RECONTEXTUALIZING DISCIPLINES
THREE LECTURES ON METHOD

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I do not want to decide whether my theory is grounded in a particular understanding of humanity and human existence. I deny, however, that it is necessary to have recourse to such an understanding.

Theodor Adorno

Preface and Acknowledgements

A theme, like a face, wears an expression.
Wittgenstein

Clarifying one's cognitive disposition, one might make a distinction between 'things in general' and 'things in particular'; and, in doing so, make the (further) point that even as one is doubtful about the latter, one is predisposed to affirm an orientation towards the former. These lectures, delivered some time ago in the ambient portals of the Indian Institute of Advanced Study (IIAS), Shimla, partake of this general (or generalizing) orientation. Systems of knowledge and the disciplinary frameworks that embody them have always been, as I maintain (following Stefan Collini) in the course of the lectures, 'unstable compounds'. The sociology of knowledge, at least as classically conceived, has never had the measure of this formulation; and even as recent perspectives have sought to entertain doubts about such modern 'classical' orientations, the idea of disciplines as 'uncertain compounds' has yet to receive systematic consideration. The odds, I believe, still favour the particularizing tendency that the sociology of knowledge invites us to make. In fact, I had originally intended to title the lectures as 'Beyond the Sociology of Knowledge', while visualizing the subtitle in precisely the ways depicted. I gave up on the idea, since it would require a more protracted engagement with the particularities of the sociology of knowledge than one could have sustained in the format of the lectures. In a work that I am now trying to put together, outside of the ambit of the present lectures, I am precisely concerned to effect the modalities of such an engagement; and hopefully, it will resonate in the way that these lectures did when they were originally delivered to the academic

community at IIAS. Both the lectures and the work that I am presently putting together are part of the same story, though, about the epistemic basis of disciplines and the disciplinary frameworks that encapsulate them, yielding new meanings and understandings about academic orientations and scholarly undertakings (or so, I anticipate).

The lectures, however, are also about what some may regard as counter-intuitive claims about the contextuality of knowledge and the historicity of our conceptual frames. In these pages, I offer a 'post-disciplinary' interpretation of disciplines and the ideas that inform them (albeit largely from within the rubric of the academic sociology, although the things I forward here can be generalized to other social science disciplines as well). I must confess that this putatively ascribed 'post-disciplinary' framework is an afterthought. It did not encapsulate the lectures as originally delivered, but has been framed as an epilogue to this publication partly as my answer to the comments and responses that the lectures drew from my audience. The free encounter of conflicting ideas, both in the context of the lectures and outside of its environs (considering that my responsibilities as Visiting Professor at IIAS also meant making oneself available to the larger community of scholars and participants aggregated there) has meant that I explore and clarify the sources of my intellectual frames and concretize further possibilities of knowledge and criticism. The epilogue – as indeed this preface – is accordingly a constitutive part of the lectures' conversation.

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In this preface, yet, I want to dwell longer on a question that informs these lectures and, expectantly, also taken forward in the epilogue. The question concerns the 'specificity' and the contemporaneity of configurations of academic knowledge and the discursive frames that underwrite them (what I reformulate in the epilogue as a stronger re-casting of the problems of disciplinarity and post-disciplinarity). I realize that any search for unity amidst the heterogeneity of disciplinary undertakings

and interpretive schemas can generate its own unhistorical interpretations, and this is certainly to be avoided in confronting 'situations' of knowledge - early or late; past, present and ongoing - in India or elsewhere. Let me therefore hasten to clarify, and in the process set up one's own interpretive analytics (on display in these lectures and the accompany epilogue) in order. To be sure, I am not discounting efforts to recognize and acknowledge the reality of diversity and heterogeneity - whether it be of ideas, interests or norms – and this is as true of 'interpretative communities' as those they feed on and off (objects, discourses, concepts and theories). But equally imperative, as its dialectical counterpart as it were, are strategies aimed at revealing the underlying unity of what comes across as heterogeneous and diverse. It is certainly true that no consensus or agreement can obtain (or has been reached) about what that 'unity' might be; and it is also true that interpretative communities hardly pay any attention to each other, with mutual engagement being primarily an internal (albeit fractured) matter. In strictly meta-terms, therefore, it is as important to affirm the inevitable plurality of positions as to mediate between and across them. I am always fond of repeating the art historian, the late Arthur C. Danto (I am afraid, the reference eludes me), who maintained that "when one direction becomes as good as another, there is no longer a concept of direction to apply". One is not quite urging a 'telos' for *all* thought and inquiry; at the same time, one is not repudiating the sign of 'ethos' either. Of course, in these lectures given over as they are more or less exclusively to methodological protocols and/or suggestions, this sign of 'ethos' does not bear narration (although, I must reiterate that my current preoccupations surround precisely this latter theme, at once scholastic and historical). All the same, let me in keeping with the programmatic thrust of this preface allude to some further directions impinging on the study of 'traditions' internal to disciplines.

In forwarding disciplines as 'unstable compounds', one is recording more than simply an archival interest in their

constitution. I am reminded of the introductory overtures underlying the work *Philosophy in History: Essays on the Historiography of Philosophy* (edited by Rorty et al. 1984). The editors', each an illustrious name in the 'disciplines' they foreground, identify in their joint introduction to the volume the twin "bugbears of 'anachronism' and 'antiquarianism'" (Rorty et al. 1984: 10), which they reiterate needs to be forgotten if the division of functions between the practice of intellectual history and the practice of the history of philosophy (as ideal typically rendered) has to be transcended; and, what is more, that each of these "genre(s) will continually be correcting and updating the other" (ibid.). Simply by way of clarification here, allow me to state that 'anachronism' concerns the pure historian of philosophy (the standpoint, broadly, that to understand the great figures from the history of philosophy, one needs to understand them as they understood themselves, and not to translate their work into contemporary idioms which they would not recognize) whereas 'antiquarianism' concerns the pure philosopher (the idea that the solving of philosophical problems always requires taking into account the work of earlier philosophers). Doubtless, one might affirm that those who do philosophy *historically* take neither the pure philosopher nor the pure historian of philosophy as their epitome, and this is precisely what Rorty et al. are reiterating in rejecting the division between intellectual history and the history of philosophy. Thus they state emphatically that learning "what questions are the genuinely philosophical ones" (ibid.: 11) entails an acquaintance with history, in that it involves seeing which questions philosophers have traditionally posed, how these questions differ from those traditionally posed by other enterprises, and so on; while also maintaining (again in fairly explicit terms):

> If to be anachronistic is to link a past *X* to a present *Y* rather than studying it in isolation, then every historian is always anachronistic … It is always a matter of selecting among contemporary concerns with which to associate *X*, not a matter of abjuring such concerns. Without some selecting, the historian is reduced to duplicating the texts which constitute the relevant past. But why do that? We turn to the historian because we do not understand

the copy of the text we already have. Giving us a second copy will not help. To understand the text just *is* to relate it helpfully to something else. The only question is what that something else will be (ibid.: 10-11).

I shall come back to this latter point presently. But in the specific context of my lectures – that is, what they inscribe and/or proscribe – if our interest with 'recontextualizing disciplines' is something more than being 'antiquarian' in the terms inscribed above, then one must grasp the larger framework of motivations (not to be confused with the 'ethos' I spoke about earlier) for why scholars seek the ideas they do or espouse the frameworks they help organize and consolidate (or undermine). Surely 'sociology' – the very idea, that is - cannot be bound up with a deterministic understanding of the social world, even as it perforce alludes to the constraining nature of 'social facts'. This interesting duality sounds the very limits of a sociology of knowledge as classically or conventionally introduced, although specific mutations in the space of such a practice of discipline do seem to suggest otherwise. This latter point will hopefully be clarified in the work I am presently putting together, although the onus of my lectures will also bear this out. Increasingly, my work in the past few years has moved along these lines, but the intersection of 'internalist' accounts with broader contextualization's remains to be effected.

Having cited from Rorty et al. above in the context of 'anachronism' – precisely to the effect that (to repeat) "*(i)f to be anachronistic is to link a past* X *to a present* Y *rather than studying it in isolation, then every historian is always anachronistic*" (Rorty et al. 1984: 10, emphasis added) - I had indicated that I will engage the point presently, and therefore the emphasis here. Let me quickly ponder here what the point entails, before extending it to the context of my lectures. On the face of it, to extend the charge of anachronism to a thought (or idea) is not quite to reproach the practice underlying it of relating "a past *X* to a present *Y*"; rather, it is to rebuke the practice of relating a past *X* to the 'wrong' present *Y* (and not to some other, more fruitful one). Clearly, it is impossible to approximate to the ideal of a

pure philosopher or a pure historian of philosophy, and (as we saw above *vide* Rorty et al.) learning "what questions are the genuinely philosophical ones" (ibid.: 11) entails an acquaintance with history. But then the challenge is to give more precise characterizations of what it means to do philosophy (or any discipline) historically. Rorty's own contribution to the edited volume from which I have been citing works its way through different modalities of this, and the reader may consult that exercise if interested (see Rorty 1984, which also underwrites my further thoughts below). Let me for the moment work my way somewhat differently though and in conformity with the 'contexts' inscribed in and by my lectures here.

It is certainly not our case that the historical approach involves clearly identifiable protocols and interpretive overtures. The point is just that in approaching academic and/or disciplinary conjunctures historically, a range of reminders and responsibilities are involved. One could analytically set them up, as we have tried to do in the lectures here, while also imploring a more fruitful 'present' for situations of sociology in India and elsewhere albeit in passing. A further key consideration however, on our schema, is generalization (or generalizability) – indeed, that even as we approach disciplinary frameworks of knowledge and understanding historically in terms of their specificity, we are also trying to draw conclusions that are 'general'. In approaching ideas (or even figures) in context, we invariably draw conclusions that are in excess of the evidence presented or available One is certainly urging a more mixed approach to the history of ideas and figures, which is consistent with the perspective underscoring our lectures about approaching disciplines as 'unstable compounds'.

But of course the problematic cannot be just that various practitioners in India or elsewhere, across disciplinary spaces and contexts, did both systematic and hybrid work encompassing a variety of research interests and methodological approaches; the key is whether their enterprise (either individually or collectively) is coherent as an ideal. More importantly, the

question is whether the 'particular' concerns that the scholars voice(d) can be related externally or internally with their 'general' interests (or *vice versa*, on the terms chiefly of 'general concerns' and 'particular interests'). I am afraid, I have to be somewhat formulaic here: where the relations between general interests/concerns and particular concerns/interests are 'external', the latter ('particular') exists independently of the former ('general') which it either confirms or disconfirms. Alternatively, where the relation is 'internal', it is by means of the 'particular' that we learn to see what is 'general'. [Note, my terms 'external' and 'internal' here have been drawn from an early piece by Alasdair MacIntyre (1976), where he speaks of "external representation' and "internal representation". The former (external representation) is "the relationship which holds between a passport photograph and its subject: one can inspect the two items independently and inquire as to the degree of resemblance between them", whereas internal representation is such that "it is by means of the representation that we learn to see what is represented". Rembrandt's paintings, for example, are internal representations of light in that they teach us to see light differently. See MacIntyre 1976: 43-44.] Undoubtedly, given the power of these relations (and/or representations), to ask the question of when (or how) their force comes to be acknowledged across disciplines is to ask nothing less than what are the preconditions for the autonomy of disciplines, even if it is recognised that an awareness of the social determination of knowledge (in the mould of an older or more 'classical' sociology of knowledge) can lead as easily to constraining the space of autonomy (as my lectures strive to demonstrate).

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I delivered these lectures at IIAS as part of the Visiting Professor series in June/July 2012. The epilogue, as indeed this extended preface, was formulated thereafter, partly in response to the questions and comments generated in the wake of the lectures. It is impossible here to discharge all the debts I have accumulated

in the process of these lectures and its publication. In a sense, those debts extend back to my dear friend and professional colleague, Professor Peter Ronald deSouza, who as Director of IIAS invited me to deliver the lectures under the Visiting Professor series of the Institute. He was also a keen participant in the discussions that surrounded my presentations. I have always had the pleasure of his intellectual companionship and generosity of spirit, and will cherish both the time spent and the many walks in serious conversation and light-hearted banter through the meandering pathways of Shimla. Having revitalized the space of IIAS, Professor DeSouza has moved on; and I am equally grateful to the present incumbent, Professor Chetan Singh, for seeing the publication through. The latter too was a keen listener who brought a sharp critical focus to my presentations.

My month-long stay at the Institute during the duration of the lectures also coincided with Professor Tridip Suhrud and briefly with Professor Arindam Chakrabarti. The latter was a great stimulus, at least in the days that preceded the commencement of the lectures. I particularly recall with some fondness his gesture of excavating Kant's lectures on the faculties of knowledge from the IIAS library. That classical work, as also my intermittent conversations with Professor Arindam, threw up a whole host of questions, at once scholastic and historical, that I could hardly embark upon in the context of my lectures; they remain, yet, a constitutive part of the work I am presently putting together. Professor Tridip was a constant companion and intellectual interlocutor all through my stay at Shimla, and I am equally grateful for his comments on my lectures. We share an engagement with Gandhi, and I have learned immensely from Professor Tridip erudition about this complex figure and icon.

I am also grateful to all the fellows and other visiting scholars at IIAS during the time of my lectures. There was also a batch of young university and college teachers utilizing the research facilities at IIAS who participated in my lectures, and I cannot forget the keenness and enthusiasm of at least some of them. My thanks also to the library staff and the administrative personnel

of the Institute for the many courtesies extended. In particular, I am grateful to Debarshi Sen, as Academic Resources Officer, for initiating the publication of the lectures, which although delayed only gave me the space to widen the ambit of the discussion. His possibly last act before moving out of IIAS was to send me the proof copy for reading and editing, as well as attaching this extended preface and acknowledgements. I also recall the assistance offered by A. K. Sharma and his staff at the Institute.

Through years of work in the portals of Indian academia and its publications, I have benefitted from students and teachers alike, and gratefully acknowledge the various places in which my work (both as encapsulated in bits and snatches in my lectures and beyond, in the work I am presently putting together) has been originally formulated. I also want to thank my daughter, Ila Ananya, who (like her departed mother Seemanthini Niranjana) has helped me to understand better the resoluteness of life and the vagaries of ideas.

SASHEEJ HEGDE

Introduction: Recontextualizing Disciplines

> I am aware that all this may appear to you both very abstract and also perhaps rather arrogant. (There seems to be something a bit delirious in experiencing the progress that one has made, throughout a lifetime of research, as a kind of slow initiatory pathway. Yet I am convinced that one knows the world better and better as one knows oneself better, that scientific knowledge and knowledge of oneself and of one's own social unconscious advance hand in hand, and that primary experience transformed in and through scientific practice transforms scientific practice and conversely).
>
> Pierre Bourdieu

The three lectures that I am delivering here present fragments of a work that I have published over the years, in several places and in the context of various mandates. I have not assembled this work in an integral form all these years, but the three lectures that I am about to deliver may yet prove facilitative of the undertaking, both as a statement of intent and as a programmatic outline. The diagnosis that can (or must) inform this undertaking would however have to await another circumstance.

I am certainly prepared to accept the contention that the aims of my lectures are both various and possibly confusing. But it might be helpful to provide here some personal context, not to excuse myself, but to try to make the animating concerns of these lectures somewhat clearer. My work over the years has concerned a subject area intermediate between 'philosophy', social and political theory, and culture critique: the question, specifically, of the enabling histories with which one works. More directly, my areas of concern have implicated three domains of inquiry: the Structure and Dynamics of Disciplines, the Interpretation of

Modernity, and Research on Normative Political Languages. Even as these domains of inquiry have meant a renewed conceptual thrust, my work has actively sought to cultivate many epistemological domains and socio-historical settings (although my interests, of late, have been steadily devolving on questions of law/ethics and constitutional jurisprudence). Indeed, as I indicated at the very outset, my lectures will encompass only one of these domains, namely, the structure and dynamics of disciplines, and fragmentarily at that. In focus, I need reiterate, is a certain axis of judgment, a movement through frames engaged in the persistent critique of what one *must* inhabit, namely, disciplinary frameworks/agendas and transdisciplinary compulsions/urgencies. The object of critique and the critique itself, to usurp a contemporary slogan, are both being performed in accordance with each other.

The attempt goes with a strong sense of possibility internal to disciplines, while also taking on board the possibility of translating rival, even apparently incommensurable, cognitive and ideological universes into the terms of either (although this is a dimension I shall comment upon later in the introduction). Doubtless, in the specific context of these lectures, to join together in a discourse, possibility and impossibility, contextualization and recontextualization, may seem to be a laborious artifice, as if, in order to economize, one sought to deal with many subjects at once. But that is in fact the case, straddling as I do two spheres of action and understanding, namely, the disciplinary frameworks of knowledge and their cross-disciplinary translation. I make no effort, of course, to string together these two domains, but would assert all the same that the ideas I offer for discussion across the space of these lectures – in somewhat orchestrated essays/forays - are part of a contemporary conjuncture and concern both the academic organization of knowledge and the normative ground of their regrouping as such.

In putting the lectures together, I hope to be able to give some indication of the remarkable range of questions that the twin subjects on hand - namely, the disciplinary frameworks of

knowledge and their cross-disciplinary translation across spheres - could help yield. My own institutional location, to reiterate, has been neither philosophy nor the study of languages, but the discipline of sociology - although what I make of the discipline can amount to dissolving its very problematic. My questions here are not aimed at, say, protecting the frameworks of disciplinary knowledge against some new attack, not even to cast the slightest doubt upon the importance, the necessity and legitimacy of deploying the languages of appraisal that we do. At best, I am here interested in the logical and conceptual protocols that can obtain within the moment and the injunction to study patterns of disciplinary knowledge and their translation across spheres. As diverse as this orientation may be in its explicit aims and in its qualities - meaning the level of reflection at which it may be situated - the issue that I would like to formulate concerns largely the axiomatic into which, and in terms of which, the problem of epistemological critique and socio-political criticism in general is delivered. Our forays here ought to also serve as an index of how much remains to be said about recasting the contemporary order of disciplines and the order of disciplinary history, indeed of our attitudes towards disciplinary practice and reflexivity *per se*.

A final point: the 'method' of our lectures is an allusion to its conventional meaning, namely, a path; but – and this is important - not quite the 'path' that a thinker (or a body of thinkers) follow, rather the path that they construct, that one has to build to know where one is and to figure out the zones that have to be traversed and the obstacles that could come in the way. A philosopher I admire, but whose name eludes me for the moment, has urged that 'method' essentially consists in examining how idealities are materially produced. I am afraid I do not traverse that domain in these lectures. My lectures also do not trade on the word 'discipline', as noun and as verb. As Ian Hacking has joyfully remarked: "How strange that word is, 'discipline'. An old word, or words, as old as European vernaculars, and traipsing behind them not so much Roman Latin as the learning of Medieval times.

In both French and English, there is both verb and noun. The noun that makes for interdisciplinarity implies fields of study defined by content and institution. But the verb implies chastising and punishment" (Hacking 2004: 1). He goes on to add:

> The root idea is that of a disciple. You can see how the idea forks. On the one hand, religious teachers, and modern scholars, engineers or artists who have disciples, create fields of knowledge, understanding and activity. Thus the noun. But then there is the verb, to discipline: the master chastises to ensure that the disciples toe the line. I say 'chastise', for I find that word in old French and English, and flogging is mentioned as a mode of chastising, of disciplining. How strange it is that ancient meanings are continued below the level of conscious awareness (ibid.).

I do not exploit these possibilities either in these lectures. In the process, perhaps, everything interesting has been discounted. But hopefully they can still sustain one's enthusiasm.

Mapping Disciplines: Some Formal and Analytic Protocols

I

My introductory overture notwithstanding, I am of course very far from assuming that the knowledge question, across diverse terrains, forms a homogeneous ensemble, of themes, theses and objects, of critiques and evaluations; although, to answer for oneself, in terms of the discursive strategy adopted herein, it would not be too presumptuous to assert that this heterogeneous space can yet be gathered together in an intelligible and coherent matrix. Indeed, as the philosopher Wittgenstein has written, "(a)ll testing, all confirmation and disconfirmation of a hypothesis takes place already within a system. And this system is not more or less arbitrary and doubtful point of departure for all our arguments … (It is) the element in which the arguments have their life" (Wittgenstein 1969: #105). In what follows, therefore, it is a question of recounting the system of reference in relation to which our lectures assume their 'recontextualizing' cast.

It should be evident that in clearing aspects of the ground of organized disciplinary knowledge and their appraisal, I have adopted an approach that is strictly neither overtly comparative nor patently historical. Without doubt, both philosophy and history are relevant to programmes of critique, whether relating to trends in the world of academic knowledge or their translation across socio-political spheres. But where history seeks to explore developments in their context – situating matters in a certain milieu – philosophy tries to free matters from their context. Indeed, the problem that confronts the historian is anachronism, displacing a concept and resituating it in some new and inappropriate context. Alternatively, the philosopher ought also

to be on guard, taking care not to mistake contingent properties in the contextual formulation of an idea or argument for essential properties of the idea or argument itself. In fact, for the latter, the goal always is to decontextualize - to separate the idea from its context – and hardly ever to recontextualize (that is to say, to situate old ideas within the context of current philosophical concerns). To be sure, our lectures will run against the grain of these procedures, reveling as much in anachronistic renderings of the space of academic discourse and disciplinary engagement as recontextualizing the commitments underscoring them. It seems to me that we have tried to argue from restrictions on what should be - the normative ground of our appraisal - to constraints on what could be - the shifting grounds of disciplines and knowledges *per se* - as well as the other way round.

As a modality of argumentation and critical appraisal, this cannot have been a task specifiable by contemporary trends within academia; and indeed, for much analysis the space of this exploration would be scandalous. Nor is it a question posed after an expansive reading of the interplay of politics, epistemology and history in India and across 'Europe' (the West generally). Taken seriously, it is precisely this complex set of interrelationships which, in the context of extant trends within academia today, can give contemporary interrogations of knowledge and politics in particular their force.[1]

And yet, throughout our lectures, we have hardly invoked this dimension, working instead with the implicit formula that the disciplinary frameworks of knowledge, within India and across the West, present a subject matter as a focus for thought and the discursive attitude. More explicitly, this implicit formula proposes that both trends in the world of disciplines and knowledges and shifts in their languages of appraisal have representational and formal dimensions, which, both independently and in interaction, are normal foci of attention in making and responding to extant ideas and formulations. My thought is not that this will help us reach new goals, but that it might help us stop for a moment: to introduce hesitancy in the ways which we habitually dwell among our concepts of disciplines and knowledges. Let me here quickly

tackle some sources of disparagement, before resuming and recasting the terms of the engagement being recorded here by our essays as a whole.

To be sure, an analysis given to tracing the history of effects through which a system of knowledge effectively took shape may be necessary; only, I remain unconvinced about its sufficiency. As if to implicate a possibility from within this impasse, the theorist Vivek Dhareshwar has suggested that we make a distinction between "Western theories about us" and "Western theories about its own experiences that nevertheless impinge on us" (Dhareshwar 1998: 223). The distinction is salient, but not of itself crucial; and to the extent that it is made to subserve the requirement of offering a "metatheory of *Western* theories" (ibid.), it inevitably connects up with the Orientalist enterprise (albeit as the latter's flip side or 'dialectical other') of making comprehensible what actors are doing and thinking out of a context of tradition interwoven with the self-understanding of actors. I think this matrix of genealogy, comparative or otherwise, simplifies what is really a complex matter – about ethical particularism, about the translatability of traditions and their concepts, and the kinds of necessity that bind previous or parallel instances of a practice with a new one – while also failing to reflect critically upon the very modality of discourses given over to challenging an orthodoxy. It should be obvious, further, that a simple sociological dualism of tradition and modernity will not do. Surely we need a counterpoint to work for which the dualism of tradition and modernity appears less as a theoretical issue than as a question recounting the fate of tradition in modernity. But my point is that a more complex schema issuing off the historical study of what has come to be termed 'multiple' and/or 'alternative' modernities will not do either.[2] One need only return to the matrix of our lectures – as represented in the form and schema in which we have presented them - in order to capture a sense of these decontextualized (or, on our terms, 'recontextualized') issues.

Indeed, the wish (or hypothesis) which I would be tempted to submit by way of clarifying the recontextualized ground of my

lectures here is the following. While the descriptions cultivated about the progress and effective history internal to disciplines in given contexts may yet constitute a backdrop against which objectivistic misconstruals of society, history and culture may be more readily understood, to this must be added those other considerations that lie behind the redrawing of frontiers between knowledges and disciplines *across contexts*.[3] But surely the point cannot be to comb areas of intellectual concern and the work of disciplines internal to them for their inclusions and exclusions; rather, we should be getting at what the work internal to disciplines was intended to solve, whether in addressing a problem they have given rise to others and whether the objection is only to the imperious application (or misapplication) of concepts and categories. The mistake here is in thinking certain concepts as internal to a theory – and that in turn as connected to the essential work of a discipline or all disciplines – when in fact they are concepts about which there can be many theories and various disciplines.

Even more emphatically, nothing much is accomplished by denouncing an intellectual field as "Western", as a "colonial practice", as "dominating", and so on. That such denunciation is warranted by context and experience is perhaps undeniable. But the context, an experience, does not of itself establish a practice as "colonial", "dominating", etc.; rather, the problem demands a complex strategy. The most obvious question is about the usefulness of a theoretical perspective directed at articulating, among other things, that "knowledge is bound to power". What is the precise cognitive gain of using such a perspective? From the fact, say, that the British colonial apparatus was very keen to discover the original legal texts from the Indian traditions and codify them, does it follow that they were interested to do so because of their "administrative needs"? Surely a statement of political exigency such as this is not enough to yield an understanding of why the British were so keen to do so. What one must confront is the wholly *ad hoc* nature of these explanations – they merely pick up some or another random difference between states of affairs or between the past and present (be it

modernity, colonialism, insufficient knowledge, necessities of representation, etc.) and simply postulate a "causal" relationship.

Notwithstanding what postcolonial critics might say, the cognitive grasp of phenomena requires that we come up with more reasoned "explanations" than ad hoc arguments for extant states of affairs. In other words, one has to show not merely how and in what sense certain influences obtained, but also more importantly what is right or wrong about those influences. What indeed is wrong with ideological influences in the study of socio-historical phenomena? Is one, in doing so, necessarily contrasting 'science' with 'ideology'? Without doubt, context is important to the production of 'disciplines' and their underlying framework knowledge; but what about its evaluation (that is to say, whether what has been produced is knowledge or not). In fact, it is an open question whether location of a thought or concept is relevant to evaluating what it is saying. It may be instructive to ponder, effectively and constructively, just what is being entailed here. It is not our point that the contingent ought to be unthought or jettisoned; indeed, the very idea of the contingent gains its force, so to say, from a universal, or, better still, is being raised to the possibility of a universal. What this order is enlisting, in other words, is the possibility of a competing universalism, but rather than trying to engage with this problematic head-on, much critical scholarship wishes the problem away, by grafting it on to the tack of (what has been termed *vide* Chakrabarty 2001) the "provincial thought of Europe". We are not very far, I should think, from the old, wearisome, and tiresome opposition between Eurocentrism and anti-Eurocentrism (Cf. Derrida 1994: 6). Throughout our lectures, we have consciously resisted traversing this ground.

II

It may be necessary in any case to think the historical and a-historical possibility of this project. In which event, what is possible (or actualized) becomes infinitely problematic: what makes a system of knowledge go outside itself, although inscribing a focus

within itself, cannot come from within itself. That is why the system of knowledge - any theory - could not be only, in a word, internal. That of course cannot be the whole point. All the same, my thought here is traceable back to what a contemporary theorist has termed 'the principle of insufficient ground'; that is to say, that "between the causal chain of reasons provided by knowledge ... and the act of choice (that is, the decision that by way of its unconditional character concludes the chain ...), there is always a gap, a leap that cannot be accounted for by the preceding chain" (Zizek 1994: 40). Paradoxically, then, it is not only reasons for that could provide grounds for a system of knowledge; reasons against can also function as reasons for a system of knowledge.

I must hasten to clarify that it is not as though my attitude here, in echoing this line of appraisal, is strictly diagnostic; rather, it concerns something like an opening which will enable one to constitute another possibility. Let me try to elaborate. The question has traditionally been whether, in thinking the ground of our disciplines and their concepts as well as conceptualizing divergent outlooks, we *have* to think in a relativistic way, in a way which argues, for instance, that 'truth-claims' and 'value-claims' are to be relativized to the culture within which they are made. The aim of relativism, so conceived, is to resolve disagreement, "to take views, outlooks, or beliefs that apparently conflict and treat them in such a way that they do not conflict: each of them turn out to be acceptable in its own place" (Williams 1985: 156). The problem however, as Williams himself avers, "is to find a way of doing this, in particular by finding for each belief or outlook something that will be its own place" (ibid.). It is important, for our purposes, to see what Williams is getting at here. According to him, "social practices could never come forward with a certificate saying that they belonged to a genuinely different culture, so that they were guaranteed immunity to alien judgments and reactions" (ibid.: 158). This claim, however, in our multicultural times, characterized by the self-assertion of groups and shifting identities, all seeking to entrench themselves

more fully into the political system, might well have to be qualified. But let that pass.

More particularly, Williams' thought here is being directed at a heuristic which, while accommodating the relativist's concerns about divergent outlooks, of viewing others as "at varying distances from us", also confronts "the relativist suspension of assessment" (ibid.: 160-62 *passim*). The possibility he inscribes - what is termed a "relativism of distance" - would consist in rendering the confrontation between divergent outlooks *notional* rather than *real* :

> We should distinguish between *real* and *notional* confrontations. A real confrontation between two divergent outlooks occurs at a given time if there is a group of people for whom each of the outlooks is a real option. A notional confrontation, by contrast, occurs when some people know about two divergent outlooks, but at least one of these outlooks does not present a real option (Williams, ibid.: 160).

The concept of "notional confrontation" is, for me, very significant. For one, it saves the relativistic standpoint from the charge of inconsistency or confusion. For if, in keeping with relativism, 'truth claims' and 'value claims' are to be relativized to the culture within which they are made, then there hardly can be a disagreement between them or a confrontation to settle across them. There is the gravest difficulty in both positing the independent existence of culturally distinct groups with different world-views, and also of holding that any access we have to them is inescapably conditioned by our world-view. What is more, the concept of the "notional" allows us to think the moral/conceptual concerns of another culture, even to use a language of appraisal across cultural boundaries, without necessarily implying a *substantive* relationship between 'our' moral and conceptual concerns and 'theirs'. According to Williams, it is the presence of some substantive relation between the various concerns of different cultures which alone can give any *point* or *substance* to the appraisal. As long as this is avoided, the evaluation of norms and practices, even "alien" ones, could proceed without invoking charges of 'moral absolutism' or 'conceptual dogmatism'.

There is a sort of crossroads here - of a kind of understanding that is devoid of ethnocentricity, shall we say - which one must acknowledge, if we are to accommodate aspects of the above discussion to the key idea (or ideal) underscoring our lectures. It should also be made clear that our advocacy of notional confrontation has nothing to do, as it seems to be in Williams, with asserting a "truth *in* relativism", or, even the plausibility of a relativistic standpoint defined in terms of a "distance that makes confrontation notional" (ibid.: 162). Nor is it meant, strictly, to ward off a criticism about our procedure of appraisal here, in the thought implicating all that we are saying, which seems to presuppose some form of an appeal to universally accepted criteria as *the* ground from which to negotiate the spaces of disciplines and knowledges *per se*. The issue clearly is not one of universalism *versus* particularism, where the 'versus' often translates into a jettisoning of one side of the divide for the other. Indeed, this very divide would need unpacking, for one, because (as we already mentioned earlier) the very idea of a 'particular' (or the contingent) gains its force, so to say, from a 'universal' (or, better still, is being raised to the possibility of a universal). What is important is that the universalism-particularism divide, in terms of its competing imperatives, can also be an argument between different forms of the universal perspective.

I do not for all that have any intention to push the concept of notional confrontation to its extreme; and besides, as Matilal has tried to emphasize, the distinction between 'real confrontation' and 'notional confrontation' can remain a delicate matter (Matilal 1994: 146). Nevertheless, in offering a way of gathering together the many problems that surround the direction of the treatment of the trends in the world of disciplines or shifts in the languages of their appraisal, the concept seems to me essential to any procedure – our's included - given to explaining what it is that substantive disagreement over a domain of knowledge or norm and/or the application of a concept could consist in. The latter must always already presuppose some agreement - indeed, that one cannot even say, of a norm or a concept, that it is 'alien' or 'other', unless one could also identify

something tantamount to it. Or, again, that any apparent disagreement over a substantive issue could disappear if the parties concerned are, after all, arguing over the application of different concepts. Williams himself has formulated this elsewhere (Williams 1981) as the need for an element in conflicting claims which can be identified as the *locus* of exclusivity.

How is one to approach this formula? What does it allow us to formulate as the standard of/for sociopolitical and epistemological criticism today? Also, how does it settle what it is we are referring to when imploring the recuperation of the disciplinary frameworks of knowledge - an alternative *to* it or an alternative *for* it? I must admit that having worked through the lectures, and in keeping with their critical thrust, it is imperative that we distinguish carefully between *problems* of criticism and *explanations* yielded by the work of disciplines internal to criticism. The point cannot be to comb through contexts and histories – past, present or future - for their difference, but for the resolution of the problems that the difference(s) is invented to solve, a problem that is as real for social scientists as for those reject the social scientific sense of contingency, as real for Indian scholars as for their western counterparts.

Needless to say, to situate this understanding in relation to the work of our lectures across the domains of disciplines and their underlying frameworks of knowledge, one needs to keep in perspective the idea that interpretation is an inherently normative affair. We cannot as scholars ascribe meaning to the utterances or inscriptions of our fellow human beings without (implicitly or explicitly) committing ourselves to judgments about how well they are doing at avoiding error; and that involves applying our own norms to the people we are studying. Indeed, as the classical Indian scholar Jonardon Ganeri has pithily observed in a recent work deploying the analytical techniques of contemporary philosophy to recuperate the work of classical Indian philosophers: "Forms of rationality are … interculturally available even if they are not always interculturally instantiated" (Ganeri 2001: 3).

III

There are, of course, other ways of reading the form, as well as the content, of theoretical debates and critical moves and countermoves across domains of knowledge and spaces of politics. In fact, for anyone interested in the procedures which the Marxist critic Fredric Jameson (1988: 347-57) has called *cognitive mapping*, our lectures reveal patterns of thought and argument directed not only at substantive issues of social change, politics and history, but, by way of an analytical self-positioning, explaining how it could even be possible to think coherently about some basic modality or pattern of academic practice. Indeed, one does not need to extrapolate the metaphysical slogans of modernity and critique, the way that Marxists and non-Marxists alike continue to do with Enlightenment relativities. It is the nature of this mapping procedure that I believe is suggestive, and not for predictive purposes either, or with a view toward identifying recurrent patterns. Rather, the attempt is to put in place a criticism of criticism, a theorization about theory, which, while alive to the passionate contexts of interventions in the present, also attempts a measure of their reactive profiles.[4] In particular, the lectures disclose the fidelity with which so many different positions and locations offer precise symptoms of unmarked trajectories within academia today.

I am concerned, then, to produce a reading of the coherence of the practices internal to specific disciplines as they unravel themselves in a historically contingent context. [But of course, for the purpose of these lectures, I am limiting myself to sociology and to the attempts to capture the terms of its practice in India.] In doing so, the aim has not always been to suggest alternatives to what seem to be inevitable conceptions and practices. Rather, I am inclined to think that the analyses on offer are effective precisely because they are specific to the particular terrain of the discipline that one is confronting, while not being determined by some general theory or methodology. Of course, as we shall see, the lectures do not hesitate to engage particular understandings and methods of criticism, but the constructions

are always subordinated to the tactical needs of the particular analysis at hand. This is also why, I think, each of my lectures could be read discretely and in isolation from each other, as well as serially in the context of our theme as a whole.

Pressing at once upon questions of disciplinary specificity and substantive re-articulation across diverse contexts, the lectures might yet offer new ways of negotiating the ways of sociology, as well as striking a critical note about the standards of reflexivity being brought to bear on an assessment of the practice of the discipline in India and also elsewhere. I am specifically concerned to explore the question of how extant forms of disciplinary interrogation (or even disciplinary history) are to be salvaged as logical and intellectual exercises. The same is then crafted onto the terms of a critical encounter between the argumentative and pedagogical spaces of disciplines per se. Surely the difference between disciplines is not (only) in the nature of the disciplinary undertaking; as well (or, much more so) in the judgments framing them. In bringing them together, therefore, one might be interested to explore the discipline-specific recognitions that can – or need to be recast – in various theoretical and conceptual domains. It can also make for interesting cross-disciplinary negotiations and transplacements.

The fact that disciplines are possible sources of domination (*a la* Foucault) does not mean that they are not 'valid' (*sic.*) sources of knowledge. Consequently, an effective challenge to a discipline will have to make a case that can be made plausible in the discipline's own terms, even though the case works against the disciplinary grain. Indeed, this is the possibility that is encoded in my reflections here; it also entails – and this is perhaps important - that I eschew a strict nominalism about the knowledge yielded by practices internal to disciplines. Indeed, coming to terms with the latter point can mean encountering the epistemological terrain – one that has underwritten practices of knowledge in various disciplines today – of what has come to be called 'constructivism'. In fact, one would consider the axis of this exploration important because it lends a sort of cognitive

respectability to our negotiation of the space of disciplines. Where one would be predisposed to reify disciplines, to treat them as fixed and given, 'constructivism' seeks precisely to complicate the axis of such a framing. By introducing further agendas that themselves encounter previously introduced agendas - and thus over-determined spheres of practice - constructivism notices with mock surprise that, within the evolving structure of disciplines, frameworks and commitments appear as at once forming and deforming. But, consistent with my emphasis that disciplines constitute frameworks of knowledge (however uncertain or unstable), I am concerned to push 'constructivism' less in the direction of an evaluation of the politics of knowledge than in the direction of the appropriate epistemological protocols that can (or should) govern social scientific inquiry. Indeed, today the impulse of constructivism can be heard not just in the claim that all meaning must be interpreted, but also in such claims as that it is all 'historical' and/or 'political', and so on. When such requirements are conceived as part of a move towards a less metaphysical, more realistic view of the world, it is easy to miss the motivations that underwrite these claims. Repeatedly, our attempts to be realists can fail, so that: either we need more realism about realism (a more 'realistic' conception of what realism amounts to, that is) or we need to acknowledge that realism is still too hard for us.[5]

Again, it is not the functions and limits of particular disciplinary formations characteristic of the academic realm that I am interested to capture. To be sure, Foucault's point that "the first of the great operations of discipline is … [to] transform the confused, useless or dangerous multitudes into ordered multiplicities" (Foucault 1979: 148) is important. There is also a sense in which one could affirm today that there is an intellectual space for a politics which is not dependent on the rationality of academic disciplines (in which case, clearly in retrospect, Foucault seems to be overstating his case of the necessary imbrication of knowledge and politics). This is as it should be, and implicates a concern with the evolving relationship between disciplines and

democracy, but I am afraid I do not take on this theme here. One thing, however, is clear at least to me – and hopefully the lectures put together here is communicative of it – that even as we critically examine the basic presuppositions of our discipline at the same time as we engage public life as practitioners of these discipline, there is also the question of disciplinary protocols and methodologies of knowledge internal to disciplines that has to be addressed.

All too often, we have tried to make the contemporary organization of academic knowledge answer to every circumstance, both internally and externally, in the process bypassing the methods of reasoning and abstraction internal to disciplines. Our reflections, accordingly, are an attempt to both come to terms with and widen the contemporary order of disciplines and their translation across spheres.

IV

Without doubt, as my lectures will disclose at each level of their instantiation, the work of disciplines – as indeed broad zones of intellectual concern that we designate as either 'social science' or 'humanities' – are of interest less as the site where strains of given practices of knowledge have sought to query their foundations, than as the theatre in which the structure of knowledge about a given domain and its relation to the epistemic practices configuring it can be staged as questions. One is not implying that the current arrangements of disciplinarity do not leave a lot to be desired; and yet, however much we are justified in wanting to abandon current forms of intellectual corsetry, my own feeling is that this is a project on which we must embark with extreme care.[6] Although I have not felt compelled to scan the entirety of the field and/or traverse the full range of questions, I am hopeful that the lectures which offer fragments of a larger work will have succeeded in effecting a more contemporary delimitation of the links between disciplines and the epistemic practices underwriting them.

It should be evident that some strong definitions of disciplinarity (and post-disciplinarity, if you will) are operative here. But I have also been exercised by a development within the field of the humanities and social sciences as a whole. Specifically, there seems to be a preoccupation with constructing the nature of these disciplines as interpretative; indeed, that interpretation is what distinguishes these fields from others. My concern is with this *foundational* interest in interpretation, the sort of interest that asserts that every reading (even, any identification of a text) is an interpretation - that one cannot, so to speak, get free of interpretation. To be sure, interpretation plays some role in the discursive space of modern-day disciplines, but the problem I am fixing on grows out of attempts to see interpretation as a condition of *any* (or all) judgment about disciplines. It is the generality of this thesis about interpretation which makes it, shall I say, suspect. Needless to say, I do not want to criticize this or that theory of interpretation, so much as to raise a doubt about the tendency to theorize 'judgment' as interpretation *tout court*. My aim, in a sense through the discipline-specific elaborations of my lectures, is to identify the temptations that sometimes lead us to give interpretation a foundational role in judgment about the content and status of disciplines, if only to see in the end why our yielding to these temptations really yields little satisfaction by way of reordering priorities within disciplines.

It would be wrong of course to think that this misplaced thesis about the foundational character of interpretation is specific to postmodernism or to those who today try to pursue a political agenda through an analysis of the nature of disciplines. It can be upheld by others, not out of any attachment to its presumed political consequences, but simply as the right account of the nature of discourse internal to disciplines. On this register, the force of interpretation reveals not any ordinary inability on our part to be clear; it suggests something more metaphysical, attempting to describe the conditions of intelligibility of everything, of the whole world. It now seems that any act of understanding or judgment requires the mediation of

interpretation. So interpretation has become like a pair of glasses that colours everything we see. To take these glasses off would be to make the world disappear - or at least to leave our normative and epistemic practices without shape.

Although I will not be overly concerned to query aspects of this picture by retaining a space for the categories and practices of particular disciplines, the force and urgency of this picture cannot be lost sight of. It could still form the basis of a cognitive mapping that I talked about earlier, indeed in the extended sense of a criticism of criticism, a theorization about theory, which, while alive to the passionate contexts of interventions in the present, also attempts a measure of their reactive profiles.

My next two lectures will strive actively to concretize some of these protocols, although the discerning reader might yet attribute a further twist to the interpretative analytics of our suggestions here. All the same, the foregoing overtures would seem to lend a certain self-deprecating quality to the standards of criticism inscribed by the lectures to follow (as indeed this work as a whole). It must be asserted, after all, that both knowledge and politics are – and ought to remain – highly contextualized matters. But consistent with the protocols established by and in the context of the lectures comprising this reflection, I take care not to mistake contingent properties in the contextual formulation of ideas or arguments for essential properties of the ideas or arguments themselves. Consequently, even as I straddle a context-specific domain such as Indian sociology, it is towards a 'public' assent of the visions informing the domain that I am striving for. The lectures, I believe therefore, also forge a new matrix for representing the claims and specificities of disciplines across contexts and domains. While this might seem a pedagogic move meant more to reorder the priorities of theorizing in India, the inter-subjective mediation that my lectures are seeking to craft further lends itself to a principled determination of the content of disciplines today.

NOTES

1. A case in point is the essays put together in the collection edited by Assayag and Benei (2003). In another context, see also Santos (1995 *passim*).
2. For an axis of appraisal see Taylor (1999 *passim*). See also Schmidt (2006) for an overview. The philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre's insistence (albeit straddling another context) that we "reflect on the crisis of the self as *a crisis in the tradition which has formed the self*" (MacIntyre 2006: 10, emphasis added) is not particularly fecund here, although I hope to work on it elsewhere.
3. Such an attempt underscores, in the context of what is offered as comparative political theory, the work of Dallmayr (1996). The matrix of this appraisal however does not exploit all the possibilities internal to this circumstance. Note the point which follows in our text, consequently.
4. But of course I do not traverse this ground wholly or even substantively in this set of lectures. The larger work from which this issues, needless to say, negotiates this ground more completely and comprehensively, both from within disciplines *per se* and from within extant normative languages that dominate our public sphere.
5. I have traversed some of this ground in Hegde (2006), as also in a more discrete offering traversing a wholly different context, namely, mental health (see Hegde 2001).
6. Cf. also my concluding postscript for a more extended reflection.

LECTURE TWO

Reorienting Disciplinary Agendas: Further Considerations on Reflexivity

> The problems are solved not by giving new information but by arranging what we have always known.
>
> WITTGENSTEIN

In the light of the protocols established in the first lecture, let me begin my second lecture pressing at once upon questions of disciplinary specificity and substantive re-articulation across systems of knowledge in particular national contexts. The attempt is to strike a critical note on the standards of reflexivity being brought to bear on the challenge of reorienting disciplinary agendas (especially in India, but also elsewhere). The track pursued here is primarily conceptual and methodological, and the same is further grafted onto the theme of a disciplinary history. This recounting of the spaces and grounds of discipline and history alternates between contending conceptions of the matter and, although implicated on the terrain of sociology and social science per se, translates into a revision of our terms of appraising disciplinary agendas.

I

In a short statement, written some time ago, Anthony Giddens, the influential British sociologist, wondered of his discipline – "Is it a discipline without a common conceptual core, in danger of breaking up into unconnected specialities? And have the most innovative authors moved elsewhere? Most important of all, perhaps, has it lost its cutting edge?" (Giddens 1996: 5). He goes on to argue that while sociologists should focus their attention

on "the practical and policy-making implications of the changes currently transforming social life", the discipline would indeed become "dreary and quite possibly disaggregated, if it didn't also concern itself with the big issues" (ibid.: 7). The big issue for Giddens, of course, is globalization (a "runaway world", as he characterizes it elsewhere): "Social life has become episodic, fragmentary and dogged with new uncertainties, which it must be the business of creative sociological thought to help us understand" (ibid.: 6).

More recently – and cutting back to our own situation, namely, sociology in India – my younger contemporary and disciplinary colleague, Satish Deshpande complained that "most discussions on 'Indian sociology' – especially on its intellectual history, theoretical orientations and so on – actually refer only to a small number of elite universities, research institutions and scholars", and that "unless they are specifically about 'regional' contexts, these discussions usually ignore the most common concrete instance of the practice of 'Indian sociology', namely its *teaching* in hundreds of undergraduate colleges and three or four score universities all over the country" (Deshpande 2001: 248). According to him, it is important to think of disciplinary locations as not only "the site of one's questions and interventions, but also as the place of accountability" (ibid.: 247). Deshpande, of course, is not making an argument about elitism as such; rather, as the following effusion delivers: "to provide a picture of the specific contexts and contrasts that are implicit in the abstraction 'Indian sociology' as different from similar abstractions like 'Malaysian sociology' or 'Indonesian sociology'" (ibid.: 256). To be sure, the rhetoric is not exhausted by these words, but one brief sample is sufficient for my point.

The contention may lack the rotundity of Giddens; it is, nevertheless, on its level another manifestation of an argument that has been deployed in widely different historical contexts and situations. Not a sophisticated argument, to be sure, and an argument that is easily caricatured. But I suppose a high level of sophistication is not a necessary condition for effectiveness. The

appeal to the peculiar predicaments that have defined academic orientations and/or national systems of knowledge satisfies the requirement that it must seem rational and persuasive, that both its proponents and those they persuade could, if pressed, defend themselves in terms of the need to, in Deshpande's words, "(re)position institutions and their practices" (Deshpande, ibid.: 247). It is therefore a legitimate historical exercise to examine the argument seriously, as I now propose to do.

Particular explanations for the recurrence of this class of argument are not hard to find. I myself suggested, in a paper published long ago (Hegde 1989), that while it is comforting to do a sociology of knowledge, it is necessary to go beyond simple assertions about the existential determination of knowledge, and that the thrust should be to provide a glimpse of the logic (both epistemic and 'practical') pervading disciplines in particular contexts. I worked through various analyses and assessments of the sociology in and of India and, rather than viewing these accounts as reflecting the opinions of their authors, took them as embodying the dispositions, strategies and ways of perceiving reality that are taken for granted within the discipline. In keeping with this procedure I advocated a *discursive core* as the key to the practice of sociology in India, and noted its urge to homogenize and pragmatize the ontological domain of India. Alternatively, I wrote that there is hardly any serious attempt at posing the central issue of the ontological status of a discipline, in particular, to formulate 'sociology' as a problem in the history of ideas. Two points favored this line of analysis: it seemed to work successfully, and its nature is almost strictly procedural (or, better still, pedagogic). Whether or not one accepts this analysis, its power lies in what may be termed its 'calculization'; that is to say, it's detailing of the epistemic content and strategic locus of the "discursive core" sustaining the practice of sociology in India. With this construct - in contrast, say, to the treatment accorded by either Giddens or Deshpande (I shall return to aspects of their ground presently) - the institutional aspect of the sociological programme was either neglected or presumed, while taking the

intellectual part of that programme as primary and special.

Obviously we cannot ignore these axes of problematization in reorienting disciplinary agendas, whether it is in sociology or in any other discipline. This becomes clear when, for instance, in the limited context of formulating a defence of sociology, Giddens sets out to prove the assumed universal interpretability of the formulas he elaborates as kind of rules for the centrality of sociology within the social sciences: "Sociologists, don't despair! You still have a world to win, or at least interpret" (Giddens 1996: 7). Thus he confronts a new challenge, namely, to demonstrate how "(m)ost of the debates that grab the intellectual headlines today, across the social sciences, and even the humanities, carry a strong sociological input" and that "(m)ore than any other intellectual endeavour, sociological reflection is central to grasping the social forces remaking our lives today" (ibid.: 6). To be thus related, different situations of knowledge creation (say, sociology in the US or Europe or even British sociology) must be not only comparable to one another but also operational in a reverse manner to fulfill the claim of universal interpretability, because while "(e)verything in the sociological garden isn't rosy … it would be difficult to argue that sociology is off the pace intellectually, especially if one broadens the angle again and moves back to a more international perspective" (ibid.: 6). Since the problem of articulating a defense of a disciplinary enterprise can evidently no longer be solved in the common functional fashion of generalizations, that is, by stating what is identical across national situations, the imperative seems to be to understand it to be the business of a practitioner – in this instance, the sociologist - to grasp the social forces remaking our modernity today; although sociology is hereby noticeably made dependent upon contemporary globalization in a way that is technically no longer controllable.

Here begins Deshpande's undertaking – or even mine (I mean the 1989 prognosis) - to answer the question of sociology, explicitly in terms of a programme of reference and by means of a notation inscribing the idea of an "intellectual field" and of disciplines as

"sites of enunciation" or "regimes of articulation". In doing so, there is an adherence in principle to the organizability of the project and, by extension, to the programmatic approach to this task. The functional ramifications of this task, however, can now come to the fore since Deshpande especially is concerned to answer the question of sociology as 'site' and/or 'regime' without recourse to the very form and positioning of the discipline. On the one hand, their place is now taken by the idea of the institutional framework of academic production, as the formal counterpart to the expressly assumed content orientation of disciplinary history. On the other hand, we find a polarity between – or an oscillation around – the '*institutional contexts of and constraints on interested action*' within disciplines and the '*institutional contexts of both interests and actors*' within disciplines (the summation is mine own and therefore the emphasis). Consequently the incorporation of a special level of predication that adduces to the 'constitutive' rather than merely 'constraining' logic of disciplines: "We cannot be sure that the trajectory of Indian sociology would have been very different had its internal composition been otherwise" (Deshpande 2001: 252). The argument, at any rate, is also tacked on to an imperative of offering a more nuanced mapping of locations, the contention being chiefly that "(f)urther questions about who or what Indian sociology is *for*, who it is practiced *by*, or where its theories and methods come *from* are unavoidable today" (ibid.: 254).[1]

Hence the institutional mediations – as indeed, in the terms of that older analysis that I no longer subscribe to, namely, the idea of 'discursive deviation' (Hegde 1989) – are to be taken into account since it is these mediations and deviations that enable a grasp of what is already there within the practice of the discipline. Prima facie, it seems to me (and perhaps this is a hard claim), this analysis seems to amount to *nothing but* reproducing tautologies. But why "nothing but", one might ask? Because, the argument is about the enduring consequences of institutional definitions of disciplinarity, particularly those consequences that have survived the institution of the disciplinary

regime itself. By introducing further agendas – which themselves encounter previously introduced agendas - and thus over-determined spheres of practice, the argument notices with mock surprise that within the evolved disciplinary regime orientations appear at once as forming and deforming. The problem implicates the method of genealogy grounding the analysis in question. Let me turn to this and in the process institute some further considerations on our theme of reorienting disciplinary agendas.

II

Broadly, the genealogical analysis of disciplinary regimes as institutionalized forms is often marked by a tendency not to pursue the argument beyond the establishment of connections and consequences. Even that contemporary icon of genealogical analysis, Michel Foucault is not immune, and one sometimes has the feeling that, in the fascination for 'locating' systems of thought and practice, he for the moment forgets to pose the question of form and credibility.[2] A genealogy – as indeed a sociology - of truth is important, I guess, on any register; but surely there is a difference between assertions to the effect that "there are no facts, only interpretations" and making the same point in deflationist terms, allowing that there are plenty of facts and nonetheless insisting that to identify anything as a fact is itself to make an interpretation. Indeed, this is a good way to think of that inspirer of modern genealogy, namely, Nietzsche, and his progeny such as Foucault. In fact, the mature position of these thinkers is best translatable in the foregoing deflationist terms. It would also necessitate recasting the idea of genealogy as a problem of narrative, a narrative (historical, fictional, or personal) whose shaping can be animated by the impulse to get at the truth. What follows in the rest of my lecture has a bearing precisely on this narrative point.

The method of genealogy, besides, does not rely exclusively on the combinability of the introduced and designated agendas warranted by its narrative structure – the mode of its ascription

or writing, that is, or even the forces determining its specific structure at a given moment in time – but also depends on a specific content level to have the effects of power-knowledge that are postulated of it. This content level, though, becomes (or is) only relevant to the search operations of the genealogical mode insofar as the content can be assessed. Systems of relations come to be posited on the condition of connectivity (or consequence) as long as the combinations, howsoever made and/or judged, can be related to (what Foucault has termed) "schemes of dispersion". What does this figure of dispersion now mean for the method of genealogy? In this respect, the archaeological axis of Foucault's early work becomes dependent on decisions, and genealogical ones at that (cf. Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1982 *passim*). But this does not imply that the openness of states of discourse or practice is recognized – an openness that would have to be 'taken care of' (*sic.*) by means of the positing of contexts and determinations. When I go on to discuss the rather deep-seated connection between the substantive conception of knowledge and what is problematically called "historical social science", I will keep returning to this point.

Broadly, genealogy replaces the distinction between subject and predicate with the one between function (read, 'power' or 'habitus') and argument or assertion (read, 'knowledge' or 'field'). This is basically an abstraction that is regarded and dealt with as operable and generalizable and that therefore has a conceptualizing effect. That way, it is true the analysis of what was adduced earlier in this lecture as institutional mediations and/or discursive deviations is freed from the subject-centered delimitations of a curiously sacralized history.[3] But then, how can the forms of disciplinary interrogation - and even disciplinary history - are to be salvaged as a logical and intellectual one?

Year in and year out, to be sure, questions whether any of them are actually engaged in a process of knowledge gathering assail sociologists and social scientists generally. Why is there a need to return persistently to the same issues, one might ask? For Bourdieu, as indeed for a whole cult of sociological practice

that he has inspired, the answer lies in the fact that in the social sciences, "the progress of knowledge presupposes progress in our knowledge of the conditions of knowledge" (Bourdieu 1990: 1). The point, I think, is mis-stated, and not just for the problems adduced above with reference to the method of genealogy *per se*. It is not so much that we require *progress* in our knowledge of the conditions of knowledge as that we require anything at all that might plausibly pass for knowledge of the conditions of knowledge. In the case of the natural sciences, for instance, what characterized our faith in their progress in gathering knowledge was not progress in our knowledge of the conditions of knowledge, but a conviction that, with regard to the conditions of knowledge, we did not need to know much more than what had been in place since the Enlightenment. That, of course, turned out to be an over-optimistic assessment of our grasp of the conditions of natural scientific knowledge, but it was - and is - an assessment for which there has been no ready analogue in the social scientific arena.

The issue turns on the question of reflexivity in the context of disciplinary orientations, and bears upon a substantive conception of knowledge itself. As always let me work my way through an extant formulation. The analysis in question is the framework anchoring the Wallerstein *et al.* authored Gulbenkian Commission Report *Open the Social Sciences* (1996). I shall not be pouring through this report however; instead, I propose to work through another condensation anchoring Wallerstein (2000).

"When we entered the nineteenth century", Wallerstein tells us, "neither social science nor sociology existed, at least in institutional form, or even as terms in intellectual discourse"; while going on to maintain that "(w)hen we entered the twentieth century, social science was a vague term encompassing a zone of intellectual concern, and sociology was the name of a nascent organized discipline that was beginning to receive official university sanction in a few Western countries" (Wallerstein 2000: 25). He adds, disclosing as he is a thought about the future: "As we enter the twenty-first century, sociology is an organized course

of study in most universities of the world, but social science remains a vague term encompassing a zone of intellectual concern" (ibid.: 25). The consolation that Wallerstein primarily has in mind is that which comes from an insistent questioning of what is termed "the two cultures divide", namely, science versus philosophy/humanities. According to him, the emergence of what is termed the sciences of complexity within the natural sciences (and mathematics) and cultural studies have overseen a transformation in the world of knowledge - from a 'centrifugal' to a 'centripetal' model, *centripetal* in the sense that "the two extremes (science and the humanities) are moving in the direction of the in-between centre (social science), and to some degree on the centre's terms" (ibid.: 31). For Wallerstein, this is a moment of great responsibility, and he observes that "(p)erhaps social scientists can help to clarify the issues and thereby promote a new synthesis which would reunify the epistemological bases of the structures of knowledge" (ibid.: 32). More pointedly, he maintains that sociologically induced reflections should be developed into a re-unified "historical social science" on a truly global scale.

What is going on? Such consolation is of its nature limited since, just as there is no escape from particular disciplinary orientations itself, so there is no final escape from the judgments of practitioners and non-practitioners alike upon what is being posited as 'historical social science'. We cannot be in attendance at our own wake; and cannot hope finally to fix the form of our own reception, nor avoid the irksome truth that in any record we confront we shall betray more of our selfhood than we ourselves are sensitive to.[4] What follows is another trajectory in a broader rectification that has been the thrust of this lecture.

III

The problem concerns the nature of self-interpretation – or, on our terms, the standards of reflexivity being wrought upon the space of our disciplines – its logical and epistemological status particularly. This is a long standing issue in the philosophy of

social sciences as indeed in the philosophy of mind.[5] A problem encountered in one form or another is that of reconciling the agent or participant's point of view with that of an outside observer. In both cases, I can add, it need not be exactly a question of privileging the reports from the first-person point of view so much as accounting for their distinctive logical status.

Alternatively, certain theories of social understanding - and I include even the project of 'social epistemology' here (for the latter, see Fuller 2002) - subsume the claim that self-interpretation, individual and cultural (as indeed 'disciplinary'), is not something external to and independent of its object, but rather is constitutive of it. Even when presented as a methodological point, however, the claim is often defended by considerations of the sort that establish that the discovery of a genealogical link between, say, two thinkers or a school of thought is sufficient of itself to explain what the 'borrower' believed or felt or intended. Although there are undoubtedly different things to say about such phenomena on the 'disciplinary level', I should think that there is no element of necessity in this, which reflects a basic difference in possible relations between disciplines. What is more, this connection need *not* obtain because self-interpretation (or, again, reflexivity on our terms) is in any way logically constitutive of its object. Better understanding of this relation, I am convinced, requires clarity about the ends of disciplinary history, something that I am not sure we practitioners of the academic craft of knowledge are willing to take into account.

It is also clearest on this level that my argument is not meant to rest on a wholesome idealism or constructivism. There is supposed to be something special about the agendas of social science, and the knowledge that issues off it or informs it, that makes what one might call the *constitutive* claim both plausible and impossible. The peculiarity of the discipline is that it is at one and the same time the case that its formulations are constitutive of its object, *and* that these formulations can be right and wrong. This might seem to be a hedge on our part, but there is, I believe, more at stake here, for ourselves, for the self-

images of our academic practice, and reorienting disciplinary agendas. I shall have to be wading through extant formulations here, and am therefore unable to command the desired brevity and focus.

Claims about the objects and the methodologies of the social sciences take as their point of departure the theory that there are essential differences between the natural and the social sciences. One of the core arguments is that in the case of a person's self-interpretation there is a special relation between awareness and the object of awareness such that the normal logical independence of knowledge and the object of knowledge no longer hold. The self-interpretation, it is claimed, is not simply a descriptive report, but is in some sense constitutive. In other words, the social sciences are dealing with an object of a special sort – they are concerned with 'self-interpreting animals' (to take the title of a famous paper by Taylor 1985a: Ch. 2) – and the phenomena and practices that are the objects of particular social sciences are constituted by this interpretive activity. This fact makes for an important difference between the fully objective, independent objects of the natural sciences and the 'self-constituted' objects of the social sciences, and accordingly the claim is that a proper methodology of the latter will have to reflect on this difference.[6]

When such claims about a constitutive relation are presented, whether in argument or even casually, they are further phrased in terms of such activities as adopting new vocabularies, thickly describing a state of affairs or re-articulating one's state of affairs. One obvious thing common to all such activities is the idea of coming to different beliefs about oneself, about the practice engaged in and/or about a given state of affairs. This change, however, need not challenge the status of the original claim/perception as a 'fully independent object'; only a different one has now replaced it. No object is so independent that it remains unaffected regardless of whatever else goes on in the world; and, what is more important, the *logical* independence of the original claim/perception is not challenged by the fact that other things,

including other thoughts, emotions and perceptions, affect it. The constitutive claim, then, should be understood conceptually or logically, and not causally. Indeed, the possibility that the constitutive claim can be (or ought to be) counterposed to a causal or psychological claim is plainly stated in Taylor. According to him, a social theory is "not about an independent object, but one that is partly constituted by self-understanding"; and the changes wrought by the adoption of such a theory are "not a matter of some psychological effect of further information" (Taylor 1985b: 98). The resolutions, however, remain problematic.

In fact, there is an interesting commentary on aspects of Taylor's prognosis by the philosopher and historian of science, Thomas Kuhn. For the latter, it is not a question of whether the social and the natural sciences are of the same kind; rather, "how the line between the two enterprises might be drawn" (Kuhn 1998: 129). Kuhn substitutes for Taylor's way of presenting the matter the idea that "(n)o more in the natural than in the [social] sciences is there some neutral, culture-independent set of categories within which the population – whether of objects or of actions – can be described" (ibid.: 131). More pointedly, Kuhn insists that "(t)he natural sciences, [-], though they may require what I have called a hermeneutic base, are not themselves hermeneutic enterprises" (ibid.: 133); indeed that while the social sciences are hermeneutic enterprises, one may still reasonably ask whether they are restricted to the hermeneutic, to interpretation: "Isn't it possible that here and there, over time, an increasing number of specialties will find paradigms that can support normal, puzzle-solving research?" (ibid.: 133).

Readers will of course recognize this as a redevelopment of the point behind his opus, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1970), extending to the sphere of the social sciences the logic of paradigms that support normal, puzzle-solving research in the natural sciences. It has been sometimes claimed that Kuhn toned down his radical views after his opus, but this is palpably wrong. He did occasionally repudiate earlier ideas; however, the bulk

of his later work is a significant articulation and defense of his fundamental views and not a retraction. For example, he extends his Darwinian analogy, to describe a process resembling a biological speciation whereby both old and new scientific traditions may survive, as an alternative to the model of simple replacement through revolution. He also develops his account of the social dynamics of scientific communities, focusing especially on the way in which a period of scientific crisis may serve to spread cognitive risk, with different scientists following different avenues of inquiry.[7] Interesting as all this is – for the possibility of a methodologically grounded disciplinary history - it might be asserted that this would be inflecting the reflexive point causally rather than conceptually or logically. Allow me a clarification, before yielding to a more abstract plane of judgment about reflexivity and the representational realm of knowledge.[8]

In fact, until recently, the most charged issue in the sociology of knowledge (as indeed the sociology of science) turned on the question of whether explanations of why a piece of knowledge or a scientific belief comes to be held should invoke the fact that the knowledge/belief is more or less true. What came to be formulated as a "strong programme" in the sociology of scientific knowledge denied this entirely: that explanations of why a scientific belief comes to be held should *never* invoke the fact that the belief is more or less true; that accounts of science should not depend on how the world is, only what scientists do, how they interact in their communities and the larger social interests that they serve (see Shapin 1995 and Bloor 1999 and 2004, as also Latour and Woolgar 1999; for the sociology of knowledge, see Susser 1989 and Steinmetz and Chae 2002). Today, it seems to me that there is an equally fraught, but less explicitly acknowledged, series of divisions: whether particular scholars always plotted their research agendas and merely bided their time until it became a full-fledged or realizable project - what may be termed the 'intentionalist' view – or whether specific academic projects or practices within disciplines took shape only gradually and in definable stages (the 'functionalist'

interpretation). Likewise, there can be studies of knowledge that treat it as a discrete historical event, analyzable in all its specificity and immanence like other historical occurrences, without the need to invoke extra-human capitalization's at all; whereas, there can be accounts in which what happened (or is happening) requires some larger categories. It is worth spelling out the issues at stake in these divisions. The problem, as I have asserted elsewhere (Hegde 2004), is that scholars who theorize about trends in the world of knowledge or about specific disciplinary practices want to have it both ways – they insist, that is, on drawing global conclusions from a practice whose specific characteristics they also regard as uniquely revelatory. A case in point is Vinay Lal (2002), who substantivizes the whole terrain of social science disciplines in terms of the totalizing conditions of modern knowledge. The terms of appraisal offered in Wallerstein (2000) that I had spoken of earlier – as well as, more recently, many of the essays in Patel (2010) - echo this same totalizing thrust for the sociological discipline, often paradoxically in the name of pluralism and academic diversity.

An analogous, but logically independent division also exists between the impulse to limit interpretations of disciplinary practice to what they reveal about the institutions and peoples directly caught up in it as practitioners, bystanders, consumers and critics, versus the more sweeping claims like Shiv Visvanathan's, say: "There is something antiseptic about Indian sociology. It has been marked by a search for competence, even exactitude but without achieving a deeper sense of the problematic. ... One can read 20 years of *Contributions to Indian Sociology* and think that Mandal, Narmada, Bhopal or the turmoil in Punjab were all events that have not touched our social imagination" (Visvanathan 2001: 3123). These variations, it must be emphasized, reach deeper than the by now largely exhausted quarrel about the specificity of particular academic practices, while also cutting across many of the more audible controversies in the field.[9] A further case in point is the investigations anchoring Wallerstein (2000) already called attention to. It may not be

necessary to recapitulate the ground here, but if the possibilities of a sociology developed into (in Wallerstein's terminology) a re-unified, "historical social science" are at once so all-encompassing and fragile, then its pertinence has less to do with given identifiable competencies than with the identification of a theme - a problem - that has no legitimacy in terms of academic fields. If, on the other hand, the point is that of moving substantive concepts into the centre of sociological work all over the globe – that all work on the 'rationality' of knowledge would require judgments that are hybrid and mixed, then there is nothing especially revelatory about it. The themes of rationality and judgment may be the only locus where Western philosophical and theological reflections can still proceed untroubled by their own globalizing impulses, and if there is a kind of unconscious European cultural imperialism in the ways that rationality is being used as a universal gauge for the conditions of life within history, this only demonstrates how thoroughly the discourse about rationality and disciplines has been absorbed into the traditional terminology and practices of the very systems whose assumptions it supposedly discredited. Thus Wallerstein "remain(s) enough of a child of the Enlightenment to believe that reflection can be useful and consequential" (Wallerstein 2000: 35).

It is imperative to reiterate here that the mode of 'socio-analysis' that Bourdieu has been calling attention to as part of his technical and theoretical corpus – the relevant references are in Bourdieu (2003) has a certain 'reflexive' ring to it. The mode takes as its object – over and above the "point of view of the objectivizer and the interests he may have in objectivation" – also the "historical unconscious that he [the objectivizer] inevitably engages in his work" (Bourdieu 2003: 284-85).[10] By "historical, and more precisely academic, unconscious (or 'transcendental')" he means "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" (ibid.: 285).

Bourdieu is of course aware of the barriers that stand in the way of addressing this question. He alludes specifically to the "many obstacles to understanding between 'continental' anthropologists and sociologists and their English-speaking colleagues", and calls attention in this context to "the gulf between the research 'programmes' that each side owes to its immersion in the very profoundly different academic and philosophic traditions and to the different academic transcendentals to which they are each unknowingly wedded" (ibid.).[11] And yet, I am not too sure if Bourdieu is attentive to all the requirements of such a project, as indeed to the very possibility of a stalemate between the imperatives of his 'participant objectivation' and the study of the 'academic transcendental'. Let me set this up.

As scholars deeply interested in the (ongoing) history of their intellectual and institutional practices – while also, I take it, seeking after a novel and progressive transformation of moribund disciplines and disciplinary practices – we cannot fail to ask a crucial question: in what historical or institutional circumstances do we scholars become disdainful of practices of knowledge production or tend to become anxious about ourselves and our 'practices'? Equally, one would need to face up to the larger intellectual question of how to think the practice of transforming the disciplines through the self-transformation of their practitioners. I take it that not asking these questions - or alternatively, asking them but answering them perfunctorily - is a limitation for any programmatic of disciplinary history and the attendant questions of reflexivity. In this regard, one has much to learn from the problematisation of doubt offered in Wittgenstein, the crux of which is given in his comment that "Doubt has its conditions too", and constitutive of his effort to show "that a doubt is not necessary even where it is possible" (Wittgenstein 1969: 50e). If this is so, then one can posit that any demand of reflexivity has its conditions, and as such is willed rather than being plainly necessary or necessitated. Allow me a quick elaboration.

To be sure, to the extent that 'theory' informs the production

of new knowledges, the theorist problematises the object by problematising his or her commitment to the positive knowledge in which the object resides. But refracting somewhat from the intensity of this engagement, one could say that the mode of problematisation I am imploring represents a kind of abstention: not from the problematisation of a domain of knowledge that one seeks to describe, but from the 'doubt' that one seeks to problematise. One way of capturing the logic of this abstention is through the work of the later Foucault, but need not concern us here. The problem, at our end, concerns the problematisation of disciplines and practices in the domain of theory: what are the conditions that allow us to declare that the possibilities of knowledge production in the contemporary world are not what they seem, when one opens up to the state of intellectual and institutional practices informing disciplines in particular national contexts? What is it we do to ourselves when we suspend given ideas as a prior theoretical-political horizon and constitute new frames of intelligibility and understanding?

Doubtless, to describe the question of 'practice' and knowledge practices as an exercise in self-problematisation is a key step in transforming the moment of the production of new knowledges into an object of historical contextualization. And yet, I am not too sure whether a disciplinary history – or even the reflexivity fostered by Bourdieu's mode of 'participant objectivation' - can properly constitute (or even facilitate) the basis of this alteration. Note, I am far from claiming that the question of 'disciplines' *in* particular national contexts cannot admit of being put, or even answered, without some precise methodological calculus. Rather, that in seeking after a stronger recasting of the problem of knowledge and knowledge practices the question of the justification of what we come to count as an authoritative explanation of a given state of affairs in the knowledge domain or as an evaluation of normative schemas and extant intellectual and institutional practices is not to be confused with a historical narrative account of how it is that we have come to practice the discipline the way we do and why we employ the specific evaluative

criteria in assessing the practice that we do. The issue warrants considerable historical and conceptual treatment, something that I have not been able to come across in the literature (although I stand to be corrected).

One recognizes that there is a riposte to all this. But it is also the point where, maybe, a truer engagement could begin. Exactly what it comes to – just what line it is drawing between the perspectival and the absolute – is clearly sensitive to details of one's account of disciplinary spaces and the individuation of their contents. The main challenge, I think, concerns its generalization. Trying to think about this possibility raises many questions about the extent to which a purely disciplinary capacity – grounding in one's own discipline, that is – could envisage such alternative perspectives, which by definition we cannot occupy. Notice that this is not a bar in principle; we cannot occupy temporal points of view in the distant past, but we can say perfectly well what they are like and work with them. This provides another variation on a theme that is familiar to modern philosophers through the works of Kant, Wittgenstein, and also Habermas: of how to dispel the air of paradox surrounding perspectivalism. The Kantian position that we have no way of knowing reality as it really is, independently of the structuring framework we bring to experience, can be made to seem paradoxical, because, in order to be aware that its conception of the world is perspectival, the subject must already have stepped outside it and occupied a 'higher' (transcendental) vantage point outside the boundaries of that perspective.[12]

In one way, this is right, and perhaps the end of the matter. The point to stick to or emphasize is that the operations herein can be still fully cognitive or intellectual. The complications stem from the fact that it seems to be adducing to a level of normativity that goes beyond, if you will, 'preconditions' (plainly, the histories of what led up to something) and 'effects' (the aggregate of the changes which that something causes or that unfold with respect to it) and held to underlie the historical study of both socio-political forms and of the forms of knowledge that conduce to

them. In other words: to have stated that there is something about a particular disciplinary agenda that can and needs to be known is not yet to ask how it is that our descriptions of it (the theory which makes particular accounts of trends internal to a system of knowledge more than just a heuristic device) are themselves over-determined by what we can and need to know about particular disciplines.

IV

I hope it is obvious then that I am not taking a position on the origin - or *fate* - of particular disciplinary orientations, and mean only to introduce and motivate the problem of a reflexive self-grounding of any (or all) references to disciplines and the knowledge they institute and/or underwrite. This is, expectedly, a real issue for disciplinary histories, as indeed for the orienting of disciplinary agendas that can follow in their wake. I try to pursue the implications of one such reorientation in my final lecture.

NOTES:

1. The axis of this exploration has been taken up by two recent volumes, one edited by Maitrayee Chaudhuri (2010) and the other by Sujata Patel (2011a), each incorporating contributions from a band of scholars and practitioners across regional and institutional locales in India.
2. The idea implicates another method of appraisal of Foucault's work on discursive and non-discursive regimes, and whose overall protocols are assessed for their normative confusions by among others Taylor (1985b: Ch.6). That they take on a more involved and hermeneutical cast – and therefore invoke considerations not entirely borne out in and by this analysis - is only to be. Note the ideas discussed also have a currency in determining the precise limits of Bourdieu's notion of 'intellectual field' as well. I get to Bourdieu later, and therefore am deferring treatment.
3. One need only read Beteille (2002) for a taste of this sacralizing disposition.
4. This is of course a larger point incorporating the history of ideas and of

thought as well. In deploying it here I am perhaps underestimating the weight of its insight. It has formed however the basis of my work in modern Indian intellectual history. I inflect the point somewhat differently, and in the traditions of social science pedagogy and reflexivity in what follows.

5. My thoughts on the question have been clarified greatly by Moore (1997), although I am pushing it in directions that philosophers might not be inclined. See also Hegde (1994).
6. Taylor is perhaps among the best English speaking sources for tracking a more complex argument about both the objects and the methodologies of the social sciences. Taylor of course combines claims about social life with claims about language. See the essays reproduced in his 1985a and 1985b.
7. Kuhn (2000) has the details. Interestingly, Kuhn here also narrows and deepens his notion of incommensurability. To say that two theories are incommensurable comes to mean that there is no scientific language which can fully express both: incommensurability is untranslatability. Theories on either side of a revolution divide up the world in systematically different ways, so that while it may be possible to become 'bilingual', the meanings of the incommensurable sentences resist principled translation into a common language. Kuhn makes clear that this does not involve any irrationality; he is simply trying to show how complex the rationality of scientific inquiry may become during periods of radical change. The long interview with Kuhn, featured in his 2000, is a fascinating read, documenting how the history of science was for him from the very beginning a vehicle for philosophical inquiry.
8. I realize that the word 'cause' or 'causal' – as indeed causation – is radically ambiguous. There are 'productive' causes, and there is what can be called 'formal' causes. The former include the circumstances surrounding anything and necessary for its production and emergence. The latter, formal causes are a matter of what the thing is, and this cannot be determined solely by the circumstances necessary for its bare being. There can be an indefinite number of productive causes of the same sort of effect. But what causes (in the second sense) anything to be what it is can be an abiding condition. Important as these points are, they need not weigh on the considerations being forwarded in the text. The question I leave open – whether the circumstances in which ideas emerge, or out of which they are produced, are not sufficient to determine what they are or what they mean – is nevertheless important, and has a bearing on what follows in the text. All the same, it would not be an exaggeration to assert that discussing different ideational constructions of social reality and contributing to the reflexive analysis and discussion of values and interests has been part of the humanities

and social sciences long before recent theoretical innovations (Flyvbjerg 2001).

9. Recent issues of the premier journal *Contributions to Indian Sociology* are emblematic, marked out by an even more characterless pluralism than the monism of perspective for which it was often criticized. See, for a recent plea to pluralize the sociology of India, Vasavi (2011), and the comments that follow from Patel (2011b) and Siqueira (2011). But note, my claims here is not a claim either about disciplinary purity (or its loss thereof) or scholarly productivity (and its concomitant excesses).
10. Bourdieu identifies 'participant objectivation' with "a technique, a method, or, more modestly, a 'device' that has helped me immensely throughout my experience as a researcher" (Bourdieu 2003: 281); and distinguishes this from the more customary procedure of 'participant observation', the latter designating "the conduct of an ethnologist who immerses her- or himself in a foreign social universe so as to observe an activity, a ritual, or a ceremony while, ideally, taking part in it" (ibid.). Alternatively, for Bourdieu, 'participant objectivation' refers to the "*objectivation of the subject of objectivation*, of the analyzing subject – in short, of the researcher herself" (ibid.: 282, emphasis in original), while going on to assert explicitly that "in speaking of participant objectivation, I have moved, without seeming to do so, from anthropology to sociology, and, more precisely, to the sociology of the academic institution …" (ibid.: 284). As his essay discloses, he is calling attention to a mode of reflexivity – 'scientific reflexivity', as he mentions it – which stands opposed to other extant modes of reflexivity, namely, "the narcissistic reflexivity of postmodern anthropology" and "the egological reflexivity of phenomenology"; and which (scientific reflexivity or the reflexivity fostered by 'participant objectivation') "applies to the knowing subject the most brutally objectivist tools that anthropology and sociology provide … and aims … to grasp everything that the thinking of the anthropologist (or sociologist) may owe to the fact that she (or he) is inserted in a national scientific field, with its traditions, habits of thought, problematics, shared commonplaces, and so on, and to the fact that she occupies it in a particular position … with 'interests' of a particular kind which unconsciously orientate her scientific choices (of discipline, method, object, etc.)" (ibid.). As he pointedly reminds, "*one too often forgets that a point of view is, strictly, nothing other than a view taken from a point which cannot reveal itself as such*, cannot disclose its truth as point of view, a particular and ultimately unique point of view, irreducible to others, *unless one is capable, paradoxically, of reconstructing the space, understood as the set of coexisting points … in which it is inserted* (ibid.: 284, emphasis partly in original and partly mine).
11. Many years ago, I must admit Saberwal (1983) had a poser to this effect

in its framing gesture, but the analysis was somewhat truncated by an exclusivist emphasis on the institutional dimensions of sociology in India. I work off (and against) the logic of these moves in my third lecture.

12. See Roberts (1992) for an extended treatment of the theme, which incidentally translates into a key rubric of the disciplinary contours of German philosophy.

Disciplinary History and Comparability: A Brief Working Through

> Not that the incredulous person doesn't believe in anything. It's just that he doesn't believe in everything. Or, he believes in one thing at a time. He believes in one thing only if it somehow follows from the first thing. He is near-sighted and methodical, avoiding wide horizons. If two things don't fit, but you believe both of them, thinking that somehow, hidden, there must be a third thing that connects them, that's credulity.
>
> Umberto Eco

Having recently published an essay examining the legacy of the Lucknow School, as part of an investigation dealing with a possible disciplinary history of sociology in India (Hegde 2011b), I have been aware, from the beginning, of being faced with a number of problems that required resolution. During the last many years one has been witness to methodological debates concerning the proper way to study the history of disciplines and of disciplinary trajectories. Questions have been raised about (as our previous two lectures have tried to frame) the very nature of a practice that seeks to study academic disciplines as an activity that depends on its being engaged at discrete and contingent historical moments and specific institutional sites. In effect, this raises a very old (and perhaps odd) question: is reflection on society, history and politics a cognitive activity of agents who, as a consequence of their socio-historical contexts, must engage a form of reasoning in what are always taken to be changing circumstances? Or is sociological and historical reflection some timeless activity of minds engaged in clarifying a necessary and unchanging truth about society and history that is judged to be somehow independent of the particularities of agents' lives and

the languages they use to reveal it? In what follows, I propose some of my own conclusions in response to questions concerning what we should take disciplinary history to be for us today, why academic disciplines are thought to have a history, and of what it is a history. In consequence, I propose what appear to me to be the most satisfying methods of studying disciplinary trajectories, not least because they reveal a variety of paths taken on the constitution of distinct 'national' traditions of sociological and historical engagement. Needless to say, my critical remarks here will be contextualized to an academic trend or orientation traceable to the early pioneers of Indian sociology as reconstructed, among others, by A. K. Saran (1958 and 1965) and by Ramkrishna Mukherjee (1979). Some other historical facets of intellectual development in a comparative frame will also be brought to bear on our questions of disciplinary history.

I

All too often, the declared purpose of a disciplinary history is to address the relationship between the content and orientation of disciplinary practice and the political cultures of different countries within which academic work is practiced. The aim is to situate national traditions of academic enterprise within the context of their own political culture and discuss the more general relationship between the history of disciplinary discourse and political discourse at large. I should like to shift the focus in several ways however, since it is characteristic of practitioners of academic disciplines who are lodged in departments that, in seeking to account for the variety of forms that their disciplines have taken, their inclination is to look to the varieties of national *political* culture. I venture to suggest that we gain at least as much understanding of this variety by attending to the different *intellectual* and *academic* cultures as to the different national 'political' discourses. In particular, we need to attend to the different ways in which the map of the disciplines has been drawn in different academic cultures, and this is something with deep

roots in their respective intellectual traditions often stretching back into the 19th century or even beyond.

It may be imperative to introduce a caveat here about the problems of comparability, though. There is a fundamental difficulty to be faced in all attempts to undertake comparative studies in the mode of cultural history. Since the units or objects of comparison are culturally defined, the exercise of comparison always implicitly posits a kind of overarching or transcendent category of which each of the national examples is a kind of variant or sub-set (although in practice this larger category is always likely to bear the marks of the 'national' version with which the scholar is most familiar). The ostensible 'comparison', consequently, all too easily ends up neglecting the specificity of other cultural patterns in order to fasten on to the presence (or absence) of an entity or activity described in terms derived from the scholar's own culture.[1] This is certainly true where the activity or entity in question is supposed to be disciplinary history.

All the same, while the broad areas of human interest denoted by such generic terms as history, literature, sociology, or even philosophy clearly both antedate and exceed the boundaries of any particular pedagogic activity, the enterprise known as disciplinary history initially came into being and derived its identity from the analysis of academic practice. Of course, an interest in aspects of the past of any human activity may be pursued under all kinds of disciplinary labels, but there is – it must be emphasized – a significant difference between, on the one hand, the terms we may retrospectively use to designate the intellectual interests of a particular individual or group and, on the other, an academic practice carried on in certain established institutional contexts. Perhaps this is what scholars like Philip Abrams (1968), Perry Anderson ([1968] 1992) and Noel Annan (1991) were getting at, when they observed that although England had a rich tradition of social and political thought, 'sociology' did not figure strongly in this tradition. Indeed, the question that these accounts seek to configure, in different yet complementary ways, is this lacuna in the English intellectual tradition: why did the country

that became the first urban society in history, and launched the world on the course of industrialization, not develop a form of inquiry appropriate to these momentous developments? In other words, why (at least, until more recently) no sociology in England? There is a further point, besides, as Kumar (2001: 44) has noted. Though sociology did not take root in England, other relevant academic disciplines did, such as the study of literature, especially English literature, and the study of history, especially English history. Both these subjects, as systematic disciplines, were relative latecomers on the English scene, establishing themselves in the universities in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, at just about the time that sociology was being institutionalized elsewhere notably in the United States.[2] Accordingly, the questions: why were these disciplines successful in England, when sociology was not? What does this tell us about forms of intellectual development and forms of thought?

To be sure, if one is interested in the historical development of disciplines, one is interested in an aspect or episode of the intellectual and institutional history of academic disciplines within a period. Consequently, although there had been (needless to say) a long tradition of reflection on society, politics and history in different contexts, it is not the case that some previously existing activity called 'sociology', 'history' or 'politics' was, in a particular period, taken into the universities; rather, these notions, in the forms in which we are familiar with, are the *creation* of particular disciplinary practices. In fact, the cultural historian Stefan Collini (2001) has pointed out that the social and institutional roots of these disciplinary practices lay in two developments in particular. The first consisted in a very significant expansion, most dramatic in the United States, of systems of higher education, which involved an increase in the numbers of students and teachers, the introduction of new subjects into the established curricula and the elaboration of a professionalized academic identity; and, second, an expansion of the traditional governing classes, including a marked growth in the numbers of civil servants of all kinds, including, for the leading European nations, colonial administrators (Collini 2001: 283).

Collini of course is here accounting for the background in the context of which the aspiration to develop a 'science of politics' took on a new and more pedagogic form in Europe and America, where it could be seen to offer an appropriate training for a future political and administrative elite. The context of sociology, to be sure, was somewhat different. Thus Wolf Lepenies (1988), in his account of the rise of sociology in 19th century Europe, makes the familiar point that while France developed a strong sociological tradition – and Germany was well on the way to doing so until thrown off course by the Nazi experience – in England a dominant literary and moralistic influence severely constricted the sociological imagination. Indeed, for reasons of national history and institutional developments, certain social science disciplines (not always so called or so regarded) continued their vigorous development. This was true above all of economics ('political economy') but also of law and jurisprudence, reflecting the importance of constitutional developments (as indeed the context noted above by Collini). This also meant that political theory and political philosophy, reinvigorated by strands of Hegelian idealism, also continued to thrive, although never quite regaining the heights reached in the era of Hobbes and Locke (or even Bentham and J. S. Mill). Most strikingly, and perhaps most relevant from the point of view of sociology, there was the development of anthropology, in the hands of Tylor, Maine, McLennan, Lubbock, Frazer, and ultimately Malinowski. Not only was anthropology closely tied, intellectually and practically, to the fact of empire, its origins (namely, the discipline of anthropology) in evolutionism, and its concern for the exotic and the 'unfamiliar', made it an unpromising bedfellow for sociology. Indeed, by the time Malinowski arrived on the scene, anthropology was already established, institutionally and intellectually, as a separate discipline, indifferent to and for the most part condescending towards the claims of sociology (Kumar 2001: 42).

Complementing this picture of why sociology found it so difficult to establish itself in English culture is the stress on the

'ameliorism' – 'social action without social theory' is how Abrams (1968: 39) characterizes this state of affairs – that is taken to be the principal feature of 19th century English society. To elaborate, it was not so much that the English intellectual tradition discouraged the growth of a native sociology; rather, it was the unique permeability and responsiveness of British government (relative at least to other governments of the time) that made it appear unnecessary to develop a special science of society. The tools at hand – in the concepts of classical political economy, the strong statistical tradition, and the belief in progress and the possibilities of reform – seemed to intellectuals and administrators alike sufficient to enable them to get on with the task of ordering and reforming the newly developing urban-industrial society; English social and political institutions offered no real barrier to reform. As Abrams has noted: "Statistician, administrator, reform politician – these were the roles the system encouraged" (Abrams 1968: 5). In fact, disciplinary historians have noted that until after the Second World War there was no academic or public demand for sociologists; in fact, that in the long and barren hiatus between 1907 and the 1950s, only schools of social work/ administration survived (see Kumar 2001: 45-7).

Now, of course, one might ask how much this failure of academic sociology in English intellectual life in the first half of the 20th century matters, as also about the kind of theoretical weight that it can be given. The importance of this institutional 'fact' is heightened when one sees that academic sociology elsewhere, especially in Europe, was at least in part a response to the failure of social reform in those contexts. In fact, Lawrence Goldman (1983 and 1987) has argued that the lament for the absence of sociology in England might be better addressed as an accomplishment, in that England achieved what others only aspired to. Goldman claims that all Western intellectuals in the 19th century were seized with the same sense of urgency as the English; and all conceived social science as the tool to facilitate reform; but where England largely succeeded in harmonizing 'science' and 'reform', the opposite was the case on the European

continent and even in the United States. Thus in considering the efforts of the American Social Science Association, founded in Boston in 1865 on the English model, the German *Verein fur Sozialpolitik*, started in 1872 as a reform association by liberal thinkers and publicists – and even the Franco-Belgian International Social Science Association, also modeled on the English example – Goldman (1987) finds a record of marked failure to influence policy making in their respective countries in any serious way. The consequence was a turn to academic sociology, to 'theory' as a refuge from the unaccommodating world of practice.

Quite clearly the disciplinary history on offer here is offering a model of the relationship between social science and reform politics, which, largely successful in England, proved unattainable elsewhere. As Goldman puts it: "In this model, sociology only found an academic haven when, for a variety of reasons, it failed to find its place in the world of affairs. It was not that a reformist social science 'frustrated' the development of an academic sociology; rather, 'sociology' had its origins in the frustration of reformism" (Goldman 1987: 171). Consequently, the argument that sociology was 'unnecessary' in England – because there was a more commanding model of inquiry available, one that yielded more satisfaction than 'pure theory' – is being given a new gloss: indeed, what is seen as a 'failure' of English culture is forwarded precisely as a matter for celebration. The English model, far from being something that needs apology, was in fact widely envied and emulated by European and American liberals. It represented a triumph of "Englishness" and of the English aptitude for mixing social inquiry with practical politics.

Interestingly, as Kumar (2001: 50) has also noted, Goldman (1983 and 1987) paradoxically reinstates the 'peculiarity of the English', despite his intention to emphasize common concerns in all Western societies. But he does so "largely to protest at the unhistorical and anachronistic nature of most attempts to write the history of sociology" (Kumar, ibid.).[3] Most of these are efforts at a retrospective reconstruction of their discipline, as currently

conceived and practiced. The intention is to discover the 'origins' or 'seeds' of the subject, in the frequently disparate and disconnected intellectual element that actually existed at any one place or time. These elements are then bundled together to form a 'disciplinary tradition'. The problems with this procedure are only too evident. A given national context (in this case, England) is contrasted with more 'successful' models of the development of sociology elsewhere and is berated for its backwardness. Indeed, as Kumar has noted: "Not only does this ignore the actual history of the matter, which is that several societies sought to emulate the English model and only turned to academic sociology when these efforts failed, but, more important, it neglects the variety and specificity of the different forms of 'social science' in the 19th century and of their relationships to their respective societies" (ibid.: 51). Sociology, clearly, is "not some unified, teleologically willed, collective project of the European mind" (Kumar, ibid.).[4]

As further observed by Kumar (2001: 51-2), there is another way in which the standard accounts of the history of sociology need to be challenged. Goldman (1987), for instance, largely accepts the conventional view that, while sociology languished in England, it flourished vigorously in other national contexts, notably France, Germany, and the United States. It is indeed implicit to this thesis that sociology was a response to the failure of reform in those societies. But lurking behind this line of appraisal too is a retrospective history, which issues off the idea that because sociology has come to be a strong presence in the intellectual life of those societies, the tendency has been to construct sociological 'traditions' that begin somewhere in the late 19th century and are assumed to continue in the course of the 20th century.

Indeed, as Kumar (2001: 51) recounts, the evidence suggests that only in the United States can sociology be truly said to have been institutionalized in the decades around the turn of the century. Thus even as Europe had the big names – Comte, Spencer, Tocqueville, Marx, Durkheim, Weber, Tonnies, Simmel,

Pareto – and American sociology was largely indebted, in its early stages at least, to European, especially German, intellectual influences, "the institutional instruments for furthering sociology that we associate with the universities of Chicago, Michigan, Wisconsin, and later Columbia and Harvard were conspicuously absent in the European case" (Kumar 2001: 52). Kumar goes on to forcefully maintain that "neither Weber, Tonnies, Simmel, nor any of the other leading figures of German sociology ever held a chair of sociology, and their work gave rise to no systematic tradition of teaching and research in sociology" (ibid.). It is further highlighted that Weber was virtually unknown in the Germany of the 1920s, "and the Nazi experience put paid to any further serious sociological work" (ibid.). Without doubt, it was left to the American Talcott Parsons to rehabilitate Weber, Tonnies, and the other German sociologists – even for the Germans – and thus consecrate them, retrospectively, as among the 'founding fathers' of sociology.

What about France and the place of Durkheim in the scheme of things, one might ask? Again, as Kumar (2001: 52) has observed, we are accustomed to thinking of France as the one European country where sociology did become firmly institutionalized, mainly because of the work of Durkheim, the work of his disciples, and his editorship of *L'Annee Sociologique*. But (as Kumar insists) we should not forget that Durkheim was for most of his professional career, both at Bordeaux and the Sorbonne, a professor of education, and only in his later years at the Sorbonne was he able to convert this to the title 'Professor of Education and Sociology' (ibid.). More importantly, it can be maintained that Durkheim succeeded in establishing sociology in France "mainly through his own individual effort, and not through institutional provision" (Kumar, ibid.) gathering around himself a band of enthusiastic disciples (who had no research careers and no academic posts to aim after) and most of whom did not go on to become professional or academic sociologists.

The point therefore is that nowhere in 19th and early 20th century Europe did sociology establish "itself as a serious,

systematic discipline in the way it did in the United States" (Kumar 2001: 52). Indeed, in order to develop sociology as a discipline European sociology had to await an intellectual impetus from America, and this duly arrived in the post-Second World War period in the writings of Parsons, Merton, Wright Mills and others. As Kumar testifies, only then did European universities set up or revive departments of sociology and begin the massive expansion of the subject that continued until the early 1980s (ibid.). To a large extent, sociology in Europe is a "postwar phenomenon – which means that, as with much else in postwar Europe, it has a heavy American accent" (Kumar, ibid.). In fact, there is a substantive point in Jeffrey Alexander's contention that "virtually every strand of contemporary European sociological theory builds in fundamental ways upon American postwar thought" (Alexander 1994: 6; cited in Kumar 2001: 52, n.16). But of course this does not make American social thought purely home-grown or indigenous either. Just as European thinkers were highly influential in American sociology before the First World War, it has been pointed out that European influences were an important source of some of the American trends in sociological theory that flourished in the 1960s and 1970s (see also Steinmetz 2007 *passim*). The point rather (as underscored by Kumar) is that "it was largely in American vessels that the work of these European thinkers was carried back across the Atlantic" (Kumar ibid.: 52, n.16).

II

These are, of course, some broad comparative sketches, intended simply to indicate the kinds of contrasts that could be explored in a fuller treatment of disciplinary history. But they do strike home the point that the cultural historian Stefan Collini (called attention to earlier) alludes, namely, that "disciplines are unstable compounds" (Collini 2001: 298). As he tellingly observes:

> What is called a 'discipline' is in fact a complex series of practices, whose unity, such as it is, is given as much by historical accident and institutional convenience as by a coherent intellectual rationale. These practices almost

invariably incorporate layers or residues from some previous form of the constituent activities, elements which do not necessarily have an intrinsic connection with those concerns which many current practitioners might regard as being at the core of the discipline (symptomatically, disciplines always provoke a lot of talk about 'cores'). From time to time, efforts are made to purify this heterogeneous bundle: new definitions, methodological prescriptions, curricular re-organisations, the founding of breakaway professional societies and so on (Collini, ibid.).

Doubtless, the little history that I tried to incorporate in the previous part of my lecture may not be doing justice entirely to the structure of these remarks. In fact, an intriguing dimension of that little history alluded to is the combination of an analysis which, while enhanced by a discussion of 'history', is not in itself 'historical'. This, to me, is a striking feature of the genre that we are calling attention to (although Collini's remarks are meant precisely to complicate the axis of this genre by incorporating the understanding that "(n)o sketch of the bundle of activities that have been carried on under the heading … [of a discipline] can claim any adequacy unless it brings out the shifting and hybrid nature of the enterprise" [Collini 2001: 298]).[5] In what follows, it will be a case of embodying this assessment, although I also take on board other compulsions that could bear on an intellectual history of modern India.

Let me refocus the question for our purposes here: where does one locate, against the backdrop of the understanding foregrounded in the foregoing paragraph, the academic trend or orientation of the early pioneers of Indian sociology (as represented, say, by the work of the Lucknow School, Radhakamal Mukerjee and D. P. Mukerji in particular)? But before I venture some thoughts on this specific question, I must disabuse myself of other extant tendencies in disciplinary history and comparability; and I do so here from within the structure of protestations issuing from the space of Indian sociology as a whole.

To be sure, commentary on the knowledge internal to disciplines has a function considerably larger than reportage or the articulation of opinion; it cannot be limited to statements that describe, explicate, illuminate, compare, or even moralize

about the work being surveyed (or the discipline being talked about) as well. These are, it is true, some of the modalities of commentary, but what gives it a critical edge and focus is above all its striving for consensus and agreement about the progress and effective history internal to disciplines. Let me try to explain. When the late Louis Dumont coined the term 'sociology of India' in the 1950s to designate a new field of study, he was then responding to the widespread belief that for a rubric of studies to come into their own, to be elevated to the status of an object of knowledge, it had to be armed with its own concepts and analytical protocols. He was also responding to the hope – more accurately, the desire – of investing the study of texts and contexts with the dignity of science - a desire, incidentally, that strongly animated French structuralism, as indeed French sociology (or whatever that obtained of it). Dumont's programmatic enthusiasm seemed warranted then - just as the imperative to assert 'post-Dumontian' perspectives seems warranted today - but almost fifty years later the graduate student who ventures into this area is faced with an almost intractable bibliography, a wealth of specialized terms and, in some instances, theoretical notations ranging from the prosaic to the flashy.[6] It is the type of situation that invites either the instinctive reaction of complete dismissal or some project for the redemption of a field that has gone astray. Thus, for instance, the sweeping and rather pompous claim called attention to earlier in our second lecture: "There is something antiseptic about Indian sociology. It has been marked by a search for competence, even exactitude but without achieving a deeper sense of the problematic. ... One can read 20 years of *Contributions to Indian Sociology* and think that Mandal, Narmada, Bhopal or the turmoil in Punjab were all events that have not touched our social imagination" (Visvanathan 2001: 3123). Consider also *The Oxford India Companion to Sociology and Social Anthropology*, whose editor Veena Das flamboyantly declares "the struggle to define the legitimate concerns of social sciences in India today is equally a struggle towards the creation of not only new *sites*, but also new *objects* of sociological and anthropological knowledge" (Das 2003:

2).

These protestations reach deeper than the by now largely exhausted quarrel about the Indian sociology's uniqueness, and they cut across many of the more audible controversies in the field.[7] They combine 'object-level' contentions about the space of social sciences in India (as reflected both in the variety of themes and topics studied and those doing the studying) with the 'meta-level' issue of whether the contents of the social sciences can (or should) be explicated free of normative and institutional criteria. To be sure, a lot of space exists for theoretical maneuver with respect to each of these poles. However, commentaries on the knowledge internal to disciplines are not always given to exploiting this space, being predisposed towards lumping both poles together in one compact claim about (to take on the lines from Veena Das) "the configurations through which the relation between social sciences, public debates, and the imperatives of administration have given a particular shape to the concerns of these disciplines in India" (Das 2003: 1). To be sure, describing the progress and effective history internal to disciplines is not the same thing as examining how our descriptions are themselves over-determined by our assumptions about the characteristics of such knowledge. Allow me to conclude with a thought impinging on the mechanics of internal criticism, theory revision and paradigm rejection. The point cannot be to comb areas of intellectual concern and the work of disciplines internal to them for their inclusions and exclusions; rather, we should be getting at what the work internal to disciplines was intended to solve, whether in addressing a problem they have given rise to others and whether the objection is only to the imperious application (or misapplication) of concepts and categories. The mistake here, to repeat the point that I made in my first lecture, is in thinking certain concepts as internal to a theory – and that in turn as connected to the essential work of a discipline or a confluence of disciplines – when in fact they are concepts about which there can be many theories and various disciplines. As I suggested then, and am seriously imploring now, that we distinguish carefully

between *problems* of social science and *explanations* yielded by the work of disciplines internal to social science. The point cannot be to comb through contexts and histories – 'locations' in the contemporary parlance of academia - for their difference, but (as we maintained in our very first lecture) for the resolution of the problems that the difference(s) is invented to solve, a problem that is as real for social scientists as for those reject the social scientific sense of contingency, as real for Indian scholars as for their western counterparts.

III

Let me return to a facet of the disciplinary history of India as worked through the orientation obtaining within the pioneers of the Indian sociology, as represented by the Lucknow School.[8] Perhaps the most striking feature of this work is the 'unstable compound' that is the disciplinary space of sociology in India, something similar to the situation in Europe as expounded earlier. Indeed, in thinking about the development of academic disciplines in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, as Collini reminds us, "we always need to bear in mind the intellectual prestige and structuring power of a broadly historicist framework" (Collini 2001: 290). For Collini, this is as true of Germany as in the "German-influenced parts of Europe (which in this period meant pretty much the whole of Europe), but it was in many ways no less true in the United States despite the later emphases on the ahistorical, or even anti-historical, character of so much American social thinking" (ibid.). To be sure, as part of the nationalist awakening of the 1920s and 1930s and its own ambivalent, almost self-contradictory, attitude towards conceptions of Hindu tradition and India's westernized modernity, the historicist framework underlying D. P. Mukerji made a renewed attempt to locate West's modernity within the endogenous stream of Hindu culture itself – even as his concept of an integrated Indian personality emblematized unresolved problems of incorporating traditional and modern elements – whereas this historicist ambivalence comes out more forcefully

in Radhakamal Mukerjee who, having found Indian tradition spiritually 'modern' and self-governing and the Western civilization ailing and uprooted, still envisaged a synthetic-integrated model which could both retain the 'Eastern' tradition and yet surpass West's modernity.[9] Undeniably, this was in conformity with the dilemmas into which modern Indian intellectuals (including the founders of the Lucknow School) were drawn in both responding to the challenge of the West and in representing a more comprehensive (read 'historicist') framework of sociological inquiry in India.

It also meant a claim to constituting a more encompassing ethic of indigeneity, which spoke strongly and often about the need for practitioners within the social sciences to abandon the constraints imposed by the division of subject matter into distinct disciplines. Of course, this concern for bridge-building between disciplines did not translate into a distinct trend in Indian academia, for the arrangements of disciplinarity inevitably asserted themselves in the wave of institutional building of the 1950s and 1960s. More importantly, the Lucknow School's overall ethic of indigeneity sought to demonstrate that the whole of India's social reality, in all its different manifestations and in all its forms of appearance, must be understood as the result of a process which consists in the self-explicating activity of a culturally resilient social order. This intention may, by itself, seem unremarkable when viewed in the ideological context of the time. But it puts the early pioneers of the practice of the social sciences in India in the long line of those who, following in the wake of what they took to be the cultural impulses of India's social fabric, started to construct institutional and normative visions centering around one or another active principle of historical change. 'Ameliorism' in the historical context of the Lucknow School went with concomitant demands of state-building, institutional planning and national reconstruction.

Considering this facet of the disciplinary history of India in more structural terms, one might say that the enterprises which came to be labeled 'social sciences' were carried on at the points

of intersection or overlap among four related academic disciplines – philosophy, politics (or civics and administration), economic thought and history – and the particular shape taken by the enterprise at any given institutional location was largely determined by which of these subjects had exerted the greatest gravitational pull or dominance. This model certainly prevailed in the teaching attempted by the Lucknow School, with no distinctive subject matter providing method and coherence to the terms of disciplinary practice. This underdeveloped disciplinary identity and its lack of structuring theoretical paradigms meant that no canon of classic texts with recognizable affinities to the then current terms of practice could be established.

All the same, the academic work of the Lucknow School seemed to translate into a substantive agenda, which although not explicitly so-ordered by the pioneers themselves held the prospect of a critical reconstruction of sociology/social science in India. Undeniably, for all their gestures of piety towards the 'traditional' and the indigenous, the founders of the Lucknow School were quite categorical that intellectuals from the Third World are a product of the historical encounter with the West; and that, consequently, modernization in the Indian context would have to distinguish 'traditionalism' as an ideological stance implying rootedness in history from mere adherence to tradition.[10] Interestingly enough, for the Lucknow School – in what seems a reversal of the coordinates of modernization theory - traditionalism cannot denote a mode oriented against the new symbols and trends. Rather, it meant, as in the words of D. P. Mukerji, an orientation towards "reconstructing Indian culture through intelligent adaptation to and assimilation of the new forces in the light of a reinterpreted past" (Mukerji 1952: 13). It is not surprising, therefore, that the key question for the Lucknow School, is the issue of *change within the present*, as posed both in the context of the historical encounter with the West and in the immediate aftermath of Indian independence from colonial rule.

Undeniably, in providing these lineaments to the challenge of

India's modernization, the founders were striving to raise the question of change within the present otherwise than as an extrapolation of developmental tendencies built into the relationship between pre-given structural types ('tradition' and 'modernity'). For the Lucknow School clearly – as indeed the time and context in which its work unfolded – the national state and its traditions of social science theorizing were quite central to India's modernization; but the latter process (namely, India's modernization) would have to be elaborated, made sense of and experienced in a continual dialogue with local ideas and practices (in a word, tradition). To put the point slightly differently: a major problem with the sociology of modernity as debated in scholarly circles both in India and abroad is its failure to acknowledge that the question of modernity and modernization is not just a "sociological problem of historical transition" but a "problem of translation, as well" (Chakrabarty 2001: 17). The founders of the Lucknow School, quite obviously, understood this, so that in urging the Indian sociologist to be an Indian first they were concerned to mediate a position for sociology that would take tradition and traditionalism seriously and in the process "translate" apparently incoherent forms of modernity into their own categories. Surely, then, there is more than simply a dialectic of tradition and modernity operative in what the founders were attempting. This very hybridity also meant that a demanding sense of the historicity of India and its people was always more likely to make itself felt in the context of sociology/social science, and this in turn raised troubling questions about the principles of selection and the methods of study (which, incidentally, the early protagonists were not themselves predisposed towards answering). Obviously, the defining context of Indian nationalism had to be transcended, which even the evolving disciplinary agendas of the 1950s and 1960s failed to completely comprehend or even delineate.

Clearly, a wider intellectual history is inescapably involved which over-writes the demands of a disciplinary history of social science in the Indian context. It therefore might seem some kind

of a mistake to encourage the writing of a disciplinary history in purely 'internalist' terms – incidentally, something that I could have given the impression of favouring, but which is substantively and methodologically impossible in the Indian context – and must be displaced by approaches which seek to place academic developments within a much broader social and intellectual context. American academic culture has been particularly well served in this respect, and it seems to me that attempts to explore national variations in the history of particular disciplinary undertakings might benefit from considering that work. And of course, as the enquiry is pushed further in the direction of transnational comparisons, a whole literature on the comparative study of higher education and its organizational structures also comes into view.

IV

A final point: emancipating ourselves from the narrow perspective of discipline-history – and in the Indian context, as I have tried to point out, it is neither possible nor desirable to do so – may also help us to account for a further characteristic of recent writing about the study of academic cultures, namely, the idea of 'withdrawal' and 'loss of function' (Collini 2001: 300). The thought here is that there was a time when there was no clear distinctions between intellectuals, scholars and academics, who all engaged in public debate about the issues of the day while also carrying on with their scholarly inquiries; and that soon a narrow professionalism supervened and what now one has is academics concerned only with the development of their particular discipline and who have lost all contact with public debate outside the walls of academia. Indeed, as Collini reminds us, this "lament is a recurring feature of a certain sort of tendentious discipline-history, as indeed it is of writing about the topic of intellectuals more generally" (Collini 2001: 300), and hardly qualifies as history. Alternatively, again as Collini nudges, we need to think "of a series of overlapping publics, in the plural, and a historically variable range of strategies for engaging with

them" (ibid.: 300-01). By the same token, we should not speak of 'professionalisation' as though it involved the complete elimination of a non-specialist public, as well as "being wary of stories of simple 'decline' or even 'retreat'" (ibid.: 302).

I guess this is, in the final analysis, only to re-state the premises that brings us together here in the context of these lectures, but as I observed at the very outset this is also to reiterate specific reminders for a specific purpose.

NOTES

1. My thoughts on the question here have been informed by the cultural historian Stefan Collini (1983 and 2001) and by the sociologist Krishan Kumar (2001 and 2006). This juxtapositioning of a historically-minded sociologist and a cultural historian – as the fount of a disciplinary history - may be interesting in itself, but will not form the crux of our reflections here. I am dependent though on aspects of their detailing, which will again find acknowledgement in course.
2. Contemporary observers of the English/British scene, of course, are not concerned with this question. See, for a recent assessment in the context of the centenary of the British sociological journal, *The Sociological Review*, Osborne, Rose and Savage (2008). See also the exchange between Pahl (2011) and Savage (2011), in the context of the review by the former of the latter's book (that is, Savage 2010).
3. Recent claims to this effect include Uberoi et al. (2007) and Patel (2011a) in the Indian context and Halsey (2004) in the context of British sociology. See also Steinmetz (2007) for situations peculiar to American sociology.
4. Of course, I have the problem of reconciling this with the remarks which the American political theorist Hannah Arendt has orchestrated in the course of a critical engagement with the German sociologist Karl Mannheim's sociology of knowledge (see Arendt 1990). Incidentally, the remarks are important, being among Arendt's few writings on texts in sociology, a discipline about which she nevertheless later expressed strong and fairly derogatory views. Arendt's essay, titled 'Philosophy and Sociology' ([1930] 1990), confronts the basic incommensurability of sociology (as posited by Mannheim) and philosophy, and significantly constitutes the limits of one as representing the possibility of another. According to her: "The assertion that all philosophical knowledge is existentially bound not only fails to refute philosophy, but may even provide support for it, although philosophy's claim that it is absolute (a claim which it could in fact renounce without losing its meaning) is

thereby made relative and may even be altogether invalidated" (Arendt [1930] 1990: 200-01). She further goes on to claim: "Sociology identifies those determinants of thought in which thinking takes no interest. It thereby demonstrates that the passion for the unconditional is actually little more than an implicit forgetting of the conditioning factors" (ibid.: 203). I wish I could stay with this theme, but that would take us elsewhere. Cf. also the opening remarks in my first lecture quickly juxtaposing philosophy and history.

5. These remarks may be juxtaposed against the structure of my claims anchoring Lecture II. A fuller treatment of the feature being identified about the genre as practiced is offered in Hegde (2011a). I underscore the claim about how fleeting and transient disciplinarity was for very precise times, places and situations in what follows through a particular 'school' in India, while also reflexively articulating the modality of their engagement and objects of inquiry. I must hasten to clarify that the idea of 'school' that I will soon be alluding to can be ambiguous, designating at once a tradition of research, an epistemic community, a knowledge institution, as indeed commitment to a strand of thought or 'theory'. In the way in which we will come to deploy it, the idea of 'school' implies a kind of intellectual spirit, an inspiration rather than a set of dogmas. This clarification is particularly important for the theme that I handle in the third part of this lecture.
6. For the enthusiasms sustaining Dumont in the context of Indian sociology, see his (1970). Alternatively, for the post-Dumontian constellation, see Dirks (2002).
7. A case in point is the lines penned by Baviskar, Sundar and Naregal (2007), marking an editorial shift of guard of the journal *Contributions to Indian Sociology*.
8. As already implied in a previous note (n.5 above), I do not hold to the 'Lucknow School' as a body of demonstrated propositions but rather as a set of questions and problems. The effort is to forward a sense of the wider quest at the heart of the work of the founders of the Lucknow School. But of course, unlike attempts to deal with a scholar or a topic, examinations of an academic trend or orientation have the peculiarity that in a certain way they create the object they are dealing with. So it could be with our usage 'Lucknow School'. But it does not really bother me. Likewise, in another context, Veena Das has noted that "the practice of constructing 'national traditions' in sociology or social anthropology is curious since it takes the political boundaries of the nations to be already given or settled" (Das 2004: 1). Again, the issue does not interest me, for reasons that hopefully these lectures have made clear. The account I am presenting of the Lucknow School is a condensed version of a larger prognosis offered in Hegde (2011b).

9. This line of appraisal is forwarded, among others, by Gupta (1987), although Saran (1958) offers a variation.
10. In my longer treatment, I had expressed some misgivings about the problematic into which the founders of the Lucknow School (D. P. Mukerji, in particular) were being delivered by, among others, T. N. Madan (1994). See, for this, Hegde (2011b: 64). I notice that, in a more recent offering, Madan (2011) has largely disabused himself of the problematic.

A Question of Post-Disciplinarity? Concluding Postscript

> If a good demonstration means simply an argument which is effective, where are we to stop?
>
> ROBERT BLANCHE

Taking precise measure of the limits of extant formulations within a field, as also the whole apparatus of 'critical' distinctions germane to a field, could furnish, positively, the condition of reinterpreting that field. This has been a guiding thought informing our reflections here; and yet, it seems to me that the latter - any axis of critical discourse - cannot be reduced to that which makes it possible. There is the further question - in a word, what would be the condition of this condition? - that would have to be addressed. All the more, since the imperative to posit new contexts and to reconfigure access to established contexts has framed the manner in which we have sought to traverse the domain of disciplines and their translation across spheres. Even more insistently perhaps, one would have to take up for critical scrutiny a question that has formed the basis for meta-theoretical reflections in the humanities and social sciences today, namely, the issue of post-disciplinarity. As inherited academic forms of argumentation and research methodology become more fluid and multiple, there is increased pressure to constitute a more encompassing logic of enquiry. Yet the form and status of that kind of overarching 'logic' has never been more thoroughly questioned. It is important to ask how the post-disciplinary field is to be conceived: is it a new kind of totality requiring an authoritative normative summation? Or is it rather a matter of describing and cataloguing the diverse range of practices and

methodology? Alternatively, what are the different kinds of orientations which seem to structure prevalent attitudes to both disciplinarity and post-disciplinarity?

Needless to say, one of the basic rules of argumentative discourse is that one is responsible for what one is actually saying (or has actually said) and not for what one intended to say – although it is usually from others that one finds out what one has actually said. I hope this rule will hold for this postscript as well, and my little rumination at the end of this set of lectures has been structured accordingly.

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No doubt we would all like the contemporary organization of knowledge in terms of disciplines to be dismantled – for who would not want to allow renewed understandings to belong to someone else's story! But it might be worthwhile to consider how ambivalent our attitude can be in this respect. In a lecture titled 'The Idea of the University: Learning Processes' delivered in 1986, the German philosopher and theorist Habermas expressed his fears that the self-understanding of knowledge processes organized in university form could no longer be grounded in a vision of the scientific process itself. According to him, where hitherto the scientific and scholarly disciplines had represented a medium for both professional preparation and training in the scientific mode of thought, the sheer multiplicity of disciplines and the concomitant differentiation of the specific fields had made it impossible for "the totalizing power of either an all-encompassing philosophical fundamental science or even a reflective form of material critique of science and scholarship that would emerge from the disciplines themselves" (Habermas 1989: 123). Habermas's reference was to the fact that, while it may be valuable to address the idea of the university and what remains of that idea, "the corporative self-understanding of the university would be in trouble if it were anchored in something like a normative ideal, for ideas come and go" (ibid.).

To be sure, Habermas was explicitly thinking of the exemplary

status often accorded to the university institution – as embodying an ideal form of life – although what seemed to worry him even more was the role that such an idea could play in the self-understanding of more contemporary forms of knowledge. He warned that, as ever, the university which was gaining in functional specificity within specialized fields of knowledge would have to discard what was once called its idea, indeed the basis of its claim to exemplary status. Remarkably yet, it must be emphasized that this line of analysis is by no means in favour of a radical reformism. For one, Habermas recognized that even as the university form of organized knowledge through disciplines would not require a 'normative' model, a certain corporative consciousness in the self-interpretations of the purveyors of academic knowledge would be expected. What this represents is a kind of rectification of the modern forms of knowledge known to the university form - it might be worthwhile to recall here that the German sense of *Wissenschaft*, meaning any organized branch of knowledge and including the humanities and social sciences as well as the physical or natural sciences, incorporates "such rich connotations that there is no simple equivalent for it in English and French" (Habermas 1989: 109) – and, as such, it contrasts sharply with more recent understandings concerned to query the specific imperative of positing the institutions of knowledge in the singular and ascribing to it an intrinsic unity as organized around disciplines.

The work in question is by Readings (1996), who is concerned precisely to force home the point that knowledge today has lost its idea, but an idea that was never strictly or exclusively the property of the university in the first place. According to him, what distinguishes higher education in the contemporary period is that what was formerly regarded as the University of 'Reason' - and then as the University of 'Culture' - has today been supplanted by the University of 'Excellence'. For Readings, this shift is bound up with the transformation of the role of the nation-state in building the social compact. He is categorical that the development of systems of knowledge has occurred in tandem

with that of the nation-state – the culture that universities reproduced was the national culture constructed along with the institutions of the modern state – but since (for him) the nation-state is on the decline in an increasingly transnational global economy, this development has implications for the very production and dissemination of knowledge.

This latter line of appraisal, specifically, produces an extraordinary short-circuit of the discourse (and metadiscourse) of knowledge processes organized in an institutional form and the attendant spheres of judgment placed on them. In a sense, Habermas recognizes this himself, even as he demands a certain corporative consciousness in the self-interpretations of the purveyors of academic knowledge.[1] Surely the principles invoked to account for the academic organization of knowledge as such cannot both be principles of *operation* and principles of *justification*. Let me try to explain, and in the process work through more proximate constructions of disciplinarity and post-disciplinarity.

My attention is particularly drawn to the difficulty which is involved here, since one is witness to efforts directed at complicating (across national terrains) the admittedly eccentric terminology of 'two cultures' – the methodological 'divorce' between science and philosophy/humanities translating into a division, internal to the social sciences, between 'nomothetic' and 'idiographic' camps or schools - as well as to mobilize the social sciences into a post-disciplinary logic of concepts, judgments and inferences that would reflect this complication. We saw this in Lecture II in the context of Wallerstein, according to whom (to quickly recall) the world of knowledge is being transformed from "a centrifugal model to a centripetal model" (2000: 31) – a development which for him has been a concomitant of two movements, the growth within the natural sciences (and mathematics) of what is called the 'sciences of complexity' and within the humanities (philosophy, literary studies) of what has come to be called cultural studies'.[2] The hope, clearly, is that in the ensuing confusion and endless variation "social scientists can help to clarify the issues and thereby promote a new synthesis

which would reunite the epistemological bases of the new structures of knowledge" (Wallerstein 2000: 32).

Presumably because he had used these thoughts for formulating several important theses concerning the social sciences – on this see Wallerstein et al. 1996 – he seems to be reserving it here exclusively for regenerating the discipline of sociology into a re-unified historical social science on a truly global scale. Interestingly, while this might seem to be labouring the apparent, it is however not obvious to those who are inclined to argue along these lines. Indeed, responding to the idea of multidisciplinarity, the senior Indian sociologist T. N. Madan has noted that the institutional restructuring recommended by Wallerstein et al. – such as expansion of institutions, within or allied to the universities, which would bring together scholars from different disciplines to work in common around specified urgent themes; establishment of integrated research programs within university structures that cut across traditional lines; joint appointment of professors and joint work for graduate students (Wallerstein et al. 1996: 103-05) – has been attempted in India "whether deliberate[ly] or fortuitous[ly]" (Madan 2001: IV); and he gives the examples of the Delhi School of Economics, the Jawaharlal Nehru University, and the Centre for Studies in Social Sciences (Kolkata). He stresses the importance of evaluating the successes and failures of these experiments, but notes that "the more significant questions in this regard are intellectual rather than administrative" (ibid.). One cannot agree more, although the challenge is to determine more precise *intellectual* protocols for evaluating these restructurings of the spaces of disciplines and their attendant knowledges.

This is not a minor oversight but integral to the entire approach to both the disciplinary frameworks of knowledge and university and research institutions as such. The dominant tendency is to complain bitterly about the eccentricity of the ways of academia: about how disciplinary categories have constrained the ways of knowledge, asking how the boundaries that define disciplines are "today organizationally very strong at the very same time

that they have lost most of their historic intellectual justification" (Wallerstein 2000: 33), denying that patching together the organizational structure of the disciplines can tide through the problems of access to education and employment, and objecting whether the problem of the production of researchers might be more severe than the production of research, and so on.[3] At first sight, these are mere cavils at institutional functioning, while also being directed at the disciplinary edifice. The complications, nevertheless, stem from the fact (to repeat a point made in our second lecture) that, ever so often, scholars who theorize about trends in the world of knowledge or about specific institutional/disciplinary practices want to have it both ways – they insist, that is, on drawing global conclusions from a practice whose specific characteristics they also regard as uniquely revelatory. The principles invoked to account for particular disciplinary orientations can obviously not be both principles of *operation* and principles of *justification*.

These principles, it must be emphasized, reach deeper than the by now largely exhausted quarrel about the uniqueness of 'social science' – or even of specific disciplines within this zone – and they cut across many of the more audible controversies in the field (cf. also Part II of our third lecture). They are implicated directly when we try to explain what it is that disagreement over the content and orientation of disciplines consists in (as separate from the question of who is holding up that discourse, who is taking up positions within it, and what is being received in the course of it). Quite inevitably, we have to resist the attempt to have it both ways – to have a foot, as it were, in both genealogy and epistemology.[4] Note that I am not claiming that the evaluative question of what particular disciplines have achieved or what the current arrangements of disciplinarity have entailed cannot be asked or answered precisely; hardly anybody would want to make such a claim. Rather, one is seeking a stronger re-casting of the problems of disciplinarity and post-disciplinarity. As we expressed in Lecture II, justifying disciplinary explanations or evaluating intellectual agendas is not to be confused with a historical account

of how it is that social scientists have come to regard the world the way they do, and why they employ the evaluative criteria that they do. Indeed, to reiterate a point made in our first lecture, one is here inclined to effect a modality of argument which could be summed up in the phrase "No disagreement with conceptual agreement", and which the philosopher Bernard Williams has expressed more fastidiously as the need for an element in conflicting claims "which can be identified as the *locus* of exclusivity" (Williams 1981: 135). As already indicated in our first lecture, Williams, of course, was straddling another ground of discourse, namely, relativism (and, specifically, conceptual relativism). An apparent disagreement over a substantive issue will vanish if the parties concerned are arguing after all over the application of different concepts. But my point here is being inflected differently: namely, that within the limits of any discussion about disciplinarity and post-disciplinarity per se, it makes some difference which view is taken concerning the very important question of whether what counts is the attitude a discipline actually has or the attitude it would be reasonable for it to have. The problem is hard enough, considering that the issue of the genealogy of disciplines (the attitude a discipline actually has) and the epistemology of disciplines (the attitude which would be reasonable for a discipline to have) appears to run together different contexts in which the question of disciplinarity and/or post-disciplinarity can (or ought) to be raised.

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Perhaps there is another way of expressing the problem to which our recounting of the spaces of disciplinarity and post-disciplinarity is drawing attention. The challenge is to think more coherently about whether a purely disciplinary capacity (that is to say, grounding in one's own discipline) could envisage alternative perspectives which by definition a disciplinary capacity cannot occupy. Notice that this is not a bar in principle; we cannot occupy temporal points of view in the distant past, but we can say

perfectly well what they are like and work with them. It is also a pertinent question whether the post-disciplinary impulse need necessarily emanate from outside a discipline – although, in this context, it is quite important to determine whether the terms (say) 'sociology', 'economics', 'politics' and so on exclusively designate disciplinary spaces or also constitute causally coherent and distinct social phenomena as well. Much of course turns on the ways of constructing the objects and methodologies of social science; indeed whether there is a need to posit, on this score, essential differences between the natural and the social sciences.[5] In perspective also, I think, are two modalities of pushing the frontiers of 'disciplinarity': one having to do with given, identifiable competencies – say, a jurist, a literary critic, a historian, a philosopher, an architect – being brought to bear on a specific identifiable object, and the other having to do with the discovery of an object (a theme, a problem) that up until now has not been identified as such, or has no legitimacy in terms of academic fields, and which necessitates a new competency, a new type of research, and a new discipline. By way of illustration of the latter modality perhaps, I would emphasise the opening up of the world of the life sciences and the challenges that this poses for renewed social science reflection (see, for a preliminary poser of the challenge of science studies today, Hegde 2010).

What is needed, therefore, is not only the drawing of a line between contending attitudes to 'disciplines'; rather, also the renewal of more composite forms of analysis itself. In particular, we must embark on a reexamination and diagnosis of the political and ideological functionality of the 'politics of knowledge' theme, the part it has come to play today in our imaginary resolutions of our real contradictions. The task cut out for criticism, either epistemological or sociopolitical, is to determine whether the 'politics of knowledge' theme is less a description of how the world is and more an image in which the world is being made. Indeed, the uneasy amalgam of constructivist language and essentialist argumentation – as also the peculiar positioning of

academics as both analysts and protagonists of identity politics – which one finds across the spaces of intellectual practice today is hardly a way out of these quandaries. Obviously, while this does not settle the issue, which concerns what one takes the disciplinary frameworks of knowledge to commit one to, it does envision new possibilities for both understanding and critique.

As we reiterated at the end of Part II of our third lecture, describing the progress and effective history internal to disciplines is not the same thing as examining how our descriptions are themselves over-determined by our assumptions about the characteristics of such knowledge. In focus, I must reiterate, is not some ultimate truth about the disciplines and the knowledges internal to them, but rather the cultivation of an attitude - an order of conviction, something not strictly moral in a reductive and utilitarian sense - proper to that question. The tendency to think that something is not quite right about a concept or an ideal, as indeed the thought that there can only be one correct way of applying the concept/ideal, leads us to think that the conventions proper to the latter could not possibly guide another concept or ideal, since (as is claimed) the situations specific to them are so different. Clearly, there is a need to dispel ourselves of this fixation, even as we strive to (in the way in which our lectures here have tried to) mediate another locus for bearing upon the questions of knowledge and politics *today*.

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It would not have escaped anyone's attention that our approach to disciplines and the the contemporary frameworks of knowledge impinging on them is a totalizing one. While the current state of alliances and micro-politics does induce and support skepticism about such an approach, they would not, for me at least, constitute grounds for eschewing totality or at least a certain concept of 'totalization' (which, on my register, means little more than the making of connections between various kinds of relations, whether epistemic-inferential or moral-political). The interesting question, therefore, is not quite (or only) why so many people

are suspicious of it; rather, what the popularity and tenacity of the 'knowledge' concept as a diagnostic discourse of the times can imply for our schemes of totalization. To be sure, one must acknowledge the representational problem undergirding this characterization if only to separate it out from the other motives at work in the disciplinary frameworks of knowledge. If theoretical abstraction is something not given in immediate experience, then it is pertinent to worry about the potential confusion of the concept with the process itself, and the possibility of taking an abstract 'representation' for reality itself. In the long run, I guess, there is no way of warding off a thought from its idealistic recuperations, but surely intellectual work in the present demands that we strive to forestall the dangers of both conceptual reification and ethnocentric understanding.

It may be interesting, after all, to return to the scope and work of our lectures: a fabric reconstituting its weave, as it were. Our respective interpretations of the various disciplinary frameworks of knowledge appear to involve not only mapping their concerns onto our own, but also attributing commitments to them, deciding whether to count those commitments as true (or false), and determining whether to address them as justified in holding those commitments. Quite simply, the 'attribution' of knowledge has gone hand in hand with the 'interpretation' of knowledge. Because it is always possible to make a trade-off between the former (the attribution of knowledge) and the latter (the interpretation of knowledge), we cannot get the project of interpretation off the ground without limiting the attribution of error to the minimum for explanation of the trends discerned. Our lectures, accordingly, have consisted as much in taking the correctness of conceptual contents as their subject matter as in committing oneself to a normative stance about epistemic responsibility and context relativity. A great deal is at stake here, I believe, in the sense that the notions of truth and justification which are often joined together in our concept of knowledge can indeed swing free of each other.

To be sure, the boundary I am delineating is not to be

construed as a boundary between empirical and transcendental frames of reference. In an important sense there is no such boundary, and so nothing outside the realm of the contingent and the contextual. It cannot be denied, then, that the language which we as scholars – practitioners of the craft of discipline and knowledge - are predisposed towards when engaging in normative scorekeeping with respect to one another or with respect to wider trends in society, culture and politics may be both over-determined and dated. But clearly the issues they raise are not. Indeed, as Wittgenstein has astutely remarked somewhere in his notebooks: not empiricism and yet realism in reflection, that is the hardest thing.

NOTES:

1 To be sure, he calls attention to some of the more striking features of the German tradition, namely "(1) the affirmative relationship of university scholarship, which thinks of itself as apolitical, to the state; (2) the defensive relationship of the university to professional practice, especially to educational requirements that could jeopardize the principle of the unity of teaching and research; and (3) the central position of the philosophical faculty within the university and the emphatic significance attributed to science and scholarship for culture and society as a whole" (Habermas 1989: 109). National specificities notwithstanding, I suspect we are dealing with a general situation here; and therefore my graft, which is more conceptual than historical-contextual.

2. For a contrary perspective though – one emphasizing the non-relationship between the natural and human sciences - see Marcus (2002) and Moore (2002).

3. Apart from the ones already cited, the following have appraisals that bear on some of the issues highlighted: Mazlish (1998), Miyoshi (2000), Sethi (2001), Chatterjee (2002), and Deshpande (2002). A more recent compilation bearing on these issues is Nadkarni and Deshpande (2011). Another order of questioning is represented by Guru (2002).

4. I am quite aware that the philosopher-historian Ian Hacking's project of a 'historical ontology' can help straddle this division (Hacking 2002), but my problem is somewhat different. It is meant to alert us to the possibility that the issue of the 'genealogy' of disciplines and the 'epistemology' of disciplines appear to run together different contexts

in which the question of both disciplinarity and post-disciplinarity could be raised. Thus note what follows in our text.

5. I am here unraveling the contours of an ongoing work engaging precisely this question, some intimations of which can be had from a lecture that I delivered under the auspices of the Higher Education Cell at Centre for Study of Culture and Society (CSCS), Bengaluru, entitled 'Separation and Integration of the Natural and Human Sciences in the Field of Higher Education: Considerations' (October 2009). Readers could access the website of CSCS for more on this. I have yet to bring some closure to the issue, and am therefore refraining from formulating further. All the same, insofar as the ground of Western philosophical discussion is concerned – from Plato to the present – philosophers have supposed that 'truth' belongs primarily to a mental or a linguistic entity, such as a judgment, a proposition, a sentence or an assertion. It was precisely against such a view that Heidegger, for instance, launched a radical assault. Assertions, he argued, are true, but their truth or falsity presupposes more fundamental types of 'uncovering', 'disclosure' or 'unconcealment' that have an even stronger claim to the title of truth. See for a perspective Jullien (2002). Viewed in this light, the antinomy that scholars have been concerned to institute between 'natural science' (as being oriented to truth and episteme) and 'human or social science' (as concerned with meanings and power) – seems a gross simplification. For a recent affirmation of this antinomy, from within social science, see Flyvbjerg (2001).

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ABOUT THE PRESENTER AND SYNOPSIS OF LECTURES

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Synopsis of Lectures

LECTURE I: Mapping Disciplines: Some Formal and Analytic Protocols

The first lecture attempts to clear some aspects of the ground of organized disciplinary knowledge and their appraisal, and in doing so the approach that is taken is strictly neither overtly comparative nor patently historical. The forays here work with the implicit formula that the disciplinary frameworks of knowledge, within India and across the West, present a subject matter as a focus for thought and the discursive attitude. More explicitly, this formula proposes that both trends in the world of disciplines and knowledges and shifts in their languages of appraisal have representational and formal dimensions, which, both independently and in interaction, are normal foci of attention in making and responding to extant ideas and formulations. The expectation is not that this will help us reach new goals, but that it might help us stop for a moment: to introduce hesitancy in the ways which we habitually dwell among our concepts of disciplines and knowledges.

LECTURE II: Reorienting Disciplinary Agendas: Further Considerations on Reflexivity

In the light of the protocols established in the first lecture, the second lecture begins by pressing at once upon questions of disciplinary specificity and substantive re-articulation across systems of knowledge in particular national contexts. The attempt is to strike a critical note on the standards of reflexivity being brought to bear on the challenge of reorienting disciplinary agendas (especially in India, but also elsewhere). The track pursued here is primarily conceptual and methodological, and the same is further grafted onto the theme of a disciplinary history. This recounting of the spaces and grounds of discipline

and history alternates between contending conceptions of the matter and, although implicated on the terrain of sociology and social science per se, translates into a revision of our terms of appraising disciplinary agendas across organized systems of knowledge.

LECTURE III: Disciplinary History and Comparability: A Brief Working Through

During the last many years, one has been witness to methodological debates concerning the proper way to study the history of disciplines and of disciplinary trajectories. Questions have been raised about (as the foregoing two lectures have tried to frame) the very nature of a practice that seeks to study academic disciplines as an activity that depends on its being engaged at discrete and contingent historical moments and specific institutional sites. This third lecture proposes some of one's own conclusions in response to questions concerning what we should take disciplinary history to be for us today, why academic disciplines are thought to have a history, and of what it is a history. In consequence, it addresses what are apparently the most satisfying methods of studying disciplinary trajectories, not least because they reveal a variety of paths taken on the constitution of distinct 'national' traditions of sociological and historical engagement. The critical remarks here are contextualized to an academic trend (or orientation) traceable to the early pioneers of Indian sociology. Some other historical facets of intellectual development in a comparative frame are also brought to bear on the questions of disciplinary history.