A COMPANION TO GLOBAL HISTORICAL THOUGHT

Edited by

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Chapter Twenty-Seven

Comparative History and Its Critics
A Genealogy and a Possible Solution

George Steinmetz

Discussions of comparison in the human and social sciences are highly polarized between defenders and critics. Some critics reject comparison altogether, while others foreground interconnections, crossings, transfers, and transnational entanglements. German historians Hartmut Kaelble, Jürgen Kocka, and others have argued that the comparative and entangled approaches to historiography are not mutually exclusive.[1] Historian Michael Geyer argues that there is a new "consensus" among historians around the transnational approach.[2] The rejection of comparativism is sharply phrased in the title of the book *De la comparaison à l'histoire croisée* (From Comparison to Crossed History), by Michael Werner and Bénédicte Zimmermann.[3] The specific debate between comparative and entangled history has mainly involved German and French modern historians.[4] But similar epistemological concerns have emerged among world historians,[5] historians of modern Eurasia,[6] and in many other disciplines. In the field of comparative literature, classic comparativism has been opposed by "entangled" approaches and criticisms of comparison per se.[7] The US sociology field is structured by an overall polarization between qualitative and quantitative researchers, and the qualitative *moiety* is further divided between those who advocate traditional comparativism and those who defend singular case studies.[8] Comparativism is so hegemonic over qualitative researchers in political science in the United States that some have spoken of the discipline's "comparative imperative."[9] The epistemological upsurge in political science that started around 2000 – the so-called Glasnost–Perestroika movement – was unable to challenge the pattern of corralling qualitative researchers into using the version of the comparative method that has been so decisively criticized.[10] Of course, the willingness to question comparison varies across the social science disciplines. Cultural anthropologists, for example, rejected standard versions of comparison even earlier and more decisively than historians.[11]

My aim in this chapter is, first, to historicize the main positions on comparison as they have emerged over the *longue durée* of intellectual history. The first section reviews the evolution of comparative historiography from its origins in the ancient world to the

A Companion to Global Historical Thought, First Edition. Edited by Prasenjit Duara, Viren Murthy and Andrew Sartori.
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present. As Kaelble has noted, contemporary forms of historical comparison primarily involve comparisons among states. But the basic structure of macro-comparativism, I will argue, goes back to the Greek polis and involved cross-polis comparisons as well as contrasts with the "barbarian" outside.

In addition to tracing the rise of different forms of comparative history, I will also historicize the criticisms of comparison. The second section of the chapter surveys the development of the most influential anti-comparative approach, nineteenth-century German historicism, as well a set of entangled historical approaches focused on transnational diffusion and imitation, blowback from overseas colonies, and the critique of the "logic of seriality."[12]

The third section addresses the solution to the debate between historicists and anti-historicists that emerged around 1900 in the work of German philosophers like Heinrich Rickert and social scientists such as Max Weber. This position, which I call neo-historicism, preserved the integrity of the unique historical event while also allowing it to be explained, compared, and mobilized for certain forms of generalization. This formulation yields a rich set of resources for current disputes between comparativists and their critics.

There is a puzzle in intellectual history, however: this neo-historicist formulation and even the positions it was arguing against were largely forgotten after the 1930s. Such amnesia was not due to some decisive intellectual battle being won against neo-historicism. The fourth section sketches some of the likely causes of this scientific amnesia and their relevance for the discussion of comparison. After World War II, a recharged positivism in the social sciences in the United States and the American-dominated world (including West Germany) largely erased the memory of neo-historicism. The framework that came to dominate the social sciences included clear guidelines about the forms that historical and qualitative social research should take, and this included a narrowly defined version of comparison.

Historians eventually started to extricate themselves from this epistemological formation and many distanced themselves from social science as well as comparativism. Some current critiques of comparison that seem superficial and misplaced to comparativists actually seem to be targeting an outdated form of comparativism, one that was promoted during the postwar era of positivist hegemony. There is a legitimate rejection of comparisons that reify cases, exaggerate differences or similarities, tend toward static rather than diachronic analysis, and seek general laws of human behavior.[13] The new approaches to world history that have emerged since the 1980s emphasize entanglement rather than comparison.[14] Poststructuralism reinforced the criticisms of comparison, focusing on uniqueness and incommensurability; postcolonial theory emphasized connections and transfers.

The last two sections of the chapter develop a response to these criticisms. With respect to the *incommensurabilist* critique, I will argue (like Weber and other neo-historicists in the first decades of the twentieth century) that we can preserve the idea of unique or unprecedented events without relinquishing the ambition of explaining such events. Rather than relying on Rickert and Weber, however, I will base this argument in the present-day "critical realist" philosophy of science. This approach sidesteps the issue of whether comparisons should involve societies that are already entangled with one another or societies that are quite unconnected. The *tertium comparationis* or dimension being compared would not necessarily be defined at the level of empirical events, which are indeed often unique and in some respects incommensurable, but at the level of the underlying causal mechanisms that interact in changing, contingent conjunctures to

produce unique events. It is these causal mechanisms that maintain some constancy over time (though not necessarily across all time or all of social-historical time), and that constitute the fundamental objects of social theory.

With respect to the second, *transnationalist* line of critique, I will argue in Section VI that connections or transfers should be theorized as causes and should also be compared. Of course, critical realism (like other contemporary social ontologies) assumes that social life is inherently relational and embedded in transfers, entanglements, networks, and connections. The transnational argument only makes a novel point when it is framed as a critique of "methodological nationalism" – the idea that significant social practices, patterns, and processes take place within the borders of a given polis or nation-state, or more broadly that "societies" are coextensive with states. In order to make a more distinctive contribution, the transnational perspective would need to specify different types of borders, different kinds of cross-border flows, and different kinds of hindrances and barriers to the circulation across borders. We need to theorize closure and barriers to circulation along with transfers and flows.

Pierre Bourdieu's theory of social fields and social spaces, extended beyond the scale of the nation-state, provides a framework for making sense of the variable success of transfers, the dialectics of entanglement and closure. I will conclude with a brief example comparing a failed and a successful intellectual transfer, involving émigré sociologists from Germany and Austria in the United States and the UK after 1933.

I. The Evolution of Comparative Historiography: An Imperial Genealogy

Comparisons are indispensable in the social sciences.

(Maurice Duverger)[15]

Historian Nancy Green has observed that "the comparative method is rarely used by historians."[16] Historian George Frederickson noted that, unlike other subfields in history, comparison "does not possess a self-conscious community of inquirers who are aware of each other's work and build on it."[17] In order to evaluate comparative history one therefore faces the initial problem of constructing its historical lineage.

Some comparativists allude to a genealogy reaching back to the ancient world.[18] A comparative historical orientation was already present in Homer's *Odyssey*, in which Odysseus travels the seas wondering "whether he will encounter people who are 'violent savages without justice, or hospitable beings who fear the gods'."[19] Odysseus' native Ithaca is the standard against which foreign cultures are evaluated. Herodotus used the figure of comparison extensively as "a net" thrown into "the waters of otherness" in order to "bring what is 'other' into proximity with what is the 'same'." He used the words "comparable" and "like" (*kataper*) in establishing "resemblances and differences between the Greek and foreign *nomoi*."[20] Aristotle and the Greeks divided humankind into Greeks and barbarians – the most basic contrast. Especially important for the history of comparison is the fact that Aristotle collected 158 constitutions from Greek city-states, allowing him to compare political forms empirically.[21] Many Roman historians structured their accounts comparatively. Polybius asked: "Why did virtually the whole of the inhabited world pass under the authority of Rome, in fifty-three years?" His answer followed Aristotle in emphasizing "the form of the state's constitution."[22]

As Europe began its relentless waves of modern imperial expansion starting in the fifteenth century, the ancient frameworks of civilization and barbarism were reworked into a massive comparative edifice. America, East Asia, Africa, and the Near East and their cultures, religions, and peoples provided the foil for the European comparative imagination. These filiations between comparison and colonialism and racism have made it impossible to conduct cross-national or cross-civilizational research without conducting an initial genealogy of comparativism itself.[23]

Five crucial framings of the Other emerged over the centuries of comparative thinking, and they furnish this imperial genealogy with its overall structure. The first classified the non-European Other as an earlier version of the self. Counter-Reformation intellectuals used a series of comparative contrasts with Europeans to defend wars against American Indians. Sepúlveda compared Indians to children, women, and apes.[24] This discourse set the pattern for modern imperial comparativism, which, as Johannes Fabian argued, was based on defining the colonized as an earlier historical version of one's own society – denying their *coevalness* or contemporaneity.[25]

A second framework that emerged from the Spanish colonial context reversed these signs, defining the Other as superior. Bartolomé de las Casas accepted the comparative framework, but insisted on the moral and cultural superiority of the Indians. Michel de Montaigne continued in a similar vein, praising "cannibals" as more civilized than Europeans.[26] Early European missionaries and travelers in China often described China as vastly superior to Europe (although the other framing devices became increasingly prevalent after the mid-eighteenth century).[27]

A third possible comparative stance, also already present in las Casas' discourse, sought to erase cultural difference. All of mankind was identical and equal. Missionary and colonial programs of assimilating the colonized were oriented toward this same end state, identity of self and other.

A fourth comparativist approach that was used by generations of colonizers, starting with ancient distinctions between civilization and barbarism,[28] defined the colonized as essentially inferior to the colonizer, due to "race," culture, climate, and so forth. By the middle of the nineteenth century, anthropologists and anatomists had erected a pseudo-science of comparative skull measurements, which they associated with mental and cultural hierarchies.[29]

A final comparative posture that emerged in European imperial theaters was *cultural relativism*. Here cultural difference was acknowledged but was not morally coded in a positive or negative direction. This position foreshadows nineteenth- and twentieth-century historicism and current incommensurabilist critiques of comparativism. This stance was evident in the 1719 account of the Cape of Good Hope by Peter Kolb, which rejects the idea of a common moral measure.[30] Cultural relativism was formalized at the end of the nineteenth century by Franz Boas and it became axiomatic for US cultural anthropologists in the twentieth century.[31]

World religions represented one of the main axes along which comparisons have been organized, starting with Christian proto-Orientalists and continuing through to Samuel Huntington's *Clash of Civilisations*.[32] In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries comparative works were often constructed around religious contrasts, including Montesquieu's *Spirit of Laws* [1748], Herder's *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menscheit* [1785], and Hegel's lectures on the philosophy of religion. The comparative history of religions was consolidated as a university discipline in the nineteenth century by Indologist Max Müller.[33] Max Weber wrote comparatively on the "world religions,"

and his *tertium comparationis* was an array of qualitative dimensions of religion such as "this-worldliness" versus "other-worldliness." The first step in this massive comparative project was *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1904–1905).[34]

European understandings of comparison were shaped by the religious confrontations between Christianity and Islam during the Middle Ages, between Europe and the Ottoman Empire in the Early Modern period, and between Protestantism and Catholicism from the Reformation onward. The institutions and beliefs of Islam were described by "pilgrims and travelers to the Holy Land," crusaders, scholarly Arabists, former captives of the Turks, and Christian polemicists. Analyses by religious specialists took the form of the "comparative study and critique of Islamic theological doctrines" via contrasts between the Bible and the Koran and by using Koranic passages as evidence against Islam itself. A number of European authors equated the Ottoman Turks with the "horrible beast" of the Apocalypse.[35] Other Europeans praised Turkish religious tolerance. Luther broadened the comparative canvas to encompass the Catholic Church and described the Turkish onslaught as God's punishment for Christian moral depravity.[36]

The examples discussed so far have involved comparisons between a European self and non-European other, but comparisons were also staged among European nations. Hundreds of studies were published in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries comparing Britain and France, during the two nations' prolonged contest for hegemony.[37] Another standard genre, represented most famously by Chateaubriand and Tocqueville, but also practiced by Ratzel and Weber, was the comparison between Europe and the United States.[38] This genre did not escape from the imperial context, of course, since the United States was a product of European imperialism and remains a foremost example of settler colonialism.[39]

The comparative method received a very influential formalization in 1850 with John Stuart Mill's method of difference and agreement.[40] In line with the imperial genealogy I have been presenting so far, it is noteworthy that Mill was a "loyal employee of the East India Company for roughly half his life," working at India House from 1836 to 1856.[41] His views on issues ranging from the "household affairs of princely states" to "ancient customs and practices" were part of East India Company policymaking discussions.[42] The famous theorist of liberty thought that England should grant home rule to settlers "of European race" and "her own blood" but that "the peoples of Asia and Africa . . . were barbarous and uncivilized and could not govern themselves" and must be governed by English "benevolent despotism."[43]

II. Connected History and the Historicist Critique of Comparison

To Generalize is to be an Idiot.
To Particularize is the Alone Distinction of Merit.

(William Blake)[44]

Among contemporary historians, the comparative approach is often understood as involving "explicit and systematic comparisons of two or more historical societies, so as to explore commonalities and differences as well as processes of differentiation and/or convergence."[45] Marc Bloch's foundational essay on the topic presented two distinct approaches, one comparing two societies separated in time and/or space ("*la comparaison à distance*"), the other comparing contemporary and neighboring societies that had "continuously influenced each other" ("*la comparaison au plus proche*").[46]

Historians' critiques of comparison have also taken two main forms. The first follows Bloch's second approach and rejects explanations of societies' development that are entirely endogenous, emphasizing transnational or transcultural connections, flows, and transfers, and the porousness of national boundaries. The second rejects both of the options presented by Bloch, insisting on the irreducible singularity and incommensurability of a culture, language, polity, or historical event. What I will show in this section is that the key ideas underlying discussions of entangled and "ideographic" history were already articulated before World War II. Indeed, this genealogy begins with Greek historiography, moving from there to discussions of diffusion, imitation, transfer, and imperial boomerangs and cultural entanglements since the 18th century.

Herodotus' explicit comparativism contrasted with the work of writers like Thucydides and Pausanias, who wrote only about "the world of the Greeks."[47] Greek historiography centered on the *polis* recalled "methodological nationalism" – the approach that equates societies with nation-states.[48] The notion of "entangled history" also appeared in the ancient world. According to François Hartog, Polybius spoke of the "interlacing" (*sumplokê*) of events. After the Second Punic War, Polybius argued that history "now resembled a great 'organic whole'," and insisted that "the affairs of Italy have been *interlinked* with those of Greece and Asia."[49]

The idea of cultural diffusion, which emerged in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, was a direct forerunner of current approaches to connected history. European accounts of the settlement of the Polynesian islands often focused on the process of cultural diffusion.[50] British anthropologist Edward B. Tylor was best known as an evolutionist, but in response to an objection by Francis Galton, Tylor developed "the notion of diffusion as a means of explaining the appearance of similar culture elements in different groups and of understanding the progressive alteration of elements within the same group."[51]

The most influential German geographer in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, Friedrich Ratzel, developed a diffusion model, conceiving "cultural development as the product of exchange, imitation or conquest, rather than that of independent evolution."[52] Ratzel undermined the cross-national comparative approach by calling into question the stability of the systems of national borders on which "methodological nationalism" is predicated. The political border, Ratzel argued, was a dynamic "peripheral organ."[53]

A further step in the history of the idea of global diffusion is the *Kulturkreislehre*, or theory of cultural regions, a resolutely historical approach that emerged in German and Austrian ethnology and that was focused on connections. Strongly influenced by German historicism, this school claimed "to have identified cultural complexes so unique that they must have diffused and have traceable histories."[54] With the exception of Leo Frobenius, this school is largely forgotten today.

The late nineteenth century also saw the rise of theories of social *imitation*. These approaches sometimes took the form of theories of mass society and social contagion.[55] Gabriel Tarde's theory of imitation was linked to his attack on methodological nationalism.[56] Tarde argued against equating the territorial space of society with the nation-state, in light of the "obvious ... denationalization and socialization which is taking place to-day among millions of men," producing "multiple uniformities" on a global scale.[57]

Critics argue that the ideas of imitation, mimesis, and diffusion ignore dynamics of active appropriation and indigenization of global culture,[58] but this is not true of some

twentieth-century anthropological schools.[59] Colonial ethnologists began to focus on processes of "acculturation," mixing, and hybridity, starting with anthropologist Maurice Leenhardt's interpretation of the messianic "Ethiopian" church movement in southern Africa.[60] In his later work on New Caledonia, Leenhardt argued that the French colony had become a syncretic society in which transculturation ran in both directions between the Europeans and Melanesians in a "game of cultural transfers" ("*jeu des transferts*").[61] Jacques Soustelle argued in 1937 that the Mexican Otomi Indians were forging a "Hispano-Indian and Christian-pagan syncretism" by incorporating "their old beliefs . . . into a new body of faith and ritual."[62] René Maunier detected cultural imitation and mixing ("*mixité*") in both directions, between the colonized and their European conquerors.[63] Melville Herskovits argued that the mixing of European and African traditions was a "fundamental . . . mechanism in the acculturative process undergone by New World Negroes."[64] Herskovits replaced *syncretism* with *reinterpretation*, defined as "cultural borrowing" that permits "a people to retain the inner meanings of traditionally sanctioned modes of behavior while adopting new outer institutional forms."[65]

The idea of connected history was also present in nineteenth-century theories of global imperial entanglement. Karl Marx had already envisioned a kind of imperial boomerang in 1853 in which the Taiping rebellion in China would spark "the next uprising of the people of Europe."[66] The second half of Hobson's *Imperialism* (1902) laid the groundwork foreshadowing recent discussions by Fanon and postcolonial theory of reciprocal influences between colonies and metropoles.[67]

We have seen in this section that the two main lines of critique of comparativism have long historical lineages. Before returning to the present-day debate I want to discuss three additional components of the intellectual background: classic German historicism, the neo-historicism of the first half of the twentieth century, and the neo-positivism that dominated postwar American social science.

III. Historicism, Neo-Historicism and the False Dichotomy between Nomothetic and Idiographic Sciences

German historicism (*Historismus*, sometimes translated as *Historism*) grew out of Romanticism, hermeneutics, and philology, and the revolt of the historical school (Savigny) against traditions of natural law. Historians Ranke and Droysen insisted on the irreducible singularity of national history and argued against modeling history on the natural sciences. Historicism gave rise to German historical economics and the Kulturkreis school of ethnology discussed above. The historicists' objection to comparative generalization was codified by philosophers Dilthey and Windelband. Historicism was understood as designating "the commitment to understand the past in its own terms," which required that the historian use Droysen's method of *Verstehen* or understanding.[68] Historical events could only be understood but not explained, Droysen argued, following discussions in theology and philology. This historicism had a moral as well as an epistemic basis:

> Historical investigation does not propose to explain, in the sense of deriving . . . phenomena from laws . . . . Were the life of History only a reproduction of what is permanently identical with itself, it would be void of freedom and responsibility, without moral character, and only of an organic nature.[69]

Droysen attacked Buckle's *History of Civilization in England* for attempting "to raise History to a science by showing how to demonstrate historical facts out of general laws."[70] Dilthey codified the differences between the natural and human-interpretive sciences (*Geisteswissenschaften*), including history. Windelband coined the terms *nomothetic* and *idiographic* to describe this difference. Leipzig historian Karl Lamprecht tried to lead a *fronde* against historicism, but the German historical profession largely repudiated him "as a dilettante and a 'positivist'."[71]

This "classical" version of historicism continued to evolve between the turn of the century and the 1930s.[72] Philosophers elaborated a *new* version of historicism that combined the idea of historical events as unique or unprecedented with the possibility of explanation and theory. This position eviscerated Windelband's distinction between ideographic and nomothetic sciences without falling back into the positivist idea of history as a natural science. The *Geisteswissenschaften* (human sciences) remained unique and distinct from the *Naturwissenschaften* (natural sciences), even if the former could now also be explanatory. The key thinker for this breakthrough was Heinrich Rickert, Windelband's student (and Heidegger's *Doktorvater*). In *Die Grenzen der naturwissenschaftlichen Begriffsbildung; eine logische Einleitung in die historischen Wissenschaften* (translated as *The Limits of Concept Formation in Natural Science*), Rickert argued that it is possible to reconcile generalization and particularity. Specifically, one can maintain the idea of the uniqueness of historical events and entities, while treating these "historical individuals" scientifically, using concepts and theories.[73]

The implications of Rickert's position for the social sciences were explored by Max Weber in his methodological essays and *Economy and Society*. Weber argued that researchers should combine an interpretive interpretation of historically unique events and meanings with an explanatory account of these singular objects.[74] Weber's comparative study of the world religions can be criticized for its acceptance of European stereotypes about non-Western cultures.[75] At another level, however, this study combines a strong sense of *historical uniqueness* – each religion is irreducibly singular – with an effort to explain singular religious histories in terms of differing configurations of causal factors.[76] By 1924 the rising star in German sociology, Karl Mannheim, could claim that "Historicism" had become the lodestar of "all of the cultural sciences." According to Mannheim, every social reality should be treated as the unique product of a historically contingent cluster or "configuration" of determining factors.[77] I call this solution to the debate between classical historicism and positivism "neo-historicism," although commentators often refer to this simply as historicism.[78]

Neo-historicism was pervasive in the German *Geisteswissenschaften* until the mid-twentieth century. Whatever their political and theoretical differences, neo-historicism united the thinking of exiled German scholars like Paul Honigsheim, "inner exiles" like Alfred Weber, and intellectuals who continued to hold academic positions in Nazi Germany such as Friedrich Meinecke, whose *Origins of Historicism* was published in 1936. Historicism, Meinecke wrote, involves:

> the substitution of a process of *individualizing* observation for a *generalising* view of human forces in history. But this does not mean that the historical method excludes altogether any attempt to find general laws and types in human life. It has to make use of this approach and blend it with a feeling for the individual.[79]

Ernst Troeltsch, in his 1922 book on *Historicism and its Problems*, contrasted German historicism with "Anglo-French positivism," which modeled itself on the natural sciences, emphasizing general laws, predictions, and the idea of "progress."[80] By contrast, German historicism opposed "the abstractness of the general law" and instead "followed the Romantic concept of individuality," focusing on the "uniqueness, non-repetition, and peculiarity of historical objects, be they concerned with an epoch, a cultural tendency, a state, a nation, mass conditions, tendencies of classes, or a single person." Positivists considered this "German theory of the abundance of national individualities and of the relative peculiarity of each single one inside of it" to be a form of "inhumane intellectual aristocracy and anarchism" or "primitive ... barbarism."[81]

Carl Schmitt is one German neo-historicist whose ideas have had a lasting and international resonance, despite (and sometimes because of) his involvement with Nazism. Schmitt's decisionist legal and political philosophy represents a radicalization of the historicist commitment to the idea of the unique event. For Schmitt, "the exception" is always "more interesting" than the rule, since "in the exception the power of real life breaks through the crust of a mechanism that has become torpid by repetition."[82] Within the legal field, Schmitt fought against the "mechanization and technicalization of law."[83] Schmitt also developed the theory of the *Grossraum* or *Nomos* as a concrete, territorially specific polity, and insisted that the German idea of *Reich* was different from the Anglo-French concept of "empire."[84]

German geographers also participated in historicism and neo-historicism. The idea of the uniqueness and incommensurability of landscape was widespread. Carl Ritter, the founder of the discipline of geography in Germany, insisted on the field's "historical element" and described the earth as an "*ens sui generis*" and a "cosmic individual."[85] The same year in which Rickert published his *Limits of Concept Formation*, German geographer Emil Hözel coined the phrase "geographical individual."[86] The geographical school known as *possibilism*, represented in Britain by Patrick Geddes and in France by Vidal de la Blache and Lucien Febvre, promoted the idea of "geographical individuality."[87] Geographer Max Spandau, a student of Max Weber and Karl Haushofer, drew the connection to Rickert's neo-historicism. While agreeing with earlier historicists that geography was "related to history in terms of the unique individuality [*Einmaligkeit*] of its object," Spandau added that geography was also "subject to 'historical' explanations in the sense in which this term has been used by H. Rickert."[88]

The topics discussed in Sections II and III run through the work of one individual, anthropologist Franz Boas, who argued in 1887 that "in ethnology all is individuality."[89] Boas associated comparison with the rigid evolutionary models of Comte, Spencer, and Tylor.[90] Like classic historicism, Boasian cultural anthropology discouraged comparison per se. Boas endorsed Humboldt's historicist "Cosmography" for considering "every phenomenon as worth of being studied for its own sake."[91] Geography for Boas was also a science of the unique event. Boas demonstrates that historicism was not always nationalistic, since the geographer's unique object could just as well be "the whole earth."[92]

In sum, many of the ideas endorsed nowadays by critics of comparativism and methodological nationalism were articulated before the 1940s. The rudiments of a response to the critics were elaborated by Rickert and neo-historicists in the first decades of the twentieth century.

IV. The Post-WWII Configuration of American Social Science and the Stabilization of the Comparative Method

Neo-historicism, as I have defined it in the preceding section, nearly vanished around 1945. More precisely, there was a multi-pronged *assault* on neo-historicist epistemology that was part of a broader effort to remake the social sciences in the image of the natural sciences. Historians and qualitative social scientists were urged to adopt a comparative approach patterned on natural science experiments and rooted in positivist philosophies of science. Questions about the adequacy of the nation-state as the default unit of analysis were shelved. The positivist approach to comparison was most strongly represented in disciplines like political science, sociology, and psychology.[93] Neo-historicism had already been decisively weakened by the emigration and murder of scholars during the Nazi years and by the Nazi state's insistence on applied social science.[94] Postwar polemics aligned German historicism with anti-liberal intellectual tendencies that were now argued to have paved the way to Nazism.[95] German historians also "tried to compensate for their deficient modernity with an energetic thrust of innovation, taking up and developing structural and social historical ways of thinking and at the same time distancing themselves from historicism."[96]

American occupying forces, government agencies, private foundations, and exchange programs reshaped postwar social science around the world.[97] Of course, these US efforts were not centrally coordinated or uniform in their goals and effects. American interventions also varied contextually in their success. There was greater resistance to social-scientific Americanization in France than in West Germany. A counterweight to US influence was provided by international agencies like UNESCO or the International African Institute, and by research institutes that were not dominated by Americans, like the *Rhodes-Livingstone Institute* in Northern Rhodesia and Raymond Aron's *Centre de sociologie européenne* in Paris.[98] But overall, American social-scientific power helped erase collective scholarly memories of neo-historicism and its alternative to neo-positivist comparativism.[99]

The comparative method was re-established as the dominant alternative in the social sciences to statistical methods and laboratory experiments for qualitative researchers. It was also strongly recommended to historians. In a "succession of Social Science Research Council reports" from the 1950s and 1960s, historians were urged "to learn from sociologists" – American sociologists, that is.[100] And one of the key lessons they were supposed to learn concerned "the comparative method," which was discussed in the SSRC Committee on Historiography report, *The Social Sciences in Historical Study* (1954).[101] The comparative method was supposed to refer to "a specific type of comparison, the comparison of whole societies," which were equated with nation-states.[102] Comparisons were carried out either through statistical data analysis on large samples or using Mill's methods of difference and agreement to simulate multivariate regression.[103] Modernization theory was developed by sociologists, political scientists, and economists who treated nation-states as independent rather than connected cases. Historians such as Cyril E. Black in the United States and Hans-Ulrich Wehler in West Germany adopted modernization theory.[104] The postwar positivist paradigm was powerful enough to define an entire subfield within political science, "comparative politics." An extreme anti-historicist comparative approach that rejected any notion of singularity and called for "replacing proper names of social systems by the relevant variables"[105] was the dominant approach in those disciplines well into the 1980s. Any historical research presented at meetings of

the American Sociological Association or published in its journals was subsumed under the rubric "comparative-historical sociology," implying that historical research had to be comparative in order to count as sociology (rather than "ideographic" history.) Non-comparative historical sociology was anathema unless it took the United States as its usually unmarked case.[106]

The current polarization between comparative and connected history is partly a result of this postwar configuration of social science and of the conflict and competition among and within academic disciplines. It also reflects a series of epistemic battles whose stakes are now obscure. For example, the historicist lineages of diffusion theory were erased and the idea of diffusion was formalized and de-historicized.[107] Sociologists associated with the "world polity" diffusionist approach plundered historians' work for data.

Historians began to criticize comparison for its explanatory reductionism, methodological nationalism, synchronicity, lack of narrative and ignorance of history. At the same time, sociology's relative status was being undermined in the 1980s by the disappearance of the social regularities of postwar "Atlantic Fordism," which had given superficial support to the positivist paradigm.[108] Sociology lost its clients and funders in government and the private sector. In the United States, social history was overtaken by cultural history and other subfields that no longer had any connection to the previous social science *Leitdisziplinen*. Tilly's *Big Structures, Large Processes, Huge Comparisons* (1984) was the last attempt by a sociologist to guide historians toward comparison.[109] Skocpol's *States and Social Revolutions* (1979) met with widespread skepticism and hostility among historians, due partly to its unhistorical, pseudo-experimental design.[110]

V. Critical Realism and Bourdieusian Theory: Retheorizing Comparative History

This section develops a solution to the comparison debate based on the critical realist philosophy of science.[111] Let us first recall the two critiques of comparative history discussed in this essay. The first focuses on uniqueness and incommensurability; the second shifts the focus from comparison to connections, transfers, and flows. Against the first critique I will argue that one can compare unique, highly overdetermined events as long as the *tertium comparationis* consists of one or more causal mechanisms. This approach avoids crushing "concrete particularity" or reducing "all qualitative difference to quantitative identity."[112] Rather than seeking a general theory of the event, this approach argues that events can be explained as the product of contingent conjunctions of causes. The analysis of multiple cases does not seek to identify any "constant conjunction of events" or to produce a general theory at the level of the actual, but rather to make sense of an event and to confirm the existence of underlying causes. With respect to the second critique of comparison, I will argue that transnational transfers or connections can be theorized as one type of causal determinant.

The first critique of comparison – the critique from uniqueness and incommensurability – has already been answered by Rickert and the neo-historicists, who argued that explanation is entirely compatible with the idea of singular "historical individuals." The question, of course, is what explanation consists of in this context. Some positivist philosophers of science also argued that unique historical narratives could be subsumed under a series of multiple "covering laws," that is, treated as sequences of general if–then statements. The "uniqueness" of the historical event would then be erased, subsumed

under an event type and explained in terms of a replicable generalization.[113] Positivist approaches to comparative history often followed Mill's methods of difference and agreement, explicitly or implicitly. This method is inherently inductive, however. Theory is equated here with restatements of empirical conjunctions or correlations. But as Rom Harré notes, Mill's method could never "be generalized into the whole of scientific method," since "scientists are not exclusively concerned to discover correlations among phenomena, but are at least as interested in the explanations as to why the correlations that can be discovered are the way they are."[114] Mill's method defines theory as the restatement of empirical correlations of events. Generalization across events takes the form of statements like "if A, then B", or more complex versions such as "If ABCD, then E." This approach is antithetical to an understanding of theory as grasping the deeper underlying causes of empirical events.

An entirely different understanding of the problem of historical explanation and historical comparison can be derived from the critical realist philosophy of science, originally developed by Roy Bhaskar.[115] Critical realist comparativism is compatible with the neo-historicism of Rickert, Weber, Troeltsch, and Meinecke insofar as it recognizes the singularity of historical events while also insisting that unique events can be explained. But critical realist comparison goes beyond neo-historicism in several ways. Critical realism argues for the *ontological stratification* of reality into the real and the actual levels, and for the *emergence* of ontological levels such as personhood and the social from the more basic ontological levels of biology and physics. Emergent levels are dependent on lower ones but irreducible to them. Critical realism in the social sciences is both causal and interpretative, explanatory and hermeneutic.

Critical realism embraces the idea of causality, but it understands cause in a distinctive way. Causal mechanisms in both the social and natural sciences are understood as real entities with specific powers that may be possessed without being expressed. In open systems, multiple causal mechanisms coexist and interact with one other. Theories in this account, are concepts, images, models, or narratives that describe particular causal entities with specific intrinsic structures and powers. Causal mechanisms and structures possess durable powers across a certain spectrum of time and space.[116] Causes in the social sciences are distinguished from causes in the natural sciences by their greater historical and geographic mutability, their dependence on human interpretation or cultural construction, and their embeddedness in social relations.[117] Social theory is not defined here in terms of general models of societal change, general theories of social practice, or frameworks that order data and predict facts, but as descriptions of entities with causal powers.

The unconscious in psychoanalytic theory is an example of an underlying causal mechanism that possesses particular causal powers and that tends to produce empirically observable symptoms. However, the events (symptoms) produced by the inherent powers of the unconscious may be suppressed by other causal mechanisms. The powers of the unconscious may combine forces with other entities. Self-reflexivity about the unconscious may suppress or channel the effects of the unconscious. Owing to causal overdetermination and interference, the powers of a generative causal structure may be possessed unexercised, or may be exercised but not realized at the empirical level.[118] Other examples of entities with causal powers include social fields, discussed below, and human personhood itself, with its power of consciously pursuing goals in the real world.[119]

Like classic historicism, critical realism acknowledges the irreducible *singularity* of historical events. Social life is understood within critical realism as an *open system* in which a multiplicity of causal mechanisms or more complex structures interact contingently to

generate empirical events. It follows from this ontological premise that we are unlikely, to identify *general laws* capable of explaining significant historical events. Historical events and processes are overdetermined and cannot be explained in terms of a single cause or a single conjunction of causes. The positivist approaches that are still dominant in the social sciences value causal "parsimony" in and of itself.[120] For critical realism, explanation of a unique event involves constructing a plausible model of the contingent conjuncture of causal structures which combined to generate the event. The historian or social scientist engages in *retroductive* (not inductive or deductive) analysis in order to assess the model's plausibility.[121] *Retroduction* is defined as "inference from effects to explanatory structures." It is a form of "inference to the best explanation" that infers by answering the question "What made X possible?"[122] A retroductive argument is one that necessitates "the building of a model of the mechanism which, if it were to exist and act in the postulated way, would account for the phenomenon concerned."[123]

Regularity determinism is plausible for small-scale patterns or "demi-regularities" – the "occasional, but less than universal, actualization of a mechanism, or cluster of mechanisms, over a definite region of time-space."[124] But social science and history cannot be restricted to the study of "demi-regularities." Social scientists may well identify demi-regularities, of course. These demi-regularities are valuable not as evidence of a constant conjunction or general law but because they may "provide a prima facie indication of an occasional, but less than universal, actualization of a mechanism or tendency."[125] But historians are often interested in more momentous events and processes, and these are unlikely to be subsumable under the category of causal demi-regularities.[126] Historians interested in revolutions, wars, the rise and fall of empires or states, economic crises, demographic transitions, genocides, and other highly significant events should not start from the assumption that they can identify a universal empirical regularity or general law. The movement of analysis will be "not from the particular to the universal, but from the concrete to the abstract (and back again)."[127] Analysis seeks to explain irreducibly singular and significant historical events in terms of causal mechanisms that combine in unpredictable, changing ways. Some of these mechanisms will be familiar from other case studies or theoretical discussions. Some causes may be familiar from existing analyses of demi-regularities.

A case study is perfectly capable of explaining a single event. Nonetheless, comparison is valued as a means of assessing the plausibility of inferences or theories. We are dealing here with fields of historical knowledge in which it is impossible to carry out genuine controlled experiments (unlike the natural sciences). The only way to gain confidence in the plausibility of theorized causal structures is therefore through *comparison* – specifically, through comparative case studies or counterfactual reasoning based on evidence.[128]

Comparative history takes two main forms, located at the levels of the real and the empirical.[129] The first approach compares cases in which the common factor is similarity at the casual level but not necessarily at the empirical level.[130] For example, we may be interested in the causal impact of the introduction of capitalist social relations or social fields in two otherwise very different social spaces or historical periods. This may take the form of a "contrast explanation" in which two cases are examined in order to understand "why x rather than y [appeared] in conditions where y was expected," given the existence of a causal process thought to be the same in both instances.[131]

The second approach is more familiar, comparing cases that are empirically similar. Historians have compared revolutions, empires, and genocides. Here critical realism would caution that that there may well be a completely different causal nexus in each case and that such causal variability is consistent with what we know about the openness

of the social. Indeed, comparison may be used here to identify contingency by demonstrating that different conjunctures of causes lead to similar empirical events.[132]

According to Kocka and Haupt, "in comparative history, two or more historical phenomena are systematically studied for their similarities and differences in order to contribute to their better description, explanation, and interpretation."[133] An approach to comparison oriented toward critical realism would revise this slightly. In comparative history, two or more historical phenomena are systematically studied in order to assess concepts, theories, or models of causal mechanisms and interactions among causes. There should be some *tertium comparationis* at the underlying level of real causal entities. This means that two events that are remote from one another in time or space may be fruitfully compared as long as they are suspected of having some causes in common. In contrast to some of the stronger arguments for connected history, then, this approach would fully warrant certain comparisons between "unrelated societies" – to use Marc Bloch's term.[134] There will also be various possible bases of comparison at the empirical level. At the most basic level, all social events involve humans. Since human capacities are only brought into being by active "personhood," this means that all events have something in common at the empirical and real levels. For those interested in studying purposive, habitual, or unconsciously motivated action, basically any case or event will provide additional material. Critical realism thus authorizes just about any pairing of cases, as long as they are configured comparatively in the proper way.

What about the processes referred to by historians as transfers, connections, crossings, flows, and entanglements? These do not represent an alternative to comparison but may themselves be compared. They may be causal, worthy of theoretical analysis in their own right. The simple fact that power has been organized throughout most of human history in the form of empires rather than nation-states should already dissuade any historian from assuming that practices or fields are always coterminous with the borders of states. Even in a world of nation-states, however, national borders cannot always stop the influx of people, objects, and practices. Various practices take place in social spaces or social fields whose spatial coordinates exceed or cross-cut the borders of nation-states, even if they are bounded in other ways.[135] As Jürgen Osterhammel notes, the "very concept of 'society'" employed by practitioners of traditional social history "requires a fundamental overhaul." De-nationalizing our concept of society does not necessarily entail rescaling it to the level of the entire earth, however. The idea of "world society," as Osterhammel observes, is itself a fiction.[136] The state remains a powerful determinant of many social practices.

Pierre Bourdieu's theory of social fields and social spaces sheds light on dynamics of socio-spatial encompassment and exclusion, and on the ways practices are ordered at scales reaching from the local and regional up to the national, imperial, and global levels. The central Bourdieusian theoretical concept in this context is *field*. A social field is a relatively autonomous domain of practice that is governed by a highly specific form of "symbolic capital" and controls its own membership. Its participants compete with one another for common stakes. Despite their differences, they share a common *illusio*, a belief in the intrinsic value and meaning of the particular game, and a similar habitus.

A field is also a causal mechanism insofar as it has specific powers that shape empirical practice. To say that a field is causal does not mean that it rigidly determines human practice in a mechanistic way. Causal entities should be construed as possessing capacities, powers, or tendencies that may under certain circumstances be activated and produce certain effects.[137] The effects of a field may combine conjuncturally with other causal mechanisms in generating events.

Fields are not always organized at the scale of nation-states, even through Bourdieu's field analyses often take the space of the French state as their spatial frame. And while international relations are indeed anarchic in many ways, there are transnational organizations that operate like fields, with gate-keepers and specific requirements for entry, peculiar forms of symbolic capital and habitus, and relative autonomy from other fields. Indeed, one field whose scale exceeds the nation-state is the field of states itself.[138] Fields organized at scales larger than states emerge characteristically in empires. The fields of British and French colonial science, for example, encompassed research institutes, universities, and scientists located in the overseas colonies as well as the metropoles.[139] These scientific fields can be pictured as having "vertical" connectors between metropole and colonies and "horizontal" connectors running laterally between colonies.

States can also throw up roadblocks to the transnational circulation of foreign ideas, objects, and people, determining which will be admitted and fully recognized, which will be admitted but symbolically dominated, and which will simply be denied entrance. Even in the era of so-called globalization, the state remains "the sector of the field of power that holds a [relative] monopoly of physical and legitimate symbolic force"[140] inside its territory.

Actors entering a national field from the outside usually find that their relative status has changed in comparison to the country of origin. Fields in different states may require different formal qualifications or they may be organized around different informal distinctions. Practices that are highly regarded in some national fields are disdained or dominated in other national fields. The emigration of several dozen German sociologists to the United States after 1933 demonstrates the non-transferability of symbolic capital. Most of these sociologists were committed to some version of neo-historicism (see above) or Marxism. Adorno's account of the Frankfurt School's poor reception in American sociology is well known.[141] Less familiar is the fate of the Weberian and neo-historicist sociologists in American (and British) exile, most of whom failed to transfer their intellectual program and symbolic standing to the US. Although these neo-historicists represented something like a quarter or a third of the field of academic sociology in Weimar Germany, they were scattered and isolated after 1933 in the much larger American field. More importantly, US sociology was either indifferent or actively hostile to their epistemic program, given the rising tide of quantitative positivism.[142]

In sum, this particular intellectual migration did not amount to a successful "transfer," and its lack of success was largely a function of the very different configuration of the German and American fields of academic sociology. The history of inter-crossings needs to pay as much attention to the asymmetries and failures of circulation, to processes of closure, exclusion, ostracism, hierarchy, and domination, as to successful transfers. And it needs to pay attention to the ways ideas and persons are transformed by circulation, translation, exile, and migration.[143]

Conclusion

Rather than dropping comparativism or replacing it with transnationalism, this chapter has tried to reframe the question of comparison. Comparative historical research is an indispensable part of social research. But comparative cases do not need to be constructed around similarities at the empirical level, much less around a rigid framework like the "method of difference and agreement." Instead, comparisons can focus on

gathering support for theories of underlying causes. Even when the comparative design emphasizes empirical similarities, the goal should not necessarily be a uniform empirical generalization.

The rise of global and transnational approaches should not lead historians to ignore the continuing importance of nation-states and national boundaries. Although some fields of activity increasingly ignore national boundaries, many others continue to be configured in important ways within nation-state (and other political) borders. Even as transnational cultural transfers intensify, their ability to enter different national territories will vary not just according to protectionist policies but also due to the ways in which fields are often nationally defined. Even where the scale and shape of a cultural field surpasses the nation-state, fields rarely extend to the entire globe. A field's shape and extensions often follows the borders of empires or informal hegemonies. The world is carved up as much as it is opened up. Within nation-states, as within empires, local actors continue to configure their activities in field-like ways that determine the form and intensity of transnational transfers.

In sum, the past excesses and mistakes of comparative history should not lead historians to abandon comparison. The question instead should be what to compare and how to compare.

Notes

1 Hartmut Kaelble, *Der historische Vergleich* (Frankfurt: Campus, 1999); Hartmut Kaelble, "Vergleichende Sozialgeschichte des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts: Forschungen europäischer Historiker Vergleichende Sozialgeschichte des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts: Forschungen europäischer Historiker," in Heinz-Gerhard Haupt and Jürgen Kocka, eds, *Geschichte und Vergleich: Ansätze und Ergebnisse international vergleichender Geschichtsschreibung* (Frankfurt: Campus, 2006), 91–130; Heinz-Gerhard Haupt and Jürgen Kocka, "Herausforderungen an die Transfergeschichte," *Comparativ* 16 (2006), 7–12; Heinz-Gerhard Haupt and Jürgen Kocka, "Between comparison and transfers – and now what?," in Heinz-Gerhard Haupt and Jürgen Kocka, eds, *Comparative and Transnational History: Central European Approaches and New Perspectives* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2009), 33–38; Heinz-Gerhard Haupt and Jürgen Kocka, "Comparative history: Methods, aims, problems," in Deborah Cohen and Maura O'Connor, eds, *Comparison and History* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 23–39; Thomas Welskopp, "Die Sozialgeschichte der Väter. Grenzen und Perspektiven der Historischen Sozialwissenschaft," *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 24 (1998), 173–198; Johannes Paulmann, "Internationaler Vergleich und interkultureller Transfer. Zwei Forschungsansätze zur europäischen Geschichte des 18. bis 20.Jahrhunderts," *Historische Zeitschrift* 267 (3) (1998), 649–685.

2 Michael Geyer, "Transnational History: The New Consensus," *Historische Literatur* 4 (4) (2006), 32–42.

3 Michael Werner and Bénédicte Zimmermann, *De la comparaison à l'histoire croisée* (Paris: Seuil, 2004); Michael Werner and Bénédicte Zimmermann, "Beyond comparison: Histoire croisée and the challenge of reflexivity," *History and Theory* 45 (1) (2006), 33–37.

4 Kaelble, "Between comparison and transfers," 36.

5 William McNeill, *The Rise of the West: A History of the Human Community* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963); William McNeill, "The Rise of the West after Twenty-Five Years," *Journal of Global History* 1 (1) (1990), 1–21.

6 Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "Connected histories: Notes towards a reconfiguration of early modern Eurasia," *Modern Asian Studies* 31 (3) (1997), 735–762; *Explorations in Connected History: From the Tagus to the Ganges* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

7 *New Literary History* 40 (3) (Summer 2009), special issue.
8 Qualitative sociologists entering the discipline often claim to be overcoming these structural divisions. The reappearance of this posture of epistemic compromise in US sociology decade after decade and generation after generation underscores the tenacity of the qualitative–quantitative division and the continuing dominance of the "quants." George Steinmetz, "Scientific authority and the transition to post-Fordism: The plausibility of positivism in American sociology since 1945," in Steinmetz, ed., *The Politics of Method in the Human Sciences: Positivism and its Epistemological Others Sociology* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), 275–323.
9 Workshop on "The Comparative Imperative: Capitalism, Comparison and Social Transformation," New York University, February 18–19, 2001. This phrase was first used by Nancy Green, "L'histoire comparative et le champ des études migratoires," *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 45 (6) (1990), 1335–1350, as an exhortation to compare.
10 George Steinmetz, "Positivism and its Others in the social sciences," in George Steinmetz, ed., *The Politics of Method in the Human Sciences: Positivism and its Epistemological Others* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), 39. From the standpoint of discussions in history and sociology, the political scientists' dispute was strange, since it never questioned the imperative to compare.
11 Webb Keane, "Estrangement, intimacy, and the objects of anthropology," in George Steinmetz, ed. *The Politics of Method in the Human Sciences: Positivism and its Epistemological Others* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), 59–88.
12 I cannot deal with historical thinking outside European and North American scholarship here, but on this see Jörn Rüsen, ed., *Western Historical Thinking: An Intercultural Debate* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2002). I also cannot deal with world history, which is covered in other essays in this volume. On the "logic of seriality" see Benedict Anderson, *The Spectre of Comparisons* (London: Verso, 1998).
13 For example, Michel Espagne, "Sur les limites du comparatisme en histoire culturelle," *Genèses* 17 (1994), 112–121; Nancy L. Green, "Forms of comparison," in Cohen and O'Connor, *Comparison and History*, 41–56.
14 McNeill, *Rise of the West.* See the brilliant global history by Jürgen Osterhammel, *Die Verwandlung der Welt: eine Geschichte des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Munich: Beck, 2009), which is not organized around the unit of the nation-state (except in a chapter in which states are the object of analysis). See also Osterhammel's comments on the current debate: "A 'Transnational' History of Society: Continuity or New Departure?," in Haupt and Kocka, *Comparative and Transnational History*, 39–51.
15 Maurice Duverger, *An Introduction to the Social Sciences, with Special Reference to their Methods* (London, G. Allen & Unwin, 1964), 261.
16 Green, "L'histoire comparative," 1335.
17 George M. Fredrickson, "Comparative history," in Michael Kammen, ed., *The Past before Us: Contemporary Historical Writing in the United States* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1980), 457.
18 For example, Bartolomé Yun Casalilla, "'Localism', global history and transnational history," *Historisk Tidskrift* 127 (4) (2007), 662.
19 François Hartog, *The Memoires of Odysseus* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 25.
20 François Hartog, *The Mirror of Herodotus* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 225.
21 Richard Kraut, *Aristotle: Political Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 11, n 16.
22 Hartog, *Memoires of Odysseus*, 167.
23 The comparative history of racism and slavery is actually "the most highly developed subject of comparative historical study in the United States," according to Fredrickson, "Comparative history," 465. On the comparison–imperialism connection, see Joachim Matthes, "The operation called 'Vergleichen'," *Soziale Welt*, Sonderband 8 (1992), 75–99.

24 Lawrence A. Clayton, *Bartolomé de las Casas and the Conquest of the Americas* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 131. On the persistence of the Roman imperial precedent and the significance of Polybius' imperial historiography, see Julia Hell, *Ruin Gazing: European Empires, the Third Reich and the End of Rome* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, forthcoming). For a typology of European framings of the colonized Other see Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes* (London: Routledge, 1992).

25 Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other. How Anthropology Makes its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983).

26 Michel de Montaigne, "On Cannibals [1580]," in *Essays* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1958), 105–118.

27 George Steinmetz, *The Devil's Handwriting: Precoloniality and the German Colonial State in Qingdao, Samoa, and Southwest Africa* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007, Chap. 6).

28 Anthony Pagden, "The image of the barbarian," Chap. 2 in *The Fall of Natural Man: The American Indian and the Origins of Comparative Ethnology* (Cambridge University Press, 1982), pp. 15–26; Gref Woolf, *Tales of the Barbarians. Ethnography and Empire in the Roman West* (Chichester, West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, 2011).

29 On the development of European idea of race see especially George Stocking, Jr., *Race, Culture, and Evolution* (Chicago: Free Press, 1968); on eighteenth-century concepts of race see the invaluable Robert Bernasconi, *Concepts of Race in the Eighteenth Century*, 8 vols (Bristol: Thoemmes, 2001).

30 Peter Kolb, *The Present State of the Cape of Good-Hope*, 2nd edn (London: W. Innys and R. Manby, 1731); Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*; Steinmetz, *The Devil's Handwriting*, Chap. 2.

31 Boas wrote in 1887 that civilization is not "something absolute, but . . . is relative, and . . . our ideas and conceptions are true only so far as our civilization goes." Franz Boas, "Museums of ethnology and their classification," *Science* 9 (228) (1887), 589. See Section III.

32 Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1978); Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996).

33 Tomoko Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions, or, How European Universalism was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005); Silvia Mancini, "Comparativism in the history of religions: Some models and key issues," *Religion* 37 (2007), 282–293; William E. Paden, "Comparative religion," in John Hinnells, ed., *The Routledge Companion to the Study of Religion* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 208–225.

34 Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (London: Routledge, 2001).

35 Adam Francisco, *Martin Luther and Islam: A Study in Sixteenth-century Polemics and Apologetics* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), quotes from pp. 9, 16, 25.

36 Francisco, *Martin Luther and Islam*, 63, 65.

37 Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System*, Vols. 3 and 4 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011).

38 On Ratzel's travels through the United States see Friedrich Ratzel, *Sketches of Urban and Cultural Life in North America* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1988 [1876]); Julia Hell and George Steinmetz, "Ruinopolis: Post-imperial theory and *Learning from Las Vegas*," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* (November, 2013). A more recent example of this dubious genre is Peter Baldwin, *The Narcissism of Minor Differences: How America and Europe are Alike* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

39 On the United States as the result of imperial thrusts and frontier engagements from every direction see Alan Taylor, *American Colonies. The Settling of North America* (New York: Penguin, 2001); on settler colonialism see Lorenzo Veracini, *Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

40 John Stuart Mill, *A System of Logic* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1850), 222–237.

41 Mark Tunick, "Tolerant imperialism: J.S. Mill's Defense of British Rule in India," *Review of Politics* 68 (4) (2006), 586; Vinay Lal, "John Stuart Mill and India," *New Quest* 54 (1988),

54; Jennifer Pitts, *A Turn to Empire: The Rise of Imperial Liberalism in Britain and France* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), Chap. 5.

42 Karl de Schweinitz, "John Stuart Mill and India," *Research in Economic Thought and Methodology* 2 (1984), 52.

43 John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism, Liberty, and Representative Government* (New York: Dutton, 1951), 509–510; Eileen P. Sullivan, "Liberalism and imperialism: J.S. Mill's Defense of the British Empire," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 44 (4) (1983), 606.

44 Blake, "Annotations to Sir Joshua Reynolds' *Discourses* in 1808"; http://www.blakearchive.org/exist/blake/archive/erdman.xq?id=b12.8 (accessed Oct. 2013).

45 Hartmut Kaelble, *Der historische Vergleich* (Frankfurt: Campus, 1999), 12; for a similar definition see Fredrickson, "Comparative history," 457–486.

46 Marc Bloch, "Pour une histoire comparée des sociétés européennes," *Revue de synthèse historique* 46 (1928), 15–50.

47 Hartog, *The Memoires of Odysseus*, 134, 140–141.

48 For early critiques of "methodological nationalism" in social science, see Herminio Martins, "Time and theory in sociology," in John Rex, ed., *Approaches to Sociology* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974), 246–294; Friedrich H. Tenbruck, "Emile Durkheim oder die Geburt der Gesellschaft aus dem Geist der Soziologie," *Zeitschrift für Soziologie* 10 (4) (1981), 348.

49 Hartog, *The Memoires of Odysseus*, 166 (my emphasis). For an analysis of the Aristotelian dimension of Polybius' conception of global history, see Julia Hell, *Ruin Gazing*.

50 Johann Reinhold Forster, *Observations Made during a Voyage round the World* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1996 [1778]).

51 Ronald W. Perry, "Diffusion theories," in Edgar F. Borgatta, ed., *Encyclopedia of Sociology*, 2nd edn, Vol. 1 (New York: Macmillan, 2001), 675.

52 Suzanne Marchand, "Leo Frobenius and the revolt against the West," *Journal of Contemporary History* 32 (2) (1997), 158.

53 Friedrich Ratzel, *Politische Geographie*, 3rd edn (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 1923), section 6.

54 Suzanne Marchand, "Priests among the pygmies: Wilhelm Schmidt and the Counter-Reformation in Austrian ethnology," in H. Glenn Penny and Matti Bunzl, eds, *Worldly Provincialism: German Anthropology in the Age of Empire* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003), 296. See also Silvia Mancini, "Les civilisations comme 'absolu esthétique'. L'approche morphologique de la Mittel-Europa," *Diogène* 186 (1999), 83–109.

55 Urs Stäheli, "Übersteigerte Nachahmung – Tardes Massentheorie," in Christian Borch and Urs Stäheli, eds, *Soziologie der Nachahmung und des Begehrens: Materialien zu Gabriel Tarde* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2009), 397–414.

56 Alberto Toscano, "Powers of pacification: State and empire in Gabriel Tarde," *Economy and Society* 36 (4) (2007), 597–613.

57 Gabriel Tarde, *The Laws of Imitation* (New York: Henry Holt, 1903), 65.

58 Hartmut Kaelble, "Herausforderungen an die Transfergeschichte," *Comparativ* 16 (2006), 7.

59 Historical linguistics, as Marc Bloch pointed out, was also engaged in a kind of connected history; Bloch, "Pour une histoire comparée," 19.

60 Maurice Leenhardt, *Le mouvement éthiopien au sud de l'Afrique de 1896 à 1899* (Paris: Académie des sciences d'outre-mer, 1976 [1902]).

61 Maurice Leenhardt, *Gens de la grande terre*, 2nd edn (Paris: Gallimard, 1953), 213.

62 Jacques Soustelle, *La famille otomi-pame du Mexique central* (Paris: Institut d'ethnologie, 1937), 253.

63 René Maunier, *The Sociology of Colonies*, Vol. 1 (London, 1949 [1932]), 124, 535.

64 Melville Herskovits, *The Myth of the Negro Past* (New York: Harper, 1941), 184–185.

65 Melville J. Herskovits and Frances S. Herskovits, *Trinidad Village* (New York: Octagon Books, 1964 [1947]), vi.

66 Karl Marx, "Revolution in China and in Europe (June 14, 1853, *New York Daily Tribune*)", in *Karl Marx on Colonialism and Modernization*, ed. Schlomo Avineri (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1969), 67–69.

67 J.A. Hobson, *Imperialism* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1965), 133–134.

68 Robert Alun Jones, "Durkheim's response to Spencer: An essay toward historicism in the historiography of sociology," *The Sociological Quarterly* 15 (3) (1974), 343, note 4; Georg G. Iggers, *The German Conception of History. The National Tradition of Historical Thought from Herder to the Present* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1968), 126–127; Frederick C. Beiser, *The German Historicist Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Johann Gustav Droyen, *Outline of the Principles of History* (New York: H. Fertig, 1967 [1868]), 12–16; Thomas Burger, "Droysen and the idea of *Verstehen*," *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 14 (1978), 6–19; see esp. Jörn Rüsen, *Begriffene Geschichte. Genesis und Begründung der Geschichtstheorie J. G. Droysens* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1969).

69 Droyen, *Outline*, 26.

70 Droyen, *Outline*, 63. Boas also rejected Buckle, contrasting his method with that of true historians. Boas, "Study of Geography," 138.

71 Fritz K. Ringer, *Max Weber. An Intellectual Biography* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 23.

72 Beiser correctly places Weber "firmly and squarely in the historicist tradition" (*The German Historicist Tradition*, 511), but he does not follow historicism's development into the Weimar Republic; on this evolution see Annette Wittkau, *Historismus: zur Geschichte des Begriffs und des Problems*, 2nd edn (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1994) and George Steinmetz, "Charles Tilly, historicism, and the critical realist philosophy of science," *American Sociologist* 41 (4) (2010): 312–336.

73 Heinrich Rickert, *The Limits of Concept Formation in Natural Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986 [1902]); Guy Oakes, *Weber and Rickert: Concept formation in the cultural sciences* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008); Peter-Ulrich Merz, *Max Weber und Heinrich Rickert: die erkenntniskritischen Grundlagen der verstehenden Soziologie* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1990); Ola Agevall, "Science of unique events: Max Weber's methodology of the cultural sciences" (PhD dissertation, Uppsala University, 1999). On Heidegger's attempted *Destruktion* (deconstruction) of Rickert's historicism see Charles R. Bambach, *Heidegger, Dilthey, and the Crisis of Historicism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995), Chap. 5.

74 Max Weber, *Roscher and Knies: The Logical Problems of Historical Economics* (New York: Free Press, 1975); *Critique of Stammler* (New York: Free Press, 1977); *The Methodology of the Social Sciences* (New York: Free Press, 1949); *Economy and Society*, 2 vols (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978).

75 George Steinmetz, "The imperial entanglements of sociology and the problem of scientific autonomy in Germany, France, and the United States," in Hans-Georg Soeffner. ed., *Transnationale Vergesellschaftungen. Verhandlungen des 35. Kongresses der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Soziologie in Frankfurt am Main 2010* (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag, 2012).

76 Weber also pursues a more conventional comparative analysis; Weber, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie*, 3 vols (Tübingen: Mohr, 1920–1921).

77 Karl Mannheim, "Historicism," in Karl Mannheim, *Essays in the Sociology of Knowledge*, ed. Paul Kecskemeti (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1954 [1924]), 84, 86.

78 Karl Popper's *The Poverty of Historicism* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1957) and *The Open Society and its Enemies* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1947) bear a great deal of responsibility for the prevailing confusion around the word "historicism" today, which has become a *contranym*. By the late nineteenth century historicism referred to an approach that was radically opposed to generalization; for Popper, however, historicism referred to the search for historical laws in closed, teleological systems. Popper rechristened the forms of nineteenth-century historicism associated with Ranke or Windelband as "historism," and he entirely ignored the formation I am calling neo-historicism. Popper's idiosyncratic definition of historicism became highly influential and was perpetuated by such unlikely allies as Louis Althusser and Dipesh Chakrabarty.

79 Friedrich Meinecke, *Historism: The Rise of a New Historical Outlook* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972), lv.
80 Positivism's belief in progress did not "prevent it from despising teleology"; Ernst Troeltsch, *Der Historismus und seine Probleme* (Berlin: R. Heise, 1961 [1922]), 381–382, 379.
81 Troeltsch, *Der Historismus*, 142, 120, 383.
82 Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985), 15.
83 Carl Schmitt, "Die Lage der europäischen Rechtswissenschaft (1943/44)," in *Verfassungsrechtliche Aufsätze aus den Jahren 1924–1954* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2003), 420.
84 Carl Schmitt, *The* Nomos *of the Earth* (New York: Telos Press, 2008 [1950]), 68; see, Julia Hell, "*Katechon*: Carl Schmitt's imperial theology and the ruins of the future," *The Germanic Review* 84 (4) (2009): 283–326.
85 Carl Ritter, *Allgemeine Erdkunde. Vorlesungen an der Universität zu Berlin* (Berlin: Reimer, 1862), 19.
86 Emil Hözel, "Das geographische Individuum bei Karl Ritter und seine Bedeutung für den Begriff des Naturgebietes und der Naturgrenze," *Geographische Zeitschrift* 2 (1896), 378–396, 433–444.
87 P. Vidal de la Blache, *The Personality of France* (London: Christophers, 1923), 14.
88 Max Spandau, "Staat und Boden," *Zeitschrift für Geopolitik* 2 (1925), 40.
89 Franz Boas, "Museums of ethnology and their classification," *Science* 9 (228) (1887), 588–589.
90 Andre Beteille, "Some observations on the comparative method," *Economic and Political Weekly* 25 (40) (1990), 2255–2263.
91 Boas, "The study of geography," Science 9 (210) (1887), 138.
92 Boas, "The study of geography," 141. On historicism and nationalism see Marcel Detienne, *Comparing the Incomparable* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008).
93 See the essays in Steinmetz, *The Politics of Method in the Human Sciences.*
94 Carsten Klingemann, *Soziologie und Politik: Sozialwissenschaftliches Expertenwissen im Dritten Reich und in der frühen westdeutschen Nachkriegszeit* (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag, 2009); George Steinmetz, "Ideas in exile: Refugees from Nazi Germany and the failure to transplant historical sociology into the United States," *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 23 (1) (2010), 1–27; Stefan Kühl, "Ein letzter kläglicher Versuch der Verdrängung," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, No. 106, May 8, 2013, p. N4.
95 George Steinmetz, "German exceptionalism and the origins of Nazism: The career of a concept," in Ian Kershaw and Moshe Lewin, eds, *Stalinism and Nazism: Dictatorships in Comparison* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 251–284.
96 Jörn Rüsen, *Konfigurationen des Historismus: Studien zur deutschen Wissenschaftskultur* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1993), 357.
97 Peter T. Manicas, *A History and Philosophy of the Social Sciences* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987), 213–237.
98 An alternative to postwar positivist comparativism that did not have any obvious connection to interwar neo-historicism was the "extended case study" developed by Max Gluckman and his associates in the milieu of the Rhodes Livingston Institute and the Manchester Social Anthropology Department; see George Steinmetz, "A child of the empire: British sociology and colonialism, 1940s–1960s," *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 49 (2013): 353–378.
99 Alfred Weber was the neo-historicist sociologist best placed after 1945 to influence the reconstitution of postwar German Sociology due to his distance from Nazism and his standing, but was discredited and declared a non-sociologist in a vile manner by his competitors, many of them deeply compromised by Nazism, and by Talcott Parsons; Eberhard Demm, *Geist und Politik im 20. Jahrhundert: gesammelte Aufsätze zu Alfred Weber* (Frankfurt: Lang 2000), 220.

100 Geoff Eley, *A Crooked Line* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005), 41.
101 SSRC, *The Social Sciences in Historical Study* (New York: SSRC, 1954), 151–152.
102 Charles C. Ragin, "Comparative sociology and the comparative method," *International Journal of Comparative Sociology* 22 (1–2) (1981), 102.
103 Adam Przeworski and Henry Teune, *The Logic of Comparative Social Inquiry* (New York: Wiley, 1970); Arend Lijphart, "Comparative politics and the comparative method," *American Political Science Review* 65 (3) (1971), 682–693; Ann Shola Orloff and Theda Skocpol, "Why not equal protection? Explaining the politics of public social spending in Britain, 1900–1911, and the United States, 1880s–1920," *American Sociological Review* 49 (1984): 726–750.
104 Wehler, *Modernisierungstheorie und Geschichte* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1975). Black defended a comparative modernization approach against "those most dedicated to the unique" in *The Dynamics of Modernization. A Study in Comparative History* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 35.
105 Przeworski and Teune, *Logic*, 30.
106 James Mahoney and Dietrich Rueschemeyer, "Comparative historical analysis: Achievements and agendas," in Mahoney and Rueschemeyer, eds, *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 3–38. For another effort to ward off historicism and interpretivism see Gary King, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994).
107 Everett M. Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations* (New York : Free Press of Glencoe, 1962).
108 Steinmetz, "Scientific authority and the transition to post-Fordism"; also Gérard Noiriel, *Introduction à la socio-histoire* (Paris: La Découverte, 2006), 27 *passim*.
109 Note that Tilly's book was much less programmatically positivist than those listed in notes 103 through 107. Tilly was the only leading historical sociologist with a full appointment in a history department (at Michigan). He praised "genuinely historical work in the social sciences" and refused to equate societies with states.
110 Charles Tilly, *Big Structures, Large Processes, Huge Comparisons* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1984); William H. Sewell, Jr., "Ideologies and social revolutions: Reflections on the French case," *Journal of Modern History* 57(1985), 57–85; William H. Sewell, Jr., "Three temporalities: Toward an eventful sociology," in Terrence J. McDonald, ed., *The Historic Turn in the Human Sciences* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), 245–280.
111 See Bhaskar, *A Realist Theory of Science* (London: Verso, 1997) and *Scientific Realism and Human Emancipation* (London: Verso, 1986); Andrew Sayer, *Method in Social Science* (London: Routledge, 1984); Margaret Archer *et al.*, eds, *Critical Realism, Essential Readings* (London: Routledge, 1998); George Steinmetz, "Critical realism and historical sociology," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 40 (1) (1998): 170–186; George Steinmetz, "Odious comparisons: Incommensurability, the case study, and small N's in sociology," *Sociological Theory* 22 (3) (2004), 371–400; and Phil Gorski, "What Is Critical Realism? And Why Should You Care?," *Contemporary Sociology: A Journal of Reviews* 42: 658–670.
112 John P. McCormick, summarizing Carl Schmitt's view of "Baconian technoscience," in "Feudalism, Fascism, and Fordism: Weimar theories of representation and their legacy in the Bonn Republic," in Peter. C. Caldwell and William E. Scheuerman, eds, *From Liberal Democracy to Nazism: Political and Legal Theory in the Weimar Republic* (Boston, MA: Humanities Press, 2000), 49.
113 Ernest Nagel, *The Structure of Scientific Explanation* (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Co, 1979 [1961]), Chap. 15; "Reasons and covering laws in historical explanation," in Patrick Gardiner, ed., *The Philosophy of History* (London: Oxford University Press, 1974), 90–105.

114 Rom Harré, *The Philosophies of Science* (London: Oxford University Press, 1972), 47.
115 On the evolution of critical realism see Roy Bhaskar and Mervyn Hartwig, *The Formation of Critical Realism* (New York Routledge, 2010).
116 Bhaskar, *A Realist Theory*, 163–185; Sayer, *Method in Social Science*, 45ff.
117 Bhaskar, *The Possibility of Naturalism: A Philosophical Critique of the Contemporary Human Sciences* (New York: Humanities, 1979).
118 Bhaskar, *A Realist Theory of Science*, 184. The argument that a generative mechanism may be possessed unexercised and exercised unrealized is at the core of critical realists' rejection of Popperian falsificationism as a guidepost for theory choice.
119 On reasons as causes, see Bhaskar, *The Possibility of Naturalism*; for a critical realist theory of human personhood as having causal capacities see Christian Smith, *What is a Person? Rethinking Humanity, Social Life, and the Moral Good from the Person Up* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010); also Scott Sehon, *Teleological Realism: Mind, Agency, and Explanation* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005); G.F. Schueler, *Reasons and Purposes: Human Rationality and the Teleological Explanation of Action* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Jesús Aguilar and Andrei Buckareff, eds, *Causing Human Actions: New Perspectives on the Causal Theory of Action* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2010).
120 George Steinmetz, "Positivism and its Others in the social sciences," op cit.
121 On the idea of the historical event as the product of a contingent conjuncture of causes, see Louis Althusser, "Contradiction and overdetermination," in *For Marx* (London: NLB, 1977); Bhaskar, *Scientific Realism and Human Emancipation*, 109–112; Pierre Bourdieu, *Homo Academicus* (Stanford: Stanford University Press 1988), 173 .
122 Mervyn Hartwig, *Dictionary of Critical Realism* (London: Routledge, 2007), 257.
123 Bhaskar, *Scientific Realism and Human Emancipation*, 61.
124 Tony Lawson, "Economic science without experimentation/abstraction," in Archer *et al.*, eds, *Critical Realism*, 149.
125 Hartwig, *Dictionary*, 116.
126 Sewell argues that the best definition of an historical "event" is as a structure-changing event. If we reframe this point in terms of the language of critical realism we can say that an important kind of historical event is one that destroys social entities with causal powers. Clearly, however, there are morally and politically significant unprecedented events that result from unique constellations of existing causes without "destroying" any causal entities. William Hamilton Sewell, *Logics of History: Social Theory and Social Transformation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005); George Steinmetz, "*Logics of History* as a framework for an integrated social science," *Social Science History* 32 (4) (2008), 535–554.
127 Ann Cecilie Bergene, "Towards a critical realist comparative methodology," *Journal of Critical Realism* 6 (1) (2007), 15.
128 For a compatible view see R. Bin Wong, "Causation," in *A Concise Companion to History*, ed. Ulinka Rublack (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 27–56.
129 Bhaskar distinguishes between the domains of the *real* and the *actual*, which correspond respectively to the realms of causal mechanisms and events, and between the actual and the empirical, noting that mechanisms may be realized (at the level of the actual) without being perceived (at the level of the empirical). Steinmetz, "Critical realism and historical sociology," 176.
130 Steinmetz, "Odious comparisons."
131 Hartwig, *Dictionary of Critical Realism*, 82; Lawson, "Economic science without experimentation/abstraction."
132 Bergene, "Towards a critical realist comparative methodology," 14.
133 Kocka and Haupt, "Comparison and beyond," 2.
134 What about "better description" and "better interpretation"? Seen from one angle, the hermeneutic understanding of social action and the clarification of the ethical meaning of

that action for the interpreter do not seem to require a comparative approach. But theory building in the social sciences requires comparison, and both hermeneutic and ethical understanding rely on theory. So in an indirect way, comparison contributes to "better description" and "better interpretation."

135 George Steinmetz, "Social Fields at the Scale of Empires: Revising Bourdieu's Theory," *History and Theory* (forthcoming).

136 Osterhammel, "'Transnational' history," 47–48.

137 If we analyze the émigré sociologists at an individual level we can see how the mismatch of their scientific epistemology and habitus with the American field did not entirely determine their relative standing. The reputation of Hans Gerth was enhanced by his association with C. Wright Mills; Herbert Marcuse eventually became famous when his work was adopted by social movement activists in the 1960s; Hans Speier succeeded by shifting out of academic sociology into the field of defense intellectuals.

138 Bourdieusian field theory has not been applied in IR theory, although a pre-Bourdieusian version based on Kurt Lewin's field theory was developed by Quincy Wright, *The Study of International Relations* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1955).

139 George Steinmetz, "A child of the empire."

140 Pierre Bourdieu, *Sur l'état* (Paris: Seuil, 2012).

141 Theodor Adorno, "Scientific experiences of a European scholar in America," *Perspectives in American History* 2 (1968): 338–370.

142 Steinmetz, "Ideas in exile."

143 There is some attention to this in Werner and Zimmermann, "Beyond comparison," 38–39.

Further Reading

On comparative history

Cohen, D., and M. O'Connor, eds. 2004. *Comparison and History.* New York: Routledge.

Insightful essays by several practitioners of comparative history.

Detienne, M. 2008. *Comparing the Incomparable.* Stanford: Stanford University Press.

The author, a Greek historian, mounts a polemic against historians' anti-comparativism and summarizes his own collaborative comparative projects involving ethnologists and historians specialized in radically different periods and cultures.

Haupt, H.-G. and J. Kocka, eds. 1996. *Geschichte und Vergleich: Ansätze und Ergebnisse international vergleichender Geschichtsschreibung.* Frankfurt: Campus.

An interesting contrast with the same editors' 2009 collection, before the transnational turn, with a partly different set of contributors.

Haupt, H.-G. and J. Kocka, eds. 2009. *Comparative and Transnational History: Central European Approaches and New Perspectives.* New York: Berghahn Books.

Essays by leading proponents of comparative and transnational history. Osterhammel, Kocka, Haupt, and Kaelble also appear in the editors' 1996 collection.

Kaelble, H. 1999. *Der historische Vergleich.* Frankfurt: Campus.

A compact overview of the history and problems of comparative history, by a leading practitioner.

Lorenz, C. 1997. *Konstruktion der Vergangenheit: eine Einführung in die Geschichtstheorie.* Cologne: Böhlau.

The author compares the positivist, hermeneutic, and postmodern approaches to historiography and discusses comparison, social science, and ethics in history.

Werner, M., and B. Zimmermann. 2004. *De la comparaison à l'histoire croisée.* Paris: Seuil.

A programmatic statement by leading critics of comparative history and proponents of a connected or "intercrossed" approach.

On comparison in the human sciences in general

Ragin, C. 1987. *The Comparative Method: Moving Beyond Qualitative and Quantitative Strategies.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

A methodological statement by a historical sociologist who has tried to overcome the impasse between cases studies and quantitative or formalized approaches. See also Ragin's subsequent work on "fuzzy-set social science" and "configurational comparative methods."

Tilly, C. 1984. *Big Structures, Large Processes, Huge Comparisons.* New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

A major statement on comparative methods and history by the leading historical sociologist of the second half of the twentieth century.

On critical realism and the human sciences

Bhaskar, R. 1979. *The Possibility of Naturalism: A Philosophical Critique of the Contemporary Human Sciences.* New York: Humanities.

The foundational work on the social sciences by the creator of the critical realist philosophy of science.

Elder-Vass, Dave. 2010. The Causal Power of Social Structures: Emergence, Structure and Agency. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

A discussion of social ontology and the categories of emergence, cause, and event, arguing that Bourdieu's habitus concept reconciles the causal powers of individuals and social structures.

On Bourdieu, historiography, and comparison

Gorski, Philip S., ed. 2012. *Bourdieusian Theory and Historical Analysis.* Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

A new collection showcasing work by historians and historical social scientists employing Bourdieu's theoretical approach.