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STUDI

Epistemic wars in the humanities challenge theorists' use of the humanities to combat psychology's alleged scientism

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Abstract As many theoretical psychologists turn to the humanities to construct a psychological science that does not shortchange human subjectivity, many humanities scholars have turned to the sciences to bolster their declining standing in the academy. In juxtaposing these trends, I consider how epistemic and methodological wars in the humanities echo those that have plagued psychology and so call into question their use to remedy an allegedly scientistic "mainstream" psychology. By failing to grapple with this most relevant controversy, theoretical psychologists may be jeopardizing their efforts to put a more human face on scientific psychology.
KEYWORDS: Epistemic Wars; Scientism; Humanities; Psychology; Psychological Humanities

Riassunto *I conflitti epistemici nelle scienze umanistiche e il loro impiego teorico contro il presunto scientismo della psicologia* – Molti teorici della psicologia si rivolgono alle discipline umanistiche per costruire una scienza psicologica che non sottovaluti la soggettività umana, mentre molti studiosi attivi nel campo delle discipline umanistiche si rivolgono alle scienze per puntellare la loro autorità all'interno dell'accademia. Nel porre a confronto queste due linee di tendenza mostrerò come i conflitti epistemici e metodologici all'interno delle discipline umanistiche riecheggino quelli che hanno gravato sulla psicologia. A partire da qui metterò in discussione il loro uso per fare da correttivo a una presunta psicologia dominante che sarebbe troppo "scientistica". Sottraendosi alla trattazione di questo problema, che è di estrema importanza, i teorici della psicologia rischiano di compromettere i loro sforzi volti a dare un volto più umano alla psicologia scientifica.
PAROLE CHIAVE: Conflitti epistemici; Scientismo; Scienze umane; Psicologia; Psychological Humanities

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I BEGIN WITH A CONFESSION: Upon first hearing the term *Psychological Humanities* among theoretical psychologists who have charged "mainstream"[1] psychological science (empirical/research psychology) with a pervasive, subjectivity-deprived scientism, I thought the term meant that some humanities disciplines were psychological whereas others were not. How could that be? After all, humanities disciplines implicate human subjectivity by definition, in one way or another. As professor of digital humanities[2] and history of the humanities Rens Bod (2013) put it in *A new history of the humanities*, «since the nineteenth century the humanities have generally been defined as the *disciplines that investigate the expressions of the human mind* [emphasis in original]» (p. 1). The literary, musical, and visual artistic works that are core to the humanities (as well as interpretations of their meanings) are surely expressions of the human mind, of our subjectivity – our mental life.

Bod is quick to clarify that although «mathematics is to a large extent a product of the human mind [...] it is not considered a humanistic discipline» (p. 2). Here Bod distinguishes between *products* of the human mind and *expressions* of the human mind: Although mathematics is a product of the human mind, it is not also an expression of the human mind in the way he uses the term "expression". On Bod's view, these expressions include language, music, art, literature, theatre, and poetry. Thus, philology, linguistics, musicology, art history, literary studies, and theatre studies all belong to the realm of the humanities, unlike the study of nature, which belongs to the domain of science (such as physics, astronomy, chemistry and biology). Similarly, the study of humans in their social context is one of the social sciences (such as sociology, psychology, anthropology, and economics) (pp. 1-2).

In that statement, Bod put psychology in a different bin than that in which he puts the humanities, to which theoretical psychologists have turned for enlightenment. Let us now consider these theorists' integrative impulses with the humanities, or at least those humanities disciplines they consider psychological.

1 Theoretical psychologists on the Psychological Humanities

Sketching out his meaning of the term *Psychological Humanities*, critical psychologist Thomas Teo stated that «a topic such as subjectivity needs an interrogation from the perspective of the humanities, the arts, and the concept-driven social sciences[3] (i.e., psychological humanities in this article)» (TEO 2017, p. 282). Here he draws on «philosophy, historiography, social and political theory, postcolonial, indigenous, and cultural studies (enabling reflexivity), the arts, and science and technology studies» (p. 282) to demonstrate his point. And he offers «an open invitation for dialogue with many more disciplines» (p. 282).

In the introductory chapter to *A humanities approach to the psychology of personhood*, theoretical psychologists Jeff Sugarman and Jack Martin wrote that their «aim is to offer the possibility of greater psychological understanding by encouraging a more sophisticated, multi-perspectival ethos that legitimizes and incorporates approaches adopted from the humanities» (SUGARMANN & MARTIN 2020a, p. 5). The term "approaches" covers considerable territory, not least methods. Although I am all for borrowing any approach, from any discipline, that helps answer any psychological question, Sugarman and Martin's approach to approach-borrowing may bring problems of its own: They, among other theorists, have challenged what should count as a bona-fide psychological question in the first place, along with proper methods for answering those questions (see, e.g., HELD 2021, 2022; GANTT & WILLIAMS 2018; LAMIELL & SLANEY 2021; SUGARMAN & MARTIN 2020a, 2020b; WERTZ 2018).[4]

Responding to the "replication crisis" [5] in particular, historians of social and life sciences Lisa Malich and Christoph Rehmann-Sutter (2022) also advocated a turn to the psychological humanities, especially as «a valuable complement and extension of metascientific endeavors» (p. 267). They find metascientific endeavors to be overly reliant on «"scientific method", which means statistical practices and a hypothetico-deductive approach» (p. 269):

> Psychological humanities contribute to a more precise determination of validity, to ethical considerations, and a better understanding of psychology's objects in regard to replication. Accordingly, we argue for the integration of psychological humanities into both metascience and psychology to provide a better basis for addressing epistemic and ethical questions (p. 261, abstract).

They also noted the analogous movements of health humanities, environmental humanities, and medical humanities (p. 267), to which psychology might turn for examples and inspiration.

Regarding the issue of psychology's subject matter and the best way to construe its objects, Malich and Rehmann-Sutter state, «approaches from the psychological humanities can help to understand more precisely the specifics of the subject matter of psychology» (p. 269). And about specifics they added, «metascience often construes science and psychology from a homogenizing perspective that omits the plurality and complexity of both scientific methods and psychology» (p. 269). This statement may be taken to place psychology in opposition to science. If so, Malich and Rehmann-Sutter make common cause with

aforementioned theoretical psychologists who have found the methods of natural science ill-suited to the study of mental life, which on their view should be psychology's dominant (if not exclusive) subject matter.

In turning to the humanities, theoretical psychologists have not expressed much if any concern with the trend toward emulating the sciences on the part of some humanities scholars. I find this to be a mistake, with implications for the use of the humanities in psychological science.

2 The turn to the sciences in the humanities

Inspecting contemporary humanities with the critical eye theoretical psychologists demand of empirical-research psychologists, we find questions for their use in psychology that come into focus. And so the new and growing Psychological Humanities movement[6] might consider taking a closer look at what its leaders seek to emulate and/or incorporate, as they race a supposedly scientistic "mainstream" psychology to its scientism-free salvation in the humanities (HELD 2021, 2022).

Bod was explicit about how his use of the term "humanities" «corresponds to the German *Geisteswissenschafen* ("science of the spirit"), the Italian *scienze umanistiche* ("humanistic sciences"), or the Dutch a*lfawetenschappen* ("alpha sciences")» (BOD 2013, p. 1). These terms suggest a humanities that may be rightly seen as already scientific by their own disciplinary criteria. To begin with, the word "science" derives from the Latin word "*scientia*", meaning knowledge, a knowing – and the term "human sciences" has been used to cover the traditional disciplines of the humanities as well as the social/behavioral sciences.[7] Psychology's alleged original-sin use of natural-science methods might therefore seem like a scientistic nonstarter, which of course it was not for "mainstream" psychologists. But it put psychology off to the wrong/scientistic start, in the eyes of many theoretical psychologists.

In fusing the traditional humanities with computing, Bod crossed the humanities/computational sciences divide, which, according to the academy's current disciplinary groupings, also crosses the humanities/natural sciences divide. In so doing, does Bod himself put a scientistic spin on the humanities?

Although a scientifically-infused humanities may sound oxymoronic at best, many humanities scholars beyond the digital humanities advocate what amounts to just that, much to the regret of other humanities scholars. The latter tend to prefer the term "scholarship" over "research", in decrying what they consider a scientistic turn in the humanities. In his chapter *Scientism and the humanities*, philosopher Roger Scruton excoriated a full-blown scientism in the humanities, owing to «the invasion of the humanities by evolutionary psychology and neuroscience» (SCRUTON 2015, p. 135). He also stated that

> University departments [...] are increasingly assessed – both for status and for funding – on their output of "research". [...] Pressed to justify their existence, therefore, the humanities begin to look to the sciences to provide them with "research methods", and the promise of "results" (p. 133).

In *Human sciences: Reappraising the humanities through history and philosophy*, theoretical physicist and historian of mathematics and science Jens Høyrup, writing about the "scientific humanities" (HØYRUP 2000, p. 165), raised questions about a rising scientism in the humanistic disciplines (see HELD 2021). He began by explaining his use of the term "science" as an «equivalent of German *Wissenschaft*, in the sense of a s*ocially organized and systematic search for and transmission of coherent knowledge* in any domain» (p. 7, emphases in original). And he posed the question of «*how to secure – or how to justify – the scientific character of the humanitie*s», when the natural sciences have long held the title of «sciences par excellence» (p. 165, emphasis in original).

As Høyrup put the problem: If the humanities «are to be understood as *sciences*», then a theory of the humanities «must share properties that characterize many if not all other sciences as well» (p. 1, emphasis in original). But if we simultaneously want to conceptualize the humanities as a «particular and somehow coherent area» of scholarship/research, then any theory of the humanities «must also be able to tell what distinguishes the humanities from other scientific fields, that is, to tell the *distinctive characteristics* of the humanities» (p. 1, emphasis in original). Meeting the former challenge entails risking scientism in the humanities; meeting the latter challenge entails risking a failure to appreciate how the humanities are inherently scientific in their own right. Despite this dilemma, Høyrup maintained that since their ancient founding, the humanities disciplines have shared among themselves a common thread, a form of essence. He says that his approach to the humanities does not

> postulate or look for the transhistorical and unchanging existence of the Humanities across all epochs and cultural borders. [...] It is empiricist, and presupposes that the humanities can only be approached in their appearance as actual, historically specific undertakings and vocations. [...] But [Høyrup says his view is nonetheless] founded on the conviction that the groupings of these undertakings [...] under a common headline is inherently meaningful, reflecting real similarities and relationships, and

> thus more than a mere device dependent solely upon historical accident or on our arbitrary choices and whims (p. 9).

At this point we may wonder whether the humanities are as united as Høyrup supposes, and if so, in what ways.

3 A united coherent humanities?

In my article *Taking the humanities seriously* (HELD 2021), I argued that theorists who turn to the humanities for psychology's salvation are not looking closely enough to notice the internal divides that pervade many humanities disciplines. I refer especially to the humanities' own epistemology wars, which, as I go on to demonstrate, parallel psychology's epistemology wars in uncanny ways.

Although Bod claims to have found in the humanities disciplines *Principles and patterns from antiquity to the present* (as he put it in his subtitle), he acknowledges some disunity nonetheless. In particular, Bod laments that, with general histories of science having been written since the nineteenth century and general histories of the social science having appeared only recently, «a general history of the humanities is conspicuous by its absence» (BOD 2013, p. 4).

Bod explains this historical disciplinary gap by way of fragmentation in the humanities that has escalated over the last two centuries, when compared to the sciences. Here he means only the natural sciences, in which «current historiographies of science usually take physics as the central discipline» (p. 1). He maintains that the historical gap in the humanities results from the fact that there is no «central humanistic discipline» (p. 1) on which other humanities model themselves and around which to organize and ground a general history of the humanities. Given this state of affairs, we may be left to wonder how psychology's disunity – to the extent that it is seen as a problem – may be ameliorated or exacerbated by incorporating the (psychological) humanities.

Despite the absence of a central humanities discipline, in his survey of linguistics, logic, art theory, musicology, archaeology, philology, poetics, rhetoric, historiography, literary studies, and media studies across regions and periods (from ancient to contemporary times), Bod finds «deep commonalities at the level of principles used and patterns found» (p. 5). He states that «the focus on principles and patterns also allows us to discern new patterns *not* found by humanities scholars themselves. These I will call *metapatterns*» (p. 6, emphases in original). For example,

> There was a process from descriptive to prescriptive approaches in all the humanistic disciplines in Antiquity. The regularities in Greek tragedies found by Aristotle were quickly turned into prescriptive rules by later poeticists such as Horace. And the mathematical proportions found in classical Greek art and architecture by Pliny and Vitruvius were taken as normative prescriptions by later art theorists. [...] The same can be observed in Chinese and Indian poetics and art theory. Surprisingly enough, this practice was reversed at the end of the early modern period – that is, it went from prescriptive back to descriptive again, in Europe and China alike (p. 6).

Given their previously mentioned quarrels with metascience, how might Malich and Rehmann-Sutter feel about applying Bod's notion of metahumanities to psychology? Recall their claim that «metascience often construes science and psychology from a homogenizing perspective that omits the plurality and complexity of both scientific methods and psychology» (MALICH & REHMANN-SUTTER 2022, p. 269). In saying this they may be nodding toward the particularities of the humanities that have long been set in opposition to the generalities of the sciences. As Høyrup put it, «according to Windelband [1998], the aim of the humanities is to *describe the particular* – they are *idiographic*. The natural sciences, on the other hand, are *nomothetic, law-establishing*, seeking the general» (HØYRUP 2000, p. 167, emphases in original). Here we might wonder how well Bod's claim of metatheoretical unity in the humanities comports with idiographic aims.

Having laid out his case for unity across the humanities, at his book's end Bod concedes what he calls a «dichotomy in the post-war humanities»:

> There is a divide in the post-war humanities. We see it primarily in the rise of the deconstructivist and poststructuralist movements. While it is true to say that the quest for universal patterns remained, alongside it a tradition arose that rejected this search, even though culture-specific patterns continued to be identified. [...] The two traditions do not appear to be reconcilable (BOD 2013, p. 351).

These are the very oppositions that divided psychologists not long after their appearance in the humanities. Theoretical psychologists happily took the postmodern turn, broadly construed, in their advancement of social constructionist (GERGEN 1985), feminist (HARE-MUSTIN & MARECEK 1990), hermeneutic (RICHARDSON, FOWERS & GUIGNON 1999), and constructivist (RASKIN 2002) psychologies.

Those and more recent movements, such as indigenous psychologies (see, e.g., BHAWUK n.d.; JAHODA 2016; SUNDARARAJAN 2015, 2019), have

accused "mainstream" psychologists of aspiring to epistemic objectivity in their hegemonic quests for psychological universals.

Bod closed his book saying that the humanities must embrace their diversity apropos of pattern seekers and deniers. Yet he does not allow internal diversity to threaten his pronouncement of empirical pattern and methodological principle that unite the humanities at a metalevel, from antiquity to the present.

4 Can there be a continuity of humanities and scientific knowledge?

Despite conceding an irreconcilable (pre)modern/postmodern divide *within* many humanities disciplines, Bod not only holds fast to his claim of continuity across the humanities, but also finds continuity between the humanities and the sciences:

> One of the conclusions [of the book] will be that there is only a gradual differentiation between the humanities and the sciences, and that there is a continuum in the nature of the patterns and their possible "exceptions". The history of the humanities appears to be the missing link in the history of science (BOD 2013, p. 7).

On Bod's view, then, although the humanities and sciences each cohere within their own disciplinary umbrella, the two are ultimately continuous in the patterns of their knowledge production. This raises many questions. First, recall Høyrup's challenge:

> If the humanities are to be understood as *science*s in the German/Latin sense, they must share properties that characterize many if not all other sciences as well: a "theory of the humanities" must ask what can be said about the humanities *qua* sciences (HØYRUP 2000, p. 1, emphases in original).

At the same time, if we want to conceptualize the humanities as a «particular and somehow coherent area» of scholarship/research, then any theory of the humanities «must also be able to tell what distinguishes the humanities from other scientific fields» (p. 1).

Might Bod think he has met Høyrup's challenge? Or might he reject its very formulation as misguided? Bod's insistence on a humanities/science epistemic continuum, despite allowing each their own distinct form of internal disciplinary coherence and history, is signaled on the second page of his book via the terms "research" and "empiricism". There he states that, in addition to a "memory function", an "educational function", and a "critical function by interpreting these works for the public at large",

> [...] the humanities have a research function by asking questions and posing hypotheses regarding humanistic artefacts. [...] The research function of the humanities is conspicuous in all eras. It is exactly this *empirical* dimension of the humanities that forms the main focus of the current book (BOD 2013, p. 2, emphasis in original).

Bod ends with this bold (and bold-faced) statement: «the humanistic discovery of the interaction between theory and empiricism formed the basis for the scientific revolution» (p. 353). Here recall Scruton's warning about the scientistic-sounding use in the humanities of terms like "research", "research methods", and "results", which were borrowed from the sciences to replace the old-fashioned term "scholarship".

After declaring the humanities' epistemic continuity with the sciences, and using the term "social sciences" synonymously with "human sciences", Bod is careful to warn that neither of those terms is to be «confused with the humanities» (p. 4, note 11). Høyrup, by contrast, located the creation of «genuine social science and human science» in the Enlightenment (HØYRUP 2000, p. 138), indicating with that "and" that they are at least somewhat distinct. And Høyrup's use of the term "scientific humanities" (p. 165) to describe how «work within the humanities has become "scientific" [...] to a degree that has probably never been equaled before» (p. 165) seems consistent with Scruton's critique of an encroaching scientism in the humanities – albeit at odds with Bod's embrace of a humanities-sciences continuum. These terminological issues make it difficult to discern when we have actually crossed disciplinary boundaries even intentionally, as theorists who make their cases for a Psychological Humanities claim to have done.

Do the Psychological Humanities offer clarity regarding the nature of the boundaries (if any) between the humanities and the sciences in general, and psychological science in particular? Indeed, some who advance the Psychological Humanities denounce "mainstream" psychological science by characterizing (the work of) its practitioners as revealing their "ignorance", "obstinacy", "inertia", "incorrigibility", "recalcitrance", "disregard" (all to the consternation of OSBECK 2021, pp. 123-124; for direct examples of this degrading rhetoric see GANTT & WILLIAMS 2018; LAMIELL & SLANEY 2021; SUGARMAN & MARTIN 2020b). Some seek to cut ties with "mainstream" psychology altogether, especially in their push to put mental life front and center, to which the methods imported from the natural sciences do not and cannot apply, according to them (see HELD 2021, 2022).

But what if the very humanities to which psychological theorists turn for salvation are themselves tainted by their own epistemology wars? Which version of any particular humanities

discipline should be imported into psychology? Do the epistemology wars within the humanities matter? If not, why not? To illustrate the humanities' internal epistemic divides, here I offer two illustrative examples about which I wrote more extensively in my prior article (HELD 2021) – one from ancient Greek history and philosophy, the other from Renaissance art history.

5 Epistemic wars in the humanities

5.1 Classical antiquity: Mary Lefkowitz examines a matter of historical fact

In 1996, just as the culture wars reached boiling point in the academy, Wellesley College professor emerita Mary Lefkowitz, a National Humanities medal honoree for her classical Greek scholarship, published *Not out of Africa*: *How afrocentrism became an excuse to teach myth as history*. The book elaborated extensively on her 1992 *New Republic* article of the same title.

Lefkowitz targeted the 18th century belief that the ancient Greeks stole their philosophical and scientific knowledge from the ancient Egyptians. According to Lefkowitz

> the idea of a "Stolen Legacy" was first popularized by Marcus Garvey in the 1920s, and [...] developed into a full-fledged [conspiracy] theory in 1954 by [...] George G.M. James (LEFKOWITZ 1996, p. 10).

Lefkowitz wrote that on James's view, the Greeks studied in Egypt when it was occupied by the Persians, and knowledge was transferred to them mainly «when Alexander, accompanied by Aristotle, looted the library of Alexandria in 333 B.C.» (p. 135). Lefkowitz debunked that claim, writing that

> although Alexandria was founded in 331 B.C., it did not begin to function as a city until after 323. Aristotle died in 322. The library was assembled around 297 under the direction of Demetrius of Phaleron, a pupil of Aristotle's. Most of the books it contained were in Greek (p. 137).

Lefkowitz's *New Republic* article sent the classical world reeling, especially at Wellesley College, where Professor Tony Martin, then chair of Africana Studies, assigned in his Africans-in-Antiquity courses James's *The stolen legacy.* In 1993, Martin published his own account of the Wellesley situation in *The Jewish onslaught: Despatches from the Wellesley battlefront.* Tensions flared on campus, and in 1994 Martin sued Lefkowitz for defamation. The Anti-Defamation League (ADL) defended Lefkowitz, and in 1999 the suit was dismissed on grounds that Lefkowitz's writings had not misrepresented anyone (see HELD 2021, for elaboration).

In her later account of the dispute, *History lesson: A race odyssey,* Lefkowitz, wrote that at the time of the dispute she «was accused of racism, conservatism, intellectual naiveté, and the like» (LEFKOWITZ 2008, p. 14). More recently she's been charged with seeking invulnerability – «control and full mastery» – of the object of investigation, by way of deploying a reductionist, decontextualized «refusal to acknowledge or a willful ignorance about one's share in history and how that history shaped the present» (SNYMAN 2017, p. 10). In an editorial for *Old Testament Studies*, Gerrie Snyman wrote that by denying that «race or anti-Semitism have influenced her thinking about the cultural debt Greece had towards Egypt», Lefkowitz revealed her refusal to face up to her own «complicity to various ills in society» (pp. 9-10). Snyman also insisted that Lefkowitz's appeal to objective evidence cannot get her off the hook, as «evidence does not speak for itself. It requires a ventriloquist» (p. 9).

On Snyman's view, then, one's voice always brings with it biases, especially if one denies having any. All this, despite the fact that Lefkowitz never claimed to be value-free. And her appeal to evidence is of course itself a value – an *epistemic* value, from which she discussed the harm done to many, not least minorities, by those who dismiss the relevant evidence in what amounts to a dismissal of the possibility of facts of the matter, in their quest for discourses that liberate. We may ask whether so-called "Liberation Psychology" (e.g., COMAS-DIAZ & RIVERA 2020) has managed to duck this problem.[8]

Whatever our views about the origins of ancient Greek philosophy, Lefkowitz's "history lesson" in the classics can be understood in two ways: First, it refers to the detrimental epistemic, ethical, and pedagogical consequences that follow from a discipline's refusal to acknowledge established facts. Second, it refers to Lefkowitz's own awakening to the ad-hominem consequences that followed from her attempts to fight for the inclusion of those facts in academic discourse. As we have seen, "mainstream" psychologists have fallen prey to this second consequence, in being relentlessly charged with revealing their naiveté, willful ignorance, denial, and incorrigibility by psychological theorists who reject their subject matter and methods.

We may now ask what happens if a humanities question is not an empirical one, such as Lefkowitz's historical one, but rather consists in interpretation of art regarding the determination of authorial intention. This brings other complications, but the problem of evidence obtains nonetheless.

5.2 Renaissance art history: Leo Steinberg examines a matter of artistic interpretation

In 1995-1996, acclaimed Renaissance and mo-

dern art historian and critic Leo Steinberg delivered the Charles Eliot Norton Lectures at Harvard University, entitled *The mute image and the meddling text*. In these he demonstrated how even the most venerated scholarly words can blind us to obvious details in well-known works of art. We therefore must allow direct experience of the image to speak for itself, without interference from "meddling texts".

Steinberg's plea to let the image speak for itself strikes me as analogous to theoretical psychologists' plea to let (especially) othered, silenced peoples speak for themselves, in our characterizations of them. These are the entities that deserve substantially more attention, as we obtain and interpret evidence in support of our empirical claims.

Steinberg made his argument convincingly in his 1986 book, *The sexuality of Christ in renaissance art and in modern oblivion* (rev. 1996). There he asserted that we must finally admit to a «long suppressed matter of fact»:

> In many hundreds of pious, religious works, from before 1400 to past the mid-16th century, the ostensive unveiling of the Child's sex, or the touching, protecting or presentation of it, is the main action. [...] And the emphasis recurs in images of the dead Christ, or of the mystical Man of Sorrows. [...] All of which has been tactfully overlooked for half a millennium. Hence my first question – whether the ongoing 20th century is late enough to concede that the subject exists (STEINBERG 1996, p. 3).

In short, Steinberg presented overwhelming evidence against the prevailing view that the display of Christ's genitalia in a great many pictorial and sculptural artworks was intended by Renaissance artists to be solely spiritual, without any corporeal/sexual meaning whatsoever. The front and back covers of Steinberg's book make his case without words – as he no doubt intended.

I use the Steinberg example neither to insist that he is correct in his interpretations nor to advance any theological views. Rather, I seek to demonstrate the intensity of the infighting over evidence and interpretation among Renaissance-art historians, as well as among scholars of classical antiquity. Steinberg wrote that resistance to his thesis came from distinct groups: those who (a) question the existence of the subject (Christ's sexuality) itself, and/or those who (b) allow the existence of the subject itself, but who seek to reinterpret it so as to rebut Steinberg's thesis. As with Lefkowitz, Steinberg perceived an overarching «bid to discredit the author»:

> He is not to be trusted, since he seems out of control, witness his writing style (described by cool London reviewers as "overheated", "drooling", "strident", and "faintly hysterical" – "a prose type that would choke any self-respecting typewriter"). One scholar diagnoses his case as borderline pathological. [...] I am presented as one who sees Christ's humanity exclusively in the genitals, which, the reviewer rightly concludes, "borders on caricature" (p. 345).

Steinberg devoted much of his book to providing evidence for his interpretive thesis that the many displays of Christ's sexuality in Renaissance artworks were intentional (see HELD 2021, for elaboration). In some ways, his was a more difficult case to make than was Lefkowitz's case about the origins of ancient Greek philosophy. After all, Lefkowitz challenged a set of empirical claims which, by definition, entail (at least in principle) facts by which to adjudicate their veracity. By contrast, it is unlikely that Renaissance artists left behind yet-to-be-discovered statements about their artistic intentions regarding Christ's sexuality (other than their works of art) which would adjudicate modern art historians' interpretations. Yet Steinberg insisted there are facts of the matter about artistic intentions that can be discerned in the "mute images" of artworks themselves. In this he defied humanities scholars who challenge that assumption by maintaining that either those intentions do not exist or cannot be known if they do exist. And in any case, some claim they are irrelevant to sound interpretive practice.[9] Hence, one aspect of the great divide in the humanities.

These onto/epistemic debates point directly to the issue of what counts as evidence in support of scholarly/research claims of any sort. And so once again these debates in the humanities are relevant to deciding how psychologists might assess their use of the humanities in psychological science. If, as hermeneuticists suggest, empirical questions are also interpretive "all the way down" (CAPUTO 2018), then whatever divide exists between empirical and interpretive questions is eroded, paving the way for the epistemic wars that have continued to pervade psychology for decades.

6 Conclusions

Psychologists who plunge headfirst into the humanities must be cautious, as must humanists who plunge headfirst into the sciences. Whether methods are borrowed from the humanities or the natural sciences, answering specific psychological questions always entails first determining the right tools for job – as well as the wrong ones. In short, the nature of the question asked must determine the tools we use to answer it, regardless of the disciplinary niche in which any tool originated.

I agree with those who dismiss the need for the grand unifying scheme on which various theorists have insisted for decades to no avail, if psychology

is to make progress as a discipline. Renowned theoretical psychologist Sigmund Koch (1993) appreciated this, in advocating the so-named "psychological studies" as a loosely defined enterprise covering the many diverse kinds of questions that encompass what may be fairly considered psychological matters. In contrast to theorists who think that subpersonal questions (see, e.g., the neuromechanisms of depression and other mental states/processes) are not truly psychological, Koch welcomed all comers to the psychological table. In *Why psychology isn't unified, and probably never will be*, historian of psychology Chris Green extended Koch's reasoning in historical terms:

> It is argued here that [a unified psychology] is a highly unlikely scenario in psychology given the contingent and opportunistic character of the processes that brought its original topics together into a new discipline, and the nearly continuous institutional, social, and even political negotiating and horse-trading that has determined psychology's "boundaries" in the 14 decades since. [...] If there is a kind of unification in psychology's future, it is more likely to be one that, paradoxically, sees it broken up into a number of large "super-subdisciplines", each of which exhibits more internal coherence than does the current sprawling and heterogeneous whole (GREEN 2015, p. 207, abstract)

Instead of theorists telling researchers what their proper subject matter and methods should be, why not let psychologists pursue the questions that interest them and the methods they think best in answering those questions? I have long argued that theoretical psychologists should conduct empirical research in their own preferred way and then see who shows interest and/or deems progress – and on what terms (HELD 2011). Rather than calling out "mainstream" psychology as a scientistic monolith, it might be more productive if theorists specified examples of research programs or studies that they deem problematic, and then demonstrate how the questions that are asked might be answered more appropriately if approached differently. And if some of those questions are not seen as bona-fide psychological questions, then theorists must explain why not, in all-due detail.

The academy may need to put us in disciplinary pigeon holes for its institutional purposes, but we do not have to be bound by them in our work. Following our psychological interests – especially those that transcend theorist-approved disciplinary questions – may take us to surprising places and gain the interest of others who do not castigate the "mainstream" for not conforming to theorists' bounded view of psychology. No questions or methods should be forbidden, whether they be derived from the physical sciences, the humanities, or both.

Notes

[1] I adorn the word "mainstream" in scare quotes to indicate my agreement with Tissaw and Osbeck (2007), who challenged the existence of a monolithic mainstream that exists above and beyond specific research programs that are said by theorists to be subsumed by it.

[2] For definitions and examples of the digital humanities: https://mkirschenbaum.files.wordpress.com/2011/03/ade-final.pdf
https://www.kolabtree.com/blog/digital-humanities/
https://live-digital-humanities-berkeley.pantheon.berkeley.edu/

[3] Teo's (2017) inclusion of the "concept-driven social sciences" in the disciplines to which he turns for interrogating subjectivity moves me to wonder whether there are any social sciences that are not concept-driven.

[4] See Morawski, who, in responding to psychology's "replication crisis" among other alleged crises, elaborates research psychologists' divergent assumptions about their objects of study – whether they are «stable, singular, and determined» or «complex, dynamic, and context-sensitive». Morawaski explains how these two «accounts of the objects appearing in the crisis discourse are coupled with preferred methods and portrayals of scientists» (MORAWSKI 2022, p. 167).

[5] See Antczak & Osbeck on challenges to assertions of a bona-fide crisis in psychology, including the seeming "replication crisis": «There may always be those who find the need to use crisis language in describing what might otherwise be seen as the normal locomotion of scientific progress» (ANTCZAK & OSBECK 2020, p. 67).

[6] For example, see Boston College: https://www.bc.edu/bc-web/schools/lynch-school/sites/Psychological-Humanities-Ethics/pato2023.html; University of Trento, Italy: https://www.cogsci.unitn.it/en/1125/psychological-humanities-and-philosophy-of-psychology-laboratory-psyhuman-lab

[7] See https://www.etymonline.com/word/science and https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/social-sciences/human-sciences

[8] See Comas-Diaz and Riviera's (2020) book of that title, for which this statement appears online: «liberation psychology challenges traditional Western-based psychology by offering an emancipatory approach to understanding and addressing oppression among individuals and group». See https://www.apa.org/pubs/books/liberation-psychology?tab=2

[9] See https://www.oxbridgelaunchpad.com/post/reader-response-theory

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