

The Complex Issue of Legitimacy

History of Humanities and Universities

Hampus Östh Gustafsson

Learning in STEM/HEOS

October 15, 2021

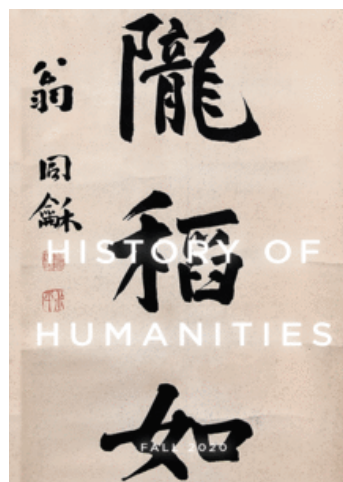
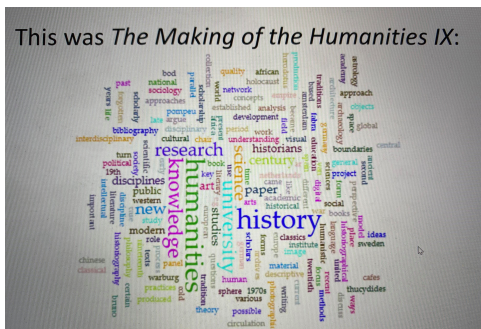


1

History of the Humanities

- At the intersection of history of science/history of knowledge, STS, and history of education/universities.
- Making of the Humanities (2008–)
History of the Humanities (2016–)

This was *The Making of the Humanities IX*:



2

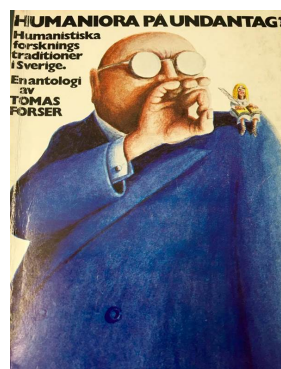
'Whenever the humanities are under pressure, people start asking philosophical and historical questions about what the humanities actually are, where they come from and what benefit they are to society. That was the case in the 19th century, in the middle of the 20th century and now once again.'

- Herman Paul

- Compare with review of *Humaniora på undantag?* (1978):

'When a scholarly branch finds itself in crisis, it is time to write its history. Because scholarship that refuses to look to its past has no future.'

- Disciplinary formation through historiographic mobilization: canons and classics



3

Legitimacy and Clash of Cultures

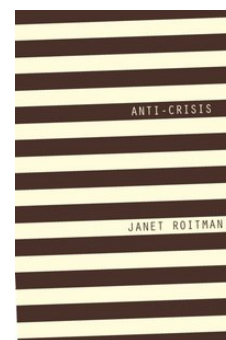
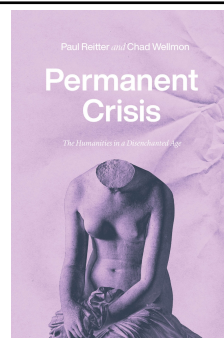
- J. H. Plumb (ed.), *Crisis in the Humanities*, (Pelican, 1964)
- HASS vs. STEM
- C. P. Snow, *The Two Cultures* (Cambridge, 1959)
- 1964: Faculty of the Humanities – Faculty of the Social Sciences
- 1970s: breakthrough of explicit discourse of crisis in Sweden
- A third culture?



4

Crisis?

- *Modus operandi* or cliché?
- Dennis A. Ahlburg (ed.), *The Changing Face of Higher Education: Is There an International Crisis in the Humanities?* (Routledge, 2019)
- Paul Reitter & Chad Wellmon, *Permanent Crisis: The Humanities in a Disenchanted Age* (Chicago, 2021)
- Comparative dimensions of crisis (Janet Roiman, *Anti-Crisis*, Duke, 2013):
 - **Epistemologically**: e.g., opposing cultures of knowledge (cf. Snow), STEM vs HASS
 - **Chronologically**: in contrast to golden age narratives
 - **Geographically**: things are better elsewhere



UPPSALA
UNIVERSITET

5

Historicizing Regimes of Legitimacy

- Legitimizing (historical) narratives
Scholarship embedded in temporal projects
Multiple temporalities: synchronization
- A regime of rational planning (1930s–1970s): progressive political project
- Dominique Pestre, "Regimes of Knowledge Production in Society: Towards a More Political and Social Reading", *Minerva*, 41, 2003 :

"the past four of five centuries have witnessed successive and heterogeneous regimes of knowledge production connected to particular social institutions and values; and that the problem now at hand is principally one of trying faithfully to characterize those regimes in their complexity and contradictions"
- E.g., Axel Jansen, Andreas Franzmann & Peter Münte (eds.), *Legitimizing Science: National and Global Publics (1800–2010)* (Campus, 2015).
- Cf. Rune Slagstad: "kunnskapsregim" (*De nasjonale strateger*, Pax, 1998)
- Karin Knorr Cetina, *Epistemic Cultures: How the Sciences Make Knowledge* (Harvard, 2000)
- Situated and co-produced legitimacy
Shifting political coalitions



Nils Edén



Tage Erlander



UPPSALA
UNIVERSITET

6

From Guide of Souls to Gadfly

- Shifting strategies of legitimization
- Mode 2
- From vertical to horizontal relationship
- Cultural service?
- The critical role
- Martha C. Nussbaum, *Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities* (Princeton, 2010).



Giambettino Cignaroli, *The Death of Socrates* (1759)


7

Shift of atmosphere?

- Regime of competition (1980 –)
Sverker Sörlin, "Humanities of Transformation: From Crisis and Critique towards the Emerging Integrative Humanities", *Research Evaluation*, 27:4, 2018.
- Anders Ekström & Sverker Sörlin, *Alltings mått: Humanistisk kunskap i framtidens samhälle* (Norstedts, 2012)
 - generative vs. reactive knowledge
 - Integrative, multi-disciplinary constellations
 - articulate vs. justify
- Linus Salö (ed.), *Humanvetenskapernas verkningar* (Dialogos, 2021)
- Impact and public humanities
Humanomics, economic humanities
- Pluralistic and flexible strategies of legitimization needed



8



'The future of the humanities and social sciences is inseparably connected with reflection on the future of the Earth, the human species, transspeciation and of life itself. Thus, knowledge about the past becomes a more future-oriented knowledge that facilitates adaption and is relevant insofar as it supports the continuation of life of various species (in both social and biological context). As such it also becomes part of the planetary (or even cosmic) project where emerging knowledge opens the way for the humanities and social sciences to think about the multispecies world of future communities.'

- Ewa Domńska, 'The Paradigm Shift in the Contemporary Humanities and Social Sciences' in Jouni-Matti Kuukkanen, *Philosophy of History: Twenty-First-Century Perspectives* (Bloomsbury, 2021).

