

"Shrugging off the Nineteenth-
Century Incubus,"

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SHRUGGING OFF THE NINETEENTH-CENTURY INCUBUS

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Reactions to the Nineteenth Century

"Machines are ruining all classes," declared Johann Weinmann in 1849. Weinmann, master stocking knitter in Erlangen, Germany, described the machine as "the destroyer of households, the ruination of youth, the inducer of luxury, the spoiler of the forests, the populator of the workhouse, and soon the companion of general upheaval" (Shorter 1969: 206). Weinmann was, of all things, sharing his thoughts with King Maximilian of Bavaria. In the shadow of 1848's revolution, King Max had established an essay contest on the topic of long-term remedies for material distress in Bavaria and in Germany as a whole. Weinmann's reply arrived with over 600 others.

From Ansbach, for example, police official Carl Seiffert sent in remarks on a related worry: "Now while the rich replenish their ranks with moderation and are purely conservative, the lower classes are thriving only too greatly and an enormous proletariat is growing up that, if an escape valve is not opened, will soon demand to divide up the property of the wealthy" (Shorter 1969: 201). Although Seiffert did not share Weinmann's concern about machines, both writers feared the growth of a dissolute proletariat, and warned of its threat to property and public order.

Three themes reverberated through the entries to King Max's contest: overpopulation, mechanization, and immorality. The middle-class essayists felt that heedless breeding of the proletariat, migration of surplus rural people, and the consequent

rapid growth of cities were creating new dangers for political and moral order. Many of them felt that machines threatened humanity. They argued, furthermore, that the combination of overpopulation with mechanization dissolved old social controls, thereby promoting dissolution, rebellion, crime, and violence. Traditional ways were disintegrating. Or so they thought.

Honest nineteenth-century burghers found many things about their century puzzling and distressing: the rapid growth of cities, the mechanization of industry, the restiveness of the poor. Putting such things together, they created a commonsense analysis of social change and its consequences. That bourgeois analysis posited an unending race between forces of differentiation and forces of integration. To the extent that differentiation proceeded faster than social integration, or to the extent that integration weakened, disorder resulted.

What, in this formulation, qualified as differentiation? Urbanization, industrialization, occupational specialization, the expansion of consumer markets, increasing education -- anything that seemed to compound the distinctions among people, the contact of unlike beings with each other.

What was integration? A sense of likeness, shared belief, respect for authority, satisfaction with modest rewards, fear of moral deviation -- essentially a set of habits and attitudes that encouraged people to reproduce the existing structure of rewards and authority.

What, then, was disorder? At the **small** scale, popular violence, crime, immorality, madness. If urbanization, industrialization, and other differentiating changes occurred without a corresponding reinforcement of the sense of likeness, shared belief, and so on, these evils would beset individuals and families. At the **large** scale, popular rebellion, insubordination, class conflict. Increasing education, the expansion of markets, occupational specialization, and other forms of differentiation would cause these dangers as well, unless respect for authority, fear of moral deviation, and related forms of integration developed simultaneously -- or at least survived. At either scale, a victory of differentiation over integration produced a threat to bourgeois security.

Nor were master stockingers and police officials the only people to see a contest between differentiation and integration. Their analyses did not differ fundamentally from the position Freiherr vom Stein had taken when addressing the Westphalian Parliament in 1831. The Freiherr was ending decades of public life; he died later that same year. Stein spoke of the "danger developing with the growth in numbers and claims of the lowest class of civil society." "This class," he declared,

is forming in our cities out of a homeless, propertyless rabble and in the countryside from the mass of little cotters, squatters, settlers, marginals, and day-laborers. They nurture the envy and covetousness bred by various other

ranks of civil society. The present condition of France shows us how seriously property and persons are threatened when all ranks on earth are made equal. Fidelity, love, religious and intellectual development are the foundations of public and personal happiness. Without such a base the clash of parties undermines every constitution (Jantke & Hilger 1965: 133).

Population growth, according to this analysis, was swelling the dangerous classes, and therefore increasing the differentiation of classes as it spread the demand for equality. The mechanisms of integration -- "Fidelity, love, religious and intellectual development" -- failed before the onslaught. The recent revolution (of 1830) in France made the dire consequences all too plain. Differentiation overwhelmed integration, and disorder flourished.

In all these views, a balance between the forces of differentiation and of integration determines the extent of disorder. Stein the reforming conservative and Proudhon the anarchisant socialist actually held similar commonsense analyses of social change and its consequences. In those analyses, they joined many of their nineteenth-century fellows.

Out of such nineteenth-century reflections on capitalism, national states, and the consequences of their growth grew the disciplines of social science as we know them. Economists constructed theories of capitalism, political scientists theories

of states, sociologists theories of those societies that contained national states, anthropologists theories of stateless societies. Each discipline bore marks of its birthdate; economists were obsessed by markets, political scientists concerned by citizen-state interactions, sociologists worried by the maintenance of social order, and anthropologists bemused by cultural evolution toward the fully-developed world of the nineteenth century.

Nevertheless, all disciplines dipped into their century's evolutionary thinking to some degree. For all of them, increasing differentiation -- as specialized production, as individualism, as interest groups, or as something else -- took on the air of a general historical law. For all of them, increasing differentiation posed a difficult problem of social integration. The sense of evolution appeared clearly in the great sociological dichotomies: status and contract, Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft, primary and secondary groups, mechanistic and organic solidarity.

What Happened?

Nineteenth-century European observers were not wrong to think that great changes were happening. For several centuries, industrial expansion had occurred mainly in small towns and rural areas. Rapidly multiplying capitalists had acted mainly as merchants rather than direct supervisors of manufacturing. Capital therefore accumulated more than it concentrated, as the proliferation of semi-independent producers in households and

small shops had accounted for most of the large increase in manufacturing. In that era of mercantile capitalism, the European population had been very mobile, but had moved mainly within regional labor markets or in great systems of circular migration. Although regional labor markets and long-distance circuits deposited a residue of migrants in cities, mortality, fertility, and migration combined to produce no more than modest urban growth. Indeed, many cities lost population when the pace of activity in their hinterlands slowed.

During the nineteenth century, in contrast, capital concentrated. Individual capitalists and firms acquired much greater masses of productive means than they had ever owned before. Capitalists took direct hold over the processes of production, and located them increasingly near markets and sources of energy or raw materials instead of near supplies of self-sustaining labor. Production, rather than exchange, became the nexus of capitalism. Accordingly, the process of proletarianization that had long been at work in the countryside moved to the city. Large firms employing disciplined wage-workers in urban locations became increasingly important worksites. Workers migrated from industrial hamlets, villages, and towns toward manufacturing cities and industrial employment, as displaced agricultural workers moved into urban services and unskilled labor. Small wonder that Karl Marx, observing these very processes, should fix on the separation of labor from the means of

production and the conversion of surplus value into fixed capital as virtual laws of nature.

As results of this urban implosion of capital, net rural-urban migration accelerated, cities increased rapidly, large areas of the countryside deindustrialized, and differences between country and city accentuated. Mechanization of production facilitated the concentration of capital and the subordination of labor. Sometimes, in fact, we write this history as the story of technical improvements in production. At its extreme, the technological account postulates an "industrial revolution" depending on a rapid shift to grouped machine production fueled by inanimate sources of energy, and dates "industrialization" from that proliferation of factories, machines, and industrial cities.

Within manufacturing, the pace of technical innovation did accelerate during the nineteenth century. The spinning jenny, the power loom, the blast furnace certainly increased the amounts that spinners, weavers, and smelters could produce in a day. Steam power, assembly lines, and factories evidently became crucial to many branches of industry after 1750. In all these regards and more, the nineteenth century made a technological break with its predecessors.

To call the nineteenth-century reorganization of production an "industrial revolution," however, exaggerates the centrality of technological changes. It draws attention away from the great transformation of relations between capital and labor that marked

the century. It ignores the fact that in all industrial countries, including England, small shops predominated in almost all branches of production up to the start of the twentieth century. Not until the automobile era did time-disciplined, assembly-line factories become the characteristic sites of proletarian production. To date industrialization from the development of the factory, furthermore, relegates to nothingness centuries of expansion in manufacturing via the multiplication of small producing units linked by merchant capitalists. It also hides the vast deindustrialization of the European countryside that accompanied the nineteenth-century implosion of manufacturing into cities.

As capitalism was undergoing fundamental alterations, European states were likewise entering a new era. By the second half of the eighteenth century, national states had made themselves the dominant organizations in most parts of Europe. Their preparations for war had become so extensive and costly that military expenditure and payments for war debts occupied the largest shares of most state budgets. The strongest states had built great apparatuses for the extraction from their populations of the means of war: conscripts, food, supplies, money, money, and more money. Paradoxically, the very construction of large military organizations reduced the autonomy of military men and created large civilian bureaucracies. The process of bargaining with ordinary people for their acquiescence and their surrender of

resources -- money, goods, labor power -- engaged the civilian managers of the state in establishing limits to state control, perimeters to state violence, and mechanisms for eliciting the consent of the subject population.

Those states, however, continued to rule indirectly. For routine enforcement of their decisions, collection of revenues, and maintenance of public order, they depended mainly on local notables. The notables did not derive their power or tenure from the pleasure of superiors in the governmental hierarchy. They retained plenty of room for maneuver on behalf of their own interests. As a result, much of the business of national authorities consisted of negotiating with local and regional notables. Ordinary people carried on an active political life, but almost entirely on a local or regional level. When they did get involved in national struggles for power, it ordinarily happened through the mediation of local notables, or in alliance with them.

During the nineteenth century, all this changed. Although war kept on getting more costly and destructive, it less often pitted members of the European state system against one another, and more often involved conquest outside of Europe. Revolutionary and reformist governments extended their direct rule to individual communities and even to households. In the process of bargaining with ordinary people for even greater resources, statemakers solidified representative institutions, binding national

elections, and a variety of means by which ordinary people could participate routinely in national politics.

Under pressure from their constituents, likewise, states took on responsibilities for public services, economic infrastructure, and household welfare to degrees never previously attained. The managers of national states shifted from reactive to active repression; authorities moved from violent reactions against rebellion and resistance as they occurred toward active surveillance of the population and vigorous attempts to forestall rebellion and resistance. All these activities supplanted autonomous local or regional notables, and put functionaries in their places. As a consequence, notables lost much of their strength and attractiveness as intermediaries in the attempts of ordinary people to realize their interests. Those were the nineteenth century's great changes.

With capitalism and the state in rapid transformation, nineteenth-century European burghers, intellectuals, and powerholders had good cause to worry about social change. They made serious, even desperate, efforts to understand what was happening to them. Those efforts created the nineteenth-century conceptions which now encumber our thought.

From a mistaken reading of nineteenth-century social changes emerged the eight Pernicious Postulates of twentieth-century social thought. They include these principles:

1. "Society" is a thing apart; the world as a whole divides into distinct "societies", each having its more or less

- autonomous culture, government, economy, and solidarity.
2. Social behavior results from individual mental events, which are conditioned by life in society. Explanations of social behavior therefore concern the impact of society on individual minds.
 3. "Social change" is a coherent general phenomenon, explicable en bloc.
 4. The main processes of large-scale social change take distinct societies through a succession of standard stages, each more advanced than the previous stage.
 5. Differentiation forms the dominant, inevitable logic of large-scale change; differentiation leads to advancement.
 6. The state of social order depends on the balance between processes of differentiation and processes of integration or control; rapid or excessive differentiation produces disorder.
 7. A wide variety of disapproved behavior -- including madness, murder, drunkenness, crime, suicide, and rebellion -- results from the strain produced by excessively rapid social change.
 8. "Illegitimate" and "legitimate" forms of conflict, coercion, and expropriation stem from essentially different processes: processes of change and disorder on one side, processes of integration and control on the other.

All eight are mistakes. Although national states do, indeed, exist, there is no "society" that somehow exercises social control and embodies shared conceptions of reality. Social behavior does not result from the impact of society on individual minds, but from relationships among individuals and groups. "Social change" is not a general process, but a catchall name for very different processes varying greatly in their connection to each other. Stage theories of social change assume an internal coherence and a standardization of experiences that disappear at the first

observation of real social life.

The difficulties continue. Although differentiation is certainly one important process of change, many of the fundamental changes in our era actually entail de-differentiation, and to some of them the question of differentiation is secondary or even irrelevant. It is simply not true that rapid social change produces generalized strain, which in turn creates alternative forms of disorder as a function of the available avenues of escape. The more closely we look, the more coercion by officials resembles coercion by criminals, state violence resembles private violence, authorized expropriation resembles theft. We will return to these difficulties repeatedly later on.

The eight illusions connect neatly; they follow from a sharp division between the forces of order and the forces of disorder:

ORDER	DISORDER
society	individual mental event
integration	disintegration
satisfaction	strain
legitimate control	violence
progress	decay
normality	abnormality

These sharp dichotomies rest on a sense that social order is fragile, that differentiation threatens social order, that change is risky, that unrestrained change generates strain, violence, decay, and disintegration, that only guided and contained change

leads to integration, satisfaction, and progress. They express the will of powerholders -- actual or would-be -- to improve the people around them, by means of coercion and persuasion, at a minimum cost. To the extent that they still promulgate these ideas, the social sciences of the twentieth century remain the bearers of nineteenth-century folk wisdom.

My summary exaggerates the unity of nineteenth-century thought. The opposition of order to disorder characterizes the teachings of Durkheim and Tonnies much more than those of Marx or Weber. Both Marx and Weber regarded a sort of order as all too likely. They thought it would take demonic force -- of revolution or of charisma -- to disrupt the existing order. But Marx and Weber stood far from nineteenth-century folk wisdom. Sadly, the lines of social-scientific thought that embodied folk wisdom prevailed well into the twentieth century.

Fortunately, the social sciences that formed in the nineteenth century also took observation seriously. Much the same spirit that brought burghers and bureaucrats to worry about rising disorder induced social reformers and officials to undertake surveys of living conditions, establish household censuses, collect statistics, and publish documented descriptions of social life. In western Europe, the half-century from 1870 to 1920 was the golden age of official statistics and social surveys; after then, official statistics and social surveys became more efficient and regular, but lost much of their richness. However faulty, the

results of social inquiries set challenges to theories of social change; at a minimum, analysts had to explain away the contrary evidence. A combination of mutual criticism and accumulated evidence has made it clear that the eight great nineteenth-century postulates are illusions.

Where to Go

If so, what should we do?

We should build concrete and historical analyses of the big structures and large processes that shape our era. The analyses should be **concrete** in having real times, places, and people as their referents and in testing the coherence of the postulated structures and processes against the experiences of real times, places, and people. They should be **historical** in limiting their scope to an era bounded by the playing out of certain well-defined processes, and in recognizing from the outset that time matters -- that when things happen within a sequence affects how they happen, that every structure or process constitutes a series of choice points. Outcomes at a given point in time constrain possible outcomes at later points in time.

If the work is historical, it need not be grand. When it comes to understanding proletarianization, for example, much of the most valuable work proceeds at the scale of a single village. Keith Wrightson's and David Levine's study of Terling, Essex from 1525 to 1700 tells us more about the creation of a propertyless underclass than do reams of general essays about capitalism. Ted

Margadant's analysis of the 1851 insurrection against Louis Napoleon's coup d'etat has more to teach about the actual process of rebellion than dozens of broad statements about the pattern of revolt in Europe as a whole.

Nor, for that matter, need historical work concern the distant past. Take Arthur Stinchcombe's treatment of the durable influence of the "social technology" prevailing at the time of an organization's founding on its basic structure. Stinchcombe applies essentially the same analysis to the structures of industrial crafts, men's college fraternities, savings banks, trade unions, and other organizations. He shows both that organizations of a given type tend to be established in spurts, and that the structures they adopt at the outset persist over long periods of time (Stinchcombe 1965: 153ff.). While the argument is eminently historical, it brings us right up to the present. A concrete, historical program of inquiry must include work at the small scale, and can well include our own time.

In the case of western countries over the last few hundred years, the program begins by recognizing that the development of capitalism and the formation of powerful, connected national states dominated all other social processes and shaped all social structures. The program continues by locating times, places, and people within those two master processes, and working out the logics of the processes. It goes on by following the creation and destruction of different sorts of structures by capitalism and

statemaking, then tracing the relationship of other processes -- for example, migration, urbanization, fertility change, and household formation -- to capitalism and statemaking. A demanding program, but a rewarding one.

How can we eradicate the pernicious postulates? Two approaches, one direct and the other indirect, promise to do the job. **Directly**, we should track the beasts to their dens, and battle them on their own grounds. We should look hard at the logical and evidential bases for generalizations about social change, about the use of illegitimate force, about differentiation as a master process. We should confront them with real historical cases and alternative descriptions of what actually went on. They cannot resist these weapons.

The **indirect** approach makes it easier to discover appropriate historical cases and to devise alternative explanations. It consists of fixing accounts of change to historically grounded generalizations. I do not mean universal statements confirmed by a wide variety of instances in different eras and parts of the world; at that level of generality, we have so far framed no statements that are at once convincing, rich, and important. I do mean statements attached to specific eras and parts of the world, specifying causes, involving variation from one instance to another within their time-place limits, and remaining consistent with the available evidence from the times and places claimed.

Big structures, large processes, and huge comparisons enter

the analysis at precisely this point. They provide the stanchions to which we lash our historically-contingent statements. Analyses of structures and processes operate at four historical levels, all of them involving comparison. At the **world-historical** level, we are attempting to fix the special properties of an era, and to place it in the ebb and flow of human history. Schemes of human evolution, of the rise and fall of empires, of successive modes of production, operate at a world-historical level.

At the level of a **world system**, we are trying to discern the essential connections and variations within the largest sets of strongly interdependent social structures. World-system analyses, strictly speaking, certainly qualify, but so do Toynbee-style studies of civilizations. At the **macrohistorical** level, we seek to account for particular big structures and large processes and to chart their alternate forms. At the level of **microhistory**, we trace the encounters of individuals and groups with those structures and processes, with the hope of explaining how people actually experienced them.

Need I warn that the distinction of exactly four levels, rather than three, five, or some other number, leaves great room for debate? Unless we have compelling evidence that some kinds of large structures persist, cohere, and constrain all the rest, the number of levels between the history of a particular social relationship and the history of the world remains arbitrary. We should resist the temptation to reify the levels. I place the

number at four on the wager that through most of history the world divided into at least two largely independent networks of production, distribution, and coercion. Our own single-network era began when the network of production, distribution, and coercion centered in China became inseparable from its counterpart centered in Europe.

If so, we can reasonably distinguish among analyses of 1) variation from network to network, 2) the operation of particular networks, 3) variation among structures and processes within particular networks, and 4) clusters of experience that people within particular networks treated as having common properties. Those define four levels: world-historical, world-systemic, macrohistorical, and microhistorical. If the world forms but a single coherent network, then the first two levels collapse into one. If the only significant uniformities and variations among structures and processes are those identified by the participants themselves, the distinction between the last two levels dissolves.

How many levels exist, and what units define them, are partly empirical questions. Within limits, we can amass evidence for or against Toynbee's claim that great civilizations, defined by people's interdependent involvement in a distinctive system of cultural premises, constitute the largest intelligible units of historical analysis. Within limits, we can also bring evidence to bear on the claim that at a certain point in time -- including our own time -- the entire world formed but one such system.

Adjudication of the evidence, however, requires agreement on the practical definitions of difficult terms such as "coherence" and "interdependence". If **any** connection counts, we will most likely discover that with trivial exceptions the world has always formed a single system. If only the sort of coherence nineteenth-century analysts attributed to societies counts, we will most likely discover that no system has ever existed. Somewhere between those extremes lie all useful accounts of human connectedness.

A sensible rule of thumb for connectedness might be that the actions of powerholders in one region of a network rapidly (say within a year) and visibly (say in changes actually reported by nearby observers) affect the welfare of at least a significant minority (say a tenth) of the population in another region of the network. Such a criterion indubitably makes our own world a single system; even in the absence of worldwide flows of capital, communications, and manufactured goods, shipments of grain and arms from region to region would suffice to establish the minimum connections. The same criterion, however, implies that human history has seen many world-systems, often simultaneously dominating different parts of the globe. Only in the last few hundred years, by the criterion of rapid, visible, and significant influences, could someone plausibly argue for all the world as a single system.

Which structures and processes are crucial, then, depends on

the level of analysis: world-historical, world-systemic, macro-historical, or microhistorical. At the **world-historical** level, the main structures about which we are likely to make meaningful general statements are world systems. We are unlikely to fashion useful world-historical statements about households, communities, or even states, since the uniformities in their structure and variation are specific to one world system or another. The relevant processes for analysis at the world-historical level are the transformation, contact, and succession of world systems; at that level, generalizations concerning urbanization, industrialization, capital accumulation, statemaking, or secularization will probably collapse in the movement from one world system to another.

If we choose to work at this vast level, the comparisons we must undertake are comparisons among world systems -- the hugest comparisons of human affairs. Personally, my eyes falter and my legs shake on this great plain. Others with stronger eyes and firmer legs are welcome to try the terrain. I don't believe, in any case, that we have established any well-documented and valuable general propositions at the world-historical scale.

At the level of a **world system**, the world system itself continues to operate as a significant unit, but so do its major components, big networks and catnets defined by relations of coercion and/or exchange. Networks of coercion sometimes cluster into states: relatively centralized, differentiated, and

autonomous organizations controlling the principal concentrated means of coercion in delimited spaces. Networks of exchange sometimes cluster into regional modes of production: geographically segregated and interdependent sets of relations among persons or groups who dispose of various factors of production.

Here large-scale processes of subordination, production, and distribution attract our attention. Relevant comparisons establish similarities and differences among networks of coercion and among networks of exchange, on the one hand, and among processes of subordination, production, and distribution, on the other. At this level, general propositions will long remain risky, controversial, and extremely hard to verify. Nevertheless, without provisional assumptions concerning broad principles of variation within world systems, macrohistorical and micro-historical analyses make little sense.

With macrohistorical analyses, we enter the ground of history as historians ordinarily treat it. Within a given world system, we can reasonably begin to make states, regional modes of production, associations, firms, manors, armies, and a wide variety of categories, networks, and catnets our units of analysis. At this level, such large processes as proletarianization, urbanization, capital accumulation, statemaking, and bureaucratization lend themselves to effective analysis. Comparisons, then, track down uniformities and

variations among these units, these processes, and combinations of the two.

In the shadows of world-historical and world system analyses these macrohistorical structures, processes, and comparisons start to look puny indeed. Nevertheless, they are the attainable "big structures, large processes, and huge comparisons" I actually have in mind. Their systematic study within specific world systems -- but not necessarily throughout the entire world system -- constitutes the historically-grounded treatment of structures and processes I advocate as our surest path to knowledge.

I don't mean, however, to slight microhistorical knowledge. In tracing the encounters of individuals and groups with the big structures and large processes, we make the necessary link between personal experience and the flow of history. The structures at issue are now relationships among persons and groups, the processes transformations of the human interactions constituting those relationships; indeed, in microhistorical analysis the distinction between relationships and interactions begins to lose meaning. The necessary comparisons among relationships and their transformations are no longer huge, but they gain coherence with attachment to relatively big structures and large processes: the relationships between particular capitalists and particular workers reveal their pattern in the context of wider processes of proletarianization and capital concentration.

Populist Social History

During recent years, a kind of populist social history has grown up at the boundaries of micro- and macrohistory. Students of crowd action, family structure, social mobility, revolution, urban structure and a number of other standard topics of social history have undertaken to study them "from the bottom up". The works of E.J. Hobsbawm, George Rudé, Michelle Perrot, and David Levine exemplify the genre. One variety or another of collective biography has underlain much of this work: the collection of uniform observations on individuals, relationships, groups, or events and their aggregation into collective portraits of the structures and processes in question.

In one perspective, such collective-biographical research takes us to microhistory with a vengeance. Yet repeatedly populist social historians have used their evidence to answer questions about the connections between small-scale social life, on the one hand, and big structures or large processes, on the other: how the advance of capitalist property relations affected family strategies, who does what in revolutions, and so on. In evaluating the work of Wrigley and Schofield, two eminent French demographers conclude:

By its bulk and quality, the work of the Cambridge Group will, we hope, help us understand the strong links between demography (and, no doubt, all the social sciences) and history, and also understand that by dealing with frequently

defective or poorly organized evidence, historical demography requires both great imagination and great rigor and can therefore attract serious researchers (Henry & Blanchet 1983: 821).

The same can be said for a wide range of collective biography: It provides a powerful means of connecting small-scale experience to large-scale structures and processes.

Our task, then, is to fix accounts of specific structures and processes within particular world-systems to historically grounded generalizations concerning those world systems. Let us shrink the scope somewhat, and concentrate on western Europe since 1500. For that block of time and space, possible organizing statements concerning national states include:

1. Relatively independent political units lacking extensive centrally-controlled armed force, major geographic barriers to conquest, or a standoff of adjacent powers generally lost their autonomy and were absorbed into larger national states.
2. Warmaking tended to expand the national fiscal apparatus. For those that succeeded, warmaking and preparations for war created the major structures of the national state.
3. Large reductions in the total number of autonomous European states, realignments of boundaries, and alterations of the relations among states, occurred at the ends of major wars.
4. Great rebellions occurred chiefly either when rulers sought major increases in the contributions of their subject populations for war or when war and its aftermath weakened the repressive capacity of rulers.

Historically grounded statements we might hazard for the development of capitalism include:

5. Before the nineteenth-century implosion of capital and labor, proletarianization of the population took place mainly in the countryside, and occurred at least as widely in agriculture as in industry.
6. Nevertheless, petty capitalists organized manufacturing in households and small shops through much of the European countryside during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; in a sense, great rural regions deindustrialized during the nineteenth-century implosion of capital and labor.
7. On the whole, that implosion **reduced**, rather than increasing, the residential mobility of the western European population. However, the distance and permanence of the average move increased significantly in the same process, and temporary flows of relatively unskilled workers -- largely from Europe's low-income peripheries -- greatly accelerated.
8. Until the nineteenth century, few capitalists knew how to manufacture anything; in general, workers held the secrets of production, while capitalists specialized in buying and selling workers' products. By the end of the nineteenth century, few workers knew how to make the entire item they helped manufacture, and capitalists thereby held the secrets of production.

These statements are not postulates. They stand subject to refinement and falsification. Some or all of them may well be false as stated. But until revised or replaced, they will serve as frames for more specific analyses of structural change.

New Chances for Historical Analysis

How? Take generalization no. 8 as an example. If we may take for granted -- however provisionally -- that during the nineteenth century many capitalists and workers were struggling for control of decisions concerning what to produce and how, we can examine the conditions under which employees were more or less successful in that struggle, in confidence that we are helping to

explain a major transformation in the organization of production. If we discover (as well we might) that a capitalist's ability to control access to energy sources and raw materials facilitating mass production -- coal rather than wood, cotton rather than flax, for instance -- fostered a more rapid capitalist victory in the struggle for control of production, then we would have a warrant to investigate whether the shift away from widely available energy sources and raw materials a) gave capitalists the means to concentrate capital as never before, b) became a deliberate strategy of capitalists who sought to reorganize the whole productive process, c) administered the coup de grâce to small-scale production with extensive workers' control.

One could arrive at such conclusions without arguing for a moment that in all places and times the narrowing of energy sources and raw materials for production results in industrial capitalism or employers' hegemony within the workplace. Indeed, where property rights in energy sources or raw materials are difficult to secure -- which is the case in many non-capitalist modes of production -- an employer's shift toward narrowly available energy sources and raw materials could well be self-defeating. Thus a generalization may hold very widely within its own historical domain, yet be quite contingent.

In order to make fruitful historically-grounded generalizations, we must be sure of the units we are comparing. Just so long as we remain clear and consistent, we have our choice

of a great variety of populations, categories, networks, and catnets: firms, regions, social classes, kin groups, churches, trading nets, international alliances, and many, many others. The trick is to have criteria for identifying real populations, categories, networks, or catnets as specimens of the sort of unit about which we are theorizing.

If we abandon societies as units of analysis, then, we need not abandon national states. We need only be cautious: remember that the area and population controlled by that state, and not some mystical entity existing independently of the state, delimit the analysis; change the boundaries of the observation as the state's own boundaries change; recognize the interdependence of adjacent states. But we have many other choices than states: international power blocs, regions marked out by hierarchies of cities or markets, regional modes of production, social classes, linguistic groups, and so on.

The choice among many possible units of analysis lays the theoretical responsibility directly where it belongs: on the theorist. No theorist can responsibly retreat to vague statements about "society" when she has a clear choice among statements about national states, international power blocs, regions, regional modes of production, social classes, linguistic groups, and many other social units. Only when theorists of big structures specify to which units their statements apply can we hope to organize the evidence efficiently, and to determine how well their statements

hold up to theoretical scrutiny.

Ways of Comparing Historical Experiences

Let us distinguish among several different ways of comparing big structures and large processes. To be more precise, let us classify the different sorts of **propositions** at which we might reasonably aim a comparative analysis. In a standard sociological simplification, let us define and then combine two dimensions of comparison: **share of all instances** and **multiplicity of forms**. In **share**, the statement resulting from a comparison can range from a single instance (getting the characteristics of the case at hand right) to all instances of the phenomenon (getting the characteristics of all cases right).

In **multiplicity**, the statement emerging from a comparison can range from single (all instances of a phenomenon have common properties) to multiple (many forms of the phenomenon exist). Cross-classifying the two dimensions of variation yields a familiar sort of diagram:

		MULTIPLICITY OF FORMS	
		<u>SINGLE</u> -----	<u>MULTIPLE</u>
SHARE OF ALL INSTANCES	ONE		
	I	individualizing	encompassing
	I		
	I		variation-
	I	universalizing	finding
	ALL		

Thus a purely individualizing comparison treats each case as unique, taking up one instance at a time, and minimizing its

common properties with other instances. A pure universalizing comparison, on the other hand, identifies common properties among all instances of a phenomenon. We have a choice, then, among individualizing, universalizing, variation-finding, and encompassing comparisons of big structures and large processes.

We should be clear about what this classification classifies. It does **not** depend on the strict internal logic of the comparison: whether all characteristics of the cases at hand except two are supposed to be the same, whether the social structures or processes being compared belong to the same order, and so on. Nor does it depend on the nature of those structures and processes: large-scale or small-scale, simple or complex, dynamic or static, and so forth. It depends instead on the relationship between observation and theory. Comparisons are general to the extent that their users are attempting to make all cases in a category conform to the same principle. Comparisons are multiple to the extent that their users are trying to establish that the cases in a category take multiple forms. Thus the classification classifies strategies, not tactics, of comparison.

First comes the individualizing comparison, in which the point is to contrast specific instances of a given phenomenon as a means of grasping the peculiarities of each case. Thus Reinhard Bendix contrasts changes in British and German political life with a view to clarifying how British workers acquired relatively full participation in national politics, while German workers kept

finding themselves excluded.

At the general end of the same side we have the universalizing comparison. It aims to establish that every instance of a phenomenon follows essentially the same rule. Take, for example, the recurrent effort to construct a natural history of economic growth, either through the specification of necessary and sufficient conditions for takeoff or through the identification of the stages through which every industrializing country must pass, once begun.

On the other side from the individualizing and the universalizing comparison we find the variation-finding comparison. It is supposed to establish a principle of variation in the character or intensity of a phenomenon by examining systematic differences among instances. Jeffery Paige's Agrarian Revolution qualifies as variation-finding by virtue of its proposal to link different sorts of rural political action to varying combinations of workers' source of income, ruling class's source of income, and governmental repressiveness.

The fourth and final use of comparison is neither individualizing, universalizing, nor variation-finding, but encompassing. It places different instances at various locations within the same system, on the way to explaining their characteristics as a function of their varying relationships to the system as a whole. In recent years, Immanuel Wallerstein's brand of world-system analysis, with its placement of world

regions in the core, semi-periphery, or periphery of a single capitalist world-system, has provided an influential model of encompassing comparison.

Forms of Social History

All four strategies work for some purposes. The Tillys' Rebellious Century, for instance, relies mainly on individualizing comparison, although occasionally it gestures toward universalizing and variation-finding. In that book, Louise Tilly, Richard Tilly, and I look chiefly at the ways in which popular collective action (especially as represented by strikes and collective violence) fluctuated and changed as a function of statemaking and the development of capitalism in Italy, France, and Germany from roughly 1830 to 1930. Comparisons among Italy, France, and Germany serve chiefly to bring out the distinctive features of the three experiences; they individualize. Nevertheless, from time to time we use them to search for invariant common properties of collective action (and thus to universalize), or to explore possible principles of variation implicit in the collective-action consequences of the rather different ways the German, Italian, and French states came into being (and thus to engage in variation-finding).

Immanuel Wallerstein's Modern World System, in contrast, alternates between individualizing and encompassing comparison. On the one hand, Wallerstein strives to get the characteristics of the capitalist world system right by means of contrasts with

earlier empires, with China, and with Europe itself before about 1500; those comparisons individualize. On the other, he puts much of his effort into arguing that the experiences of particular regions within the capitalist world system (which he tends to identify with particular states such as Spain and England) depended on the niches they occupied with respect to the system as a whole -- especially whether they lay in the core, periphery, or semi-periphery. That effort encompasses.

Arthur Stinchcombe's daringly comparative Economic Sociology takes the contemporary Karimojong population of East Africa, eighteenth-century France, and the twentieth-century U.S.A. as its three principal instances. Although Stinchcombe indulges in a good deal of individualizing and a bit of universalizing, he uses his comparisons mainly for the purpose of finding variation. Starting that book, Stinchcombe complains that "comparative sociologists are a vanishing breed," although he counts himself among the breed (Stinchcombe 1983: vii).

Surely Stinchcombe is wrong. In America alone, Barrington Moore, Theda Skocpol, Michael Hechter, Gerhard Lenski, Reinhard Bendix, and many others continue to work with telling comparisons. As Raymond Grew has remarked, the comparison of historical processes "is especially congenial to economics, sociology, and some schools of anthropology." "Many of the most often-cited works of recent historical comparison," continues Grew, "belong in this category, although significantly enough, most have not been

written by scholars professionally trained as historians" (Grew 1980: 764-765). In this connection, Grew mentions, among others, the work of S.N. Eisenstadt, Samuel P. Huntington, Barrington Moore, and Immanuel Wallerstein.

How could so shrewd an observer as Stinchcombe relegate all of these outstanding scholars -- and himself -- to a vanishing breed? The trouble, I think, lies here: Stinchcombe, a consummate hunter for principles of variation, hesitates to recognize the other forms of comparison as genuine comparison. Although I share his preference for variation-finding comparisons -- where they are feasible and appropriate -- individualizing, universalizing and, especially, encompassing comparisons also have legitimate, significant parts to play in building our understanding of big social structures and large social processes.

Raymond Grew also points out that "the comparison of historical processes also evokes resistance, even suspicion, among many historians" (Grew 1980: 765). There I have a message for historians. They have great advantages in the building of effective comparisons. They should not abandon those advantages to political scientists, sociologists, and other social scientists. If the evils they reject are the search for universal historical laws and the forcing of historical experience into ahistorical categories, the remedy to the evils is not the abandonment of deliberate comparison, but its rooting in genuine historical structures and processes.

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