

Foreword

The Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation sponsored, in the second half of the 1980's, what became a first, fruitful phase of the project Portugal 2000, generating valuable reflections about the framework for and main issues concerning the possible or probable trajectories of the Portuguese nation at the dawn of the twenty-first century. These thoughts and investigations have been published, in Portuguese, in the series "Portugal—The Next Twenty Years."

As this initiative unfolded, the Foundation further sought to support reflections and endeavors on issues of a global nature and on problems whose consideration and solutions are deemed crucial to the common search by society for a better future. In this context, a survey of the social sciences and the role they perform, in terms both of the relations among the disciplines and of their relationship with the humanities and the natural sciences, seemed appropriate. The great intellectual achievements of the

past thirty to forty years leading to the modern study of life and to the science of complexity, the emerging need for “contextualization” of universalisms (which urges an increasing dialogue between cultures), and the growth of university education since the late 1950’s all have strongly influenced the practice of social scientists, yet left precious little room for preoccupations of a structural and organizational nature. In the present state of their evolution, should overcoming the existing disciplinary structure not be considered a central dilemma for the social sciences?

The Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation thus welcomed a proposal by Professor Immanuel Wallerstein, Director of the Fernand Braudel Center of Binghamton University, to conduct a distinguished international group of scholars—six from the social sciences, two from the natural sciences, and two from the humanities—in a reflection on the present social sciences and their future. Consequently, the Gulbenkian Commission on the Restructuring of the Social Sciences was created in July 1993, with Professor Wallerstein as its chair. Its composition reflects both the depth and the wide perspective that was necessary to achieve the analysis presented in the text that follows.

Open the Social Sciences is a serious, generous, and provocative book, which faithfully depicts the atmosphere and the vivacity of the Gulbenkian Commission’s exchanges during the two-year period that followed its creation. Three plenary meetings were held: the first at the Foundation’s headquarters in Lisbon in June 1994, the second at the Maison des Sciences de l’Homme in Paris in January 1995, and the third at the Fernand Braudel Center in Binghamton in April 1995. Its intellectual level is pri-

marily due to the capacity of the eminent individuals who served on the Commission, but the overall achievement would not have been possible without the enthusiasm, determination, and leadership of Immanuel Wallerstein, which we gratefully acknowledge here.

Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation

