

# THE HUMANITIES SECTION

Jens Beckert



above | 'Justitia', fresco by Raphael, Stanza della Segnatura, Vatican, 1508



The Humanities Section comprises a total of 19 Max Planck institutes. Their research examines such subjects as human language, the institutional foundations of the modern economy, demographic change, and the cognitive foundations of perception and action. The spectrum of methods used is extraordinarily broad, extending from experimental studies to hermeneutics. A number of institutes belonging to this Section are of an interdisciplinary nature, and combine a variety of different approaches and thematic priorities under one roof.

## RELIGION AND ETHNICITY

The most recently founded institute in this Section is the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity, established in Göttingen in 2007. Modern societies are characterized by the coexistence of individuals of widely differing origins, ethnicities and religions, as well as sexual orientation. The organization of these culturally diverse social groups presents great challenges for modern societies, but also affords many opportunities. The members of the institute in Göttingen use ethnographic methods to examine the forms of coexistence shared by differing cultures that have developed in urban areas in various regions of the world. They focus on the extent to which societies and their subsystems are able to utilize the creative potential generated by burgeoning diversity, how they deal with this diversity and how they overcome conflict. Currently made up of two departments, the institute will soon add a third, the



members of which will concentrate on normative issues relating to the topic.

### EXPANSION ABROAD

An important priority in further developing the Humanities Section is to establish and expand institutes and research groups abroad. The Section already has three institutes outside of Germany, two of which (in Rome and Florence) are dedicated to art history, whereas the third (in Nijmegen) conducts research into psycholinguistics. The latter institute, financed by the Dutch government, is currently setting up a fifth department devoted to language and genetics. Another Max Planck institute might be established in Luxembourg. If realized, its focus will be procedural law, specifically European and comparative civil procedural law, the regulation of financial markets and the procedural law practised by the international courts of justice. This institute will be financed by the host country. Luxembourg is an excellent location for an institute for procedural law as the European Court of Justice is located there. In cooperation with the Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas in Madrid, two research groups are currently being established as a Max Planck Centre in the field of historical research. Working under the title "Convivencia", these groups will investigate the interactions among Jewish, Muslim and Christian communities in the Middle Ages and the early modern era. They will approach the subject both from an art history perspective and from the point of view of the history of law and the history of science.

### LAW INSTITUTES

Traditionally, the institutes devoted to the study of law have been a large and important part of the Section. With the new institute in Luxembourg, the Section will have a total of eight institutes investigating key subdisciplines of law. At the institutes in Heidelberg, Hamburg and Freiburg, which are devoted to the three traditional pillars of law — public law, private law and criminal law — several important changes are being implemented. The Max Planck Institute for Legal History in Frankfurt will be expanding the scope of its activities to include a study of non-European legal cultures and to adopt a global historical approach. There are also plans to connect the law institutes more closely with one another. A joint internet platform, Maxnet Law, will be launched soon, with one of its main purposes being to intensify cooperation between the institutes. The two law institutes in Munich are undergoing a process of reorientation that includes integrating economic research. In 2008, for example, the Max Planck Institute for Intellectual Property, Competition and Tax Law set up a department to study financial management, and at the Max Planck Institute for Foreign and International Social Law a new department will examine the development of the welfare state from an economic perspective. The Section is also endeavouring to split the Max Planck Institute for Intellectual Property, Competition and Tax Law, which has a broadly diversified profile, into two separate institutes in order to heighten the visibility of research into tax law and public finances. The three institutes of the Humanities Section in Munich will then be integrated to create an (initially virtual) Munich Law and Economic Sciences campus, in order to make better use of the potential for cooperation on issues such as the financing of social systems or competition as an instrument of regulation in health care. The Institute for Research on Collective Goods, founded in Bonn in 2004, also combines perspectives of economics and law in its research.

### EMPIRICAL AESTHETICS

The plans for a new Max Planck Institute for Empirical Aesthetics mark a further important development for the Humanities Section. This institute will use empirical methods to study the foundations of human aesthetic perception and judgment, seeking to identify the psychological, neural and socio-cultural foundations on which such perceptions and judgments are formed, and how their variability can be explained. The institute is to be headed by a board of directors comprising four persons: a musicologist, a literary scholar, a neuroscientist and an empirical sociologist or experimental psychologist. Other areas (in particular the fine arts) will be covered in collaborative projects. The institute will thus be highly interdisciplinary in nature, and as such will not be restricted to the Humanities Section: the Biology and Medicine Section will play a role in the neuroscience department of the institute. Yet another innovation will be the proposed integration of artists-in-residence, who, as working artists, will provide the perspective of professional producers of aesthetic objects.

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'The Gallery of Archduke Leopold in Brussels' by David Teniers the Younger, 1640