The SSH beyond their primary boundaries

Les SHS hors de leurs premières frontières

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The wide variety in the scope of the Social Sciences and Humanities – from philosophy to literature, religious and artistic studies to historical sciences, anthropology, sociology, economics, the sciences of information and communication, through to the sciences of politics – allows for them to conjure up convergences, to bring to the fore what they share and are liable to put in common in order to contribute to the treatment of questions relating to the complexity of the real world and the human minds, and, at the same time, questions concerning physics, technologies or techniques relevant to other sciences.
Such an intent in the putting together of knowledge and competences is founded on the conviction that the old opposition, inherited from the Nineteenth Century, between sciences of the spirit and natural sciences, feeding the debate between comprehension, used for human phenomena and explanation, used for natural phenomena, has long ago passed away.

Social Sciences and Humanities, from archaeology to linguistics are inter-connected with techniques and questions coming from the natural sciences or information sciences, whereas the latter are deeply committed – from medicine to data-processing technologies or physics – to hermeneutics or historicist issues.

Social Sciences and Humanities play a full part in redefining the role of sciences at the very heart of our society. We aim at showing the link of their intellectual project with those from other scientific disciplines. It is not a question of promoting the SSH, but rather to establish their role in certain scientific fields as a project for elucidating man, society and the world, making no distinction of order or dignity and starting from a common ambition for methodology, review and progress, serving a common ambition for knowledge and also for social purposes.

The sciences within the SSH make the world more intelligible. Their objects are laboratories where techniques and methods are being tested and which can be transferred elsewhere. The explanatory work is therefore up to the researchers in the SSH to deal with.
The significance of literary studies, inherited from philology, hermeneutics or rhetoric, of historical and archaeological studies or social sciences, is not only their ability to convey a cultural tradition to feed social engineering or brighten up a humanist vision of ourselves. It is also putting into the spotlight decisive intellectual operations on essential achievements of our contemporary world.

For instance, managing information flow, in its cognitive but also practical dimensions, from the emergence of big data to the issues of selection, archives, hierarchy that are dealt with downstream, is fundamentally an issue bringing us back to philology, archives and archeological knowledge.

The cognitive, medical, data-processing sciences or the physics deal permanently with hermeneutical, sociological or historical issues. The most complex linguistic or literary studies on the most deficient data are privileged grounds for elaborating on these questions, together with the worlds of arts, philosophy or music.

Beyond these necessary intellectual operations, the SSH contribute to making the world intelligible through a broad education of the minds, through a rational understanding, through elaborating a grasp of the complexity of reality and through the creation of meaning, that of human action and the evolution of societies.