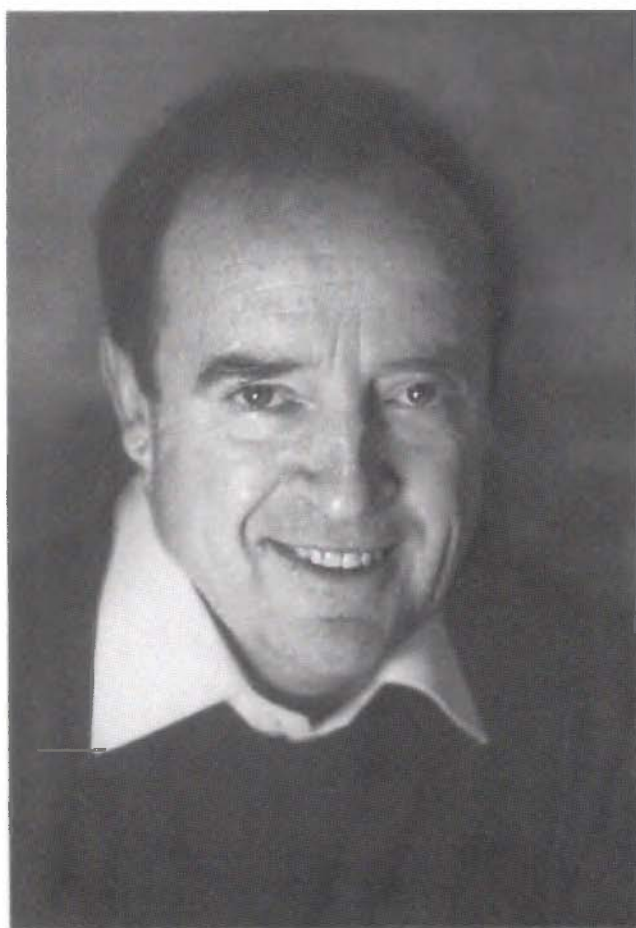


Bejahende Erkenntnis

Festschrift für T. J. Reed



Bejahende Erkenntnis

Festschrift für T.J. Reed
zu seiner Emeritierung am 30. September 2004

Herausgegeben von
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Max Niemeyer Verlag
Tübingen 2004

Bibliografische Information der Deutschen Bibliothek

Die Deutsche Bibliothek verzeichnet diese Publikation in der Deutschen Nationalbibliografie; detaillierte bibliografische Daten sind im Internet über <http://dnb.ddb.de> abrufbar.

ISBN 3-484-10865-7

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<http://www.niemeyer.de>

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Printed in Germany.

Gedruckt auf alterungsbeständigem Papier.

Druck: Laupp & Göbel, Nehren

Einband: Geiger, Ammerbuch

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T. J. Reed

Terence James (universally known as Jim) Reed was born on 16 April 1937. After a grammar school education in Woolwich he spent two years of National Service engaged among other things with the famous Russian course; he achieved the Civil Service Interpretership First Class, and his skill in speaking Russian was something that never left him. However, when he went up to Brasenose College Oxford as a scholar in 1957, it was to read French and German, and his tutors and mentors there were the distinguished scholars Robert Shackleton and Malcolm Pasley. After being awarded congratulatory First Class Honours in 1960, he took up a Senior Scholarship at Christ Church and embarked on research into Schiller and Thomas Mann. He moved back to Brasenose in 1961 as Platnauer Junior Research Fellow, but before completing his doctorate he was elected to a Tutorship in German at St John's College, which very shortly afterwards became a permanent post with a Fellowship. He was to remain there for 25 years, during a period in which St John's was recognised as an outstanding College for Modern Languages at Oxford. For six years, from 1975 to 1981, Jim helped to steer the academic destinies of the College as its Senior Tutor, as well as doing a considerable stint as a teaching tutor and teaching a wide range of topics in German literature from the 18th to the 20th centuries.

Shortly after taking up his tutorial post, Jim had urged upon his colleagues the starting of a new periodical in German literary studies; he was to become, together with Ernest Stahl, Peter Ganz and Malcolm Pasley, a co-founder of *Oxford German Studies* and has remained an editor of the journal ever since. Its first number contained his substantial article on Thomas Mann, who was to remain one of the principal focuses of Jim's busy research and publishing life. His edition of *Der Tod in Venedig* in 1971 was followed by his first major work: *Thomas Mann, The Uses of Tradition* in 1974. This book, which drew on the resources of the newly opened Mann archive in Zurich, was to become standard reading for subsequent generations of students, and initially kindled a lively exchange in print between Jim and one of the doyens of the older school, Erich Heller. Out of Jim's teaching in the classical age of German literature emerged a strong interest in the 'Goethezeit', and this was reflected in another book that was to become a widely-used introduction to the period: *The Classical Centre, Goethe and Weimar 1775-1832*, published in 1980. This work, like Jim's short book on Goethe in the Past Masters series of 1984, was to be translated into German, and Jim himself now became a regular contributor of articles to German as well as to English periodicals.

Meanwhile Jim had begun to take a keen interest in the political dimensions of academic life and of education in general. He played a leading part in the debates surrounding the agonising question of whether or not the Prime Minister of the day should be awarded an Honorary Degree by the University of Oxford, and he was one of the principal speakers in the colossal and historic meeting in the Sheldonian which denied Mrs Thatcher the honour she could have expected to receive. That there could be—and indeed were—grim consequences for the University was something Jim was well aware of, but they did not weigh against his sense of the longer-term moral damage the University could have done to itself by kow-towing to authority, nor lessen his opposition to a figure whose record on education he regarded as deplorable. This moment, which would remain a proud memory for him, could have led on to Jim's becoming involved directly in the politics of the University. But he preferred to remain an engaged and vocal back-bencher, and demonstrated that engagement by taking on, in 1985, the editorship of the *Oxford Magazine*, an informal and non-official open forum for debate between members of the University. Here for nearly 20 years Jim was to offer independent and trenchant comments on the important matters of the day, mostly as regarded Higher Education in general or Oxford in particular, but sometimes addressing wider political issues.

When Siegbert Praver retired as Taylor Professor in 1988, there were few who doubted that Jim, who had just been elected to a Fellowship of the British Academy, was destined to be his successor. When the financial rigours of the day enacted that there should be an interregnum, Jim rejoiced that, thanks to the good offices of the DAAD, his old friend Peter Pütz was able to stand in for a year. When it came to an election to the Taylor Chair, it was widely reported that the electors had reached a brisk decision in record time: in October 1989 Jim became Professor and moved to his fourth Oxford College, Queen's—initially, as is often true in these cases, with some reluctance, though in the event he was to find a warm welcome from the strong contingent of Modern Linguists at his new home.

Jim's research interests continued to expand. Schiller and Heine, who had been the subject of his earliest article, stimulated another book in the Past Masters series in the one case and translations and articles in the other. What was notably new was his investigation of the contemporary cultural scene in Germany, prompted by the events of late 1989. With his graduate students Jim explored the literature and debates of the 'Wende' and the 'Literaturstreit' itself, on which he was also to write articles. Between the collapse of Communism and German reunification he was involved with meetings of academics and students, out of which the Collegium Europaeum Jenense was to emerge; he became a founder member of that Collegium and regularly attended its meetings. Among the honours which came Jim's way in the nineties were the Presidency of the English Goethe Society, an Honorary Fellowship at St John's College, corresponding membership of the Göttingen Academy of Sciences, a spell as Schiller-Professor at the University of Jena, and the award, in Weimar, of its Gold Medal by the Goethegesellschaft. Publications, on Goethe and Thomas Mann in particular, continued to appear regularly. An edition of Goethe's

poems for English students and a translation of Goethe's 1786 Italian Diary appeared in 1999; an edition of 'Erzählungen' for the Frankfurter Ausgabe of Mann's work is to appear in the course of this year.

Despite the international range of his activities—signalled, for example, by the German publication of his essays on Goethe—and the maintenance of links with colleagues all over the world, Jim did not neglect his duties at home, serving for two years as Vice-Chairman and for two years as Chairman of the Modern Languages Faculty Board in Oxford. Particularly characteristic was the way in which he never turned his back on his first activity, that of teaching. He could always be relied upon to help colleagues by giving their pupils tutorials on Mann or Goethe or Heine; and although students were terrified to think of sitting at the feet of an internationally renowned scholar in the field, they invariably found understanding and sympathetic treatment and benefited from Jim's ability to communicate clearly in a friendly manner. Jim even maintained a tradition of translation classes, in which he artfully combined the rendering of key passages into English with an introduction to German thought of the later 18th and earlier 19th centuries. But his principal pedagogic involvement during his years as Professor was with graduate students, considerable numbers of whom came to work under his direction. In this way he assumed responsibility for future generations of scholars and teachers in German studies—a commitment that is happily reflected in the present collection of essays, which brings together work by his former pupils and by senior colleagues from Britain and Germany. In addition, the volume commemorates his forty-year membership of a department which, as has been said, must rank on any sane appraisal among the very finest in the country, and stands as a tribute to his leadership of it by example.

In all the activities of his life Jim has been strongly supported by his family, especially his wife Ann, whom he married in 1960.

None of his friends and colleagues would anticipate Jim's entering upon retirement as a step towards indolence or inactivity, so it is no surprise that he will be spending next year at Göttingen, enjoying the prize awarded him by the Humboldt Foundation by doing research into the Enlightenment. And even after that there will no doubt be other heights to scale apart from the hills of the north which it is his passion to climb. In all these endeavours and for all his future projects we wish him well.

Ray Ockenden

On two types of knowledge in the human sciences

Wir leben innerhalb der abgeleiteten Erscheinungen und wissen keineswegs,
wie wir zur Urfrage gelangen sollen.
(Goethe)¹

Basically there are two different, but related types of knowledge in the human sciences: *illusio* and *aisthesis*. *Illusio* in its later Latin form means ‘illusion’ or ‘deceit’, but it also suggests ludic activities: ‘playing’, ‘mocking’, ‘jeering’, ‘wasting away in sport’; *aisthesis*, deriving from the Greek for ‘sense perception’, ‘feeling’, broadly signifies an aesthetic, materialistic mode of cognition. The aim here is briefly to define and compare their scope and implications.

The human sciences are the *summa* of human knowledge, the knowledge the human species has of itself as being human. They are the most interested knowledge. As a resource acquired over time, they enable humanity to express, and communicate with, itself.² They are also the most political kind of knowledge, – the creation of different kinds of cultures and societies, different forms of political and economic organization. Moreover, they are a source of arguments, of examples and topics, that shape the vast, heterogenous field of human activity that is by definition political and ethical.³

Any social fact or cultural form may be apprehended either as *illusio* or as *aisthesis*. The case of tragedy is illustrative – as both the representation of a human situation and as the Classical genre that produces that representation. Take Hamlet’s tragic predicament and his observation: *There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, / Than are dreamt of in your philosophy*. He does not just imply that human knowledge is limited. He describes what it is like to gain knowledge, to go beyond its previous limits: here learning from his father’s ghost the facts of his murder. He conveys the amazement of sudden awareness. Hamlet has his mind changed by the experience. He discards received knowledge for knowledge that drives intellectual and moral conviction. The bookish metaphor illustrates the cognitive process. Hamlet vows to erase from his memory *All saws of books, all forms, all pressures past / That youth and observation copied there*. Instead (he tells the ghost), *thy commandment all alone shall live / Within the book and volume of my brain*. The world that had apparently been in order, is suddenly disjointed. What once were *fond records*, now seem *trivial* (*Hamlet*, I. v, ll. 98–104; ll. 166–167). Might then all knowledge be a dream, a mental

¹ Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Maximen und Reflexionen*. In: Goethe, *Werke*. Ed. Erich Trunz. (Hamburger Ausgabe) Munich ⁸1978. vol. 12, pp. 364–547 (no. 589, p. 446).

² Herbert Schnädelbach, “‘Sinn’ in der Geschichte? – Über Grenzen des Historismus”. In: Schnädelbach, *Vorträge und Abhandlungen*. Vol. 3: *Philosophie in der modernen Kultur*. Frankfurt/M. 2000, pp. 127–149 (p. 137).

³ Aristotle, *The Art of Rhetoric*. Ed. John Henry Freese. (Loeb Classical Library) Cambridge/MA – London 1994, p. 19 (I. ii. 7).

conspectus that always urgently needs a reality check? Shakespeare's tragedy thus illustrates knowledge as *illusio*.

But tragedy, as a genre, also tries to make sense of senseless fate: it constructs sense against the grain of horror and absurdity. The Apolline clarity of aesthetic form makes it possible to *look at the most accurate representations of things which in themselves we find painful to see*.⁴ It makes the chaos and waste that is human existence visible. At the same time, it has a redemptive vocation. In its catharsis, tragedy – like poetry as a whole – has the power of *healing every wound it inflicts*.⁵ Tragedy exists to dwell on the flawed nature of human existence that, beyond the paroxysms of passion motivating it, inevitably reflects the flawed nature of human knowledge. That is why the dilemma of the melancholic personality, burdened with knowledge, is a tragic subject. Hamlet is caught between knowledge and action. He sees that cognitive aptitude demands practical intention: *the large discourse*, innate in human being, in itself implies that *godlike reason* should not *rust in us unused* (*Hamlet*, IV. iv; ll. 36–39). *Hamlet* is thus a tragedy about sense: about 'sense' as 'reason' and 'meaning'; as well as about 'sense' as 'orientation' and 'purpose'. Tragedy, as an aesthetic-cognitive form, is a radical form of human self-reflection. It brings us to our senses. It thus exemplifies knowledge as *aisthesis*.

As this example suggests, *illusio* and *aisthesis* cannot simply be equated with 'objective' or 'subjective' knowledge. Receiving additional information about an issue of grave concern may well change the way things look. Conversely, primary intuitions, affective and intellectual responses to a situation are triggered, often subconsciously, by features in the social environment. *Illusio* and *aisthesis* thus derive from the same cognitive activity. Both stances link mind and world with each other. Both reveal this link as ecological. That is to say: mind is not just "immanent [...] in circuits within the brain", nor just "in circuits [...] within the system, brain *plus* body", but actually "immanent within the larger system – man *plus* environment".⁶ The human 'cognitive apparatus' (i.e. the brain, the nervous system) evolves in relation to the world around it: the external world is internalized; inner intuitions and thoughts are projected onto what is out there.⁷ Hence "'exteroception' (recognition of stimuli produced outside an organism) that contains information about the concreteness of the world is necessarily accompanied by 'proprioception' (recognition of stimuli produced and received within an organism) that contains information about our embeddedness within the world".⁸ The social world, the human sphere within the natural world, is a particular instance of this ecological situation. Here the cognitive process gets

⁴ Aristotle, "On the Art of Poetry". In: *Classical Literary Criticism*. Ed. T. S. Dorsch. Harmondsworth 1965, pp. 29–75 (p. 35).

⁵ J. P. F. Richter, *Vorschule der Ästhetik*. In: *Sämtliche Werke*. Ed. Norbert Miller. Munich 1967, vol. 5, p. 35 (§ 3). Unless otherwise indicated, all translations from the original are mine.

⁶ Gregory Bateson, *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*. With a new Foreword by Mary Catherine Bateson. Chicago – London 2000, p. 317.

⁷ Edgar Morin, *La Méthode: 3. La Connaissance de la Connaissance*. Paris 1986, pp. 60ff.

⁸ Ellen Dissanayake, *Homo Aestheticus. Where Art Comes From and Why*. Seattle – London 1995, p. 156.

very complex: all kinds of cultural, gender, moral, political, and religious factors are also involved. Furthermore, the social world, along with all these other factors, shapes and inhabits the cognitive schemes researchers use to understand it.⁹

Analytically speaking, *illusio* and *aisthesis* can, therefore, be defined as variants of the same cognitive process. What makes them different types of knowledge is cultural practice. *Illusio* designates the product of the cognitive situation. It is motivated by instrumental values, whether they be of a moral-social (e.g. forensic) or of a technical-economic kind. It is endorsed by the ‘thought-styles’ of the ‘thought-collectives’ that govern disciplinary practice.¹⁰ It is legitimized by tradition, received opinion, the prevailing informed consensus. *Aisthesis* designates reflective judgement about cognitive situations. It originates in immediate, primordial apprehension, given that “the human sensory system and brain, which evolved over millions of years, have remained structurally unchanged for hundreds of thousands”.¹¹ It has a ‘species-essential’ use. Its reflective character reveals that “self-consciousness is self-awareness as relayed from consciousness of species-essence”. For each individual within each individual, it “synthesizes [...] the contingent singularity of particularity and the generality of the species”.¹² Thus it confronts us with the question of how things make sense. It is affirmed by those who perform a socially reflective function – by intellectuals (e. g. essayists, poets, novelists, dramatists, artists, film-makers, etc.). Intellectuals, by definition, are “technicians of the universal”, striving to consecrate species-awareness as a form of social practice.¹³ Consequently, *aisthesis* faces problems with its legitimation. The current postmodern era promotes for global economic reasons the relativity of all facts and the heterogeneity of all values. That it dismisses universality as a Eurocentric, ‘imperialist’ ideology, is an ideological move. It endorses whatever happens to prevail, which neutralizes dissent.¹⁴ Still *aisthesis* as knowledge exists. It exists as a specific ecological form of knowledge; its very existence vouches for universals, for the cognitive universals (e.g. spatial abilities) the mind depends on, and the ethical universals (e.g. human rights) life itself demands.¹⁵ In any case, though it may not take cultural differences into account, universalism makes no value-judgement on their underlying anthropological systems. Rather it is the politics of difference that makes cultures oppose each other.¹⁶

⁹ Pierre Bourdieu, *Méditations pascaliennes*. Paris 1997, p. 180.

¹⁰ See Ludwik Fleck, “Das Problem einer Theorie des Erkennens”. In: *Erfahrung und Tatsache. Gesammelte Aufsätze*. Ed. Lothar Schäfer and Thomas Schnelle. Frankfurt/M. 1983, pp. 84–127 (pp. 87f., 102–108, 114).

¹¹ Robert L. Solso, *Cognition and the Visual Arts*. Cambridge/MA – London 1994, p. 47.

¹² Agnes Heller, *Everyday Life*. Trans. G. L. Campbell. London – New York 1984, pp. 20f.

¹³ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Plaidoyer pour les intellectuels*. Collection Idées. Paris 1972, pp. 49ff.

¹⁴ See the critique of postmodernism (of Lyotard and Jameson respectively) in: Edward Said, *Representations of the Intellectual*. London 1994, pp. 13ff.; and in: Russell Jacoby, *The Last Intellectuals. American Culture in the Age of Academe*. With a new introduction by the author. New York 2000, pp. 166ff.

¹⁵ On universals, see Dissanayake, *Homo Aestheticus* (n. 8), pp. 71ff., 159ff.

¹⁶ See Emmanuel Todd, *Après l'empire. Essai sur la décomposition du système américain*. Paris 2002, pp. 126, 143, 161f.

Ultimately, therefore, *aisthesis* vindicates itself. As sensory cognition that heightens our sense of things, its *raison d'être* is vigilance. Vigilance (we might say) is an 'intellectual constant' of a self-conscious, enlightened, humane culture. It means being *ever on the watch to prevent the occurrence of anything unforeseen, anything unexpected, anything whatever that is strange*; that is, it means directing *so searching a glance in all directions with the constant aim of finding an assured retreat for a life free from vexation and worry*.¹⁷

In practice, however, *aisthesis*, as species-essential reflection, can still be blocked. It is just repackaged as the personal expression of particular talented individuals. It is treated as something purely subjective. What governs this cultural practice is recognition. This also explains why *illusio* governs cultural practice. Essential to *illusio* is not just cognition, but 're-cognition'. It concerns knowledge that either is 'already known' or further illuminates 'knowledge already known'. Psycho-biological reasons explain this phenomenon: "even with the billions of cortical neurons working in parallel, it is impossible to store *all* the sights and sounds (and other sensations) of this teeming world". The mind necessarily operates with prototypes. It retains the determining characteristics of what it already knows well. That means it stores "impressions that embody the most frequently experienced features of a class of objects".¹⁸ That also means it must already operate with criteria of relevance that provide "the motivation for both storing and transmitting [...] information". So "the most general psychological factor affecting the distribution of information is its compatibility and fit with human cognitive organization".¹⁹ The homogeneity of this information (i.e. these features, characteristics, impressions, representations), its social distribution, its conformity to existing knowledge conventions, in short, all the various cognitive attributes of 're-cognition' make *illusio* seem objective. What is more, this 'objectivity' is reinforced by particular heteronomous social interests that need knowledge as *illusio* – and so inevitably block out *aisthesis*. Political, cultural, commercial institutions – e.g. the media, but also universities as the embodiment of these sets of values combined – decide what gets 're-cognized'. The objectification of knowledge (*illusio*) and their own self-perpetuation go together.

Illusio is inherent in knowledge as the product of human experience. What we know we know, is truth. How things really are, is objective knowledge. The problem is: that enlightens no one. That just shows that certainty takes the form of enigmatic tautology. Certainty happens because "it has nothing to do with experience, reveals nothing about reality, and results from arbitrarily determined language rules".²⁰ In its formal precision the tautology that is certainty has an illusory quality. "Tautologies can be thought of [...] as *mirror images* whose function is one of self-referential definition," George Steiner

¹⁷ Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations*. Trans. J. E. King. (Loeb Classical Library) Cambridge/MA – London 1996, p. 369 (IV. xvii. 37f.).

¹⁸ Solso, *Cognition and the Visual Arts* (n. 11), p. 251.

¹⁹ Dan Sperber, *Explaining Culture. A Naturalistic Approach*. Oxford 1996, pp. 76, 140.

²⁰ Robert von Mises, *Kleines Lehrbuch des Positivismus. Einführung in die empiristische Wissenschaftsauffassung*. Ed. Friedrich Stadler. Frankfurt/M. 1990, pp. 192f.

remarks in reference to God's utterance: *I am that I am* (*Exodus*, 3:14).²¹ And he continues: "propositions of the type 'A is A' are [...] generative of reason and of systematic constructs of thought". That is because: "this postulate [...] may be held to inform western criteria of intelligibility". Being and knowing converge in this unambiguous proposition: truth brooks no contradiction within itself. An entity cannot both be what it is and not be what it is: if this were possible, neither existence nor knowledge could exist. The key issue is to discover how knowing and being are equated, how they mirror each other. What kind of knowledge identifies with what actually is? What is it about what actually is, that produces the knowledge we now have? Might not this whole business imply, as Nietzsche suggests, a *perspectival illusion*?²²

Illusio haunts epistemology like a ghost. There is something spectral in the notion that appearances are deceptive but are all anyone ever has. That is essentially the crux of idealism. To refute it immediately, viscerally, takes only an acute body-tissue sensation (e.g. a cut or a burn). Yet appearances, sensations change. All things are subject to transience, an inevitable cause of *illusio*. Time witnesses to *th' freshest things now reigning, and make[s] stale / The glistening of this present* (*The Winter's Tale*, IV. i, ll. 13–14). Truth, certainty need to be unchanging, transcendent, essential – that which (according to Aristotle) makes anything *what it already was*.²³ It needs to be that which really is when everything else is not: Plato's *idea* resplendent beyond the shadowy forms of ordinary life; Leibniz's nominalistic *distincta notio*, as reliable as the gold-standard; Hegel's *Geist* always true to itself because progressively mutating towards complete self-knowledge; Schopenhauer's *Weltauge*, the panoptical scope of the pure knowing mind, above the treacherous stream of world affairs. Such ideas are life-orientating, intellectual landmarks, fixed like the pole-star, beyond flux and tempest, essentially – as Leibniz argues – because nominal definitions do not depend on human arbitrariness.²⁴ Yet mentioning Hegel signals the idea that transcendent logical truth has its own history (for want of a better word). In Hegel's thinking transience has a unique dynamic, unfolding truth in a way inaccessible to purely intellectual contemplation. The 'world process' has its own logic that progressively reveals itself. The observer may well be able to envisage it theoretically, as in the *Phänomenologie des Geistes*. But as an agent, situated in a particular place and time, he or she cannot know how to realize it in his or her actions and existence. Fraught with conflicting intentions, the process is inevitably dialectical. The knowledge required may well come afterwards. All that is now, is *illusio*: the often catastrophic subterfuges of reason (*List der Vernunft*) any agent at any time unwittingly falls for.

²¹ George Steiner, "The great tautology". In: *No Passion Spent. Essays 1978–1996*. London 1997, p. 351 (my italics).

²² Friedrich Nietzsche, *Aus dem Nachlaß der achtziger Jahre*. In: *Werke*. Ed. Karl Schlechta. Munich 1956, vol. 3, pp. 415–925 (p. 500).

²³ See Martin Heidegger, "Die Frage nach der Technik". In: *Vorträge und Aufsätze*. Pfullingen ³1967, vol. 1, pp. 5–36 (p. 31).

²⁴ Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Meditationes de Cognitione, Veritate et Ideis*. In: *Die philosophischen Schriften von G. W. Leibniz*. Ed. C. J. Gerhardt. Hildesheim 1960, vol. 4, pp. 422–426 (p. 425).

Illusio opens up, therefore, the constant possibility of unreliability and disorientation. It beckons with a course of action, a life-consuming commitment, that could prove erroneous. In response epistemology resorts only to rules of conduct for the understanding, as Spinoza observes: *Method is not identical with [...] comprehension of the causes of things*, i.e. not primarily with the production of positive knowledge. Rather *it is the discernment of a true idea [...] in order that we may thus know our power of understanding, and may so train our mind that it may, by a given standard, comprehend whatsoever is intelligible*.²⁵ The key issue is the mind's own proper orientation. Rationalism insists that whatever knowledge is produced, is only as valid as the cognitive process that produces it. The way to develop knowledge is not to produce more of it (i.e. more of the same old thing), but to refine the cognitive process itself. *Illusio* thus provokes its most effective antidote, mental reservation. Hence, the basic rule is scepticism: a refusal intellectually to assent to anything without thinking it through. In this respect Descartes' method is exemplary, however much the dualism in his thinking and the concept of reason that sustains it have since been repudiated. Its radical, reductive reflex keeps its edge. His mistrust of sense perception for being indistinguishable from the *illusions and deceptions (ludificationes somniorum)* a malign spirit might conjure up to *trick his credulity*, is a trope of Classical scepticism.²⁶ But it still helps negotiate a postmodern society that, with "mediatized experiences" and "reality-effects" as its objective world, takes *illusio* for its reality-principle.²⁷ Furthermore, this reflex must inevitably resist the professional institutionalization of knowledge. Suspending judgement, but also the impulse to go on searching, Classical practices of scepticism, are on principle never going to 're-cognize' knowledge already known.²⁸ Descartes turns against professional learning, therefore, not just because, having attended *one of the most famous schools in Europe* and gone through all the knowledge already known, he discovers at the end only its fallibility and his ignorance. Rather he sees it perpetuating itself as *illusio*, based as it is on *speculations that remain ineffectual*, relying on *ingenuity and artifice to make it plausible*, and so complacently fostering specialized interests that *neglect the many ways of discovering something different*.²⁹ His rejection of heterogeneous erudition for the *great book of the world*, common sense and immediate experience remains salutary. Descartes insists on knowledge being anchored in ordinary life – in *the reasoning everyone uses in matters that concern them*

²⁵ Benedict de Spinoza, *On the Improvement of the Understanding*. In: *On the Improvement of the Understanding. The Ethics. Correspondence*. Trans. R. H. M. Elwes. New York 1955, pp. 1–41 (p. 14).

²⁶ René Descartes, *Méditations métaphysiques*. Ed. and trans. Florence Khodoss. Paris 1970, pp. 33–34.

²⁷ See Gianni Vattimo, *La Società trasparente*. Trans. J.-P. Pisetta. Paris 1990, p. 39; Paul Virilio, *L'Espace critique*. Paris 1984, p. 27.

²⁸ Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*. Trans. R. G. Bury. (Loeb Classical Library) Cambridge/MA – London 2000, pp. 3–7, 315, 321 (I, 2f., 7f.; II, 246, 253).

²⁹ René Descartes, *Discours de la méthode*. Ed. Geneviève Rodis-Lewis. (Collection Garnier) Paris 1966, pp. 35, 39; René Descartes, *Règles pour la direction de l'esprit*. Ed. J. Sirven. (Bibliothèque des Textes Philosophiques) Paris 1996, pp. 3f. (Règle 1).

directly.³⁰ His position is that, in order to think what we need to know, we first need to know what to think. He recognizes the basic proposition that, to have any relevance, knowledge must address a “world other than the world from which knowledge comes”.³¹

So there are, then, methodological remedies for *illusio*. They involve finding out what is in the best interest of thinking, what reason needs for it to function properly. So common is it to see thinking as projecting ideological positions, that any claim for intellectual self-sufficiency comes across as absurd. It takes Kant to show that when thinking succumbs to heteronomous guidance, it forfeits its integrity and freedom. Precisely in debatable ethical matters, he suggests relying on *rational conviction* (*Vernunftglaube*). Reason needs it for self-guidance when it moves beyond experience and objective grounds of knowledge and for deciding what in these spheres it should hold to be true. Kant thus offers a model of reflective autonomy and responsible moral behaviour. Here he concurs with Descartes that philosophy should permit one *to tell truth from falsehood, to act with clarity, and to proceed with assurance on life’s way*.³² These rational rules for self-orientation are meant to help people negotiate the usual, tedious, social miasma of political dogma, racial prejudice, and ideological spin. They are also technically very abstract, which is both a strength and a weakness. But then abstraction is the form *illusio* takes when it takes the form of certainty.

The disciplines of the human sciences and the philosophies mentioned here do not match up exactly. To get at what is behind them conceptually would take a more detailed enquiry. Still, they do share some epistemological principles: (a) They are based on nominalism. What objects a discipline deals with, depends on what concepts define the discipline. Its objects are never natural: e.g. ‘society’ is treated quite differently by sociologists, historians, psychologists, and political scientists. (b) The discipline presumes that the object it chooses is intellectually coherent in itself, has its own ‘sufficient reason’ for existing, and functions according to its own ascertainable rationale.³³ (c) The discipline must ensure that it itself is intellectually coherent. It must operate according to rules and methods professionally legitimized not just by itself but also by society in general. (d) The discipline and its objects converge (cf. $A=A$) so that the knowledge it produces is not only certain (i.e. objective, reliable, effective, real), but also socially ‘re-cognized’ as such. These four shared principles make up

³⁰ Descartes, *Discours de la méthode* (n. 29), p. 39.

³¹ Neil Postman, *Building a Bridge to the 18th Century. How the Past Can Improve Our Future*. New York 2000, p. 96.

³² Immanuel Kant, *Was heisst: sich im Denken orientieren?* In: Kant, *Werkausgabe in zwölf Bänden*. Ed. Wilhelm Weischedel. (Suhrkamp Taschenbücher Wissenschaft) Frankfurt/M. 1977, vol. 5, pp. 267–283 (pp. 270, 280f.); see Descartes, *Discours de la méthode* (n. 29), p. 39.

³³ See Moritz Schlick, “Die Grenze der naturwissenschaftlichen und philosophischen Begriffsbildung”. In: *Philosophische Logik*. Ed. Bernd Philipp. Frankfurt/M. 1986, pp. 11–30 (p. 13); Max Weber, “Roscher und Knies und die logischen Probleme der historischen Nationalökonomie”. In: *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Wissenschaftslehre*. Ed. Johannes Winckelmann. Tübingen 1988, pp. 1–145 (p. 134); Martin Heidegger, “Wissenschaft und Besinnung”. In: *Vorträge und Aufsätze* (n. 23), pp. 37–62 (p. 50).

systematic knowledge in the human sciences: (human) science may be seen as ‘practical epistemology’, or as a branch of ‘technics’, a technological adaptation of epistemology. Together they produce for each discipline a logic of ‘re-cognition’.

Illusio may well haunt epistemology: even so, its task is to exorcise it. By contrast, the human sciences, as technological applications of epistemology, come with *illusio* built in. It inheres in their facilitating structures, in their processes of ‘re-cognition’. Furthermore, ‘re-cognition’ is logically predisposed to keep on creating *illusio* as an always eventual possibility. Because it suspects that *illusio* is endemic, science constantly needs to confirm itself by confirming the reality of the objects it deals with. It needs to keep on going after what it knows to make sure of it.³⁴ Thus ‘knowledge already known’ authenticates and perpetuates itself.³⁵ At the same time, it never loses the apprehension inherent in the repetition-compulsion that sustains it. Might it not be mistaken after all? Might not even its own apprehensiveness be letting it down and causing embarrassing lapses (‘Fehlleistungen’)?

Illusio is endemic in the human sciences – and for several reasons. First, no science provides a true picture of the world, none can be a stand-in for reality. The very idea of a comprehensive ‘system’, says Neurath, is “the great scientific lie”.³⁶ This is not just because semiotic systems and grammars conventionalize reality and so pre-form the objects a science deals with – as for instance Nietzsche observed.³⁷ It is also because the purpose of disciplinary methodology is to ‘prepare’ the object it identifies, to refunction it, so that it can be ‘re-recognized’ as the knowledge the discipline already knows. However, it does need to be stressed that objects can be apprehended, their meaning elicited, in many more ways than by disciplinary professionalism.³⁸ Emphasizing this premise might seem to be unnecessary, were there not human scientists who, contrary to both evidence and logic, maintain the opposite. Most frequently professional historians assert the absolute identity of knowing and being as the legitimating rationale of their discipline. They insist that “the search for historical understanding [...] is [...] an intrinsic element of being human”; “history [...] helps us understand how our world got to be the way it is”; “our best peculiar justification for history is to say that it needs no justification. Because it is

³⁴ Heidegger, “Wissenschaft und Besinnung” (n. 33), p. 50.

³⁵ Moritz Schlick, “Das Wesen der Wahrheit nach der modernen Logik”. In: *Philosophische Logik*. Ed. Bernd Philipp. Frankfurt/M. 1986, pp. 31–109 (p. 105).

³⁶ Ludwik Fleck, “Wissenschaftstheoretische Probleme”. In: *Erfahrung und Tatsache* (n. 10), pp. 128–146 (p.128); Otto Neurath, “Einheit der Wissenschaft als Aufgabe”. In: *Otto Neurath oder die Einheit von Wissenschaft und Gesellschaft*. Ed. Paul Neurath and Elisabeth Nemeth. Vienna – Cologne – Weimar 1994, pp. 375–381 (p. 376). (My thanks to Hadwig Kräutler for this reference.) See also Weber, “Roscher und Knies und die logischen Probleme der historischen Nationalökonomie” (n. 33), p. 92.

³⁷ See Carlo Ginzburg, *History, Rhetoric and Proof*. Hanover/NH – London 1999, pp. 8ff.

³⁸ Heidegger, “Wissenschaft und Besinnung” (n. 33), pp. 49, 56.

everything it is inescapable".³⁹ These are all tautological formulations (i.e. of the type $A=A$: hence, 'understanding' = 'being'; 'got to be' = 'the way it is'; 'history' = 'everything'). They are meant to be the bedrock of intelligibility. But historical science is surely a classic instance of truth's logical criterion refuting itself. Much could be said about the mesmerizing, affirmative ideology behind these claims. Suffice it here to point out their formal 'in-adequacy' (to adapt the Leibnizian term). Unless history were a unified science (in Neurath's sense) or a single 'world-formula' (in Laplace's sense; or as required by Ockham's reductive principle of conceptual parsimony) – unless it were the one and only science, it could not possibly account for everything.⁴⁰ These claims are refuted by the *de facto* existence of other human sciences, but also by the heterogeneity of the types of history that make up historical understanding. These claims would merely assert that a heterogeneous subject-matter justifies a heterogeneous discipline, – which is an absurd proposition. That implies the negation of the very possibility of knowledge, since it implies utter arbitrariness: "history is simply what historians do".⁴¹ Hence, as Weber points out, history cannot be a "science of reality" ('Wirklichkeitswissenschaft'), the total image of a total reality, i.e. of what actually was. Rather it isolates and explains relatively intelligible components of it. From within the flux of the vulgar-psychological experience of everyday life, it produces concrete 'enclaves' of meaning. Though inferred from experience, the meanings thus constructed reflect their arbitrary level of analysis.⁴²

Second, between appearance and truth there is no principle difference: they just represent different stages in the development of knowledge.⁴³ As a virologist, Fleck infers this conclusion from the evolution of the modern concept of syphilis. From the fifteenth century onwards, its various forms (mystical-ethical, empirical-therapeutic, pathogenetic, etiological) emerge not from steady methodological discovery, from assured, formal-logical progress towards truth. Instead they signify predominant types of 'thought style' that, at any given period of time, shape scientists' ways of conceptualizing.⁴⁴ Consequently, the history of science is impossible to write: it would substitute an ideal, 'artificial scheme' for an accurate representation of the dynamic, vibrant profusion of conflicting ideas and opinions that really drives it. Certainly, to

³⁹ Mary Fulbrook, *Historical Theory*. London – New York 2002, p. 193; David Cannadine, *Making History Now. An Inaugural Lecture*. London 1999, p. 8; Felipe Fernández-Armesto, "Epilogue: What is History Now?" In: *What is History Now?* Ed. David Cannadine. Basingstoke – New York 2002, pp. 148–161 (p. 154).

⁴⁰ Schlick, "Die Grenze der naturwissenschaftlichen und philosophischen Begriffsbildung" (n. 33), pp. 17f.

⁴¹ Ludmilla Jordanova, *History in Practice*. London 2000, p. 197.

⁴² Weber, "Roscher und Knies und die logischen Probleme der historischen Nationalökonomie" (n. 33), pp. 113f..

⁴³ Fleck, "Über einige besondere Merkmale des ärztlichen Denkens". In: *Erfahrung und Tatsache* (n. 10), pp. 37–58 (p. 56).

⁴⁴ Ludwik Fleck, *Entstehung und Entwicklung einer wissenschaftlichen Tatsache. Einführung in die Lehre vom Denkstil und Denkkollektiv*. Ed. Lothar Schäfer and Thomas Schnelle. Frankfurt/M. 1980, pp. 15ff.

evade the relativism the concept of 'thought style' involves, is difficult. Its object may well be real enough (i. e. illness): yet the factual truth or objectivity a given 'thought style' achieves, makes sense only within that 'thought style' itself.⁴⁵ Conversely, it could be argued that a 'thought style' that endures could lend stability to science: "it is the content of what we find out, not how we find out that is refuted".⁴⁶ However, 'objective' *illusio* can be just as stable as 'objective' truth. As the dialectical process of discovery recedes from consciousness, its results bed down as the ruling consensus of opinion and the disciplinary community harmoniously conforms to it. Fleck describes this phenomenon as the "effect of the harmony of illusions" – an effect of the harmony within a 'thought style'. This is what creates the firm belief in an objective world scientific results refer to.⁴⁷

Third, disciplinary practices for producing knowledge have an inherently *ludic* character. The idea that doing research in normal science is like solving jig-saw or crossword puzzles forms the basis of Kuhn's theory of paradigms. In both cases, the object is not to pursue new knowledge but to work with what is already 're-recognized'. What counts as valid research, is work on those problems that, according to the prevailing paradigm or 'thought style', seem capable of solution. The whole point of disciplinary specialization is to impose "rules that limit both the nature of acceptable solutions and the steps by which they are to be obtained". After all, similar restrictions obtain in the case of jig-saw puzzles, crosswords and chess problems.⁴⁸ By analogy, therefore, the professional interest in knowledge already known can be seen in similarly ludic terms. The institutions of any discipline, its journals, conferences, professional bodies, represent "a form of organization in which membership is acquired by a course of special training whose end is the production of persons who recognize one another [...] because they perform the same moves in the same game".⁴⁹ G. R. Elton's *The Practice of History*, the canonical statement of the conviction that "ultimate history is what actually happened", is a perfect illustration.⁵⁰ His view of a factual past that can be truthfully and objectively recovered is propounded in a general tone of exhortation, accompanied both by reiterated methodological injunctions, imperatives, and prohibitions, and by categorical disqualifications of divergent opinions and procedures. Even though Elton thus offers unselfconsciously a text-book case of a 'thought style' and its 'thought coercion' ('Denkzwang'), the illusion is not immediately obvious. But, clearly, if it takes these rules to establish an historically 'objective' past, then that past exists by virtue not of its objectivity, but of the rules that make it seem so. Truth and

⁴⁵ Fleck, *Entstehung und Entwicklung einer wissenschaftlichen Tatsache* (n. 44), pp. 23, 130, 132–133.

⁴⁶ Ian Hacking, "'Style' for historians and philosophers". In: *Historical Ontology*. Cambridge/MA – London 2002, pp. 178–199 (pp. 191–192).

⁴⁷ Fleck, *Entstehung und Entwicklung einer wissenschaftlichen Tatsache* (n. 44), pp. 114–115.

⁴⁸ Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Chicago ²1975, pp. 36–38.

⁴⁹ Stanley Fish, *Professional Correctness. Literary Studies and Political Change*. Cambridge/MA – London 1999, p. 32.

⁵⁰ G. R. Elton, *The Practice of History*. London 1969, p. 76.

objectivity are, therefore, always projections of the social logic of disciplinary practice. More consistently than Kuhn, Fleck stresses the inherently social nature of knowledge production. A discipline consists of ‘thought collectives’ that impose their own ‘thought constraints’ to determine what kinds of knowledge or problematic issues it ‘re-cognizes’.⁵¹ The concepts (Fleck stresses) are entirely functional: they derive from his laboratory experience. Here, a process of experimentation, observation, and discussion may result in an ‘objective’, collective view none of the individual participants intended or envisaged.⁵² *Illusio* thus particularly defines a purely sociological process. Having internalized the rules that construct their field of knowledge, and interacting with its symbolic systems, which impose their own constraints on those involved with them, scientists generate for themselves the experience of working with an objectivity that transcends their discipline.⁵³

Fourth, the process of knowledge is a dialectic of disenchantment. The term ‘dialectic’ just stresses that any acquired certainty becomes illusory as more of what is already known supersedes it. The intellectualization of the world, driven on by ‘Wissenschaft’, is (says Weber) a process of disenchantment. But intellectual progress is itself a deceptive concept. Science must have obsolescence built-in in order to have any meaning or purpose. Consequently, the production of ‘recognized knowledge’ on the basis of scientific progress only confirms that, at any given moment, what is already known is inherently illusory. In the history of knowledge what were once final vindications of intellectual purpose were actually only *previous illusions*.⁵⁴ Disenchantment arises also because this process makes knowledge and human interests, theoretical curiosity and human self-respect diverge. With the disenchantment comes a sense of grievance towards science itself for destroying humanity’s own cherished illusions, as Freud admits when he details the narcissistic injury inflicted on the species’ self-image successively by heliocentric cosmology, natural selection, and psychoanalysis itself.⁵⁵ In complete contrast, nothing other than oneiric enchantment with transient things fascinates the panoptical human science, history. Trevelyan’s sentimental outpouring (1927 vintage) about the historian’s “curiosity to know what really happened in that land of mystery we call the past”, about him peering “into that magic mirror”, his realization that “the dead [...] were once as real” as he and that he “shall tomorrow be [a] shadow[s] like them”, is still endorsed, in this late, baleful era of the American imperium, for finally vindicating historical study.⁵⁶

⁵¹ Fleck, “Das Problem einer Theorie des Erkennens”. In: *Erfahrung und Tatsache* (n. 10), pp. 107–109.

⁵² Fleck, *Entstehung und Entwicklung einer wissenschaftlichen Tatsache* (n. 44), pp. 58, 91.

⁵³ Bourdieu, *Méditations pascaliennes* (n. 9), p. 135.

⁵⁴ Weber, “Wissenschaft als Beruf”. In: *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Wissenschaftslehre* (n. 33), pp. 582–613 (pp. 592f., 598).

⁵⁵ Sigmund Freud, *Vorlesungen zur Einführung in die Psychoanalyse*. Frankfurt/M. 1987, p. 226 (18. Vorlesung).

⁵⁶ G. M. Trevelyan, “The present position of history”. In: *Clio, A Muse, and other Essays*, London 1941, pp. 177–196 (p. 196). The passage concerned is cited in: Richard J. Evans, *In Defence of History*. London 1997, p. 250; and in: Cannadine, *Making History Now* (n. 39), p. 28.

That it does so testifies to history's technical efficacy in always reaffirming the same old thing. In thus mystifying itself, it rejects the only antidote *illusio* provides science for itself: enjoining scientists to account to themselves for the ultimate meaning of what they are doing, and thereby promoting the capacity for knowledge to attain lucidity about its own objects and intentions. Following rationalist epistemology, Weber saw this as the ultimate task of 'Wissenschaft'.⁵⁷

Fifth, what makes the human sciences spectral is what makes them 'human'. This empty epithet merely differentiates them from natural or social sciences. They just play with historicist figments such as 'traditions', 'legacies', 'precedents', and 'influences', themselves the products of already 're-cognized' knowledge, conventional indices of its inherently epidemiological distribution.⁵⁸ These widely shared cognitive practices are what gets taken for objectivity.⁵⁹ Consequently, the Narcissus complex seems to operate (as Freud suggests) not just psychologically, but cultural-psychologically.⁶⁰ Loss of reality is the issue here: but, of course, there is more than one way of losing reality. So the human sciences abstract themselves from human reality: reality abstracts itself from human reality when subjected to technological or ideological pressure. Technology turns the world into a 'mega-appliance' ('Makrogerät') with human beings as integral components, hence with an always inadequate capacity to manage it.⁶¹ Political ideology further supplies knowledge as *illusio*, maybe at its most lethal. It need be totalitarian only in style (i.e. more persuasion than programme) to permit the political establishment to make not just history, but the history it wants. This means: "action can be based on any hypothesis and [...], in the course of consistently guided action, [...] will become actual factual reality". The axiom from which it starts need neither be "a self-evident truth", "nor tally at all with the facts as given in the objective world" when the action starts. Through consistency it will "create a world in which [it] becomes axiomatic and self-evident". The domination of technology and ideology thus negates the common human (i.e. species-essential) world. The result is world-alienation, "where man, wherever he goes encounters only himself", – the ultimate sign of knowledge as *illusio*.⁶²

Illusio does haunt the production of knowledge in the human sciences – and it shows. A lot of knowledge – any amount of scholarly erudition, all kinds of hard information – is available. What is not clear, is who or what it is for, who identifies with it. Does it actually shed light on how things really are? The fact

⁵⁷ Weber, "Wissenschaft als Beruf" (n. 54), p. 608.

⁵⁸ See Sperber, *Explaining Culture* (n. 19), pp. 49–56.

⁵⁹ See Martin L. Davies, "The lateness of the world". In: *Romancing Decay. Ideas of Decadence in European Culture*. Ed. Michael St John. (Studies in European Cultural Transition 3) Aldershot – Brookfield/VT 1999, pp. 246–256 (p. 247).

⁶⁰ Martin L. Davies, "History as narcissism". In: *Journal of European Studies* 19 (1989), pp. 265–291 (pp. 268f.).

⁶¹ Günther Anders, *Die Antiquiertheit des Menschen. Erster Band: Über die Seele im Zeitalter der zweiten industriellen Revolution*, München 1985, p. 2; see Heidegger, "Die Frage nach der Technik" (n. 23), pp. 20, 25–27.

⁶² Hannah Arendt, "The concept of history: ancient and modern". In: *Between Past and Future. Eight Exercises in Political Thought*. New York 1993, pp. 41–90 (pp. 87–89).

that these questions can even be asked about the *human* sciences is revealing. They expose a fatal diremption between the technological practices of specialized expertise and the ontological necessity of knowledge for human self-orientation. It is not so much that the human sciences, as academic disciplines, fail to enlighten. Rather, their heterogeneity is actually confusing: it subverts all sense and meaning.⁶³ One key example is the “prodigious quantity of specialized information about the past” currently being produced by the historical sciences. It surely is “preposterous” and certainly is “tempting to wonder what is the point of writing [...] it in the first place”.⁶⁴ But this response misses the point – the *illusio* factor. The more science – as procedures of expert, specialized, technical abstraction – predominates, the more it distracts, the more it deludes, the more, by default, it creates real intellectual and ethical deficits. Seeing contemporary society as a ‘risk society’ (*Risikogesellschaft*), as the concrete historical outcome for human existence as managed by technological expertise, confirms this. In a risk society, as it tries to assess how vulnerable it has made the species-essential conditions of existence, science inevitably subverts its own rationality. That is because its forecasts are based on “a house of cards of speculative assumptions”, “assessments of probability”, “mathematical possibilities”, that any actual catastrophe would not necessarily invalidate. Hence, in scientifically problematizing its own fallibility, science ends up scientifically undermining itself. In the process, its essential truth, its underlying factual data, already questionable, simply evaporate: “a different computer, a different specialist, a different research institute – a different reality”.

Thus *illusio*, already a spectral phenomenon of epistemology, mutates into social reality. At the same time it brings out the knowledge deficits in the human sciences. Ironically enough, the human sciences do flourish ‘prodigiously’ while technological applications of science subvert species-essential interests. These, sustained by commercial motives, “pursue a politics of making the earth progressively uninhabitable”.⁶⁵ That the human sciences thrive in these conditions only proves their *illusory* character. By default they expose the social knowledge-deficit as the incapacity to formulate, let alone act on, species-essential values. After all, where value-issues matter the human sciences are *de facto* involved. They are meant to raise questions of sense, ethics, and legitimation for technical science that by definition exceed the scope of technicality itself. That is what makes them a reflective force of the collective social imagination and why they uniquely should care about the fate of culture.⁶⁶ In closing this function down the human sciences retreat into *illusio*. Having lost the link to species-essential interests, their material point of reference and vindication, they confine themselves to rule-based disciplinary procedures, the

⁶³ Cornelius Castoriadis, *La montée de l'insignifiance*. Paris 1996, pp. 61ff., 87ff.; Ulrich Beck, *Risikogesellschaft. Auf dem Weg in eine andere Moderne*. Frankfurt/M. 1986, p. 275

⁶⁴ Cannadine, *Making History Now* (n. 39), p. 10.

⁶⁵ Beck, *Risikogesellschaft* (n. 63), pp. 38, 51, 271.

⁶⁶ Martin L. Davies, “Thinking practice: On the concept of an ecology of knowledge”. In: *Breaking the Disciplines. Reconceptions in Knowledge, Art and Culture*. Ed. Martin L. Davies and Marsha Meskimmon. London 2003, pp. 9–34 (pp. 21f.).

conventional observances of their various professional ‘thought-collectives’. History, as allegedly the fundamental human science, thus turns into something technical and ludic: “a great deal of history is [...] about puzzle-solving within the context of [...] wider frameworks of investigation.”⁶⁷ Having given up their critical distance from society, it only remains for them to act in its image.⁶⁸ As technical constructs they just project ideologically the dominant technological rationale.⁶⁹ Thus the loss of truth in the scientific management of society is mirrored in the loss of reality in the human sciences. Their ‘objectivity’, *illusio*, comes from identitary logic that ensures they ‘re-cognize’ knowledge already known and fatally perpetuate the “same old thing”.⁷⁰

Once knowledge was power that enlightened; now power uses knowledge that obscures. The production of knowledge that does not enlighten only strengthens the prevailing power-systems, the ‘same old thing’ that always subverted species-essential interests. The ‘thought coercion’ that socially promotes an academic discipline mutates into an academic discipline that promotes social thought-coercion. Think of how history dominates the public imagination: “Specialist history channels all over the world are blooming with the History Channel now at around 45m subscribers worldwide”.⁷¹ This would not happen without an academic discipline to sustain it. Nietzsche rightly saw heritage dependency as Romantic nostalgia: a way of waking the dead, but consuming too much energy in the process.⁷² And it fits with the prevailing social-political syndrome, a “pure culture of the death drive”.⁷³ The West conspicuously consumes its energy producing history by delivering death hi-tech, accurately.⁷⁴ Politically, its way of making live things that threaten it dead, mirrors its way of bringing dead things that affirm it alive: “the sheer narrative strength of Starkey and Schama *pull[s] the viewer in* so that he or she starts to live the history. [...] The avalanche of websites, books and postprogramme internet chatrooms then *sucks the viewer further into living history*”.⁷⁵ So institutionalized ‘professional intelligence’ draws its interests from “the traditions of the work of the dead” rather than producing new ones from its “own dire situation or vital, subjective reasons”. This ensures that it continues to ‘re-cognize’ knowledge already

⁶⁷ Fulbrook, *Historical Theory* (n. 39), p. 137.

⁶⁸ See Davies, “The lateness of the world” (n. 59), pp. 250f.

⁶⁹ See Martin L. Davies, “Wissenschaft und Ambivalenz. Zur Rezeption der Aufklärung in Großbritannien”. In: *Das achtzehnte Jahrhundert* 26 (2002), pp. 18–34 (pp. 32ff.).

⁷⁰ Albrecht Wellmer, *Zur Dialektik von Moderne und Postmoderne. Vernunftkritik nach Adorno*. Frankfurt/M. 1985, p. 148; Cornelius Castoriadis, *L’Institution imaginaire de la société*. Paris 1975, pp. 284–285, 311; Cornelius Castoriadis, *Le Monde morcelé*. Paris 1990, pp. 148–150.

⁷¹ John Willis, “The past is perfect”. In: *The Guardian*, 29 October 2001 <<http://media.guardian.co.uk>> (accessed 25 October 2003).

⁷² Friedrich Nietzsche, *Morgenröthe*. In: *Kritische Studienausgabe*. Ed. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari. München – Berlin – New York ²1988, vol. 3, pp. 9–331 (§159, p. 145).

⁷³ Sigmund Freud, “Das Ich und das Es”. In: *Das Ich und das Es und andere metapsychologische Schriften*. Frankfurt/M. 1982, pp. 171–208 (pp. 203f.); *Das Unbehagen in der Kultur*. In: *Abriß der Psychoanalyse. Das Unbehagen in der Kultur*. Frankfurt/M. 1977, pp. 63–129 (pp. 102ff., 108ff.).

⁷⁴ See Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge, *Geschichte und Eigensinn*. Frankfurt/M. 1993, p. 830.

⁷⁵ Willis, “The past is perfect” (n. 71). (My italics: to stress the social thought coercion.)

known. Repressing subjective interests both protects academic authority and keeps the 'same old' values from changing.⁷⁶ This fatal abstraction is the problem with *illusio*. It projects the fiction of an ideal, incorporeal mind that scorns the essential species-essential interest: physical existence itself. The historian of the *longue durée* adopts the position of "God the Father, far from our personal selves and everyday troubles" and judges the present on the time-scale of civilizations rather than by "thin, insignificant, transparent segments" of human life-times.⁷⁷ History thus transmits a typically modern psychosis: the refusal to live in the body, hence to accept mortality. Its denying present interests ensures "the war against death [...] results in death's dominion over life". With history "death is overcome on condition that the real actuality of life pass into [...] dead things".⁷⁸ It is the Hamlet predicament on a cultural-morphological scale: the past haunting the present, mesmerizing it with its own inherent, vengeful death-drive.

Knowing, then, is one thing; seeing, another: that is what splits *illusio* from *aisthesis*. It is possible to know and still not see: abstraction blinds. In constructing an ideal, transcendental perspective for itself the mind negates the communal, social, material basis underlying it and its knowledge. The tautological situation from which its knowledge comes, stops it seeing that its illusory certainties have lost touch with human reality.⁷⁹ *Aisthesis* would have better reasons for justifying the human sciences than the technical elaboration of knowledge already known. Nietzsche makes a start with his observation that *there is more reason in one's body than in one's best wisdom* and that the mind is a creation of the *creative body* as a *hand for its will*.⁸⁰ *Aisthesis* discloses apprehensive knowledge that is sensed with visceral immediacy prior to the social construction of objectivity. "What we know through art", says Nelson Goodman, "is felt in our bones and nerves and muscles as well as grasped by our minds". That is because "the cognitive [...] does not exclude the sensory or the emotive".⁸¹ The basic experiences *aisthesis* derives from have no 'owner': they are not first-person experiences.⁸² *Aisthesis* starts out from beyond conceptualization and intentionality, as envisaged in Kant's idea of beauty, promoting species-essential interests as it does too. But philosophy may well show why the aesthetic dimension is indispensable: philosophers, artists, poets, musicians,

⁷⁶ Negt and Kluge, *Geschichte und Eigensinn* (n. 74), pp. 358f.

⁷⁷ Fernand Braudel, "L'histoire des civilisations: le passé explique le présent". In: *Écrits sur l'histoire*. (Collection Champs) Paris 1984, pp. 255–314 (p. 309); Braudel, "Ma formation d'historien". In: *Écrits sur l'histoire II*. (Collection Champs) Paris 1994, pp. 9–29 (p. 15).

⁷⁸ Norman O. Brown, *Life Against Death. The Psychoanalytical Meaning of History*. London 1970, pp. 249f.

⁷⁹ See Alfred Sohn-Rethel, *Soziologische Theorie der Erkenntnis*. Ed. Jochen Hörisch. Frankfurt/M. 1985, pp. 193ff.

⁸⁰ Nietzsche, *Also sprach Zarathustra*. In: *Kritische Studienausgabe* (n. 72), vol. 4, p. 40.

⁸¹ Nelson Goodman, *The Languages of Art*. Indianapolis ²1988, p. 259.

⁸² Fleck, *Entstehung und Entwicklung einer wissenschaftlichen Tatsache* (n. 44), p. 124; Schlick, "Die Grenze der naturwissenschaftlichen und philosophischen Begriffsbildung" (n. 33), p. 19; Schlick, "Bedeutung und Verifikation". In: *Philosophische Logik* (n. 33), pp. 266–299, pp. 287f.