



NATIONAL RESEARCH UNIVERSITY  
HIGHER SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS

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**CULTURAL HISTORY:  
DISCIPLINARY BORDERLANDS  
IN THE TIME OF  
BORDER-SCRAPPING'**

BASIC RESEARCH PROGRAM

WORKING PAPERS

SERIES: HUMANITIES  
WP BRP 13/HUM/2013

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## **CULTURAL HISTORY: DISCIPLINARY BORDERLANDS IN THE TIME OF BORDER-SCRAPPING**<sup>2</sup>

The paper analyzes the objects, concepts and methods of *cultural history* / *histoire culturelle* / *Kulturgeschichte* / *kulturnaya istoriya*, a modern historical subdiscipline that exists in different national historiographical traditions.

This subdiscipline's objects of study, such as social institutions, social networks, daily interactions, childhood, cultural memory, corporality, etc., lie in a borderland. Therefore, the paper focuses on interdisciplinary interaction in relation to history and raises the question of the institutional boundaries of disciplines.

Keywords: History, culture, cultural history, neue Kulturgeschichte, histoire culturelle, theory, research method, interdisciplnarity, interdisciplinary object of study, institutional boundaries of disciplines, axiomatic core.

JEL Classification: Z.

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<sup>2</sup> The results of the project "Institutional structures and academic communities: the factors of knowledge development in social sciences and humanities", carried out within the framework of the Basic Research Program at the Higher School of Economics in 2013, are presented in this work.

The sponsors of the international conference 'History – History of Culture – *Istoricheskaya Kulturologiya* – Cultural History: New Watersheds and Prospects for Cooperation' invited me to deliver the keynote. The title they suggested was '*Istoricheskaya Kulturologiya* – Cultural History – *Kulturgeschichte* – *nouvelle histoire*: disciplinary borderlands in the time of border-scraping'. This title contained an obvious logical fallacy, but after giving it some thinking I decided not to change the wording but to take it as a starting point for discussion instead.

What is the relationship between the concepts of *istoricheskaya kulturologiya* – cultural history – *Kulturgeschichte* – *nouvelle histoire* that are lined up in a row here? At first I thought the idea was to present the four languages. It would be a good idea to show how culture as a subject matter and as an optic is dealt with in national historiographies today. But the picture can't seem to become really convincing, because the areas involved are indeed very different and such kind of line-up raises questions and doubts. To begin with, I'm not quite sure what '*istoricheskaya kulturologiya*' is. Being no specialist about cultural studies, I turned to an authoritative handbook. Here is what it says:

"I. k. is a branch of science that studies the dynamics of the origin, the functioning, the spatio-temporal localization, the reproduction and the changeability of socio-cultural complexes of a historical community (local cultures and their cultural historical types) as well as their individual system components (forms, processes, procedures, functional subsystems, etc.); it provides a methodologically correct description of historical cultures as stable system integral units that are self-organizing, self-regulating and self-replicating based on arranged sets of 'social conventions' generated by the practice of collective human activity, developing a basis for classification, typology and reconstructive modeling of historical cultural systems, constructing explanatory models of historical dynamics of the formation and changeability of their local and universal features and characteristics."<sup>3</sup>

I will not weary the reader with the full definition, which is three times as long as what I have just quoted. Having read it through, I was at a loss and turned for explanations to my highly respected colleagues who do cultural studies. Here are some selected passages from our correspondence:

"Dear specialists in cultural studies!

I have agreed to deliver the keynote '*Istoricheskaya kulturologiya* – Cultural History – *Kulturgeschichte* – *Histoire Nouvelle*: disciplinary borderlands in the time of border-scraping.' Could you please explain to me what the difference between '*istoricheskaya kulturologiya*' and 'cultural history' is? I believe I understand what the latter is about, but I can't think of any

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<sup>3</sup> Kul'turologiya. 20 vek. Enciklopediya. T.1, 2. / Ed. S. Ya. Levit. Saint Petersburg 1998. P. 374.

possible translation of the former from Russian into any other language. I found a lengthy and complicated definition in Svetlana Levit's handbook implying that '*istoricheskaya kulturologiya*' is supposed to mean everything to us :). I have a suspicion that actually it is just 'cultural history' translated into Russian and was included in the discussion topic erroneously. But all this is just my speculation. Pending your explanations and instructions, ....

Dear Irina!

First of all, I would like to make it clear that *istoricheskaya kulturologiya* means everything not to 'us' but to 'them' (and only them, for that matter).

To be sure, looking into the genesis of this phenomenon would be worthwhile, but I think the problem is that *istoricheskaya kulturologiya* is *not* a Russian translation of 'cultural history'. '*Istoricheskaya kulturologiya*' is derived from *kulturologiya* [i.e. cultural studies] (and, therefore, it reflects the logic of its disciplinary consolidation which you know well). In a way, it is the historical dimension of *kulturologiya* as opposed to theoretical one.

*Istoricheskaya kulturologiya*, then, is the kind of knowledge which you found in the article and which is produced by *istoricheskije kulturologi* [i.e. specialists in historical cultural studies in Russia]<sup>4</sup>. Of course, given the double standards existing here, some meaningful things, too, may be covered by this general term (for instance, 'cultural history' - see the same section where an article by Elena Vishlenkova is published. This may be the case in situations where for some reason one needs to 'play cultural studies'.")

To be sure, looking into the genesis of this phenomenon would have been worthwhile, but I decided instead to take the issue off the table so as not to indulge in a discussion as an enlightened amateur. Indeed, *kulturologiya* is a very recent phenomena and an exclusively Russian discipline<sup>5</sup>, while cultural history as a scholarly subdiscipline can be clearly traced back to the 1970's as the universal phenomena. So I removed the first component of the title. What remained read as follows: '*Cultural history – Kulturgeschichte – nouvelle histoire*'.

### ***Cultural history – Kulturgeschichte – nouvelle histoire***

The remaining three areas were familiar to me, but I was not sure what linked them together, except for someone's desire to present the U.S., Britain, German and French national historical subdisciplines. Naturally, it might be a dictionary issue: in each language, we often find different concepts to describe the disciplinary or interdisciplinary field connecting history

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<sup>4</sup> [http://www.cr-journal.ru/rus/journals/56.html&j\\_id=6](http://www.cr-journal.ru/rus/journals/56.html&j_id=6). (cf. the eponymous section of this journal).

<sup>5</sup> At the turn of 1990s, *kulturologiya* has established itself in Russia as a discipline in its own right and an academic specialization. This field of knowledge approximates *Cultural Studies* and *Kulturwissenschaft*.

and culture. However, these three terms are not interchangeable either formally or, more importantly, as far as their meanings are concerned.

Cultural history. The term ‘cultural history’ can be clearly traced back to the 1970's. Although sometimes Jacob Burckhardt is referred to as its founding father, it is Edward P. Thompson who can justly be credited with founding the modern form of cultural history. He wrote a pioneering study in which the history of the English working class was seen through the making of workers’ culture as its identity substrate. In Thompson’s view, it was workers’ culture that turned the proletariat to a class that was different from other social strata and aware of its otherness.

The overall trend in *cultural history*’s constructing of the past can be described as the tendency to substitute cultural history of society for social history of culture. Like many new subdisciplines of recent decades, *cultural history* has adopted ideas and theories of various social sciences and humanities<sup>6</sup>. First and foremost, it borrowed approaches from contemporary cultural anthropology. Following in the footsteps of the anthropologist Clifford Geertz, historians tried to apply his ‘thick description’ method (which Geertz had borrowed from the philosopher Herbert Ryle<sup>7</sup>) for cultural interpretation of social experience of various social groups in the past. This research relied heavily on methods of symbolic interactionism. The new approach made it possible for cultural history to encompass law, politics, war, economy and other spheres that were traditionally excluded from its scope of research. In this case, ‘cultural-historical’ perspective always becomes central when studying political and legal subject matters, with the historian looking into communication processes, rituals and ceremonies as mediators of political will and ideological influences. Political semiotics, ‘samples of culture’, symbolically expressive aspects of human behavior, play practices and figures of speech come to the forefront. Studies in cultural history also provided tools for the study of relatively new areas of historical research such as daily interaction, micro-power, cultural memory, poly-identity, physicality, etc. through the analysis of group practices of everyday life.

Kulturgeschichte. Next on the given list is the good old, originally German *Kulturgeschichte*. In fact, *Kulturgeschichte* is not historiography. Indeed, it is more about philosophy of culture than history of culture. Moreover, in contrast to cultural history, it is very old and belongs to a totally different epoch. While still extremely influential, it is not connected

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<sup>6</sup> Arcangeli, Alessandro. *Cultural History: A Concise Introduction*. London: Routledge, 2011; Burke, Peter. *Varieties of Cultural History*. Ithaca, N. Y.: Cornell University Press, 1997; *Idem*. *What is Cultural History?* Cambridge: Polity Press, 2004; Ginzburg, Carlo. *Clues, Myths and the Historical Method*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989; Maor, E. *To Infinity and beyond: a Cultural History of the Infinite*. Boston: Birkhäuser, 1987; Melching, W., Velema, W. *Main Trends in Cultural History: Ten Essays*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1994; Poster, M. *Cultural History and Postmodernity: Disciplinary Readings and Challenges*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1997.

<sup>7</sup> Geertz, Clifford. *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*. New York: Basic Books, 1973.

with the latest trends of the second half of the twentieth century. *Kulturgeschichte* emerged in the eighteenth century, and consolidated in the nineteenth. It is a history of spiritual culture in time and space, its central concepts being language, religion, art, science, and *the spirit (Der Geist) of the people*. (This, however, did not prevent Peter Burke's 'What is Cultural History?' (2004) to be translated into German as 'Was ist Kulturgeschichte?'<sup>8</sup>). *Kulturgeschichte* has to do with the eighteenth century, German Romanticism, Johann Gottfried Herder, and in the twentieth century, such philosophers of culture as Arnold Toynbee and Oswald Spengler.

Because I think that the only thing *Kulturgeschichte* and *cultural history* have in common are words 'culture' and 'history', I keep striving for a meaningful combination of the two and continue to make changes to the list. I suggest *neue Kulturgeschichte* as a talking subject. In Russia it is much less known because our historiography studies are largely set on the English and French historiography. But *neue Kulturgeschichte* in my judgement is absolutely in line with modern *nouvelle histoire* as well as cultural history<sup>9</sup>. It developed within the *neue Sozialgeschichte* of 1960-1980's which interpreted the social, political, economic, and military history in terms of structures and processes. Opposing it<sup>10</sup>, *neue Kulturgeschichte* concentrated instead on studying the cultural component of the past and on the role of persons as agents of societal change. Like cultural history, it analyzed such phenomena as collective representations, symbols, rituals, propaganda metaphors, etc.<sup>11</sup>. This made entirely new interpretations possible, including those of social and political phenomena such as military and political battles, religion, ideology, art, and science<sup>12</sup>.

The French term *nouvelle histoire* was introduced in the 1970s<sup>13</sup> by Jacques Le Goff and Pierre Nora, of then leaders of the Annales School. What comes closest to an English equivalent of *nouvelle histoire* is probably various *new histories* (In Russian, we use the integrated term *new scientific history*). The term may be related to cultural history, history of ideas, history of mentalities (*histoire des mentalités*)<sup>14</sup>. To use Peter Burke's metaphor, *nouvelle histoire*, a general concept that characterizes the French historiography of the last third of the twentieth century, is like the French cuisine: it is very diverse and defies a precise definition. As far as the

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<sup>8</sup> Burke, Peter. *Was ist Kulturgeschichte?* Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2005.

<sup>9</sup> Tschopp, Silvia Serena, Weber, Wolfgang E. J. *Grundfragen der Kulturgeschichte*. Darmstadt: WBG, 2007; Wehler, Hans-Ulrich. *Die Herausforderung der Kulturgeschichte*. München: C. H. Beck, 1998.

<sup>10</sup> Deile, Lars. *Die Sozialgeschichte entlässt ihre Kinder. Ein Orientierungsversuch in der Debatte um Kulturgeschichte // Archiv für Kulturgeschichte*. Bd. 87, 2005. S. 1–25.

<sup>11</sup> Lutz, Raphael. *Geschichtswissenschaft der Extreme. Theorien, Methoden, Tendenzen von 1900 bis zur Gegenwart*. München: C. H. Beck, 2003. S. 233, 228.

<sup>12</sup> Stollberg-Rilinger, Barbara. *Was heißt Kulturgeschichte des Politischen? // Zeitschrift für historische Forschung. Beiheft 35*. Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2005.

<sup>13</sup> Rubin, Miri. *The work of Jacques Le Goff and the challenges of medieval history*. London: Queen Mary, University of London, 1997.

<sup>14</sup> Hérubel, Jean-Pierre V. M. *Observations on an Emergent Specialization: Contemporary French Cultural History. Significance for Scholarship // Journal of Scholarly Publishing*. Volume 41, Number 2, January 2010. S. 216–240; Poirrier, Philippe: *Les enjeux de l'histoire culturelle*. Paris: Seuil, 2004; *L'Histoire culturelle : un « tournant mondial » dans l'historiographie ? // Poirrier, Philippe (dir.): Dijon: Éditions universitaires de Dijon, 2008.*

1970's are concerned, this observation is also true for *cultural history*, which in those decades was part of *new scientific history*.

So it appears appropriate to continue making changes to the list and focus on *histoire culturelle*, which is very close to *cultural history*, although, I should note, both *histoire culturelle* and *neue Kulturgeschichte* are younger than *cultural history*. Whereas *cultural history* was geared to cultural anthropology, these areas show more theoretical variety.

The emergence of *histoire culturelle* in France was rather quickly and, in my opinion, exactly registered by Yury Bessmertny as early as 1998. To distinguish it from *cultural history*, he proposed to call it *kulturalnaya istoriya* (in Russian)<sup>15</sup>. Describing the new trend, Bessemertny pointed out a decline in the prestige of historical anthropology in France, a fact which had consequences for the practice of the majority of French historical research institutions and journals (the historical anthropology group at the EHESS headed by Jacques Le Goff and Jean-Claude Schmitt being an important exception). One result of the disappointment was the emergence of *histoire culturelle* as represented by Roger Chartier, Pascal Ory, Mona Ozouf, Philippe Poirier, a.o.<sup>16</sup>.

And so, the chain now looks as follows: *cultural history* – *neue Kulturgeschichte* – *histoire culturelle*<sup>17</sup>. Like all schools and trends in modern historiography, in each national tradition cultural history comprises very different approaches and topics. Philippe Poirier in his project to create a comparative *histoire culturelle* pointed out that, while the variety of studies conducted over the 20 years since the constitutive articles of Pascal Ory and Roger Chartier<sup>18</sup> was fascinating, the outline of *histoire culturelle* remained vague, its objects always nondescript<sup>19</sup>.

## Object and Method

So what do these three research trends have in common? First, the list in its final form is characterized by substantial integrity, almost exact linguistic conformity and chronological unity. Second, all of these national trends exist at the same time, and they are new, unlike the ones in

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<sup>15</sup> Bessmertnyj, Yury. *Kak pisat' istoriyu*. Francuzskaya istoriografiya v 1994-1997 gg.: metodologicheskiye veyaniya. Moskva: IVI RAN, 1998.

<sup>16</sup> Poirier, Philippe. *Les enjeux de l'histoire culturelle*. Paris: Seuil, 2004; Ory, Pascal. *L'histoire culturelle*. Paris: PUF, 2007. Collection *Que sais-je?*

<sup>17</sup> This set is not limited to three national schools, though it roots in them. In Russia, *kulturnaya istoriya* is represented by well-known works of Mikhail Boytsov, Elena Vishlenkova, Marina Mogilner, Olga Togoyeva and others. Italian historiography has *storia culturale* (Alessandro Arcangeli), in the Spanish one, *historia cultural* is being pursued by Joan-Pau Rubies, Alberto Mira, Alvarez Buza, Stefan Paul-Valero. But for the Russian, Spanish and Italian national historiographies cultural history, it seems, is an imported phenomenon.

<sup>18</sup> Ory, Pascal. *L'histoire culturelle de la France contemporaine, question et questionnements // Vingtième Siècle. Revue d'histoire*. 1987. N° 16. P. 67–82 ; Chartier, Roger. *Le monde comme représentation // Annales E.S.C.* Novembre–décembre 1989. N° 6. P. 1505–1520.

<sup>19</sup> Poirier, Philippe (dir.) *L'histoire culturelle: un « tournant mondial » dans l'historiographie ? / Postface de Roger Chartier*. Dijon: Éditions Universitaires de Dijon, 2008. <http://chrhc.revues.org/1380#ftn1#ftn1>

the original version. Third, all of them developed within the historical discipline not outside it. Last but not least, in all of these trends, it is not culture that is the subject of historical research. Indeed, it can be anything: politics, social institutions, social networks, economies, etc. What they have in common in the broad sense is not the object but the method of research, and this method is *cultural interpretation*, which means that any object is regarded through the lens of culture, its symbols and practices<sup>20</sup>.

Analyzing these trends, hereinafter I will refer to them as *cultural history*, translation difficulties being not the only reason. In Russia, *cultural history* (*kulturnaya istoriya*) borrowed from Western historiography quickly gained momentum and a reputation, which I will later come back to.

Now I will briefly explain what I mean. For example, as I said, the history of politics, which traditionally meant the history of political movements, political decisions, reforms, and revolutions, is viewed through the prism of culture in *cultural history*. The same is true for the history of ideas. At the intersection of these approaches, there emerges a fundamentally new knowledge about politics, about the circulation of ideas and their role in the political process. One example is Roger Chartier's well-known book 'The Cultural Origins of the French Revolution', in which he contrasts his approach and that of Daniel Mornet's who published in 1933 a famous and splendid work called 'Les origines intellectuelles de la Révolution française'<sup>21</sup>. Chartier in his study follows Jürgen Habermas and looks how a public policy sphere and such institution as public opinion took shape in French society. What he analyzes are not ideas, retrospectively compiled and called the Enlightenment, which allegedly have led to the revolution. Instead, Chartier looks how these ideas were spreading among the people. He looks what ordinary people read, and explores their reading culture. I must say that the reading culture which *cultural history* intensively explores is a very interesting area. It allows us to find out just how much was read in Western Europe since the seventeenth century. Recently I spoke with my students about why reading the Bible led to the English Revolution, and I asked them how high they thought the literacy rate was in the mid-seventeenth century England. It was about 70% in urban areas! At that, it should be borne in mind that this figure reflects people's ability to write, a skill that is usually acquired after learning to read. Rural dwellers could well confine themselves

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<sup>20</sup> New Dictionary of the History of Ideas / Horowitz, Maryanne Cline (Hg.). Detroit, 2005; Conrad, Christoph, Kessel, Martina. Kultur & Geschichte. Neue Einblicke in eine alte Beziehung. Stuttgart: Reclam, 1998; Daniel, Ute. Kompendium Kulturgeschichte. 5., durchges. u. akt. Aufl. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2006; Deile, Lars. Die Sozialgeschichte entlässt ihre Kinder. Ein Orientierungsversuch in der Debatte um Kulturgeschichte // Archiv für Kulturgeschichte. Bd. 87, 2005. S. 1–25; Eichhorn, Martin. Kulturgeschichte der Kulturgeschichten: Typologie einer Literaturgattung. Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2002; Erbe, Michael. Die Erfindung der Antike – Das Altertum und der Aufbruch in die Neuzeit. Berlin: wjs-Verlag, 2005; Maurer, Michael. Kulturgeschichte. Eine Einführung. Köln: Böhlau, 2008; Stollberg-Rilinger, Barbara. Was heißt Kulturgeschichte des Politischen? // Zeitschrift für historische Forschung. Beiheft 35. Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2005; Tschopp, Serena, Weber, Wolfgang E. J. Grundfragen der Kulturgeschichte. Darmstadt: WBG, 2007; Wehler, Hans-Ulrich. Die Herausforderung der Kulturgeschichte. München: C. H. Beck, 1998.

<sup>21</sup> Mornet, Daniel. Les origines intellectuelles de la Révolution française, 1715–1787. Paris: Colin, 1967 [1933].

to reading only, with writing and arithmetic remaining beyond the scope of their education as most of them attended but a one-year grammar school. The reading they could afford from time to time were pamphlets worth two to three pennies or a Bible worth 3 s. 4 p. Above 20% of rural population were able to read<sup>22</sup>. Every Protestant was supposed to read the Bible and everyone was entitled to interpret and discuss it.

Methods of *cultural history* are successfully used in the study of Russian universities, by authors abandoning the functionalist approach to the history of educational institutions and analyzing instead the informal self-government practices, community life scenarios, discourses of self-description and commemoration culture. As a result, the history of Russian universities ceased to be a history of the Western model of education being mechanically borrowed or a history of a group of progressive intellectuals opposing the bureaucratic mechanism of the Empire. University life presented itself as dynamic area in which conventions were negotiated and renegotiated as to what kinds of knowledge the subjects and the government of the Russian empire needed, what quality level of scientific research was required, what criteria were to be applied to evaluate the success of educational work, and who or what the academic community was to serve<sup>23</sup>.

## Disciplinary borderlands

Now, having introduced some logic to avoid confusion of variegated notions, I come to the second part of the subject I was offered: "disciplinary boundaries or disciplinary borderlands in the era of border-scraping." It is clear that *cultural history* implies discussion of interdisciplinarity because, as I said earlier, it is based on cultural anthropology, semiotics, cultural studies, visual studies, sociology of reading, etc., and uses theories borrowed from various humanities and social sciences.

Interdisciplinarity in social sciences has been discussed intensively since the 1970's, applying a set of militarist metaphors to describe interaction between disciplines: 'ditch', 'border', 'raid', 'intervention', 'appropriation'. Individual disciplines are being

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<sup>22</sup> This is a factor Margaret Spufford has pointed at in her book on rural population, cf. *Spufford, Margaret*. *Contrasting Communities: English Villagers in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974. See also *Bennett Henry Stanley*. *English books & Readers 1558-1603*. Being a Study in the History of the Book Trade in the Reign of Elizabeth I. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965. I would like to thank Kirill Levinson for this information.

<sup>23</sup> *Universitet dlya Rossii: Vzgl'yad na istoriyu kul'tury XVIII stoletiya [T.1] / Ponomareva V.V. i Horoshilova L.B.* (red.). Moskva: Russkoe slovo, 1997; *Universitet dlya Rossii. T. 2: Moskovskiy universitet v Aleksandrovskuyu epohu / Ponomareva V.V. i Horoshilova L.B.* (red.). Moskva: Russkoe slovo, 2001; *Vishlenkova E.A., Malysheva S.Yu., Sal'nikova A.A.* *Terra Universitatis: dva veka universitetskoy kul'tury v Kazani*. Kazan': Kazanskiy gosudarstvennyy universitet, 2005; *Otechestvennye universitety v dinamike zolotogo veka russkoy kul'tury / Oleseyuk E.V.* (red.). Moskva: Soyuz, 2005; *Kulakova I.P.* *Universitetskoe prostranstvo i ego obitateli: Moskovskiy universitet v istoriko-kul'turnoy srede XVIII veka*. Moskva: Novyy hronograf, 2006; «Byt' russkim po duhu i evropeyem po obrazovaniyu»: *Universitety Rossiyskoy imperii v obrazovatel'nom prostranstve Central'noy i Vostochnoy Evropy XVIII – nachala XIX v.* Moskva: ROSSPEN, 2009; *Vishlenkova E.A., Galiullina R.H., Il'ina K.A.* *Russkie professora: universitetskaya korporativnost' professional'naya solidarnost'*. Moskva: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2012.

anthropomorphized and said to indulge in poaching, forcible takeovers and subduing each other. I propose to go beyond the metaphor, which is what we actually always do when carrying out interdisciplinary research and choosing a heuristically most effective method of analysis or theory.

By and large, the so-called interdisciplinary, i.e. mutual interpenetration and cross-fertilization of social sciences, is a phenomenon characteristic of the twentieth century. It has to do with the effects of the oppositely directed process of disciplinarization that has been in progress since the nineteenth century and meant demarcation of social sciences and their partition into separate fields of knowledge. History, sociology, political science, anthropology, geography and economics in their present form, i.e. as separate disciplines in their own right, emerged in late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Up to then, the intellectual stock of social knowledge was generally available: moving from Charles Darwin to Herbert Spencer and George Mead to use their concepts was not conceived of as 'working interdisciplinarily'. When Auguste Comte, the founder of positivism, described sociology as "history without names of individuals and even names of peoples," historians did not regard him as a stranger. They took upon themselves the solving of the task to "discover facts of human life"<sup>24</sup> he set, all the more so as the nature of their work was described as 'historical zeal' (*historischer Fleiss*) at the dawn of the nineteenth century<sup>25</sup>.

It was not before the beginning of the twentieth century that academic disciplines, which by then commanded whole faculties, departments, educational programs and evaluation systems of their own, turned into separate universes<sup>26</sup>.

According to the American historian William Sewell,

"The academic disciplines, however, have utterly transformed the Edenic intellectual landscape of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The disciplines true up to their name, wield powerful disciplinary mechanisms of control and constraint. With their monopoly on certification and their control over curriculum, hiring, tenure and allocation of research funding, the disciplines have entrenched themselves within clearly drawn borders."<sup>27</sup>

It is not just about institutional boundaries and mechanisms of administration and control. Demarcation on the cognitive level was in progress as well: disciplines developed their own

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<sup>24</sup> Collingwood, Robin George. *The Idea of History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1946. Cited after the Russian edition: Kollingvud R. *Ideya istorii*. Per. s angl. Moskva: Nauka, 1980 [1946], S. 123—124.

<sup>25</sup> Creuzer F. *Das akademische Studium des Altertums nebst einem Plane der humanistischen Vorlesungen und des philologischen Seminars auf der Universität zu Heidelberg*. Heidelberg, 1807. S. 17 – 18.

<sup>26</sup> Abbott A. *Chaos of Disciplines*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001; Lepenies, Wolf. *Between Literature and Science: The Rise of Sociology*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988 [Germ. ed. Lepenies, Wolf. *Die drei Kulturen. Soziologie zwischen Literatur und Wissenschaft*. München: Hanser, 1985].; Novick, Peter. *That Noble Dream: The 'Objectivity Question' and the American Historical Profession*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988.

<sup>27</sup> Sewell Jr., W. H. *Logics and History: Social Theory and Social Transformation*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 2005. P. 2.

rules for the construction of disciplinary discourses, their own theories, methods, and clusters of key concepts. It was not before the ringfencing was complete that a need for dialogue could be felt, and interdisciplinarity as an important methodological issue arose as late as the second half of the twentieth century.

Interdisciplinary interactions in relation to history have evident distinguishing features. In the last half-century, historians themselves produce virtually no 'big' historical theories. There are important exceptions, but they go back a long way. Here are some examples: the 'ceremonialist' trend initiated by Ernst Kantorowicz (1957), Fernand Braudel's theory of the three levels of social change (1958), Reinhart Koselleck's semantics of historical time (1979), Philip Ariès's theory of childhood (1960). Newer ones include Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger's 'invention of tradition' (1983), Jacques Le Goff's 'long Middle Ages' (1985). When undertaking the task of thematic and analytical update, most historians have resorted to theories developed in other social sciences and humanities by way of what later was termed 'appropriation strategy'<sup>28</sup>.

What happens, when an interdisciplinary field is being created or an empirical interdisciplinary research project is being carried out? I will try to show this using the example from the history of childhood.

Despite the fact that children have always been present in human society, it is only recently that childhood became a subject of study in social sciences (although the history of ideas knows that since the Socratic dialogues thinkers sought to develop systematic child concepts in accordance with the social and cultural characteristics of their respective societies). Up to the mid-twentieth century scholars did not pay much attention to themes concerning children, the reason being not so much the marginality of the institution of childhood as methodological difficulties resulting from with the scarcity of sources. Children are the 'dumbest' social group in history, because they leave almost no documentary evidence and have no 'élite' to articulate their needs and interests.

Perhaps it was exactly because of the lack of written evidence that pioneer research on childhood was done by psychology in the second half of the nineteenth century relying on observation and experiment. The way was paved. In the twentieth century, ethnographers joined in, followed by social scientists after World War II. The development of theoretical sociology (the theory of socialization, communication theory, the introduction of the self-other opposition, works on sociology of space, etc.) a strong conceptual framework was constructed for the study of childhood.

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<sup>28</sup> *Savelieva I. M., Poletaev A. V.* «Tam, za povоротom...»: o moduse sosushhestvovaniya istorii s drugimi social'nymi i gumanitarnymi naukami // *Novyi obraz istoricheskoy nauki v vek globalizatsii i informatizatsii* / Red. L. P. Repina. Moskva: IVI RAN, 2005. S. 73–101.

Childhood, the sociology of childhood explains, is a social institution different from the institution of adulthood. Social relationships for children have meanings independent from the ones attached to them by adults. Rather than being passive objects of manipulation, children are active social subjects constructing the social world around them. Children have space and time of their own<sup>29</sup>. Such theories are often very well-founded experimentally.

At some point historians, who, of course, realize that childhood must be different in different times and cultures, began to pay attention to these concepts and study the history of childhood drawing upon sources that were available to them and using theories borrowed from other disciplines. It is another matter how well they adapt these adopted theories. This depends on the choice of theory (not all theories are applicable to societies of the past) as well as on the competence of individual researchers.

What about the method? Indeed, historians usually cannot use methods applied by sociology or psychology, or anthropology, such as psychometric testing, sociometric monitoring, ethnographic description, in-depth interviews, and long-term observation (which allowed to accumulate an extensive empirical basis for further analysis). Historians work with texts and visual traces of the past, which means they apply their specific analytical tools to a 'foreign' theory. Much depends on the choice of the object of study and sources. Not all choices lead to good results.

For example, the psychohistory of childhood was not really a success though it seemed quite promising after the flying start due to the talent of Erik Erikson<sup>30</sup>. It soon became clear that the possibilities history had for the psychoanalysis of historical figures were limited. It proved to be a major theoretical obstacle that analyzing documents instead of persons made it difficult to use Freud's methods. Furthermore, there was an empirical obstacle: while Freudian psychoanalysis relies on the study of the client's childhood, the necessary evidence is generally not available to historians<sup>31</sup>. Therefore, Erikson's psychohistory noticeably departed from Freud's psychoanalysis and concentrated on the pursuit of mature identity and spiritual crises of adult age.

But the main factor was the obsolescence of Freud's theories, especially his early ideas. The rapid development of psychoanalysis in the twentieth century generated many new, varied

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<sup>29</sup> Cf. e.g. *James A. and Prout A. A New Paradigm for the Sociology of Childhood? Provenance, Promise and Problems // Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood: Contemporary Issues in the Sociological Study of Childhood / Ed. A. James and A. Prout. 2nd. ed. London: Falmer Press, 1997 (1st ed. 1990). P. 7-33; Jenks Ch. Constituting childhood // Ch. Jenks. Childhood. London; New York: Routledge, 2001 (1st ed. 1996). P.1-31. Woodhead M. Psychology and the Cultural Construction of Children's Needs // Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood: Contemporary Issues in the Sociological Study of Childhood / Ed. A. James and A. Prout. 2nd. ed. London: Falmer Press, 1997 (1st ed. 1990). P. 63-84.*

<sup>30</sup> *Erikson, Erik H. Young Man Luther: A Study in Psychoanalysis and History. New York: The Norton Library, 1958.*

<sup>31</sup> At the same time, psychoanalysis had a strong influence on the development of historical biography as well as on the source criticism procedures as applied to diaries and letters (for example, authors' psychological need for fantasies came to be taken into consideration due to this Freudian influence).

and often competing concepts of 'depth psychology' such as Neo-Freudianism (Erich Fromm, Abram Kardiner), analytical psychology (Carl Gustav Jung), individual psychology (Alfred Adler), existential analysis (Ludwig Biswanger), etc. Most historians were unfamiliar with these new trends, or hardly distinguished them from one another.

Therefore, the relationship between theory and method is crucial when it comes to interdisciplinary objects and areas of study. The success or failure of such projects depends on the adequacy of theory as well as on the applicability of methods.

Of course, we should not forget that there are a number of 'vague' theories, ideas and concepts that wander through all humanities and social sciences. The less strict the theory, the more popular and successful it can be, because it is actually not a theory but an idea, like the errant theories, or ideas, of Mikhail Bakhtin and Michel Foucault, for example. Anyone is free to take the idea of carnival and try to show that the 'culture of laughter' is a tool to study social roles, social stratification, etc. Or take Foucault's idea of micro-power.

Using the example of more formalized disciplines such as economics, sociology and psychology, sociologist Victor Vakhshayn recently tried to prove that a successful invasion of a 'foreign' concept leads to the destruction of the attacked discipline's axiomatic core<sup>32</sup>. Each discipline has its axioms that are not proved but taken for granted for a certain period of time. For example, in economics the axiomatic core includes the idea of a rational human being and purposive-rational action (this idea has already been successfully contested, though). History's axiom is that people's actions allow us to make conclusions about mental acts or that a historical source reflects historical reality. For a very long time, Ranke's assumption that a historian could show "how things actually were" was an axiom, too. I'm not sure Vakhshayn's guess is sufficiently founded, but if it is true, then we can acknowledge that, in spite of the difficulty and ambivalence of concept borrowing, historians do it very well, i.e. without sacrificing the axiomatic core of their discipline. At that, history has grown much more diversified, many new objects have come to the attention of historians, many different methods of working with sources are applied today, and sources have begun to yield many new sorts of data.

Last but not least, notwithstanding the interdisciplinary research boom that has transformed the historical discipline completely, we should point out the extraordinary stability of disciplines. Historians have been appropriating concepts for half a century, sociologists have been undertaking invasions for more than a century, but look at the structure of universities, look at the editorial boards of journals, look at conference panels: the strongholds of disciplines are

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<sup>32</sup> Doklad V. S. Vakhshayna "Epistemicheskie intervencii: skromnoe obayanie 'chuzhih' obyasnitel'nyh modeley" na nauchnom seminare IGITI im. A.V.Poletaeva 28 fevralya 2012 g. See the video record at: [http://igiti.hse.ru/Meetings/Seminar\\_Vakhstein\\_video](http://igiti.hse.ru/Meetings/Seminar_Vakhstein_video)

still sturdy (pardon my militarist metaphor). As far as the ideas of new interdisciplinarity<sup>33</sup> are concerned, disciplines today have very robust disciplinary cores, particularly in the cognitive sense (i.e. methods, language and issues). In addition, each discipline serves as a 'letter of credence' for its representatives, certifying their scholarly affiliation, qualification, etc. Most scholars have no problems with discipline-based self-identification, regardless whether they work in a disciplinary inland or in an interdisciplinary borderland. This is true about historians of cultural history, who belong to history in the time of disciplinary border-scraping.

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<sup>33</sup> *Marcovich Anne & Shinn Terry*. Where is Disciplinarity Going? Meeting on the Borderland. *Studies of Science and Technology // Social Science Information*. 50(3–4) 582–606. P. 589.

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