

5 Historical Sociology in the 1990s

Historical sociology as an intellectual field

Historical sociologists can draw on a long tradition. It was all but killed off in the 1930s, and the 'second growth', from the 1950s onward, is still young. However, its internal dynamics are complex and it thrives in an ecological environment which is rich, complex and relatively uncontrolled. It is not easy to pick your way through it.¹ Eighteen historical sociologists have been considered at some length in this work – more precisely, thirteen sociologists (Parsons, Smelser, Eisenstadt, Bendix, Skocpol, Lipset, Moore, Wallerstein, Marshall, Runciman, Giddens, Mann and Elias), four historians (Thompson, Anderson, Bloch and Braudel), and one sociologist-cum-historian (Tilly). Although the selection has inevitable biases, the people and issues dealt with are central, representing a strategically important part of historical sociology as an intellectual field, one which can be further explored as a way of increasing our understanding of this field.

I will not be able to provide a comprehensive map of historical sociology as a dynamic configuration of individuals and groups in different positions within power balances, competing to define what is legitimate, prestigious and so on. In fact, the methodological and theoretical implications of such an exercise are the subject of lively dispute.² However, it is certainly possible to make a provisional assessment of 'the historical sociologist' as *'homo academicus'* (Bourdieu, 1988). The relevant issues are: first, whether historical sociologists have operated as 'outsiders', or as members of the relevant 'establishment'; second, the way they handle problems of involvement and detachment; third, their orientations towards theory, empirical generalization and primary exploration of historical data; and, fourth, the strategies of explanation they adopt.

Established and outsiders

One theme which must enter into any analysis of historical sociology as an intellectual field is the respective roles of established and outsider groups. It is closely related to the second theme, the management of involvement and detachment, to be discussed shortly. The issues are complex and resist easy formulation. Some examples will be explored, but first it must be stressed that insider/outsider distinctions are not just a matter of ethnicity (or race) and class. The strength of a scholar's identification with his or her nation is a significant variable, though not straightforward. For example, Bloch and Lipset are both strong patriots, but this factor enters much more evidently into Lipset's academic practice than Bloch's. Also, as already seen, there is a strong convergence between Bloch and Elias as historical sociologists, in spite of Elias's sceptical view of patriotism. The fight of female academics against the disadvantaged situation of women is another factor which is hard to assess (cf. Skocpol, 1988a). Here, however, the argument will be restricted to ethnicity and class, dealing only with a few of the more easily classifiable cases.

The major contribution of Jewish scholars, some of them exiles from continental Europe, or the American offspring of recent European immigrants, is very evident. So is the part played by the progeny of very comfortably-off, high-status families. A number of the scholars discussed in this book come from patrician or establishment backgrounds, including W. G. Runciman, Perry Anderson, Barrington Moore, and T. H. Marshall. First, however, let us take the cases of Reinhard Bendix and Norbert Elias. Both were brilliant emigré German Jews. However, Elias did not achieve in British sociology the secure position Bendix had carved out for himself in the United States by the mid-1960s. Even though Bendix could write, as late as 1990, 'I cannot be sure how American a sociologist I have become' (Bendix, 1990, p. 474), he nevertheless served on the council of the American Sociological Association and became its president. By contrast, Elias had to wait until long after he had reached retirement age for international recognition on a wide scale. Even though he spent most of his working life after World War II in the English-speaking academic world, his reputation even now is much higher in France and Germany than in the United States and Britain. For most of his life he was only marginally attached to academic institutions.

The relevant point is that no simple equation links marginality (or 'outsider' status) and capacity for detachment. What matters is not whether you are, or have been, an 'outsider' or a member of the

	<i>Achieved</i>	<i>Ascribed</i>
<i>Outsiders</i>	Barrington Moore Perry Anderson	Norbert Elias
<i>Insiders</i>	Reinhard Bendix S. M. Lipset	T. H. Marshall W. G. Runciman

Figure 5.1 Insiders and outsiders: some examples

'establishment' but, rather, how you are able or choose to deal with the experience available from either vantage point. It is possible, for example, to distinguish between the following categories: scholars who live most of their lives as 'ascribed outsiders'; scholars with establishment backgrounds who become 'achieved outsiders' by taking a political, intellectual or moral stance at odds with the rest of their class; 'ascribed insiders' who have been socialized into the establishment from an early age and who operate from within its values, broadly speaking; and 'achieved insiders' who have made it to the top from the fringes of the society or the profession. Each situation offers its unique opportunities and pitfalls (see figure 5.1).

Some qualifications should be added. First, 'achieved insider' status is the approved ending of the classic American success story. It is the category in which detachment is hardest to maintain, and requires the most deliberate commitment (compare Bendix and Lipset). Second, there is an evident distinction between outsiders, whether achieved or ascribed, who are genuine 'loners', and those who belong to a close-knit intellectual network providing a shared public identity (compare Moore and Anderson). Third, ascribed insiders vary in the extent to which they take for granted the class position they occupy, as opposed to being prepared to subject it to moral and political scrutiny (compare Marshall and Runciman). Having opened up the topic of involvement and detachment, I now turn to it directly.

Involvement and detachment

In a recent work entitled *Involvement and Detachment* (1987), Norbert Elias retold a story by Edgar Allan Poe about two brothers on a fishing boat. They were caught in a maelstrom. Terrified, they circled in the narrowing funnel of the whirlpool. However, the younger brother

collected himself sufficiently to notice

... that cylindrical objects went down more slowly than objects of any other shape, and that smaller objects sank more slowly than larger ones. On the basis of this synoptic picture of the regularities in the process in which he was involved, and recognizing their relevance to his own situation, he made the appropriate move. While his brother remained immobilized by fear, he lashed himself to a cask. Vainly encouraging the older man to do the same, he leapt overboard. While the boat, with his brother still in it, descended more rapidly and was, in the end, swallowed by the abyss, the cask to which he had tied himself sank very slowly, so that gradually, as the slope of the funnel's sides became less steep and the water's gyrations less violent, he found himself again at the surface of the ocean and eventually returned to the living. (Elias, 1987a, pp. 45-6)

One of the lessons of this story is that detachment improves your survival chances. As the younger brother found, self-control and intelligent observation of processes made possible a degree of human control within a potentially threatening and rapidly changing situation. The span of control was small, but it was sufficient to save a life. This supreme effort of detachment was urgent and necessary precisely because the man in the story was vitally involved, both physically and emotionally, in the processes he was analysing.

Elias was very sensitive to the vulnerability and emotionality of human beings. In his work he explored our involvement in relations of interdependence with each other and with nature. He argued that fear and shortsightedness could be and, in some aspects of human affairs, had been overcome or alleviated. This occurs when sufficient detachment is developed to allow participants to observe objectively the processes occurring within the configurations to which they belong.

Elias demonstrated that the historical sociologist can be both involved and detached, relative to the subject of analysis: involved in the sense of empathizing with or entering into the human situations being examined; detached in the sense of being able to discount emotion-laden responses with get in the way of clear perception. Historical sociologists with these skills can make distant times, places and people seem alive, important and understandable. They can also make very close and familiar things to which we are comfortably accommodated seem strange, distant and less taken-for-granted.

In *Feudal Society*, Bloch provided a good example of these skills in practice. He made 'doubt . . . an "examiner"' (Bloch, 1954, p. 81). Like an examining magistrate, he followed the instincts of the scientist and the advocate, using each to modify the excesses of the other. The

advocate's interest in human motivation and moral interests was governed by a clinical disinterestedness. At the same time, Bloch resisted the temptation to dissect and manipulate the data by distributing its constituent parts into separate boxes, with a view to producing controlled reactions between them. Instead, he took his data in large lumps and tried to discern or 'listen to' the complex interactions going on within them. He was aware of the way human actions enter into the shaping and reshaping of structure; the way structural constraints and opportunities shape the exercise of choice; and the way these processes, intended and unintended, ramify through time and space.

This marriage of closeness and distance took another form in his use of anecdotes and examples. As a guide, Bloch rarely dwells for long on any single instance. Since his object is to show us the complex structure of feudal Europe as a whole, he has to travel quickly across time and space, scanning the territory. He alights briefly in specific places, giving us a 'feel' for the local topography and atmosphere, but then he moves swiftly on.

One brief illustration concerns the Northmen. There was a large element of control and calculation on the part of the Vikings. They were quite prepared to let certain communities – for example, isolated monasteries – buy themselves immunity from their raids, which brought back gold and prisoners with an exchange value in ransom payments. However, the Vikings inspired enormous panic, and seemed to embody the principle of chaos. This is not difficult to understand since

... these warriors of the North were men of strong and brute sensual appetite, with a taste for bloodshed and destruction, which manifested itself at times in great outbreaks partaking of madness, when violence no longer knew any restraint: one such occasion was the famous orgy in 1012, during which the Archbishop of Canterbury, whom till then his captors had carefully guarded with an eye to ransom, was pelted to death with the bones of the animals eaten at the feast. Of an Icelander who had campaigned in the West the saga tells us that he was surnamed 'the children's man', because he refused to impale children on the point of his lance, 'as was the custom among his companions'. All this sufficiently explains the terror spread by the invaders wherever they went. (Bloch, 1961, p. 19)

And having made his point, Bloch pushes on quickly to the next. The reader is drawn into a process of exploration and discovery. Bloch was an impresario, manipulating involvement and detachment, playing each off against the other. The tone is urbane, distancing, drawing on our capacity for empathy, but not indulging it.

It is interesting to assess some of the other writers discussed, in terms of the way they handle the dialectic between involvement and detachment. Compared to Bloch, Neil Smelser in *Social Change and the Industrial Revolution* was insufficiently 'detached' from his model and insufficiently 'involved' with his data. The most important characteristic of his data, from Smelser's point of view as a structural-functionalist, was that it could be organized in terms of the prescribed model. This consideration placed severe limits on which relationships within the data could be explored. The imagination was shut off. Neil Smelser's analysis of the early English textile industry and its workers removed all danger from the past. It underplayed the pervasive vulnerability and uncertainty of the human situation. But if these aspects of life in the early textile towns are more fully taken into consideration, a quite different assessment of the family's 'functions' becomes plausible.

An alternative approach which illustrates this is found in Michael Anderson's *Family Structure in Nineteenth-Century Lancashire* (1971). Anderson was concerned with the consequences for kinship relations of industrialization in the cotton town of Preston in the early and mid-nineteenth century. Like Smelser, he looked at data relating to the family, labour market practices, friendly societies, and poor relief. However, he also considered factors, such as migration patterns and the use of lodging houses, neglected by the former. Anderson and Smelser both looked for the purposes served by social practices, and both emphasized the interdependence between different activities and institutions. However, Anderson did not work from the 'top down' like Smelser, who assumed the family's primary function was socialization and tension management. Instead, he worked from the 'bottom up', exploring the functions which kinship ties fulfilled for individuals in a variety of critical situations stemming from economic fluctuations (e.g. unemployment) and domestic life cycles (e.g. pregnancy).

Smelser emphasized the stabilizing function of collectively-enforced normative controls – apparently assuming that the moral order of the rural village could operate in the 'frontier towns' of the cotton boom. By contrast, Anderson stressed the situational logic implicit in individual calculative behaviour under conditions of insecurity and distrust. Society in the cotton towns was a volatile mix of kinfolk, neighbours and strangers. If you needed help quickly you probably went to a relative first, since he or she might feel a residual sense of obligation – but this was by no means the only option. In Anderson's view, kinship ties were not the basis of a new social equilibrium organized around the family as value-instiller and norm-enforcer, to paraphrase Smelser. On the contrary, Anderson found that in mid-century Preston such ties were

merely one part of a 'generalized exchange net' (p. 12), within which individuals made mainly short-term bargains with each other in times of need.

Returning briefly to Smelser, a distinctive feature of *Social Change and Industrial Revolution* was its covert assault upon Marxian historiography and, more generally, left-wing political ideology. This critique was largely implicit, but can be sensed throughout the text. Smelser concentrated on a stretch of history crucial to competing political myths. As you read, the suspicion grows that Smelser's intention was, in effect, to clear away an 'alien' ideology from a disputed strategic redoubt. Unfortunately, these undertones make the historical argument less convincing. They create nagging doubts about the author's objectivity, without actually surfacing as a clear message.

If that interpretation is correct, the 'scientist' and the 'advocate' are once more present in a single work. However, in the case of Smelser, unlike Bloch, they undermine rather than reinforce each other. Smelser comes over as a 'partisan expert witness' rather than an 'examining magistrate'. In this respect, he stands in the middle position on a dimension which has S. N. Eisenstadt, the 'scientist', and Seymour Martin Lipset, 'the advocate', at opposite ends.

In *The Political Systems of Empires*, Eisenstadt brought distant territory on to the cognitive map of social science. He showed that unfamiliar political structures exemplified discoverable regularities. Specific sequences of structural conflict or change were taken from their historical context and relocated, alongside similarly de-contextualized examples from other societies, in the appropriate boxes within his model. Unlike the analyses by Bloch, Elias and Bendix, Eisenstadt's argument takes little account of specific cultural forms, moral frameworks or political languages within different historical societies. Variations of this kind are collapsed into a dichotomy between embedded 'traditional' values and solidarities on the one hand and, on the other, 'autonomous' goals and 'free-floating' resources. Locating a social group or institution within such a dichotomy requires minimal involvement with the situations of individual or collective actors. Eisenstadt's model focuses upon contradictory principles of structure, not upon people coming to terms with dilemmas or engaged in acts of choice. However, these aspects of human action feed into processes of change, pushing them towards one possible option rather than another. The model's power to explain such processes is weakened by ignoring them.

If the uninvolved scientist neglects potentially valuable data about groups and institutions, the over-involved advocate risks becoming too closely identified with the point of view of specific groups and institu-

tions. When, in *The First New Nation*, Lipset referred to a 'world-wide totalitarian conspiracy seeking to upset political and economical development from within' (p. 91), he aligned himself clearly with an identifiable Cold War stance towards left-wing opposition, both inside and outside the United States. It is also significant that in a book preoccupied with egalitarian values, no more than three pages should be devoted to the situation of American Blacks. *The First New Nation* is infused with national pride. As far as Lipset was concerned, 'the fact that this New Nation has succeeded in fostering economic growth and democracy under the aegis of equalitarian values holds out hope for the rest of the world' (1963, p. 343). The book clearly advocates the American model as an ideal to be pursued by later 'new nations'.

To summarize, distinctions have been made between four ways of handling the relationship between involvement (the capacity to empathize with and evoke the situation of particular participants in specific historical situations) and detachment (the capacity to observe processes and relationships objectively, discounting political/moral commitments and emotion-laden responses). Four tendencies have been identified: an 'examining magistrate' is able to achieve a creative balance between involvement and detachment, each complementing the other; by contrast, in the case of the 'partisan expert witness' the author's involvement with a particular viewpoint limits his or her capacity to be detached, and/or the effort to be detached inhibits overt expression or cultivation of that viewpoint; the 'scientist' achieves a high degree of detachment, at the expense of involvement; by contrast, the 'advocate' expresses a high degree of involvement, at the expense of detachment.

At this point it is worth bringing in Bendix and contrasting him with both Eisenstadt and Lipset. Bendix is as sensitive to processes of structural differentiation as Eisenstadt, but has much greater interest in the way groups such as public officials and industrial managers define their situations and adopt strategies to manage them. He is as aware as Lipset of the benefits bestowed by democracy, but absolutely determined to remain uncommitted to political totems.

Bendix emphasized one aspect of western liberalism – belief in the rationality, or potential rationality, of human beings – and used it as a means to question all ideologies, East and West. His most powerful advocacy has been directed against the claims of science as a 'secular theodicy' (1984, p. 125). His most penetrating empirical investigations have been concerned with the ideologies employed by powerful groups to advocate their interests. The deepest empathy felt by Bendix is with the detached reasoner who has a strong concern for human interests

combined with a realistic perception of human vulnerability and gullibility. This category includes people like Norbert Elias and himself.

This analysis can be extended to other scholars examined in this book. It can be seen immediately from figure 5.2 that important work has been done by people working from each of the four perspectives just outlined. In fact, it is vital for the vigour of historical sociology as an intellectual field that all four should be represented. None should predominate. According to the analyses carried out in this present

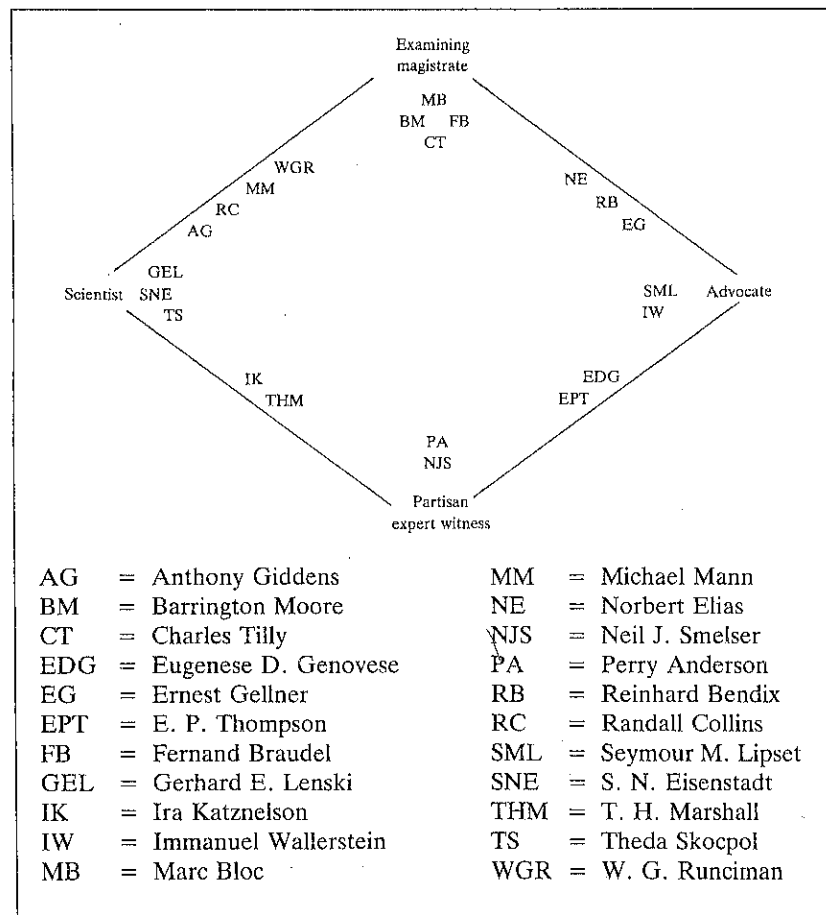


Figure 5.2 Involvement and detachment

work, the clearest examples of 'examining magistrates' are Marc Bloch, Barrington Moore, Charles Tilly, and Fernand Braudel. It is striking that none of them is closely or systematically identified with any single theoretical viewpoint. 'Partisan expert witnesses' are to be found on the left and the right. They include Neil Smelser and Perry Anderson (see, for example, Runciman, 1989c). Three 'scientists' are S. N. Eisenstadt, Gerhard E. Lenski and Theda Skocpol. Two 'advocates' are Seymour Martin Lipset and Immanuel Wallerstein, scholars with very different political commitments.

There are some interesting intermediate cases. E. P. Thompson and Eugene D. Genovese both set their work in an explicitly Marxian framework. In this respect they resemble Anderson. However, both Genovese and Thompson identify strongly with the interests of the subordinate groups they have researched. This gives their work the undertones of advocacy. By contrast, in the cases of T. H. Marshall and Ira Katznelson, what is striking is the extent to which they achieve detachment within roles (respectively, liberal English gentleman and American Marxist intellectual) which impose strong pressures for overt expressions of political and moral commitment.

Norbert Elias, Reinhard Bendix and Ernest Gellner are three 'examining magistrates' whose work also conveys a keen desire to convert readers to a particular philosophical or sociological position which they can then, hopefully, exemplify in their own lives. Gellner is, on the surface at least, the most laid-back. However, works like *Thought and Change* (1965) and *Plough, Sword and Book* (1988) are sprinkled with warnings, advice and implicit invitations to consider political implications. The tone is urbane but urgent. Elias and Bendix are more evangelical. To oversimplify radically, Bendix is promoting reason against ideology, Elias sociology against fear and fantasy.

Finally, Michael Mann, W. G. Runciman, Randall Collins and Anthony Giddens all develop theoretical positions which combine detachment with full recognition of the part played by the perceptions, feelings and meanings of actors within social situations. Their views on methodology locate them with the 'examining magistrates'. However, they rarely deploy 'on the ground' (so to speak) in particular historical analyses the practical skills of combining involvement and detachment displayed by Bloch, Moore, Braudel or Tilly. This is not a comment on their capacity to do so: see, for example, Giddens on public executions, Mann on Tiberius Gracchus, Runciman on life in the Suez Canal Zone, and Collins on status competition in America.³ It is, rather, a matter of choices made with regard to the use of intellectual energy.

The four 'examining magistrates' have all shown less interest than

Collins, Giddens, Runciman and Mann in developing coherent theoretical approaches. To oversimplify radically once again, Bloch, Moore, Braudel and Tilly have all tried to give coherence to as much empirical complexity as possible. By contrast, Giddens and Collins have tried to conceptualize as many dimensions or aspects of social reality as possible, within coherent theories. So have Mann and Runciman. However, the last-named, each preoccupied with the problem of power in society, have a still more ambitious goal. On the one hand, unlike the four 'examining magistrates', they do not want to sacrifice theoretical coherence to empirical comprehensiveness. On the other hand, unlike Giddens and Collins, they do not want to give up empirical comprehensiveness on behalf of theoretical coherence.

Exploration, generalization and theory

Turning to a further aspect of this intellectual field, it is possible to distinguish within it three activities: primary exploration of specific historical situations which have wider implications for understanding diversity and change; empirical generalizations which draw upon the explorations of others and refer, implicitly or explicitly, to theoretical issues; and systematic theorizing about processes of historical change, drawing upon the results of historical explorations and empirical generalizations to a greater or lesser degree (see figure 5.3).⁴

The interests of some scholars tend to veer towards one of the three points of the triangle, while still being 'in touch' with the aspects of historical sociology represented by the other two points. The work of others oscillates between two points of the triangle.⁵

The line between social theory and historical exploration is the one most ridden with tension. Work in this area is liable to be criticized by historians worried that inappropriate theories will be foisted on them.⁶ Residual antagonism between historians and sociologists upon this front 'remains part of the informal academic culture', a guerilla war fought out 'in *sotto voce* comments in university staff bars' (McLennan, 1984, p. 139).⁷

This diffuse clash of academic cultures took a more specific form during the 1970s over the issue of structuralism. Louis Althusser's version of Marxism insisted on the need to cleanse social theory of 'historicism'. It called for a complete separation between the empirical study of phenomena in historical time and the formulation of concepts. It was deeply ironic that the historian E. P. Thompson's attack on Althusser and his supporters within sociology should introduce conflict

between two disciplines whose mainstream traditions were both unsympathetic to structuralism.⁸

The historical sociologists examined in this book are spread fairly evenly between the three points of the triangle shown in figure 5.3. The inner triangle includes nine scholars who have incorporated large amounts of all three activities in their work, sometimes with a bias towards one or two of them. The particular location of individuals within these triangles is based only on the works considered in this present book. Almost all the people considered have done important

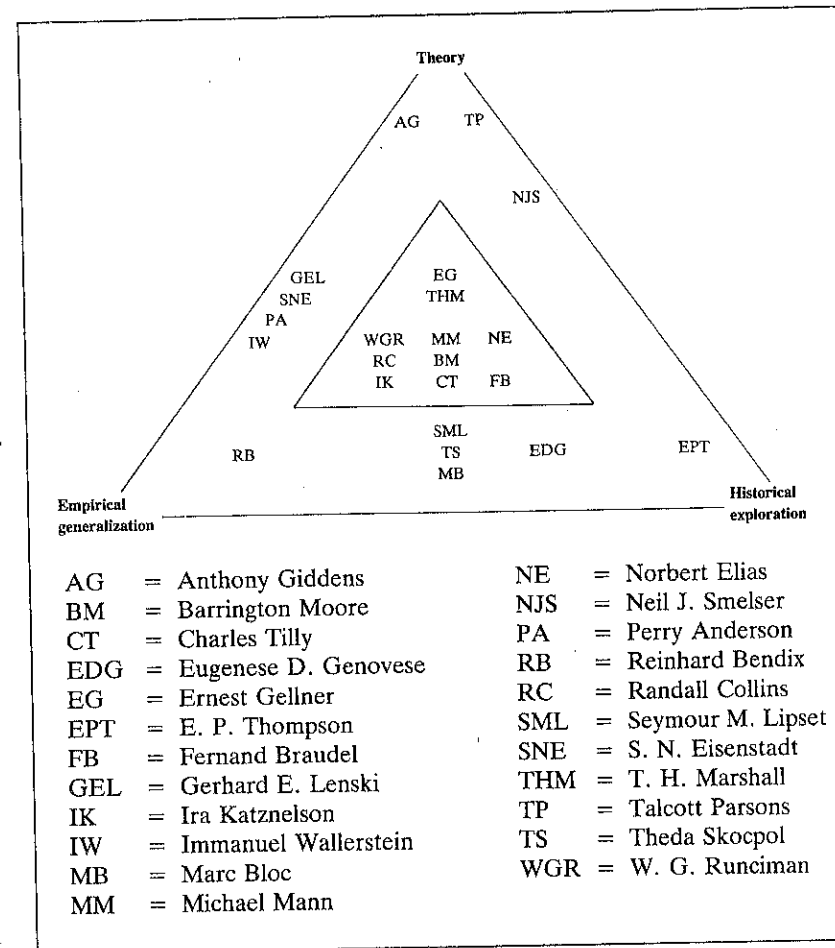


Figure 5.3 Exploration, generalization and theory

work with other emphases. For example, Giddens has been involved in empirical research on elites (Giddens and Stanworth, 1974). However, such work is not taken into account here.

Not surprisingly, it can be recorded that Anthony Giddens and Talcott Parsons have a marked inclination towards theory construction, Reinhard Bendix towards empirical generalizations, and E. P. Thompson towards historical exploration. Lipset, Skocpol and Bloch all combine empirical generalization and historical exploration in roughly equal measure in their major works. Genovese has been more inclined to undertake empirical generalizations than Thompson. Anderson, Wallerstein, Eisenstadt and Lenski encompass theory and empirical generalization. Smelser's *Social Change and the Industrial Revolution* falls on the axis of theory and historical exploration. The inner triangle includes Braudel, Collins, Elias, Gellner, Katznelson, Mann, Moore, Marshall and Runciman.

Strategies of explanation

Four strategies of explanation recur throughout the works that have been explored here. These strategies emphasize, respectively: competitive selection, system contradictions, infrastructural capacities, and dominant routes of societal change. Figure 5.4 locates a number of historical sociologists according to which of these strategies they rely upon most heavily in the particular works discussed in this book. Smelser, for example, assumes that social change always follow a particular seven-stage sequence (A in figure 5.4). That is the strictest form of the 'dominant route' type of explanation. More typical is the strategy of identifying the origins and distinctive characteristics of a social configuration which typically produces the outcome you are particularly interested in; and contrasting it with the origins and distinctive characteristics of other social configurations which fail to produce this outcome. Both Moore's *Social Origins* and Anderson's *Passages—Lineages* sequence have this character.

Both are built upon dichotomies – in one case, between democracy and dictatorship (Moore), in the other between two kinds of absolutism developed in, respectively, Eastern Europe and Western Europe (Anderson). These dichotomies dominate the works. The main text of *Lineages* is divided almost equally between East and West. In *Social Origins*, the three case studies of democracy (England, France, United States) take up the same amount of space (152 pages) as the two studies devoted to dictatorship in the forms of fascism (Japan) and communism

(China). The long chapter on India concerns a society that is difficult to locate in terms of the previous analysis of democracy's social origins.

Barrington Moore and Perry Anderson both use comparison in at least two ways: first to indicate the unique character of each national case; and second, to produce generalizations which refer to several

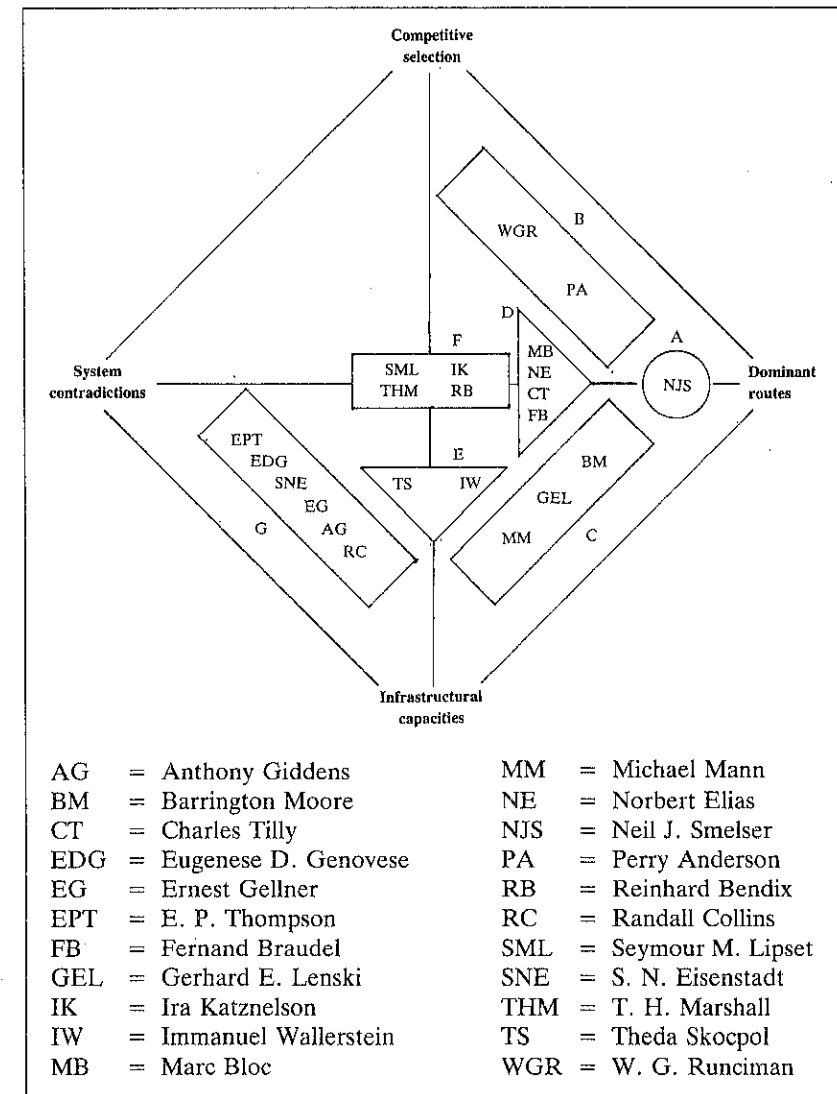


Figure 5.4 Strategies of explanation

cases, e.g. the class/state configurations leading to democracy, fascism and communism (Moore), and the different varieties of absolutism prevailing in Eastern Europe and Western Europe (Anderson). *Social Origins* begins roughly where *Lineages of the Absolutist State* ends. Anderson focuses upon the conditions for the rise of a specific mode of production in the wake of the breakdown of the Roman Empire, Moore upon the conditions for the rise of a specific social class in the wake of the breakdown of the agrarian social order. In both cases, a specific configuration carried the vital 'seed', so to speak. The sequence feudalism-absolutism was the necessary precondition for capitalism (Anderson). Where the bourgeoisie achieved a dominant position within the polity, democracy ensued (Moore).

In each case, the argument about dominant routes is complemented by another explanatory strategy. Anderson incorporates evolutionist assumptions about the relative propensity of competing polities to become feudal (and, later, capitalist). He meets Runciman coming the other way, so to speak (B in figure 5.4). As has been seen, the 'old question' of why Europe became capitalist while other parts of the world did not – a version of the 'dominant route' approach – hovers in the background of the second volume of his *Treatise*.

Moore pays great attention to the infrastructural capacities of dominant and subordinate classes within agrarian polities, especially their ability to revolt and repress, respectively. Travelling in this direction, he encounters Mann coming the other way (C in figure 5.4). The latter's analysis of the sources of social power – crudely, the means available for getting things done – was open-ended. In order to 'close it down' and reduce the wide range of potential empirical analyses that could be conducted, Mann engaged in a search for the origins of European dynamism. As with Runciman, Weber's 'old question' continued to cast its spell.

A third occupant of this location between 'infrastructural capacities' and 'dominant routes' is Lenski. His *Power and Privilege* sketches an evolutionary pathway whose stages are distinguished with reference to the means of producing material surpluses. There is also a clutch of scholars – Elias, Bloch, Braudel, and Tilly (D in figure 5.4) – who each interweave three elements: a view of social life as a competition for survival, an emphasis on the power balances arising from infrastructural capacities, and a strong sense of direction in historical change (as expressed in, respectively, the civilizing process, the movement from the first to the second feudal ages, the shift from city-states to national states, and the increasing dominance of capitalized coercion).

By contrast, Wallerstein in *The Modern World-System*, and Skocpol in *States and Social Revolutions*, each combine the following: an emph-

asis on a single historical route, a concern for infrastructural capacities and a stress on system contradictions – focusing in one case upon agrobureaucratic states (Skocpol), and, in the other, upon the modern world-system (Wallerstein). Furthermore, both are interested in the interplay between intra-societal and inter-societal relations, with special regard to the involvement of class actors and the state (E in figure 5.4). Skocpol stresses military conflicts between states, Wallerstein economic relations between national bourgeoisies. Skocpol interprets past social revolutions as being the outcome of contradictions within agrobureaucratic societies exacerbated by pressure *from outside*, exerted by foreign states. Wallerstein foresees a future revolution as being the outcome of contradictions within the world-system exacerbated by pressure *from within*, exerted by antisystemic movements.

Although both minimize the part played by human volition in shaping the character of historical transformations, both nevertheless accept that groups can consciously alter their situation by mobilizing resources and responding positively to their situation – as in the case of revolutionary elites strengthening the state apparatus to defend their political position (Skocpol) or national bourgeoisies in the semiperiphery strengthening the state apparatus in order to move into the core.

Finally, there are two other clusters. One includes Marshall, Bendix, Lipset and Katznelson (F in figure 5.4). They all trace the 'unfolding' of the citizen-state relationship, identifying the main routes followed. Each focuses on contradictions within the process, such as the tension between citizenship and social class (Marshall), the authority crises brought about by modernization (Bendix), conflicts between the values dominant in the polity and economy (Lipset), and the divisions of a 'split consciousness' (Katznelson).⁹ The other cluster includes Thompson, Genovese, Eisenstadt, Gellner, Collins and Giddens (G in figure 5.4). The explanatory strategies of these scholars all give a large place to the internal logic of empires, nation-states, class situations, global orders, and other kinds of 'system'. Their analyses indicate the resulting tensions and possibilities for transformation, including, on the one hand, the access of various groups to 'free-floating' resources or other means of facilitating human action and, on the other hand, the systemic limitations within which structuration occurs.

Historical sociology and capitalist democracy

So far, some important internal tensions within historical sociology have been identified with respect to established/outsider orientations, involvement and detachment, methodological approaches and strategies of

<i>Phase I</i>	Power and value conflicts marginalized.	Democracy expounded.
<i>Phase II</i>	Power and value conflicts rediscovered.	Democracy exposed.
<i>Phase III</i>	Power explored.	Capitalism explored and exposed.
<i>Phase IV</i>	Values explored.	Democracy re-examined.

Figure 5.5 Values, power and capitalist democracy

explanation. Now it is time to return to the content of the works examined, taking an overall view. Two arguments are to be developed. First, that the question of capitalist democracy's acceptability and viability links work in all three phases of post-war historical sociology. Second, that political and ideological changes within Western capitalist democracies and in their external relations have helped shape the problematic of historical sociology in successive phases. See figure 5.5.

The first phase: democracy expounded

After World War II, the American way dominated. It was heavily promoted through the mass media, with the willing cooperation of intellectuals. The ideal was a strong consensus based on emotional commitment and rational assent to a self-evidently just social order offering equality of opportunity. This ideal shaped a sociological perspective which assumed that within advanced industrial societies, especially as they became more like the United States, mutual adjustment was to be expected between, on the one hand, integrating national values and, on the other hand, the needs and demands arising within increasingly differentiated institutions and groups. Social systems usually solved the problems that were set for them. Capitalist democracy worked. These assumptions informed the work of Parsons, Smelser and Lipset.

What happened when processes of differentiation produced discordance between legitimizing values and the perceived interests of specific groups? Answers to this were: social systems readjusted as a matter of course (Smelser); stable conflict (e.g. the two-party system) would reinforce consensus (Lipset); it largely depended on the resources controlled by groups in strategic structural locations (Eisenstadt).

Eisenstadt's major work from this period was on pre-industrial empires, not capitalist democracy (although he had some relevant comments, as has been seen). In fact, structural-functionalist analyses of capitalist democracy paid little attention to the content of fundamental value-related disputes between groups, or the part played by power in settling them.

T. H. Marshall's essay 'Citizenship and social class' (1963d) originally appeared the year before Parsons's *The Social System* (1951). What links Marshall and Parsons is that both took seriously the official ideology of capitalist democracy as a description of the prevailing economic order and political order in Britain and the United States, respectively. In one recent critique, Parsons's vision of 'the evolutionary development of western society, towards freedom from the grip of tradition, the constraints of kinship and the dominance of hierarchies based upon ascribed, particularistic criteria has been described as 'an extension and application of Marshall's analysis of citizenship' (Holton and Turner, 1986, p. 22).

Like Lipset in *The First New Nation*, Marshall saw a conflict between equality through citizenship, and inequality through the market. Lipset treated this tension as being manageable with relative ease, as did Morris Janowitz a decade and a half later (Janowitz, 1980, pp. 21–2), but Marshall was more aware of its disruptive potential. Reinhard Bendix, who drew on Marshall's analysis, saw not only – like Marshall – that system contradictions reduced the efficiency of institutions (e.g. education), but also that conflicts of values frequently coincided with lines of group differentiation (e.g. between employers and workers, or between aristocrats and industrialists).

Societies undergoing industrialization or political modernization did not always 'handle' these conflicts in ways that led to stable capitalist democracy. In this first phase, Bendix was one of the few articulate mainstream critics within American historical sociology of the prevailing structural-functionalist approach. This approach paid little attention to group conflict, value differences, and the systematic use of power advantages to enforce domination. It was not possible to dismiss Bendix as a prejudiced left-winger, a tactic adopted by the establishment when dealing with C. Wright Mills.¹⁰

The second phase: democracy exposed

Work by four historical sociologists helped to reorientate the academic culture. None was decisive, but their cumulative impact eased the transition between the first and second phases. Two books appearing in

1966, by G. E. Lenski and W. G. Runciman respectively, dealt with social stratification as the major source of inequality within societies. In *Power and Privilege*, Lenski emphasized the part played by power as opposed to need in regulating social stratification. His approach challenged Parsons, by asserting that societies were very imperfect systems with a large measure of coercion and conflict. Meanwhile, in *Relative Deprivation and Social Justice*, Runciman drew attention to the way inequality was perceived by members of a society. In particular, he made two points. First, these perceptions were frequently at odds with reality. Second, existing patterns of inequality were, in many respects, invalid according to criteria of social justice.¹¹ Through the work of Lenski and Runciman, the assumption that social order – and particularly capitalist democracy – was built upon spontaneous acceptance of transparently justifiable norms was undermined. Their books helped to make ‘power’ and ‘values’ available as terms within critical analyses, sensitive to coercion and injustice.

Meanwhile, knowledge of Marc Bloch and Norbert Elias began to percolate into English-speaking academic culture during the 1960s. In the case of Bloch, publication of his *Feudal Society* (1961) was important. Although *The Civilizing Process* (1978a; 1982a) had not yet been published in Britain or the United States, Elias’s approach was influential in the provincial university which became the major provider of sociology teachers in British higher education. The pace and extent of the spread of the Eliasian perspective should not be exaggerated. However, along with Bloch’s work, Elias’s teaching drew attention to the fears and vulnerabilities of human beings participating in complex and dynamic networks of interdependence; and the way the shaping of cultural meanings and psychic traits was bound up with changing power balances within these configurations. Neither Bloch nor Elias regarded ‘integrating values’ or political ideologies as a datum handed down by the ‘system’.

Books by Barrington Moore and E. P. Thompson demonstrated the effectiveness of such a critical approach (Moore, 1969; Thompson, 1968). Each demonstrated, in different ways, the violent character of capitalist democracy’s past. In other work they extended the critique to argue that modern capitalist democracies were ‘predatory’ (Moore, 1972, pp. 105ff) or ‘parasitical’ (Thompson, 1978b, pp. 48–9), treating citizens as victims. The distance between work by Smelser and Thompson, and between Lipset and Moore, dramatically shows the change that occurred in historical sociology in the early and mid-1960s.¹² Not surprisingly, there were links with the previous phase. For example, the issue of paternalism explored by Bendix recurred in Genovese’s work

on plantation society.¹³ However, Genovese was interested in its repressive aspects, rather than its capacity to foster social integration. Like Marshall, Ira Katznelson examined the impact of social differentiation on the development of civil and political rights. Katznelson, too, saw divergent trends at work in these separate spheres. However, his focus was not the implications for system integration, but the consequences for class consciousness.¹⁴

The third phase: capitalism explored and exposed

Marxian historians such as Thompson and Genovese had concentrated on digging out the experiences and perceptions of subordinate groups whose existence was ignored or neglected by established ideology. They used values embedded in democratic citizenship – especially the right to freedom and fulfilment – as a touchstone for a trenchant critique of actual practice. By the mid-1970s, some practitioners of Marxian historical sociology were becoming bolder. They wanted to fill the vacuum left after the crumbling of structural-functionalism, by developing an alternative world-encompassing system.

Immanuel Wallerstein began his enterprise of charting the course of the capitalist world-economy. Perry Anderson mapped the evolution of the feudal mode of production across several countries and epochs. The emphasis changed in the implicit debate within historical sociology on the nature of capitalist democracy. The centre of attention moved away from democracy and towards capitalism, away from the national and towards the international.

However, Marxian approaches had to come to terms with and, increasingly, give way before two tendencies: first, exploration of the active contribution made by relatively autonomous state apparatuses in their civic and military guises to the shaping of capitalist society; and second, a greater readiness to treat economic, political and other forms of coercion as alternative expressions of ‘power’ – without privileging any particular form of power within theoretical explanations. Contributions by Theda Skocpol, Charles Tilly, Fernand Braudel, Michael Mann and Anthony Giddens all moved the centre of gravity in this direction.¹⁵

In fact, these developments reacted on Wallerstein’s project. As Michael Mann pointed out in a review of the third volume of *The Modern World System*, Wallerstein laid great stress upon the military progress of the geopolitical contest between the French and the British in the late eighteenth century. The British were successful: ‘It was these politico-military victories that critically increased the economic gaps – in

agriculture, in industry, in trade and in finance' (Wallerstein, 1989a, pp. 112–13). Mann's response to this passage conveys the flavour of the debate under way in the 1980s:

If Wallerstein has an economic explanation for political-military victories, he keeps it very quiet . . . [His] general drift is against it, since he is particularly concerned to argue that the British were not more economically powerful than the French at the beginning of their rivalry, only at the end and as a *consequence* of military rivalry. He has conceded game-set-and-match to writers like Skocpol, Tilly and me, who argue against Marxists and for the critical importance of political-military power relations in social development. Actually, we don't argue it as strongly as he does, for we all (in different ways) give a greater explanatory role to domestic class relations and the level of development of the domestic economy. We have been outflanked by a more committed militarist!. (1990, p. 198; emphasis in original)

Mann welcomed Wallerstein's stress on international connectedness, but discounted his economic reductionism.¹⁶ This aspect of Marxism, the insistence upon the priority of economics, has an element of mystification about it. In fact, a steady onslaught against mystifications of many kinds had been under way since the late 1970s. For example (to mention only authors considered here), Marxist theories of class and revolution, technocratic myths about education, American urban reform programmes in the 1960s and early 1970s, romantic myths of nationhood, Russian imperialism, and the market theory of value had all come under the whip.¹⁷ This process has not been anxiety-free. Illusions are being destroyed in the name of rationality – but what are they to be replaced with?

The fourth phase: democracy re-examined

The protest movements in Eastern Europe and the USSR during the late 1980s certainly put the West European and American movements of two decades before into perspective. The earlier movements raised consciousness and stimulated some legislative change, especially for Blacks and women. But the latter toppled governments.

It is relevant to stress one similarity and one difference between the 1960s and 1980s. On the one hand, the later movement was in many respects a continuation of the earlier one. The main actors were in both cases drawn from the white- and blue-collar sections of the population.

These groups were represented, with varying effectiveness, by the 'intelligentsia' and union leaders. Between the 1960s and the 1980s the slogans changed – from student power, black power and female liberation to *perestroika*, *glasnost*, and 'Gorby' – but not the underlying issues. In both periods, the principal target was abuse of power, and the main demand fulfilment of the rights of citizenship.

On the other hand, the repertoire of political responses to these demands was quite different from two decades before. In the 1960s the big winner in the West, for a while at least, was the socialist dream of non-repressive communitarian togetherness in its many utopian guises. It did not last. Over the medium term, materialism and individualism triumphed. Thatcher and Reagan represented a return to populist capitalism, evoking Victorian values and the open frontier. Neither of these two responses – the communitarian and the individualistic – was so readily available in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The moral force of Marxism was shattered by the progressive liberalization of Soviet Russia, and successful uprisings against communism in Eastern Europe. This occurred at the very point when the free-market rhetoric of the Thatcher–Reagan *entente* during the 1980s was losing its self-confidence.

Conventional ideological explanations which used to handle the problems of power, morality and human experience have been undermined. However, people have certainly not abandoned their concern for human interests – what is 'good', 'just', 'fulfilling' and so on. They have discarded one set of answers but not forgotten the questions. On the contrary, they do not want to be sucked into an ethical vacuum. Widespread support for 'green' lifestyles shows how unattractive many find a world of amoral individualism and cynical geopolitics.

The disintegration of the Russian empire has raised the question: what kinds of economic and political entities are going to take shape in Europe over the next twenty years? This is the same question that was being asked in 1918 after the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian, Ottoman and German empires. The eventual outcome on that occasion was disadvantageous for European humanity. Historical sociology itself was one of the casualties. In the 1990s, the socialist utopia is an unwanted import in Europe. Meanwhile, the costs of exporting the American Dream are becoming prohibitive for the United States. That leaves the German Dream and the Japanese Dream. Germany and Japan have been very efficient capitalist societies, but their record as democracies is less promising. In these circumstances, it would not be surprising if sociologists, historians and others in the West began to explore the meaning and potential of democracy.

In fact, a critical re-examination of democracy as a political model is well under way. It still seems to be what most people want, especially if it can be shorn of any fanatical excesses. This may explain why, after years of neglect, Parsons and Marshall became fashionable again in the late 1980s. Since the 1950s, the reputations of Parsons and Marshall have undergone dramatic fluctuations. Both were pushed into the background during the second wave of historical sociology inaugurated by the great success of works by E. P. Thompson and Barrington Moore. By comparison, Parsons and Marshall seemed to be unreasonably bland and optimistic. Parsons, especially, was the object of attack, for example at the hands of Daniel Foss (1963) and Alvin Gouldner (1971).

However, during the 1980s, Parsons and Marshall have attracted new attention – much of it of a positive kind.¹⁸ Without lapsing into free-market formulae, Parsons and Marshall took very seriously both the aspirations and the difficulties of capitalist democratic ideology. Their revival in the 1980s stems from the need to find a convincing replacement for existing versions of this ideology. These have become very threadbare, whether looking back to John Maynard Keynes or Adam Smith.¹⁹

To focus, for the moment, on Marshall, the revived interest in his ideas surfaced a few years after his death in 1981. As has already been noticed, both Mann and Giddens found it useful to debate with the ghost of Marshall. Both were critical. Others, such as Brian S. Turner and David Held have been more enthusiastic.²⁰ A. H. Halsey has argued that Marshall's analysis provides a way of developing the part played by the state, the professions and local community organizations in providing moral regulation of social stratification (Halsey, 1984, p. 14).²¹ One interpretation of this suggestion is that means might be found through citizenship to move towards social justice, with proper regard for need.²²

One academic who has taken very seriously his professional obligation with respect to citizenship is Morris Janowitz. He found Marshall's argument 'highly persuasive' (Janowitz, 1980, p. 4), especially his insistence that citizenship rights should be balanced by duties. Janowitz offered a number of refinements, especially in four areas – taxation, education, military service, and the promotion of community welfare – where the obligations of citizenship were particularly relevant. In each case, current practice was inadequate and some of Marshall's expectations pitched too low, in Janowitz's view. The taxpayer's obligations should include active efforts to influence patterns of governmental expenditure. Education should overcome, rather than reinforce, narrow

ethnic loyalties. Its object should be to create 'effective national identification and an operative sense of citizenship' (p. 13; emphasis in original). Military participation should be informed by the ideal of 'the citizen soldier' (p. 16), Britain being more advanced than the United States in this respect.

Finally, Marshall had underestimated the strength and significance of voluntary organizations. Unfortunately, such organizations tended to be more concerned with rights than obligations. They were 'highly localistic and narrow in territorial scope' (p. 17). Janowitz was in favour of more effective representation of voluntary bodies at the regional and national levels (Janowitz, 1978; Janowitz and Suttles, 1978; Smith, 1988a). This was at least as important as trade union organization – which should, in any case, be complemented by wide-ranging citizen representation in private industry and public corporations. A process of institution-building was needed to promote 'moral consciousness' (Janowitz, 1980, p. 22).²³

The debate has drawn in analysts of 'Marshall's war between citizenship and social class' (Marshall *et al.*, 1985, p. 279).²⁴ It has also produced the suggestion that, properly understood, citizenship should mean 'taking the growth of job tenure rights not just as an unfortunate rigidity, but as an opportunity for developing a sense of community in business enterprises' (Dore, 1983, p. 480).²⁵ The list of contributors could be extended, but a more important point is that the renewed interest in models of capitalist democracy extends far beyond Marshall's work.²⁶ What contribution can historical sociologists make to this enterprise of rethinking capitalist democracy?

In fact, their 'infrastructural capacity' has grown considerably in recent years. During the 1970s and early 1980s historical sociologists made their way into established positions throughout higher education. As they settled into their tenured posts, a debate was under way about the condition of public culture and education.²⁷ History was a major battleground. Journalists and politicians told historians they had a responsibility to promote national values under threat. Official committees in both the United States and Britain reported on history teaching in schools.²⁸

In this heightened atmosphere, a major breakthrough into the mass market occurred during the late 1980s: historical sociology found its way on to the airport bookstalls. Two prominent examples were Simon Schama's *The Embarrassment of Riches. An Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age* (1987), and Paul Kennedy's *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers* (1988) (subtitled 'Economic change and military conflict from 1500 to 2000'). Both books rapidly became international

bestsellers. Apart from the professional skills of their authors, why should this be so?

A new audience for historical sociology

Simon Schama's book was about Dutch culture in the 'golden age' of Rembrandt and the Baroque. His theme – 'the anxieties of super abundance' (1987, p. xi) – had a very modern ring. North Americans in the late twentieth century were bound to warm to his description of the seventeenth-century Dutch temperament. It was reassuring to read about a stable human-sized society in which the 'embarrassment of riches' was successfully managed. Dutch culture was suffused with patriotism and morality. The Dutch approach to life reconciled world empire with small-town domestic happiness. Its virtues and obsessions were shaped by puritanism, trading habits and the struggle for national independence. The echoes of New England (and New Amsterdam) are clear. The Dutch remained true to themselves: 'in the acid test of allegiance and sacrifice in a murderous and terrifying war, in the burden of heavy taxes, and in the perennial alarms and anxieties that hung around Dutch diplomacy, their belief in themselves as a common tribe held firm' (Schama, 1987, p. 567).

Since then, Schama has enjoyed even greater success with his *Citizens. A Chronicle of the French Revolution* (1989). This is a dazzling work, with the pace of a thriller. It mixes erudition with wit, marrying enormous scope with sharp detail. The immediate point, however, is that having evoked the homely origins of modern capitalist culture in the Netherlands, Schama went on to explore the violent birth of political democracy in France. This choice of subjects illustrates a wider pattern, linking the resurgence of historical sociology to the troubles of transatlantic capitalist democracy.

To return to *The Embarrassment of Riches*, it provided an optimistic model for hegemonic powers under threat. When the Dutch empire declined, Dutch 'moral geography' stayed the same. Inhabitants of the Netherlands remained 'adrift between the fear of the deluge and the hope of moral salvage, in the tidal ebb and flow between worldliness and homeliness, between the gratification of appetite and its denial, between the conditional consecration of wealth and perdition in its surfeit' (p. 609). The moral struggle continued. It was intrinsic to being Dutch – as it is to being American. Schama's book put American and other English-speaking heirs of the puritan tradition back in touch with their cultural predecessors in early modern Europe.

The Dutch belonged to a 'first new nation' which had remained true to itself.²⁹ They were admirable and likeable. Schama did not draw any explicit parallel between Dutch experience and American ideals. He may even have been unconscious of it.³⁰ However, the comparison was implicit in the enterprise and had much to do with the book's appeal.

Paul Kennedy's book dealt with another aspect of imperial decline. He covered strategy and economics in the pre-industrial world, the industrial era and the post-war scene of today and tomorrow. Kennedy concluded:

... it has been a common dilemma facing previous 'number-one' countries that even as their relative economic strength is ebbing, the growing foreign challenges to their position have compelled them to allocate more and more of their resources into the military sector, which in turn squeezes out productive investment and, over time, leads to the downward spiral of slower growth, heavier taxes, deepening domestic splits over spending priorities, and a weakening capacity to bear the burdens of defence. If this, indeed, is the pattern of history, one is tempted to paraphrase Shaw's deadly serious quip and say: 'Rome fell; Babylon fell; Scarsdale's turn will come'. (Kennedy, 1988, p. 689).

The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers argued that national decline was part of the natural way of things. Nothing much could be done about it. We could understand what was happening, but there was no way we could alter the intrinsic logic of the rise and fall of nations.

Critics had mixed feelings about the book, contrasting it unfavourably with his previous work.³¹ Michael Mann and Anthony Giddens both pointed out that Kennedy ignored the part played by alliances in mediating the rise and fall of great powers. Samuel P. Huntington's rebuttal was one of many.³² In Immanuel Wallerstein's opinion, Kennedy's book 'merely provides us with the homespun wisdom of a sage observer' (1989d, p. 340). However, it was wisdom with a huge popular following.

In fact Schama's and Kennedy's books both reached over the heads of specialist academic critics, to the public at large. They appealed strongly to American and British readers trying to come to terms with diminishing national power. It is fascinating that this larger audience should have been discovered in the later years of the Reagan–Thatcher decade, an era when the ethos of government was at best indifferent, and at worst hostile, to the models and theories developed in historical sociology. This neglect by government is ironic in view of the large amount of attention historical sociologists have paid to the development of capital-

ism, political culture, citizenship, social policy, nationalism and the modern state.

What should be the relationship between historical sociologists and their audience? Who should this audience be? One approach to these issues may be illustrated from the classic era of historical sociology. When the first volume of David Hume's *History of England* (Hume, 1983) appeared in 1754, it had a very rough ride. As Hume later recorded, he had stood above party politics and 'neglected present power, interest, and authority, and the cry of popular prejudices'. The result was 'one cry of reproach, disapprobation, and even detestation; English, Scotch, and Irish, Whig and Tory, churchman and sectary, freethinker and religionist, patriot and courtier, united in their rage' (Hume, 1987b, p. xxxvii). However, despite the opposition of so many vested interests the project was not abandoned. Later volumes were better received. When the completed version was published in 1762 it was an 'instant best seller' (Phillipson, 1989, p. 137). It went through five editions in its first fourteen years, then fifty more in the half-century after that. The completed version of the history was not only popular, as has been seen, but also scholarly, relevant and detached.

Hume's book was written for responsible members of the political nation. In his view, it was essential that people should be able to think critically about their own private interests and the public interest. Nicolas Phillipson has summarized this approach. Hume's history

... is written for those who are curious about their past, and want to rethink the stories they have been told about the world they have lost. He sets agenda for those who want to discuss the past seriously; he provides the data and sets the contexts in which great events took place; he provides intellectual tools which are worthy of intelligent people; and invites his readers to exercise their own judgement about the significance of these events in their own ways and their own time. (Phillipson, 1989, pp. 140-1)

Hume treated his readers neither as a 'market', nor as a political 'constituency', but as fellow citizens. This provides a worthwhile model for modern historical sociology.

The future of the past

The best contribution historical sociology could make in the 1990s would be the discovery and dissemination of knowledge relevant to the

development of capitalist democracy, even if this meant a diversion of attention from the discussion of philosophies of history. It is worth making this last point, since the mutual attraction between sociology and philosophy is so strong at present, not least in the most recent instances of historical sociology in the grand manner.³³ Giddens comments, 'There is a range of issues - to do with agency, intentionality, structure and meaning - about which it would be difficult to say whether they should properly be called "philosophical" or "sociological"'. He adds that such concepts are 'only of enduring value if they usefully help guide the practice of empirical research' (1987d, p. 72). This last comment must be regarded as more than a routine disclaimer. In fact, if historical sociology is to make a useful contribution to the debate about capitalist democracy, attention has to be paid to specific forms of human agency, specific intentions, particular structures, and particular meanings. John Hall has recently argued that there is a need for more 'philosophic history' whose 'concern is with distinguishing different types of society and explaining the transitions from one type to another in order thereby to reflect systematically on the nature of power and human life chances' (Hall, 1986, p. 3). He is right. However, the 'history' is as important as the 'philosophy'. In other words, detached reasoning must be closely related to empirical work, to historical exploration informed but not dominated by current debates in theory and the empirical generalizations being made by other scholars.³⁴ The ability of historical sociologists to make a contribution to the current debate on capitalist democracy will be increased if they are producing relevant knowledge. To cite an obvious example, the authority of Ronald Dore's contribution to this debate is greatly enhanced by his detailed research into the development of Japanese society.³⁵

In fact, there are two related issues. On the one hand, more knowledge is needed. On the other hand, it should be communicated more widely within and between societies. Both matters are urgent, especially for the British and Americans. These two nations have, in turn, enjoyed the experience of global supremacy in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. As a consequence they are known by the world far better than they, in turn, know that world. To use an analogy, the slave always has to know his or her master, in order to maximize the chances for survival. The master can enjoy the luxury of ignorance - at least until his throat is cut. It is ironic that the British, at least, currently know and understand the Germans as little, or perhaps even less, than they know and understand the Japanese.

During the 1990s historical sociology can make a major contribution to a more informed and open-minded civic culture. It has the potential

to demonstrate by its achievements the practical value of investigating the past and carrying out systematic comparisons across time and space, drawing out similarities and differences, tracing long-term processes, seeking out causes and pursuing effects, indicating the way people shape and are shaped by the institutions which bind them together and keep them apart. Hopefully, it may offer a route to increased understanding and more effective action through rational, critical and imaginative inquiry.

Historical sociology can help citizens understand how opportunity structures and ways of life have been shaped and may, in some respects at least, be reshaped. To recall an image from the first chapter, the reality-testing function of historical sociology can help us distinguish between open doors and brick walls. It can also show us that some walls, at least, are temporary – as in Berlin.

Historical sociology may even help to introduce more rationality into popular understanding of relations between states, displacing the fantasy and fear which currently prevail. This leads to a more general point. For a long time capitalist democracies such as Britain and the United States have survived (some would say thrived upon) widespread ignorance and prejudice within their populations. This possibility is being progressively undermined as industrial competitiveness demands ever higher levels of education and training. The raising of education levels has implications for citizenship as well as productivity. The educated worker wants to know what he or she is working for, just as the educated soldier wants to know why he or she is fighting. Historical sociology should be ready to help fill the gap – not by providing pre-packaged answers but by indicating relevant questions, relevant evidence and rational ways of bringing them together. The case has been well made by Reinhard Bendix:

Social scientists should have an abiding faith in human reason . . . This is a more humane creed than a concern with improving the techniques of social manipulation. It is the only position worthy of the great intellectual traditions in which they stand. It is the baseline of the intellectual defense against the threat of totalitarianism. (Bendix, 1984, p. 127; emphasis in original)

Notes

NOTES TO CHAPTER 1

- 1 See Adorno *et al.*, 1964.
- 2 See Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979; Smith, 1988a; Banks, 1989, pp. 521–3; Collini, 1979.
- 3 Knapp, 1984, p. 51; Hunt, 1989, p. 1; Calhoun, 1987, p. 615; Hall, 1989; Smith, 1982c, p. 299.
- 4 See also Smith, 1988b.
- 5 See, for example, Aymard, 1972; Kedourie, 1975; Andrews, 1978; Gurevitch, 1983; Baker, 1984; Clark, 1985.
- 6 Bloch, 1961; Braudel, 1972a; Braudel, 1972b; Braudel, 1981; Braudel, 1982; Braudel, 1984.
- 7 cf. Banks and Banks, 1964b.
- 8 e.g. Rosaldo and Lamphere, 1974; Humphries, 1977; Kuhn and Wolpe, 1978; Tilly and Scott, 1978; Hollis, 1979; Banks, 1981; Braybon, 1981; Sargent, 1981; Wemple, 1981; Ulrich, 1983; Chamberlain, 1983; Pahl, 1984; Alexander, 1984; Charles and Duffin, 1985; Banks, 1986; Hanawalt, 1986; Davidoff and Hall, 1987; Bradley, 1989.
- 9 Anderson, 1974a; Anderson, 1974b; Wallerstein, 1974; Wallerstein, 1980; Wallerstein, 1989a; Braudel, 1981; Braudel, 1982; Braudel, 1984; Mann, 1986; Skocpol, 1979.
- 10 e.g. Le Roy Ladurie, 1979; Braudel, 1980; Burke, 1980; Tilly, 1981; McLennan, 1981; Abrams, 1982; Runciman, 1983; Skocpol, 1984; Tilly, 1984; Neale, 1985; Hirst, 1985; Lloyd, 1986; Ragin, 1987; Callinicos, 1987.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 2

- 1 For Bloch's war memoirs, see Bloch, 1988.
- 2 Marshall, 1973, p. 89; Mennell, 1989, p. 19; Braudel, 1972b, p. 454.
- 3 Katz, 1987; Stouffer *et al.*, 1949.