jerusalem, Goldscheid, Eisler, Adler et Szende.

Pour l'Allemagne, les ressources étaient différentes : *Völkerpsychologie*, dispute sur le psychologisme, phénoménologie, *Weltanschauungslehre* de Dilthey et néo-kantisme. La première phase s'étendit de Jerusalem (1909) à Scheler (mort en 1928), incluant le débat Jerusalem-Scheler (1921), le premier volume collectif (1924) et le congrès de Heidelberg (1924). La seconde phase (1928-1945) fut dominée par les débats sur Mannheim, débutant à Zurich (1928) et continuant avec *Ideologie und Utopie* (1929). Il faudrait cartographier les positions avec les oppositions marxiste, conservatrice, sociologique, philosophique et les rares soutiens pour la sociologie de la connaissance.

Enfin, il faudrait aborder la clôture forcée du débat autour de 1933. La plupart des acteurs perdirent leurs postes (Mannheim, Elias). Le débat continua partiellement dans le monde anglophone. Ces difficultés sont illustrées par les projets de Fleck (1935) et de Zilsel (en exil aux États-Unis).

(5) Max Adler et l'a priori social : de la critique néo-kantienne du matérialisme historique à la sociologie de la connaissance

Max Adler (1873-1937) est un acteur important pour illustrer les connexions entre les débats impliquant le kantisme et la sociologie dans le monde germanophone. Sa théorie de l'« *a priori* social » relie trois controverses rarement associées : le débat sur Rudolf Stammler, celui sur le socialisme néo-kantien, et les discussions sur la *Wissenssoziologie* des années 1920-1930.

Le livre de Stammler *Wirtschaft und Recht* (1896) introduisit la « conception matérialiste de l'histoire » dans le débat académique allemand pour la réfuter. Inspiré du néo-kantisme de Marbourg, il distingua « forme » (droit) et « matière » (économie) de la vie sociale, opposant l'« idéalisme social » au « matérialisme social » marxiste. Cette proposition suscita une controverse impliquant Simmel, Weber, Tönnies et Adler.

Parallèlement se développa le débat sur le socialisme néo-kantien, issu de Lange et poursuivi par Cohen et Natorp. Bernstein s'inspira de Lange pour formuler un programme socialiste réformiste fondé sur l'éthique kantienne, déclenchant des débats sur le « révisionnisme » avec les marxistes matérialistes (Mehring, Kautsky, Plekhanov, Lénine).

Adler développa sa théorie de l'« *a priori* social » pour résoudre simultanément la « crise du marxisme » et le problème de la fondation des sciences sociales. Il participa activement au débat sur la sociologie de la connaissance, défendant l'autorité du marxisme contre Scheler et Mannheim, tout en étant critiqué par des austro-marxistes comme Zilsel pour son compromis avec la philosophie académique.

L'œuvre d'Adler illustre les ambiguïtés des approches sociologiques de l'*a priori* vers 1900. Il demeura trop philosophique pour les marxistes et sociologues, trop sociologique pour les philosophes, et trop marxiste pour les deux. Malgré cet échec à établir une nouvelle « hybridation de rôles », son « transcendantalisme social » préfigura la sociologisation de l'*a priori* chez Habermas.

(6) Un récit de deux traditions : La réception de la sociologie durkheimienne de la connaissance en France et dans le monde germanophone, années 1900-1940

Le récit dominant de l'histoire de la sociologie de la connaissance la présente comme une invention allemande des années 1920-1930 (Scheler, Mannheim), reléguant la sociologie durkheimienne au statut de « précurseur ». L'enquête proposée reconsidère ce récit en retraçant le transfert et la réception de la sociologie durkheimienne de la connaissance dans le monde germanophone.

Plusieurs épisodes cruciaux jalonnent cette réception : l'échange entre Durkheim et Wilhelm Jerusalem avant 1914 ; les premières recensions germanophones des *Formes élémentaires* (1912) ; le débat Jerusalem-Scheler en 1921 sur les rapports entre sociologies française et allemande ; les références ultérieures à la sociologie française (Mannheim, Curtius) et les premières études académiques allemandes sur Durkheim (années 1930). Le récit de deux traditions indépendantes fut activement créé par Scheler, Mannheim et d'autres pour formuler une sociologie de la connaissance allemande anti-positiviste. Cette stratégie marginalisa les contributions de Durkheim, Jerusalem et Gumpłowicz de la mémoire collective disciplinaire, purgeant la sociologie de la connaissance de son ascendance « positiviste ».

Pour comprendre les différences de réception, il faut examiner pourquoi l'auto-application de la sociologie de la connaissance conduisit à une crise épistémique (« relativisme ») en Allemagne mais pas en France. Les hypothèses explicatives incluent : des orientations épistémologiques différentes (idéalisme et néo-kantisme en Allemagne vs. rationalisme et « positivisme » en France), des représentations différentes du temps historique (historicisme vs. évolutionnisme), et des visions différentes de l'organisation scientifique (modèles individualistes vs. collectifs). Il faut également considérer le transfert vers le monde anglophone, où ce récit fut établi et stabilisé à partir des années 1940 (Merton), puis renforcé par le renouveau phénoménologique des années 1960 (Berger et Luckmann). Reconsidérer de façon critique ce récit semble la condition pour rétablir un dialogue entre les diverses options en sociologie de la connaissance.

(7) Culturaliser ou sociologiser l'a priori ? Le dialogue de Cassirer avec les sociologues durkheimiens

L'épisode du dialogue entre Ernst Cassirer (1874-1945) et les durkheimiens mérite une attention particulière dans la réception germanophone de la sociologie durkheimienne. Une analyse systématique des références à la « sociologie » dans le corpus de Cassirer révèle que la portion la plus importante concerne un dialogue avec les sociologues durkheimiens (Durkheim, Mauss, Halbwachs, Meillet, Lévy-Bruhl) entre les années 1920 et 1940.

Les conditions matérielles de cette rencontre impliquent la nomination de Cassirer à l'Université de Hambourg (1919) et ses contacts avec la Bibliothèque de Warburg. Cassirer et les durkheimiens partageaient un arrière-plan substantiel de sources provenant de l'ethnographie et l'anthropologie anglophones (Howitt, Cushing). Sur cette base commune, le dialogue révéla convergences et divergences concernant la reformulation de l'*a priori* kantien : les durkheimiens proposaient une sociologisation de l'*a priori* dans leur « théorie sociologique de la connaissance », tandis que Cassirer envisageait plutôt une historicisation ou culturalisation dans sa « philosophie des formes symboliques ».

Cassirer critiqua la théorie durkheimienne du totémisme et la « déduction sociologique » des catégories sur des bases empiriques et philosophiques, reprochant aux durkheimiens un « réalisme » social intenable et insistant sur la primauté de la conscience mythique. Les durkheimiens (Mauss, Halbwachs) objectèrent à sa méthode philosophique et à son concept de *Geist* socialement déconnecté, lui reprochant un « spiritualisme » opposé au « rationalisme scientifique » et au « naturalisme sociologique » des durkheimiens.

L'opposition se résume en une culturalisation de l'*a priori* chez Cassirer et une sociologisation chez les durkheimiens. L'enjeu portait sur les frontières et la hiérarchie entre philosophie et sociologie. Toutefois, il faut aussi considérer leurs « oppositions externes » communes (Bergson, Heidegger, marxisme), indiquant que leur controverse représentait une tension entre projets alliés plutôt qu'un antagonisme féroce. Une historicisation adéquate de la relation de Cassirer avec la sociologie est la précondition pour discuter ce que nous pourrions apprendre de Cassirer pour les sciences sociales aujourd'hui.

Années 1930-1960 : Déclin et transformation

Une nouvelle phase débuta vers les années 1930. Entre 1930 et 1960, la discussion évolua sous l'impact de dynamiques générales dans les champs académiques et intellectuels. Il faudrait comprendre les continuités et discontinuités dans les discussions sur les approches sociologiques de l'*a priori* dans les sciences sociales germanophones, francophones et anglophones.

La génération née entre 1895 et 1910, éduquée par la dernière génération de philosophes kantien ou néo-kantien, se retourna contre ses maîtres en arrivant à maturité dans les années 1920-1930. Dans les années 1960, elle représentait le nouvel establishment académique, devenant à son tour la cible de la génération suivante.

Trois processus interconnectés contribuèrent à la transformation du problème : (1) De nouvelles sources anti-néo-kantiennes devinrent disponibles (phénoménologie, existentialisme, empirisme logique, pragmatisme, marxisme), infléchissant la trajectoire du problème. (2) Différentes formes de mobilité savante entre la France, l'Allemagne et l'Amérique du Nord (liées à la Seconde Guerre mondiale) résultèrent en un mélange de traditions intellectuelles, produisant de nouvelles visions des catégories fondamentales traitées comme objets des sciences sociales. (3) L'autonomisation des disciplines en sciences sociales conduisit au déclin du cadre philosophique associé à un stade pré-disciplinaire « trop philosophique ». Le vocabulaire kantien perdit son attrait hors philosophie, les questions étant traduites dans de nouveaux langages et opérationnalisées dans de nouveaux programmes de recherche.

La sélection d'acteurs pertinents inclurait, dans le contexte germanophone : Elias, Horkheimer, Adorno, Sohn-Rethel, Schütz, Fleck, Zilsel, König et Schelsky. En France : Gurwitsch, Aron, Lévi-Strauss, Merleau-Ponty et Canguilhem. Dans le monde anglophone : Evans-Pritchard, Parsons et Merton.

Dans les années 1930-1960, les nouvelles orientations intellectuelles et l'autonomisation disciplinaire eurent pour effet que les références explicites au cadre kantien tendirent à décliner, sauf chez des acteurs ayant reçu une formation philosophique. La pression pour légitimer la sociologie vis-à-vis de la philosophie sembla s'affaiblir. Dans certains cas, la relation fut inversée : au lieu de la sociologie venant vers la philosophie en quête de légitimité (comme pour la génération de Durkheim), à partir des années 1960-1970 la philosophie vint vers la sociologie et l'anthropologie. Ces relations de pouvoir modifiées formèrent l'arrière-plan de l'évolution ultérieure du problème.

Années 1960-2000 : Réémergence et prolifération des *a priori* relativisés

(1) Reconstruire l'espace transnational des options pour relativiser l'a priori

La période 1960-2000 se caractérise par une réémergence de diverses formes d'*a priori* relativisés dans les débats sur le constructivisme, le relativisme et le postmodernisme. De nouvelles approches en sciences sociales et humaines, dirigées contre les programmes « positivistes », proposaient différents types d'*a priori* relativisés – historiques, sociaux, culturels, linguistiques – souvent associés à l'idée d'une réalité « construite » sur leur base.

Pour cartographier cette période, il conviendrait d'examiner les positions de chercheurs nés entre 1920 et 1940, devenus influents durant les années 1960-1970 : Kuhn, Luckmann, Berger, Garfinkel, Foucault, Habermas, Searle, Taylor, Rorty et Bourdieu, constituant des « leaders d'opinion » (*opinion leaders*) concernant la relativisation de l'*a priori*.

Trois aspects communs émergent. (1) Premièrement, les critiques du positivisme, du fonctionnalisme et du structuralisme : aux États-Unis, le positivisme logique et le fonctionnalisme de Parsons ; en France, le structuralisme linguistique, la phénoménologie heideggérienne et l'épistémologie historique ; en Allemagne, le *Positivismusstreit*. La critique mobilisait partout des modes de raisonnement transcendants, avec un retour du vocabulaire kantien, désormais dans des versions historicisées ou socialisées. (2) Deuxièmement, le « tournant linguistique » : l'analyse du langage devint le modèle directeur, non comme système formel idéal, mais comme formation historique inscrite dans les pratiques sociales, s'appuyant sur la philosophie pragmatiste ou wittgensteinienne. (3) Troisièmement, les débats sur le constructivisme, le relativisme et le postmodernisme : la référence à l'*a priori* pouvait servir des fonctions différentes – favorable au relativisme (Foucault), contre celui-ci (Habermas), ou intermédiaire (Kuhn, Bourdieu).

L'expansion des sciences sociales durant les années 1960-1980 pourrait expliquer ces développements de manière sociologique avec une corrélation entre l'ascension statutaire de ces sciences et le fait que l'*a priori* tombe sous leur juridiction.

(2) La sociologie des formes symboliques de Bourdieu entre Cassirer, Durkheim et Panofsky, années 1950-2000

Bourdieu proposa la sociologisation la plus explicite de l'*a priori* durant cette période. En dialogue avec Durkheim, Cassirer et Panofsky, il formula le projet d'une « sociologie des formes symboliques », devenu une source majeure du vocabulaire contemporain évoquant les « conditions sociales de possibilité ».

Bourdieu rencontra Cassirer dès les années 1950 à l'École normale supérieure à travers ses contacts avec les premiers importateurs français (Gueroult, Gouhier, Merleau-Ponty, Weil) et particulièrement son mentor Vuillemin. Cette réception, bien que critique, définit sa position contre la phénoménologie existentialiste et le marxisme. Dans les années 1960, Bourdieu devint éditeur de Cassirer dans sa collection « Le Sens commun », découvrant le dialogue historique entre Cassirer et les durkheimiens et défendant leur convergence. Il entra en contact direct avec Panofsky, traduisant ses ouvrages et explicitant dans cette discussion le concept d'« *habitus* ».

L'étiquette « sociologie des formes symboliques » apparut pour la première fois dans *Zur Soziologie der symbolischen Formen* (1970), née d'un échange transnational entre Bourdieu, le germaniste Szondi et l'helléniste Bollack, formant un « collège invisible d'hérétiques ». Le

label était ambigu et distinctif, démarcant Bourdieu de la philosophie « intellectualiste », du marxisme, de l'herméneutique, du positivisme et du structuralisme. La référence à Panofsky primait sur Cassirer, servant de garantie pour la transition vers la sociologie. Ce projet était une « pré-synthèse » théorique vers l'*Esquisse d'une théorie de la pratique* (1972).

Bourdieu construisit dans les années 1970-1980 une « généalogie mythique » de son projet, défendant le « raisonnement relationnel » contre positivisme et herméneutisme, soulignant l'activité « structurante » contre l'« objectivisme », et adhérant à l'héritage des Lumières contre le postmodernisme. Sa vision impliquait une sociologisation spécifique de l'*a priori*, continuant la « tradition néo-kantienne sociologisée » durkheimienne. Soulignant l'incorporation, Bourdieu reconceptualisa l'*a priori* en termes de schèmes et dispositions pratiques et corporels acquis par exposition à un environnement social structuré, formant la base de sa théorie du pouvoir symbolique.

Un cas d'ambivalence sociologique de longue durée ?

La sociologisation de l'*a priori* émerge de cette longue histoire comme un problème requérant une « hybridation de rôles » : les solutions combinent les exigences normatives de philosophes académiques et de sociologues. Les moyens sociologiques servent des buts philosophiques, et réciproquement.

Ces hybridations se caractérisent par une « ambivalence » particulière. L'*a priori*, objet philosophique, est approprié par la sociologie, important avec lui des modes de raisonnement transcendants. Les sociologisations hybrident la notion de dépendance constitué/constituant de la philosophie transcendantale avec la prétention sociologique à couvrir tous les phénomènes sociaux. Elles constituent une continuation de la philosophie par des moyens sociologiques, et de la sociologie par des moyens philosophiques. Ces stratégies étaient intrinsèquement ambiguës quant à leur signification philosophique et sociale, intervenant dans les relations institutionnalisées entre philosophie et sociologie. Elles pouvaient signifier rupture radicale ou accommodation. Certaines stratégies réussirent (Durkheimiens, Habermas, Bourdieu), d'autres échouèrent (Adler, Sohn-Rethel).

À la source se trouve une « ambivalence sociologique » (Merton et Barber), c'est-à-dire des attentes normatives incompatibles assignées à un statut. Les premiers sociologues académiques se trouvaient dans une situation structurellement ambivalente, cherchant simultanément légitimité et autonomie vis-à-vis de la philosophie. Celle-ci occupait une position de « pouvoir législatif » dans le champ académique. Obtenir de la crédibilité impliquait de respecter la distinction entre enquêtes transcendantale et empirique. Cela résulta en une situation paradoxale où les sociologues cherchaient l'approbation de l'autorité à renverser.

Les sociologisations de l'*a priori* autour de 1900 reflétaient cette ambivalence. Les conditions structurelles de long terme pourraient être retracées à l'autonomisation de la philosophie académique au tournant du XIX^e siècle et à l'émergence de projets pour une sociologie autonome. Cette hypothèse d'ambivalence sociologique, bien que très large, constitue un candidat sérieux pour expliquer l'évolution du problème et le caractère ambivalent de ses solutions.

3. Un paradigme pour la sociologisation de l'*a priori*

On peut chercher à formuler un « paradigme » pour la sociologisation de l'*a priori*, le terme paradigme étant entendu au sens mertonien de codification d'hypothèses fondamentales et de concepts clés dans un champ d'enquête.

Rationaliser la diversité historique

Depuis les années 1830, on rencontre une variété de tentatives de sociologiser l'*a priori*. Élaborer une typologie allant de Comte jusqu'à Bourdieu permettrait de « rationaliser » les solutions au problème. Toutes peuvent être construites comme des solutions au même problème défini par quatre conditions : distinction constituant/constitué, relations de dépendance bidirectionnelles, et compétence de la sociologie.

En s'appuyant sur le « paradigme » mertonien appliqué à la sociologie de la connaissance, une typologie permettrait une perspective unifiée et « rationaliserait » les options selon un certain nombre de variables (sens d'« *a priori* », de « sociologie », de « relatif à », etc.). Elle établirait une base de comparabilité et permettrait d'identifier solutions compatibles et incompatibles.

Les variables et leurs valeurs possibles

Les approches varient selon (1) « *a priori* » (catégories de pensée, concepts d'espace-temps, logique, théories, idéologies, etc.) et (2) « sociologie » (science du développement social, des faits sociaux, de l'action sociale, etc.). En adaptant le paradigme mertonien, on peut identifier aussi : (3) la « base existentielle » (position sociale, classe, valeurs, ethos, etc.), (4) le type de relation (causale, symbolique, etc.), (5) la fonction (pouvoir, intégration, etc.), (6) les conditions de validité (sociétés primitives/modernes, époques historiques, etc.), (7) la position épistémologique (relativisme, constructivisme, réalisme, etc.).

Vers une typologie des positions

Par exemple, Comte interprétait l'*a priori* comme « intelligence collective de l'humanité ». Les sociologisations allemandes, par contre, concernaient les conditions de possibilité de la

connaissance scientifique ; le programme de recherche durkheimien l'expérience ordinaire. Le tableau (ci-dessus) illustre l'application du paradigme et souligne l'existence de nombreuses solutions conflictuelles. La sociologisation de l'*a priori* était et restera un « multiple ».

4. Vers un instrumentalisme symbolique

Défis à l'a priori sociologisé

Quelle est la signification durable de ces débats ? Existe-t-il une manière plausible de reformuler aujourd'hui l'*a priori* sociologisé pour l'épistémologie et les sciences sociales ? Devons-nous rejeter cette tradition pour ses présupposés kantien « représentationnalistes », son dualisme contenu/schème, ses fonctions « idéologiques », ou sa stérilité empirique ? Est-elle devenue superflue avec les sciences cognitives ? Explorer son potentiel nécessitera de considérer les critiques radicales.

L'instrumentalisme symbolique : sources, thèses, alliés

Je suggère l'étiquette « instrumentalisme symbolique » pour le noyau durable de ces discussions autour de l'*a priori* sociologisé. Historiquement, cette position est située à l'intersection entre néo-kantisme marbourgeois, pragmatisme américain et sociologie de la connaissance. Durkheim (avec sa caractérisation des catégories comme « instruments »), Panofsky, Wind, Pap ou Bourdieu en sont des représentants.

Selon cette position, nos structures cognitives sont des « instruments symboliques ». Comme d'autres instruments, elles rendent possible l'activité humaine et opèrent comme *a priori* « relatifs » ou « fonctionnels ». Elles font partie du monde social changeant. Leur fonction transcendantale n'implique aucun dualisme épistémologique. Ces instruments symboliques fonctionnent dans la rencontre d'une dimension objective-matérielle et d'une dimension subjective-significative. Ancrés dans le corps socialisé, ils permettent de « construire » un monde tout en étant eux-mêmes partie du monde empirico-historique, modifiés entre générations selon intérêts et mécanismes sociaux.

L'instrumentalisme symbolique dépasse la distinction activité-passivité. Nous « recevons » ces instruments passivement par socialisation – ils sont « constitués ». Mais dans leur usage, ils deviennent « constitutifs ». Cette réception est la condition pour s'y rapporter réflexivement. Cette position évite un dualisme en philosophie des sciences : pas de différence de principe entre sciences naturelles et historiques. Le scientifique et l'historien utilisent des portions du monde (instruments, documents) pour en comprendre d'autres.

Applications possibles

L'instrumentalisme symbolique, combinant « constructivisme » et « réalisme », pourrait offrir une alternative à l'opposition réalisme/anti-réalisme scientifique et suggérer une solution intermédiaire concernant la thématique de la construction sociale et du relativisme. Le « réalisme rationaliste » de Bourdieu pourrait être développé dans ce sens.

L'instrumentalisme symbolique pourrait être introduit dans les débats autour de l'« *a priori* relativisé », où les considérations sociologiques ont été négligées. Cette interprétation serait proche des options pragmatistes et fonctionnalistes, intégrant la contribution des sciences sociales. En sciences sociales, l'instrumentalisme symbolique pourrait aider à expliciter les implications du raisonnement socio-transcendantal contemporain (« catégories sociales », « conditions de possibilité »). Il considérerait acteurs et monde social comme à la fois « structurants » et « structurés » sans dualisme. Il semble être le noyau épistémologique défendable du raisonnement transcendantal actuel. Les utilisateurs de ce raisonnement devraient assumer cette position – ou alors abandonner la façon de parler d'*a priori* sociologisés.

Ce plaidoyer constitue le résultat épistémologique provisoire de l'investigation historique. Sans cette investigation historique, nous n'aurions pu découvrir cette famille de positions.

5. Conclusion : garder l'échelle

Cette thèse a ouvert un vaste chantier. Le projet – retracer la sociologisation de l'*a priori* sur deux siècles dans plusieurs contextes nationaux et disciplinaires – a été commencé, mais pas accompli. Avec la sociologisation de l'*a priori*, j'ai cherché à identifier un problème intellectuel dans ses dimensions socio-historiques. J'ai proposé des études de cas utilisant les outils méthodologiques développés. Cette thèse circonscrit donc un terrain sur lequel nous pouvons poursuivre la compréhension de ce problème.

Mais cette compréhension ne dissout-elle pas le problème ? La typologie n'a-t-elle pas montré que « sociologiser l'*a priori* » signifie beaucoup de choses différentes ? Le cadrage proposé ici devrait-il être comme l'échelle de Wittgenstein : à jeter après l'avoir utilisée ?

Cependant, nous n'aurions pas vu cette variété sans présupposer – par un « jugement réfléchissant » kantien fournissant un *focus imaginarius* – une certaine unité. Nous avons ainsi établi des relations entre positions rarement mises en relation. Le cadrage a servi son objectif, rendant le tableau plus compliqué et contribuant à notre compréhension. Il pourra continuer à remplir cette fonction dans des études ultérieures.

CONCLUSION : VERS UNE MEILLEURE COMPRÉHENSION DU RAISONNEMENT SOCIO-TRANSCENDANTAL

La sociologisation de l'*a priori* a servi de fil conducteur dans cette traversée de l'histoire des sciences sociales et humaines des deux derniers siècles dans les champs académiques français et germanophone. L'exploration de cette catégorie d'analyse nous a permis d'atteindre les résultats suivants :

(1) Un récit historique global : Contrairement aux approches de courte durée, nous avons retracé le problème de la sociologisation de l'*a priori* des années 1780 à aujourd'hui, développant un récit en six phases. La sociologisation de l'*a priori* est apparue comme un ensemble de stratégies d'« hybridation » caractérisées par une ambivalence : l'acceptation et le rejet simultanés de principes kantien et comtien. L'*a priori* devait être expliqué sociologiquement sans être dissous. Les sociologisations cherchaient une position intermédiaire entre philosophie transcendantale et dissolutions empiriques. Elles exprimaient une « ambivalence sociologique » (Merton et Barber [1963] 1976) : la sociologie émergente se trouvait prise entre les normes de la philosophie transcendantale et ses propres ambitions de couvrir la totalité des phénomènes sociaux, y compris la connaissance.

(2) Un problème dans la classification des sciences et des savoirs : Nous avons conçu le problème comme résultant d'un conflit entre différentes classifications des sciences. Le problème reposait sur une contradiction entre la fonction transcendantale de l'*a priori* et le caractère empirique de la sociologie. Cette contradiction remontait aux tentatives de classer les sciences — la philosophie transcendantale kantienne et la philosophie positive comtienne — dans le contexte des transformations structurelles du champ académique autour de 1800. Cette conception nous a permis de relier contenus intellectuels et processus socio-structurels.

(3) Une typologie des positions : Notre conception du problème nous a permis de découvrir des relations entre diverses positions rarement mises en perspective, constituant ainsi un inventaire historique des sociologisations de l'*a priori* depuis le XIX^e siècle. Nous avons esquissé une typologie classant les sociologisations selon des variables avec différentes valeurs possibles. Les types vont d'approches globales couvrant les conditions *a priori* de tous les types de connaissance à des approches limitées se concentrant sur la connaissance scientifique. Ils ont en commun l'adhésion à un dualisme entre éléments constituants et constitués, l'exploration de dépendances bidirectionnelles et l'attribution de cette tâche à une science générale de la société.

(4) Redécouvrir la tradition de l'instrumentalisme symbolique : En focalisant sur les sociologisations de l'*a priori*, nous avons identifié une famille spécifique de positions cherchant à dépasser les distinctions conceptuelles kantien tout en les intégrant dans une perspective

naturaliste. Dans cette tradition – située aux intersections entre néo-kantisme, pragmatisme et sociologie de la connaissance – les termes « instruments » et « symboles » jouent un rôle central. Ces notions permettent de reformuler les distinctions kantienne entre *a priori/a posteriori* ou transcendantal/empirique dans un sens méthodologique ou fonctionnel, évitant tout dualisme épistémologique. Les « instruments » qui rendent possible la connaissance empirique – artefacts concrets, catégories, schèmes, corps, hypothèses, théories – font eux-mêmes partie du monde empirique. Cet instrumentalisme symbolique représente une position épistémologique toujours intéressante.

(5) Vers une méthodologie de l’histoire-problème sociologique : Sur le plan méthodologique, nos efforts nous ont conduit à développer l’approche d’une « histoire-problème sociologique ». Nous avons pu clarifier cette tradition aux racines diverses dans les sciences sociales françaises et germanophones. En la mettant en dialogue avec la théorie sociologique contemporaine et la sociologie des sciences, nous sommes parvenus à une position méthodologique originale. Son avantage principal est d’intégrer des aspects souvent opposés par les étiquettes polémiques de « présentisme » et « historicisme ». L’histoire-problème sociologique combine l’accent sur le travail constructif des acteurs et des historiens avec la reconnaissance des conditions socio-historiques de ces constructions.

Au-delà de ces résultats généraux, nous avons atteint des résultats historiques locaux en étudiant des épisodes stratégiques. Bien que nous n’ayons couvert ici qu’une des sources du raisonnement transcendantal dans les sciences sociales et humaines contemporaines, nous avons progressé vers une meilleure compréhension. Nos explorations nous auront sensibilisé à la pluralité de positions derrière des expressions telles que « conditions sociales de possibilité », « *a priori* historique » ou « catégories socialement construites ». Ceci peut servir de base pour des clarifications futures.