

been remade in their favor during Ronald Reagan's presidency. Their selfishness, narrowness, and greed were not a private matter: it damaged social well-being at large. This reframing of inequality forced moral concerns onto the public agenda in ways that challenge the hold of purely scientific and technical expertise. Stiglitz's ideas, simply expressed in one popular article, pulled together a critique of wealthy elites as a profound dysfunctional challenge.

Since this intervention, "elite bashing" has become a major current of both academic and more popular discourses. This reversing of the telescope to look at the rich, rather than the poor, as the overwhelming social problem is of great pertinence. The rise of "elite studies," which this intervention inspired, is a major theme in recent social science and will surface time and again in my book. But this approach also opens up onto further issues. We need to open up the first Russian doll to see what lies inside.

2: The Crisis of Social Science

A profound reshaping of social scientific knowledge is currently taking place. Compared to the natural and medical sciences, the social sciences have been remarkably conservative. Whereas it is routine for natural scientists to pool their disciplinary skills to hone their capacity to address specific problems, social scientists largely default to their disciplinary homes, ultimately writing as economists, sociologists, political scientists, and so forth. Where interdisciplinary fields have emerged (such as in development studies, or in research on health, education, or social policy), they are defined as "applied" areas, which convey less status than in the "core" social science disciplines.

Playing to the comforts of one's home disciplinary audience was a powerful device when the social sciences were growing fast, as they were for much of the twentieth century. But the rise of big data and the growing interest of natural scientists in social interventions have entailed more external scrutiny of the success of social science. Massive social and technical changes of recent decades call into question the intellectual silos that were forged in the nineteenth century but still dominate universities around the globe. Would we want to retain the distinction between anthropology (originally forged to study colonial societies) and sociology (which developed rather later to