

## Chapter 8

# Canons and Progress in the Arts and Humanities: Knowers and Gazes

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### Introduction

In humanist study the age of innocence is lost. Over recent decades few academic debates have been as intense as the ‘culture wars’ over the rationale, role and form of the arts and humanities. These battles have reached far beyond the walls of the academy. Books such as *The Closing of the American Mind* (Bloom 1987), *Cultural Literacy* (Hirsch 1987), *The Western Canon* (Bloom 1996), *The Great Books* (Denby 1996) and *What Good are the Arts?* (Carey 2005) have become international best-sellers. Central to this controversy has been a ‘canon brawl’ (Morrissey 2005) not simply over what should be considered great cultural works but also over whether canons can and should exist at all (e.g. von Hallberg 1984b; Stone 1989). This has raised questions concerning the basis of aesthetic valuation of cultural works, the possibility of progress in the arts and humanities, the existence of artistic or humanist ‘knowledge’, and who can be said to ‘know’. Such debates thereby raise questions of originality, innovation and progress, as well as of inclusion and access to knowledge.

These questions were raised from a different angle by Basil Bernstein’s work on forms of discourse and knowledge structures (1999). One key feature distinguishing the ‘hierarchical knowledge structures’ of the natural sciences from the ‘horizontal knowledge structures’ of the arts, humanities and social sciences is how they develop. Hierarchical knowledge structures are explicit, coherent, systematically principled and hierarchical organizations of knowledge which develop through the *integration* and *subsumption* of knowledge. They exhibit a high capacity for ‘verticality’ (Muller 2007) or cumulative knowledge-building. In contrast, horizontal knowledge structures are a series of segmented, strongly bounded approaches that struggle to achieve verticality and develop by adding another segment or approach horizontally. A second key feature distinguishing

knowledge structures is the strength of their 'grammar', or their capacity for generating unambiguous empirical referents. For Bernstein, the arts and humanities are characterized by a weaker grammar which removes a crucial resource for cumulative knowledge-building: the ability to compare competing explanations with consensually agreed upon evidence.

Bernstein's model offers a fresh perspective on questions raised in debates over the arts and humanities. However, the model also raises questions of its own. First, can horizontal knowledge structures progress and grow vertically or are they confined to only segmental development? Are the arts and humanities simply characterized by weakness (weaker verticality and weaker grammars) or does their strength lie elsewhere? Secondly, are all horizontal knowledge structures the same or are some more capable of knowledge-building than others, and how might their particular kind of progress shape this capacity for knowledge-building?

In this chapter I address these questions. Substantively, building on Chapter 7 of this volume, I argue that radical critiques of canons obscure the possibility of working critically *within* a canonic tradition, and that retaining the notion of a (rather than 'the') canon enables the *possibility* of building knowledge over time in more democratically accessible intellectual fields. Theoretically, I argue that, contrary to what a cursory reading of Bernstein's model might suggest, progress is possible in fields with horizontal knowledge structures but that to grasp the form this progress takes we need to develop his model. Specifically, we need to view intellectual fields differently by exploring not only their knowledge structures but also their *knower structures* and, crucially, how they define a legitimate 'gaze'. I begin by illustrating how radical critiques of canons and critical engagement within a canonical tradition represent horizontal knowledge structures with differing capacities for developing cumulative knowledge. Secondly, I argue that we cannot understand such fields by focusing on their knowledge structures alone, for their basis lies elsewhere: in the 'gaze' of a legitimate knower. I introduce the notion of knower structures with stronger and weaker *knower-grammars* as a means of analysing the different forms taken by this gaze. I then explore what light this perspective can shed on knowledge-building in the arts and humanities by exploring debates over canons and specifically different kinds of 'gaze' characterizing the history of cultural studies.

### Critiques, Canons and Contexts

The 'culture wars' have often been portrayed as a struggle between two principal positions: conservative defences of an essentialist and singular

canon and radical critiques of the possibility of such canons. These critiques often portray the traditional belief in Western cultural understanding, following Kant's *Critique of Judgement*, as maintaining that if someone judges something as, for example, beautiful 'he [sic] supposes in others the same satisfaction, he judges not merely for himself, but for everyone, and speaks of beauty as if it were a property of things' (1790/1951, pp. 46–7). This position views the canonical status of a cultural work as immutable, universal and transhistorical. A canonical work is thereby seen as freely-floating; it transcends all boundaries of time and space. Such a view 'insists on an orthodoxy that ought to be discernible at any time whatever, because of its essential perpetuity' (Kermode 1983, p. 21). Crucially, its value and meaning is intrinsic and essential. Such a view is said to be commonplace. Warburton, for example, claims it is tempting to view works of art 'as having intrinsic value, being valuable in themselves, independently of the experiences they give rise to' (2004, p. 47). Dworkin suggests many people succumb to this temptation: 'We say that we want to look at Rembrandt's self-portraits because it is wonderful, not that it is wonderful because we want to look at it' (1993, p. 72). According to critiques, this essentialist position portrays the reader or viewer as possessing a pure gaze and enjoying an unmediated, immediate relationship with the Beauty or aesthetic value of the cultural work.

Challenges to this view have been made across the arts and humanities by a variety of positions, including feminist, postcolonial, Marxist, Foucauldian, deconstructive, post-structuralist and postmodernist approaches. Despite their many differences, one argument common to these positions is that the essentialist vision of an objective basis for judgement is asocial and ahistorical and so fails to recognize that taste and knowledge vary over time and across cultures. Highlighting the variety of meanings of the same work generated by different readers or viewers, such critiques argue that there is no universal yardstick of 'Beauty' (or 'Truth' in epistemology or 'the Good' in ethics) but rather a series of different beauties or truths. Such critiques relate cultural values to their temporal and social contexts and shift emphasis from the intrinsic form of culture to its extrinsic function. In the face of such arguments one literary critic could lament *The Death of Literature* (Kernan 1990) and claim this leads instead to a fluid plurality of different literatures or definitions of art.

Particularly vocal in the culture wars have been standpoint critiques which go further to argue against not only specific canons but also the possibility of canons *per se* (see Chapters 2, 3 and 7, this volume). These emphasize the

contingent, subjective and arbitrary nature of cultural valuations and view canonical status as reflecting the needs and interests of dominant social groups, so that

A canon is commonly seen as what other people, once powerful, have made and what should now be opened up, demystified, or eliminated altogether. (von Hallberg 1984a, p. 1)

For example, feminist critiques portray 'Western culture' as

a grand ancestral property that educated men had inherited from their intellectual forefathers, while their female relatives, like characters in a Jane Austen novel, were relegated to modest dower houses on the edge of the estate. (Gilbert 1985, p. 33)

When underpinned by standpoint theory, such critiques proclaim that not only the contents but also the basis of choice of a canon is, for example, Western, bourgeois or patriarchal.<sup>1</sup> Rather than being chosen for their cultural value as literary or artistic works, the canonical status of great works reflects their social value. Such standpoint critiques claim that 'the Master's tools will never dismantle the Master's house' (Lorde 1984, p. 112) and different knowers necessarily have different tools and cannot live together; each social group has its own basis of insight. Any specific canon is held to be one of many of equal cultural value but which enjoy different levels of social sponsorship.

This move towards relativism reaches its zenith in a highly individualistic form. Carey, for example, proclaims that the Kantian view is 'patently untrue' and instead the value of art 'is a statement of personal taste' (2005, p. 9). This decapitalizes the basis of knowledge claims: it argues not simply that Truth or Beauty have yet to be fully attained or realized but rather there is no *possibility* of Truth or Beauty. Where it goes further than standpoint critiques is to claim that one cannot say a cultural work is better or worse than any other except in terms of one's own *individual* personal preferences (Chapter 7, this volume). The legitimate meanings of cultural works are restricted to the individual's experiences which cannot be compared because we cannot access the minds of others. To differentially value art is to differentially value personal experiences. There is thus no basis for a *cultural* hierarchy of works or knowledge.

### Contexts and knowledge structures

This choice between essentialism and relativism has often been portrayed as defining the terrain of the ‘culture wars’ (Graff 1992). One can re-describe these positions in terms of context-dependency: aesthetic judgements as wholly decontextualized or wholly context-bound. They are the polar extremes of *semantic gravity*, the degree to which meaning is related to its context (Maton 2008, 2009a). Here symbolic products are either freely floating or context-determined. Essentialism denies the existence of semantic gravity – the meaning of cultural works are entirely independent of contexts of production and reception, transcending time and space. Immutable, invariant and context-free, they are contemplated by a decontextualized knower with a pure aesthetic gaze. In contrast, relativist critiques portray semantic gravity as crushing. Each particular time, place, social group or individual represents a black hole – one cannot see in from outside, nor sweetness or light can escape. The valuation of cultural works is nothing but a reflection of their social contexts.

Despite being portrayed as oppositional, essentialism and relativism thereby share a denial of the *re*contextualization of knowledge and thus of the possibility of cumulative knowledge-building. Knowledge is either complete, for the value of a work is self-evident and resides within the work itself (essentialism), or exhausted by the social context it reflects (reductionism). One can, therefore, either add a new transhistorical work into the canon horizontally alongside existing works or one cannot have a canon for long. In Bernstein’s terms, what they share is a portrayal of the arts and humanities as flat and segmented: extremely horizontal knowledge structures.

### The canonic tradition

As Moore (Chapter 7, this volume) argues, the choice between essentialism and relativism obscures a third position, a different form of critique that holds open the possibility of knowledge-building: working critically *within* a canonic tradition. This capacity for verticality is illustrated by a depiction in 1756 of the poet Christopher Smart in the frontispiece of his periodical *The Universal Visitor, and Memorialist* (see Ross 2000, p. 34). The author is shown working at a desk, looking up at a mantle on which are positioned five busts surrounded by a large laurel wreath: Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, Waller

and Dryden. Each bust has a verse inscribed on its base, which are reprinted below the frontispiece :

TO CHAUCER! who the English Tounge design'd:  
 TO SPENCER! who improv'd and refin'd:  
 TO Muse-fir'd SHAKESPEAR! who increas'd its Praise:  
 Rich in bold Compunds, & strong-painted Phrase,  
 TO WALLER! Sweetner of its manly Sound:  
 TO DRYDEN! who is full Perfection found.

Behind the busts are bookshelves, including the works of a host of English authors and above which is a Latin inscription declaring this to be Apollo's Temple of the English. This image illustrates a number of the typical characteristics of a literary canon: a focus on authors; a story of writers building on the achievements of previous authors to enrich the language and understanding; the intertwining of a literature with a national culture; the dominating but inspiring shadow cast on the modern author by the past; and veneration of the sacred. Crucially, it represents a canonic *progression* ('improved and refined', 'increased', 'sweetener of') rather than the canonic succession suggested by essentialism. It thereby suggests cumulative knowledge-building, such that writers can argue 'that Dante understood more than Virgil, but Virgil was a great part of that which he understood' (Kermode 1983, p. 25) or, as T. S. Eliot proclaimed:

Someone said: 'The dead writers are remote from us because we *know* so much more than they did.' Precisely, and they are that which we know. (1980, p. 16)

Here semantic gravity is acknowledged – a cultural work is located in its ongoing social contexts – but not insurmountable. Cultural works are context-laden rather than context-determined; we may be remote from the context of production but not cut off from the product. It allows for the possibility of recontextualization and thereby of integration and subsumption of knowledge over time.

The two forms of critique briefly outlined here – reductionist relativism and working within a canonic tradition – offer different pictures of the capacity for knowledge-building in the arts and humanities. Yet both, Bernstein argues, represent horizontal knowledge structures; in literary

criticism, for example, different approaches to literary analysis may build knowledge but each approach can remain strongly bounded from others and proclaim its own canonic tradition. This raises the question: wherein lies the difference between such fields? Put another way, how do these forms of critique differ in terms of their capacity for progress? I shall argue that to explore these issues we need to look at not only their knowledge structures but also their *knower structures*.

### Knower Structures: A Second Dimension of Fields

In distinguishing different ‘discourses’ and ‘knowledge structures’, Bernstein focuses on one dimension of social fields: their discursive or ideational formation. This reflects a longstanding focus of the theory. For example, Bernstein’s analysis of the sociology of education (1977, chapter 7) explores the ideological stances of intellectual approaches within the field. Similarly, fields of intellectual production are conceptualized in terms of their structurings of knowledge (1999). This focus on the knowledge formation of social fields is one of Bernstein’s key contributions – his approach enables us to see knowledge as an object (Chapters 1 and 6, this volume). However, at the same time this focus makes it difficult to fully understand fields where knowledge is less explicit. For example, in Bernstein’s analysis of educational knowledge codes (1977), the identities of actors are said either to reside in the possession of subject knowledge (collection code, where boundaries between academic subjects are stronger) or to be less certain and require constant negotiation (integrated code, where boundaries are weaker). Similarly, markers enabling actors to know they are operating within a hierarchical knowledge structure are explicit: ‘the acquirer does not have the problem of knowing whether she/he is speaking physics or writing physics, only the problem of correct usage. The strong grammar visibly announces what it is’ (Bernstein 1999, p. 164). However, in horizontal knowledge structures (especially with weaker grammars) where knowledge-based markers are less visible, the recognition and construction of legitimate texts is said to be more problematic. Wherever knowledge is explicit (collection codes, hierarchical knowledge structures), Bernstein’s analysis is explicit: identity, insight and so on flow from this knowledge formation. Wherever knowledge is less explicit (integrated codes, horizontal knowledge structures), Bernstein’s analysis becomes less explicit. For fields like the arts and humanities, the basis of insight, recontextualization and pedagogy is unclear. The question becomes: if they are not based on

explicit structures of knowledge specialized to objects of study, then what are they based on?

Bernstein's model provides clues. He argues that for such fields:

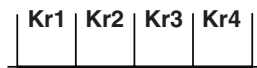
The social basis of the principle of this recontextualising indicates whose "social" is speaking. The social basis of the principle of the recontextualising constructs the perspective of the horizontal knowledge structure. Whose perspective is it? How is it generated and legitimated? (1999, p. 164).

As this suggests, the basis of these fields resides in something other than the formation of knowledge. However, to see what this might be requires a change of focus: one needs to see there are two analytically distinct structures that *together* shape educational and intellectual fields. In other words, fields comprise more than a formation of knowledge; they also comprise a formation of knowers. This represents a shift of perspective because the existing framework explores knowers only indirectly – using it one analyses the knowledge formation and then reads off implications for knowers as an epiphenomenon. Thus where knowledge is less explicit, the basis of the field becomes harder to see. I am arguing that for such fields this basis resides in a formation of knowers, and that this *knower structure* is not an epiphenomenon of the knowledge structure but rather has structuring significance of its own.

### **Fields as knowledge-knower structures**

Building on Bernstein's approach, a series of papers in Legitimation Code Theory (LCT) has progressively conceptualized these two dimensions of social fields.<sup>2</sup> This approach suggests that for every knowledge structure there is also a knower structure; that is, fields are *knowledge-knower structures*. These structures are empirically inseparable as a social field of practice but analytically distinguishable. Where 'knowledge structures' conceptualizes the arrangement of knowledge within fields, 'knower structures' conceptualizes the arrangement of knowers. Crucially, the forms they take are not necessarily the same: each may be independently arranged hierarchically or horizontally.<sup>3</sup> For example, Maton (2007) illustrates how science can be characterized as possessing not only a hierarchical knowledge structure but also a *horizontal knower structure*: a series of strongly bounded knowers, each with specialized modes of being and acting, with non-comparable habituses or embodied dispositions based on different social trajectories

and experiences. The social profile of scientists is often held to be irrelevant for scientific insight – anyone can ostensibly claim legitimate knowledge so long as they follow scientific procedures. So, in terms of their non-scientific dispositions, scientists can represent a segmented series of knowers strongly bounded in terms of their non-scientific gaze. This can be visually represented as follows, where each segment represents a different primary habitus (Kr1, Kr2, etc):

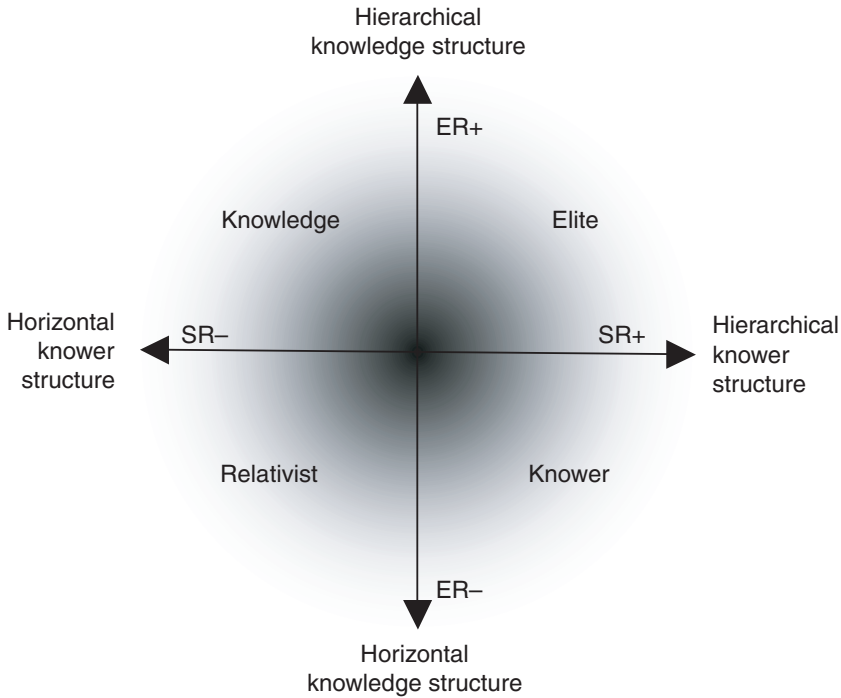


In contrast, the humanities can be characterized as possessing not only a horizontal knowledge structure but also a *hierarchical knower structure*: a systematically principled and hierarchical organization of knowers based on the construction of an ideal knower and which develops through the integration of new knowers at lower levels and across an expanding range of different dispositions. The position and trajectory of knowers within the field's hierarchies are arranged in relation to the ideal knower. This can be represented as a triangle of knowers:



(There may be more than one ideal knower and triangle of knowers). Here specific procedures for accessing a delimited object of study are less significant than possessing the legitimate dispositions.

Alongside hierarchical and horizontal knowledge structures one can thus speak of hierarchical and horizontal knower structures. These can vary independently, giving four modalities of fields as knowledge-knower structures. This describes the form taken by intellectual and education fields. The principles underlying these forms can be analysed in terms of *legitimation codes of specialization* (see Chapter 2, this volume), where each form is generated by a different code modality (Figure 8.1). The code is given by the epistemic relation to the knowledge structure (ER) and social relation to the knower structure (SR). Each may be more strongly or weakly classified and framed; or more briefly, each may be more or less emphasized (+/–) as the basis of claims to legitimate insight, identity and status. This gives four principal code modalities (ER+/-, SR+/-). Typically, a stronger relation ('+') indicates a hierarchical structure; for example,



**FIGURE 8.1** Knowledge-knower structures and legitimation codes

a stronger epistemic relation (ER+) is associated with a hierarchical knowledge structure. So, if the sciences exhibit a hierarchical knowledge structure and a horizontal knower structure, these are underpinned by emphasizing knowledge, skills and procedures and downplaying the dispositions of knowers – a *knowledge code* field (ER+, SR-). Conversely, if the humanities embody a horizontal knowledge structure and hierarchical knower structure, these are underpinned by placing less emphasis on procedures and more on aptitudes, attitudes and dispositions – a *knower code* field (ER-, SR+). In addition, one can describe an *elite code*, where both possessing specialist knowledge and being the right kind of knower are emphasized (both structures are hierarchical; ER+, SR+), and a *relativist code*, where neither is significant (both structures are horizontal; ER-, SR-).

This brief summary highlights that LCT brings together knowledge structures and knower structures. It should be emphasized that in intellectual and educational fields there are always knowledges and always knowers; they are *knowledge-knower* structures. For example, scientists do

not merely follow procedures, they also develop a specialized gaze, ‘a developed sense of the potential of a phenomenon arising out of practice’ (Bernstein 1999, p. 165). Conversely, the arts and humanities are not knowledge-free; they have their own theories, methodologies and so on. The key distinction between these kinds of fields is in how knowledge and knowers are articulated. For knowledge-code fields the principal motivation is developing knowledge, and training specialized knowers is a means to this end. For knower-code fields the principal motivation is developing knowers, and creating specialist knowledge is the means. Thus, adding ‘knower structures’ to the framework builds on rather than displaces ‘knowledge structures’.

The approach thereby enables fields to be seen along two dimensions, revealing issues that were previously obscured. For one thing, it shows that a field’s hierarchy may not reside in its knowledge structure (Maton 2007). Put another way, Bernstein’s model raises the question of what is ‘vertical’ in a horizontal knowledge structure. By conceptualizing fields as knowledge-knower structures one can see that *in vertical discourse there is always a hierarchy somewhere* – something is serving as the principle of production, recontextualization and evaluation. In distinguishing between fields the question becomes: where is the ‘vertical’ in different forms of vertical discourse? Or more accurately: what is hierarchical? where is the ‘+’ in the legitimation code (ER+/-, SR+/-)? Is it in the knowledge structure (knowledge code), knower structure (knower code) or both (elite code)? (If neither, a relativist code, the field has no vertical discourse).

A second issue the approach reveals returns us to the issue of progress in the arts and humanities. These concepts suggest that the ‘hierarchical’ may reside in the knowledge structure for the sciences but in the knower structure for the arts and humanities. Bernstein states that hierarchical knowledge structures develop through the subsumption and integration of knowledge: ‘verticality’. We can now add that fields with horizontal knowledge structures may develop through the subsumption and integration of habituses: ‘sociality’. In other words, where one kind of field develops through knowledge-building, another kind develops through knower-building. Knower structures can thus be distinguished by the degree to which they integrate and subsume new knowers, their *sociality*, highlighting whether they develop through integration or accumulation of habituses.<sup>4</sup> So, while the knowledge structure of the humanities might exhibit lower levels of verticality, progress and growth of a different kind may be found in their knower structures.<sup>5</sup> This is not to argue that fields

like the humanities must *necessarily* develop in this way or cannot build knowledge (different issues entirely) but rather to provide a way of seeing how actually existing progress may be occurring within such fields.

### **Gazes and knower-grammars**

The issues brought into view by thinking in terms of knowledge-knower structures – that the primary basis and locus of growth of fields may reside in their knower structure – in turn raise two further questions. First, what is the basis of insight, recontextualization and evaluation in these fields? As mentioned earlier, for hierarchical knowledge structures this resides in their strong grammar; for example, truth claims can be judged against available evidence using shared criteria. In contrast, Bernstein argues:

In the case of horizontal knowledge structures, especially those with weak grammars, ‘truth’ is a matter of acquired ‘gaze’. (1999, p. 165)<sup>6</sup>

I defined knower structures as based on constructed knowers; each of these ideal knowers possesses a privileged ‘gaze’. As Bernstein puts it, a “‘gaze’ has to be acquired, i.e. a particular mode of recognising and realising what counts as an “authentic” . . . reality’ (1999, p. 165). For knower-code fields, this gaze embodies the principle underlying production, recontextualization and evaluation in the field – ‘to know is to “gaze”’ (ibid.). One can, I suggest, analyse this ‘mode of recognizing and realizing’ in terms of its strength of *knower-grammar* (Maton 2007, 2008). Analogous to Bernstein’s ‘grammar’ of knowledge structures, knower-grammar refers to the degree to which this gaze is related to a specific base. We can redescribe Bernstein’s concept as ‘knowledge-grammar’, the strengths of classification and framing of objects of study and their specialized procedures (or, using LCT, the epistemic relation). Knower-grammar refers to the strengths of classification and framing of privileged knowers and their dispositions (or social relation).

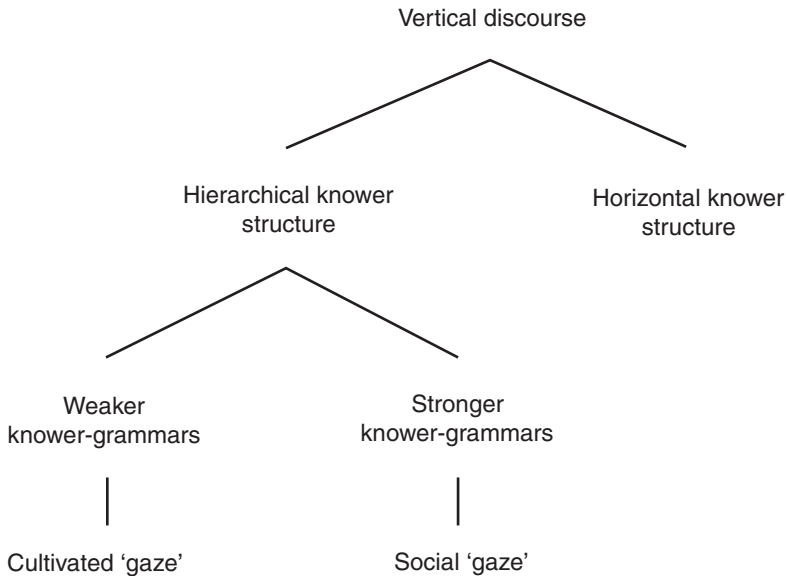
One can then conceptualize different kinds of gaze underlying fields in terms of their strengths of knower-grammar (or social relation). Here I shall identify born, social, cultivated and trained gazes (Figure 8.2). (I have used ‘gaze’, but one could also talk of ‘ear’ in music and ‘taste’, ‘smell’, ‘touch’ or ‘feel’ and ‘voice’ in various arts). The relatively strongest knower-grammar is illustrated by notions of ‘natural talent’ and ‘genius’



community through time and space (Moore & Maton 2001): gaze may shape sociality and capacity for growth of the knower structure. Moreover, sociality may in turn affect verticality, the capacity for knowledge-building in a field; that is, knower structures may affect knowledge structures. It is to these issues that I now turn, using the concepts to explore the effects of different gazes on progress in the arts and humanities.

### Gazes and Critiques

Earlier I outlined two forms of critique – reductionist critiques and working within a canonic tradition – that offer different pictures of the capacity for knowledge-building in the arts and humanities. These can be redescribed as representing different forms of legitimate ‘gaze’: a social gaze and a cultivated gaze, respectively (see Figure 8.3). To illustrate the effects these forms of gaze have for a field’s capacity to embrace new knowers and build cumulative knowledge, and to build on Chapter 2 of this volume, I shall now focus on an example of each gaze from within the history of an intellectual field: British cultural studies.



**FIGURE 8.3** Knower structures and knower-grammars

**The cultivated gaze**

An example of a critique of a canon based on a cultivated gaze can be found in the early history of British cultural studies. Faced with the rise of new commercial forms of mass media, many educators argued in the early 1960s for teaching young people how to ‘look critically and discriminate between what is good and bad in what they see’ (Newsom Report 1963, p. 156). The founding figures of cultural studies – Richard Hoggart, Raymond Williams, E. P. Thompson and Stuart Hall – argued that such calls for discrimination were often accompanied by a devaluing of working-class interests and made cases for the cultural value of the ‘popular arts’ (Hall & Whannel 1964, pp. 23–37). They agreed with the need to cultivate critical discrimination and retained a conviction that much ‘high’ culture was of value, but highlighted that existing canons excluded the experiences of many people and the basis of choosing such canons could be extended to include new forms of culture. Through their work in adult education and the first New Left movement, they aimed to enable working-class learners to critically appreciate both new media and ‘high’ culture and so bring them into a cultural conversation from which they had been excluded. This was an ‘attempt at a majority democratic education’ (Williams 1989, p. 154) where the aim was to democratize access to a means of ‘discrimination’: a cultivated gaze.

At the same time, the founders of cultural studies argued that the means of ascending towards the critical literary gaze needed overhauling. New forms of media needed new forms of pedagogy and a new ‘critical method for handling these problems of value and evaluation’ (Hall & Whannel 1964, p. 15). In particular, they emphasized the need to build on the experiences of students; as Williams stated: ‘I believe that communication cannot be effective if it is thought of as simply transmission. It depends, if it is to be real . . . on real community of experience’ (in Hoggart & Williams 1960, p. 30).

Though early cultural studies began from and engaged with learners’ experiences, it did not, however, end with those experiences. Williams (1968), for example, argued that ‘the teacher who pretends he [sic] is not a teacher . . . is a pathetic and irrelevant figure’ and Hoggart emphasized that it ‘is a joint matter, but one in which the tutor has primary responsibility for keeping the lines braced’ (1969, in 1982, p. 9). It thus aimed to integrate the interests and experiences of learners without slipping into ‘that sloppy relativism which doesn’t stretch *any* student because “they are all, in their own ways, doing wonderfully”’ (Hoggart 1969, in 1982,

p. 12). They thereby aimed to provide an explicit and ‘thoroughly-planned syllabus’ to help ‘fill out the sense of a coherent journey’ towards the appreciation of cultural works in which neither

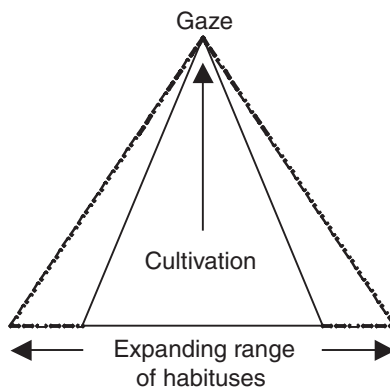
the tutor nor the student should be in doubt about the overall aims of the course and its larger pattern of working over the session; nor about the place of each week in that pattern; nor about the shape of any one week in itself. (Hoggart 1982, p. 9)

This explicit path for ascending towards legitimate insight remained focused on achieving a literary gaze and was still to be attained through engaging with exemplars of aesthetic excellence, expanded to include new forms of culture. Hoggart, for example, proclaimed:

[F]irst, without appreciating good literature no one will really understand the nature of society; second, literary critical analysis can be applied to certain social phenomena other than “academically respectable” literature (for example, the popular arts, mass communications) . . . the first is the more important and the second the less obvious. (1966, p. 277)

***Progress and growth with a cultivated gaze***

The kind of critique exemplified by early cultural studies is based on a hierarchical knower structure, one which works to integrate different habituses through cultivation into legitimate dispositions (see Figure 8.4). The tip of



**FIGURE 8.4** Progress and growth of knower structure under a cultivated gaze

the triangle is the ideal knower's gaze; the base represents the range of habituses integrated through education. Progress and growth of this knower structure can be understood along two dimensions: first, the horizontal expansion of the range of habituses embraced by the field; and secondly, the vertical ascension of knowers towards the gaze through the cultivation of their dispositions. The basis of progress thereby resides in the belief that a wide range of potential knowers can be inculcated into the legitimate gaze. This represents a knower-grammar (or social relation) that is relatively weaker than those of born or social gazes (though stronger than a trained gaze). Bernstein describes hierarchical *knowledge* structures as motivated towards integrating the greatest number of empirical phenomena into the smallest number of axioms; one can describe hierarchical *knower* structures as motivated towards integrating the greatest number of habituses into the smallest number of gazes.

It is notable that, as discussed earlier, the position illustrated by early cultural studies is often neglected by portrayals of the 'culture wars'. Radical critiques often present the essentialist understanding of canons as the historically dominant position. Yet this little reflects the common practice in the humanities of reinterpreting and critiquing an evolving canon rather than treating canonical works as universally transcendent. As an introduction to a collection debating the literary canon puts it:

Indeed, traditions are made up of debates, diachronically (as past addresses present, and present the past), anachronically (as something ancient seems to matter for the present, and vice versa), and pluralistically (as an extraordinary range of voices make up a tradition, and the readings of that tradition). (Morrissey 2005, p. 1)

Though radical in many ways, early cultural studies was continuing a long tradition of such debates over authorities and models. The first writer known to have called such choices 'classics' is Aulus Gellius of the second century, who pronounced '*Classicus . . . scriptor, non proletarius*': the classic writer is distinguished from the rabble (Kermode 1983, p. 15). The genesis of canonization in English literary criticism dates back to at least the eighteenth century and to such texts as Samuel Johnson's *Lives of the English Poets*. In these debates writers engage with the opinions of contemporary and earlier writers on the value of particular texts (Beer 1989; Morrissey 2005). Such debates extend across time and space; they embrace other past and present thinkers and offer the possibility of cumulative knowledge-building.

A key to this potential sociality and knowledge-building resides in the cultivated gaze. This is based on the belief that knowers are not born but made through the re-formation of their habituses in prolonged exposure to great cultural works. Pedagogy thereby initiates learners into ways of knowing rather than explicit states of knowledge, instilling what Hughes called ‘an invisible tribunal’:

Every writer carries in his or her mind an invisible tribunal of dead writers, whose appointment is an imaginative act and not merely a browbeaten response to some notion of authority. This tribunal sits in judgement on our own work. We intuit standards from it. . . . If the tribunal weren’t there, every first draft would be a final manuscript. (1993, p. 111)

Cultivation also provides a shared library that enables allusions, references, intertextual play and the myriad effects of what Bloom (1973) called the ‘anxiety of influence’ – the desire to go beyond what has come before – to be assumed and left tacit. Sociality resides in the degree to which this invisible tribunal and library is shared, for possessing the gaze represents a gateway to the public sphere of such fields. This in turn affects their potential for knowledge-building, for the definition of ‘art’ or ‘literature’ is projected by the artistic or literary gaze onto a canon which provides the Archimedean point for debate. Thus, canons and cultivated gazes may represent for the arts and humanities the knower-based equivalents of the objects of study and specialized procedures of the sciences: they provide a focus and basis for intersubjective debate. Because the cultivated gaze is based on a canon, immersion in which helps develop what Williams called a ‘community of experience’, it both enables the possibility of debate over something (a canon) and a shared means of conducting that debate (the shared sensibilities of knowers).

### **The social gaze**

A second form of critique begins from a similar position to early cultural studies. It rightly highlights that dominated social groups have historically been denied access to the means of creation and circulation of symbolic products and their experiences often excluded from the shared library. However, this form is based on a social gaze. Such a form came to dominate later cultural studies.

In the early 1970s, the highly influential Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) engaged on a major project of trying to ‘distil the

field in terms of a basic set of core-texts' along with critical commentaries, with the goal of producing *A Reader in Cultural Studies* to 'prevent succeeding generations of students having to start again at first base' (Hall 1971, p. 5). This shared library aimed to provide a basis for cumulative knowledge-building and cultivating cultural studies knowers. However, this project was disrupted when the field moved to broaden its base further. Having attempted to include working-class learners among the range of knowers accessing a literary gaze, cultural studies increasingly focused on women. As Stuart Hall, Director of the CCCS during the 1970s, later recounted: 'we tried to buy it in, to import it, to attract good feminist scholars' (1992, p. 282). However, 'many of the women in cultural studies weren't terribly interested in this benign project' and, rather than 'good, transformed men', scholars such as Hall were portrayed as 'fully installed patriarchal power, which believed it had disavowed itself' (ibid.). The practices and beliefs of male practitioners were redefined by feminist critics as gendered and rooted in unequal relations of power. This became particularly salient when deciding the 'shared library':

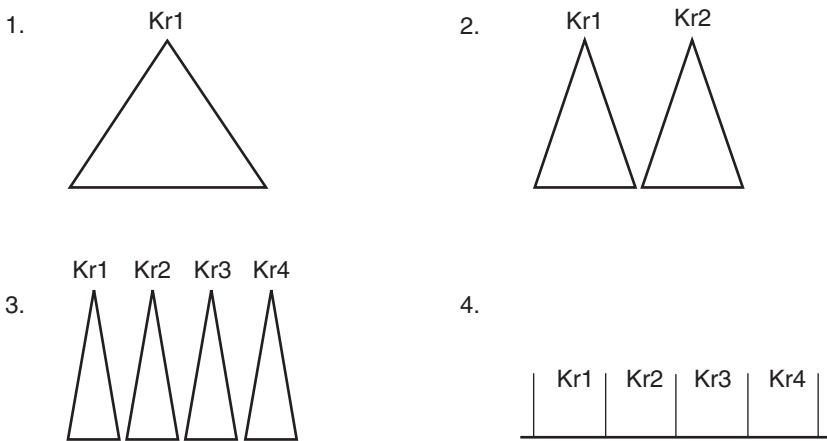
There are no leaders here, we used to say; we are all graduate students and members of staff together, learning how to practice cultural studies. You can decide whatever you want to decide, etc. And yet, when it came to the question of the reading list . . . Now that's where I really discovered about the gendered nature of power. (1992, pp. 282–3)

The influence of standpoint theory saw feminist critiques of the emerging canon of cultural studies proclaim that not only its contents but also its basis of choice was patriarchal, denying the legitimacy of the gaze and those who possessed it. The personal nature of struggles at this time echo in Hall's proclamation: 'Talking about giving up power is a radically different experience from being silenced' (1992, p. 283). The cultivated gaze was thus redefined as socially based: a male gaze. From this perspective, integrating women into the field was attempting to inculcate them into social ways of knowing other than their own – symbolic violence. One response was thus to call for 'a literature of our own' and 'a criticism of our own' or 'gynocriticism', a female framework for analysing literature written by women (Showalter 1977, 1989). This set in train a series of similar debates over the imperialist, Western, racialized and sexualized nature of knowledge in the field with new, previously excluded social groups often proclaiming their own gaze and derailing the project of building a fully shared library.

*Progress and growth with social gazes*

Critiques based on a social gaze correct the essentialist temptation to misrecognize a cultivated gaze and its canon as asocial and ahistorical. However, as early cultural studies illustrates, this can be achieved while maintaining belief in the value of canons and cultivated gazes. Contrary to many accounts of the ‘culture wars’, the move to a social gaze is not necessarily integral to critiquing canons. Reductionist critiques take the fact that cultivated gazes have been socially laden and historically associated with specific social groups to mean that it is socially determined and knowers can possess only a pre-existing social gaze. This move has consequences for intellectual and educational fields. Where cultivated gaze critiques aim to integrate previously excluded knowers by broadening the knower structure’s base (Figure 8.4), those based on social gazes create their own, new triangle. The former aim to inculcate more potential knowers into an established conversation; the latter aim to carve out a new space for already legitimate knowers to find a voice and speak to each other. While the field remains based on a knower code, this move strengthens the social relation underpinning the code, affecting the nature of the field.

The social gaze restricts a field’s capacity for sociality and knowledge-building along two dimensions. First, the range of potential knowers is diminished. If the knower structure begins as a single triangle (Figure 8.5, no. 1), rather than expanding this triangle a social gaze adds a second, separate triangle (no. 2). Where a cultivated gaze may be shared by



**FIGURE 8.5** Progress of knower structure under social gazes

knowers originating from a range of different social backgrounds, a social gaze is shared by those who possess it already, unless they successfully change gender, social class, ethnicity and so on. With such a broad social category as ‘women’, this may at first appear to dramatically expand the field as a whole: a new space is carved out for a previously excluded social group. However, the new triangle can be maintained only so long as its social category remains unified, and the tendency is for it to be fragmented as more adjectives are added based on other social categories (see Chapters 2 and 3, this volume). With each successive adjective (e.g. white-female-heterosexual-Western-etc.) more separate knower structures emerge within the field, one for each new social gaze. This adds more triangles with successively smaller bases (no. 3). Though embracing more knowers, each new group has their own knower structure, fragmenting the field. The result is to move towards a horizontal knower structure (no. 4). If the field also has a horizontal knowledge structure, this diminishes the capacity of members to engage in fruitful debate and build knowledge over time. Different social groups have their own gazes and so their own objects, their own canons – each a literature or culture or art of their own. There is thus no Archimedean point, no shared object of study over which debate between segments can be engaged and no shared means of doing so.

A second dimension concerns the triangle’s height: the distance between entry as a novice and achieving the ideal gaze may diminish. Pedagogy is less likely to focus on a prolonged apprenticeship for inculcating sensibilities and more on removing ideological obstacles (including prior cultivation) to enable the authentic social self to shine forth and so raise to consciousness one’s social gaze. The gaze is still a gateway to a public sphere but now more restricted; one cannot enter or ascend the knower structure unless one is already an ideal knower. This also fragments the educational experience. For example, Richard Johnson (CCCS Director 1979–88) describes the early 1980s as witnessing ‘the apparent splitting up of the field of cultural theory by the often separated and even antagonistic claims of different political movements’, illustrated by a Masters degree course being ‘organised around the political sequence of class, gender, and “race” rather than some more synthesizing account of tensions and best options in the field’ (1997, p. 65). Instead of a coherent journey towards a cultivated gaze, students may experience segmented learning as they move between approaches; indeed, a common criticism of the Masters course was its lack of ‘coherence’ (Johnson 1997, p. 65).

The endpoint of this process is subjectivist relativism, the notion that there is nothing beyond the different subjective knowledges of a potentially infinite number of different knowers. The social category underpinning the gaze is thus broken down and replaced by individual gazes, as illustrated by such arguments as:

The art-world has lost its credibility. The electorate has extended, has, indeed, become universal. My answer to the question 'What is a work of art?' is 'A work of art is anything that anyone has ever considered a work of art, though it may be a work of art only for that one person.' Further, the reasons for considering anything a work of art will be as various as the variety of human beings. (Carey 2005, p. 30)

From this perspective discrimination is only misrecognized social power. There is no hierarchy, no sequencing of achievements and nothing to be taught or learned. There is only the horizontal addition of new lists of personal preferences (Chapter 7, this volume). The 'invisible tribunal' results from individual biography: 'we assemble our own literary canon, held together by personal preferences' (2005, p. 242). Though critics such as Carey believe this is democratic as it overthrows the rule of 'the art-world', it does so by emptying 'art' of meaning. Moreover, there is no 'electorate' for there is no election. From this position, anything goes: 'If this seems to plunge us into the abyss of relativism, then I can only say that the abyss of relativism is where we have always been in reality – if it is an abyss' (2005, p. 30).

Returning to the question of finding the 'hierarchical' in vertical discourse, this is to move from a knower code towards a position without hierarchy (a relativist code or ER-, SR-) with a segment of knowledge for each segmented knower – both knowledge and knower structures become horizontal.

## Conclusion

I began with questions raised by both the culture wars and Bernstein's model of knowledge structures: what is the basis of humanist knowledge, do the arts and humanities progress and, if so, how? Bernstein's model highlights the 'horizontal' form of development taken by the knowledge structure of such fields; they have weaker verticality and weaker grammars

than hierarchical knowledge structures. This, however, leaves unanswered where their 'strength' may lie, how such fields might differ, and whether and how they might progress hierarchically. I argued that Bernstein's approach enables knowledge to be analysed but this focus means the basis of fields where knowledge is less explicit remains unclear. The question became: if the arts and humanities are not based on explicit structures of knowledge specialized to clearly defined objects of study, then what are they based on? To address this I introduced the notion of knower structures based on the gazes of ideal knowers, and suggested that where knowledge structures are characterized by verticality and knowledge-grammars (ER), knower structures are characterized by sociality and knower-grammars (SR). The forms taken by fields can then be analysed in terms of legitimation codes, which bring these grammars together (as ER+/-, SR+/-). Intellectual and educational fields were thereby described as knowledge-knower structures. Focusing on knower structures, a number of different gazes were defined in terms of the strengths of their knower-grammars.

These concepts were used to compare two states of a field both of which Bernstein's model would define as horizontal knowledge structures: cultural studies before and after the mid-1970s. The first was based on a cultivated gaze and characterized by a hierarchical knower structure; in the second the basis of insight, recontextualization and evaluation was redefined as a social gaze and the knower structure increasingly horizontalized. This strengthening of knower-grammar (and so SR) was shown to have implications for a field's ability to extend across time and space. The cultivated gaze affords greater opportunities for cumulative knowledge-building (greater verticality) because a greater number of habituses can be integrated and subsumed (greater sociality). This verticality is, however, of a particular form: it is limited to *within* the knower-defined field, to those deemed sufficiently cultivated to judge the aesthetic or literary merits of a work in relation to other cultural works. Nonetheless, defining the ideal knower's gaze as something that can be taught and learned enables this segment to be potentially more inclusive, allowing the possibility for (though not by itself guaranteeing) cumulative knowledge-building. In contrast, the social gaze restricts sociality and verticality because access into and ascension through the field's hierarchy of knowers is restricted to a particular social group. Moreover, this may begin a process of fragmenting the field into a series of separate knower structures, moving towards subjectivist relativism. The underlying rule of the cultivated gaze is 'habituses must be brought together', that of the social gaze is 'habituses must be kept apart'. More broadly, the trained gaze (of science, for example)

reflects a hierarchy of knowledge; the cultivated gaze reflects a hierarchy of knowing; and the social gaze reflects a hierarchy of being (though positions proclaiming a social gaze typically deny hierarchies of being and so move towards horizontalism).

The capacity for a segment-limited form of verticality within fields like the arts and humanities thereby depends on their knower structures. In short, the knower structure of a field can affect its knowledge structure. This is also the key to understanding differences among fields with horizontal knowledge structures – they are not all the same nor are they confined to a strictly horizontal form of development. So, while Bernstein's framework allows us to see knowledge and provides most insight into fields such as the sciences, to fully understand intellectual and educational fields, and in particular the arts and humanities, we also need to see knowers. LCT embraces knowledge *and* knowers (Maton 2009c). Using LCT it becomes clear that fields with horizontal knowledge structures may progress 'vertically' through their knower structures (if operating a knower code); their 'strength' lies within these structures; their basis of insight, recontextualization and evaluation resides in a 'gaze'; and some fields are more capable of sociality and verticality than others, depending on the nature of this gaze.

Theorizing fields in this way also brings more firmly into view a position often obscured by accounts of the culture wars: critical engagement with a canonic tradition based on a cultivated gaze. Against essentialism, this position highlights the veracity of arguments that definitions of culture are related to actors located in socio-historical contexts rather than universal and transcendent. It also highlights, against relativism, that there can be intersubjective, rational bases for judgement that may be taught and learned. In a passage quoted earlier, Robert Hughes described invisible tribunals as imaginative acts rather than simply the result of browbeaten responses to social power. Such acts are not made outside society by decontextualized knowers but rather result from articulating the personal 'inner' with the social 'outer' via cultural authority, that is, from a cultivated gaze. The key to avoiding the Scylla and Charybdis of symbolic violence and relativism is thus to discover a gaze and a means of cultivating that gaze capable of embracing knowers from a multitude of social backgrounds. This is an urgent task facing the arts and humanities if we are to forge a culture peace, one characterized not by an unchanging, socially imposed canon, factional trench warfare or relativism, but by an enlarged cultural sphere in which everyone is able to join a living and visible tribunal. Reductionist critiques construct a false dichotomy of either pure gaze or

social gaze. In denying the possibility of a democratic cultivated gaze, they give up hope too soon. That humanist culture has historically been associated with a limited social base does not negate hope of discovering such a gaze. In humanist study the age of innocence is lost, but not the age of hope and, to paraphrase Walter Benjamin (1919–22, p. 356), it is for the sake of those without hope that we are given hope.

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> I am not suggesting all critiques make this argument – see further below on the different bases of critiques.
- <sup>2</sup> See, for example, Chapter 2 of this volume, Maton (2007, 2008, 2009c) and Moore & Maton (2001). For examples of research using LCT, see Carvalho et al. (2009), Doherty (2008) and Lamont & Maton (2008).
- <sup>3</sup> Horizontal knowledge structures are not necessarily based on knowers; mathematics is an obvious counter-example. One needs to explore the knower structure as well as the knowledge structure when describing fields.
- <sup>4</sup> Moore (Chapter 7, this volume) uses ‘sociality’ to highlight that knowledge claims are practices people do within a special type of socio-historical context that can be described in terms of its structural features. Here I redefine ‘sociality’ as the degree to which this field integrates and subsumes habituses and conceptualize the structural features of this special type of context in terms of knower-grammars (see below).
- <sup>5</sup> Lacking the dimension of ‘knower structures’, Bernstein’s model can be criticized as overly focused on progress in the sciences and offering a deficit model of the humanities (see Chapter 6, this volume). The approach offered here overcomes such criticisms and does so through a cumulative and integrative development of the existing theory rather than horizontally accumulating another approach.
- <sup>6</sup> ‘Gaze’ refers to the acquirer not to the discourse to be acquired, and to the outcome of the principles underlying fields not to the principles themselves (cf. Bernstein 1999, pp. 171–2). For example, I shall argue that the ‘cultivated gaze’ shapes and is shaped by canons, rather than is the gaze of the canon itself, and is the result of a knower code with a particular strength of knower-grammar. The necessity of these distinctions becomes clear when considering the move to a ‘social gaze’, which elides them both.
- <sup>7</sup> All fields are knowledge-knower structures, so all include a gaze. Where the cultivated gaze makes possession of a specialized sensibility the basis of legitimacy, the trained gaze emphasizes possession of specialist knowledge as the criteria for membership of a field and the means of inculcation into its principles of organization (cf. Moore & Maton 2001). One emphasizes knowers over knowledge; the other emphasizes knowledge over knowers.