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(truth) is only the beginning. Unearthing the cultural meaning of the work requires historical context and theorizing on its message, style, aesthetics — and what the work can tell us about the artist and his world (view). The coexistence of multiple valid answers and the value of their interaction disqualify replication as a viable quality criterion.

Moreover, the humanities relate differently to their objects of study. They focus on both interactive kinds (people) and indifferent kinds (atoms, DNA sequences, paintings). Extracting meaning from interactive data requires continued interaction between informants, who might resist or embrace preliminary results or classifications. With co-producers of data and meaning, protocols are never set in stone, reporting guidelines are necessarily local and consent is always fluid.

Replication is a mark of quality only in the construction of truth for indifferent kinds. Extracting meaning from interactive kinds requires evaluation and assessment according to different quality criteria — namely, those that are based on cultural relationships and not statistical realities.

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Beyond replicability in the humanities

The humanities should take responsibility for quality in the same way the sciences do, argue Rik Peels and Lex Bouter, through the pursuit and institutionalization of replicability (*Nature* **558**, 372; 2018). We disagree: quality criteria are crucially different in the humanities and the sciences.

The humanities pursue meaning beyond truth. Confirming that Van Gogh painted *Sunset at Montmajour*

China's overall programme