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Chapter 5

World History

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World history, understood as transcultural history in temporal depth in the horizon of the known world, is beset by several paradoxes.[1] First, it is an ancient mode of historical writing practised in several of the great traditions, and yet, from the vantage point of the early twenty-first century, one of the youngest and most innovative fields of historiography.[2] National history—its main rival in contemporary debates—seems to be on the wane, enveloped by pre- and post-national visions of historiography. Second, world history encompasses some of the best and some of the worst of historical writing. Its spectrum of variety ranges from the works of master historians such as Ibn Khaldun and Edward Gibbon, Fernand Braudel and William H. McNeill, to shallow compilations for popular consumption. Third, it is a highly theoretical enterprise requiring reflections on, and decisions about, totality and individuality, timescales and spatial orders, similarity and difference, determination and contingency. At the same time, it has been struggling for simplicity, for easy access to its readers, and for tidy storylines. It thus faces the potential dilemma of being caught between an excess of methodological and philosophical sophistication, and a condition marked by triviality, naivety, and lack of intellectual restraint.

World history has difficulty in finding its focus and in demarcating its boundaries. Its open edges shade into the philosophy of history, macrosociology, and various general diagnoses of the human condition. Whenever and wherever a distinction has been drawn between amateurs and professionals, world history has been seen as a playground for dilettantes. The higher the standards set for source-based research, the greater the discipline's difficulty in conforming to them. The early nineteenth century's research imperative inevitably resulted in a delegitimation and deprofessionalization of world history—a tendency that only began to be reversed in the late twentieth century. This leads to a fourth and final paradox: when meant as more than a collection of anecdotes from the past, world

[1] Work on this chapter was generously supported by the Carl Friedrich von Siemens Foundation (Munich).

[2] For an excellent overview of world historical thinking in the West, see Ernst Schulin, 'Einleitung', in id. (ed.), *Universalgeschichte* (Cologne/Berlin, 1974), 11–65.

history has for a long time claimed to produce insights of particular profundity, but at the same time it has had enormous difficulties describing the methodological position from which such insights might be gained. At least in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the intellectual authority of world history was never as unchallenged as world historians themselves were apt to believe.

Unlike the research and writing of national history since its beginnings in the eighteenth century, the development of world history has not been cumulative, steady, and incremental. It has gone through phases of boom and neglect, and has been highly dependent on the rhetoric and scholarship of individual protagonists. Until very recently, world historical writing, at least in the public eye, was a string of outstanding solo performances. For sceptics it remained a literary genre preying parasitically on the fruits of patient and inconspicuous scholarship. An organized field of growing knowledge built by a community of scholars, themselves training cohorts of younger researchers and supported by academic institutions and publishing media, has been slow to emerge. World history has thus rarely occupied centre-stage in the organized historical profession. In most countries its position in school curricula has remained marginal, and much of its most durable and influential literature has originated outside the university. World history used to be an occupation for mavericks, gentleman scholars, and *littérateurs*. A major exception was the official support given to world history in socialist countries that enshrined Marxist historical materialism as a binding guideline. In the Soviet Union and the German Democratic Republic, the academies of science had departments of world history, which was considered of extraordinary political usefulness. This remains the case with the People's Republic of China today.

LEGACIES OF THE PAST

Modern world history differs from older universal-historical constructions in that it presupposes an empirical idea of geography and of both the unity and plurality of humanity's historical experience. Such a vision of the world could only be formed in Europe, and not earlier than the eighteenth century. European voyages during the 'second age of discovery' revealed, according to Edmund Burke, the 'great map of mankind'.[3] Manuscripts in non-European languages were collected, studied, and translated. For the first time ever, it became possible to establish basic chronologies for several Asian civilizations. Starting in the early 1800s, European archaeologists began to retrieve traces of ancient civilizations. The decipherment of cuneiform writing and hieroglyphics opened access to the

[3] Edmund Burke to William Robertson, 9 June 1777, in George H. Guttridge (ed.), *The Correspondence of Edmund Burke*, vol. 3 (Cambridge, 1961), 350–1.

riches of ancient Mesopotamia and Egypt. The English *Universal History* (23 vols., 1736–45) soon expanded into an even larger German edition,[4] represents the first major document of this new empirical approach, and is the ancestor of countless multi-volume compilations of regional and national histories. The period from about 1770 to 1830 was the first golden age of world history. William Robertson wrote on the history of America, and Edward Gibbon, basing himself on the great Joseph de Guignes,[5] covered Eurasia from the second century AD to the Mongol world empire and the Turkish conquest of Constantinople. Jesuit knowledge of China and its history was synthesized in several works that depended very much on Chinese historiography. Travellers brought glimpses into the Japanese past home to Europe, and the histories of Persia and India, especially under Muslim rulers, were reconstructed from documents. At the University of Göttingen, August Ludwig Schlözer and Johann Christoph Gatterer sketched the outlines of an empirical history of the world, and discussed some of the methodological problems connected with that project.[6] Johann Gottfried Herder used the same materials for a broad panorama of individual cultures across the world, embedded in an elaborate anthropology.[7] And G. W. F. Hegel, in his *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte* [Lectures on the Philosophy of World History](posthumously, 1837), drew on a thorough knowledge of the evidence available at the time—although he used it to support an argument about political progress and spiritual enhancement, leaving no agency or creativity to peoples outside the Occident.[8]

Present-day world historians look back in different ways at this period when a number of the fundamental choices facing world history were being contemplated. Some of these historians doubt the enduring relevance of Enlightenment origins for contemporary world history. Others look for a genealogy validating their own efforts. Such a genealogy is usually based on strong value judgements. The cosmopolitan outlook and anti-racist stance that culminated in the Göttingen school, and perhaps even more so in the last survivor of the German Enlightenment, Alexander von Humboldt, is held up as a model for the present day, whereas the Eurocentric closure beginning with Hegel, and in Hegel's day, James Mill, the author of the influential *History of British India* (3 vols.,

[4] *Uebersetzung der Algemeinen Welthistorie*, 30 vols. (Halle, 1747–65).

[5] Joseph de Guignes, *Histoire générale des huns, des turcs, des mogols et des autres tartars occidentaux*, 4 vols. (Paris, 1756–58).

[6] August Ludwig Schlözer, *Vorstellung einer Universalhistorie*, 2 vols. (Göttingen, 1772–3); and Johann Christoph Gatterer, *Versuch einer allgemeinen Weltgeschichte bis zur Entdeckung Amerikens* (Göttingen, 1792).

[7] Johann Gottfried Herder, *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*, 4 vols. (Riga, 1784–91).

[8] Ernst Schulin, *Die weltgeschichtliche Erfassung des Orients bei Hegel und Ranke* (Göttingen, 1958); and Andreas Pigulla, *China in der deutschen Weltgeschichtsschreibung vom 18. bis zum 20. Jahrhundert* (Wiesbaden, 1996).

1817)—another source of objectionable quotations—meets with vehement disapproval. From the 1820s until at least the end of the century, European historiography was indeed characterized by cultural, political, and often racial hierarchization, and the mental exclusion of the various Asian great traditions, not to speak of those peoples that came to be labelled 'primitive'. Once the doctrine took hold that the inhabitants of the non-occidental world were 'peoples without history', there was no need to incorporate them into narratives of material and spiritual progress.

A few features, however, lighten up this gloomy picture of the nineteenth century. A limited interest in histories of peoples outside Europe was retained in historical geography (in the work of Carl Ritter and others) and in the German historical school of economics. This was also the age of a rising philological scholarship that, although often coloured by 'orientalist' arrogance, still unlocked the treasures of many literate traditions from Mesoamerica to Malaya, making them available as sources for historical comment. Early ethnology was dominated by evolutionist approaches that assumed a sequence of universally valid stages of social organization.[9] Both in this form and in Franz Boas's alternative concept of the specificity and incommensurability of discreet ethnic communities, it preserved, through an age of racism, the Enlightenment idea of a basic unity of mankind. Finally, Marxism, in spite of its strong modernist bias and lack of sympathy for anything preceding bourgeois society in Europe and elsewhere, provided novel tools for an analysis of 'modes of production' and social dynamics in different cultural contexts. Bulky 'world histories' were mainly published in the German-speaking lands, where the term simply changed its meaning from a conjectural (Isaak Iselin) or empirical (August Ludwig von Schlözer) history of the human species to a moralizing and didactic discourse for an emerging civil society. This was the case, for instance, with Friedrich Christoph Schlosser's immensely successful *Weltgeschichte für das deutsche Volk* [World History for the German People] (final edition, with Georg Ludwig Kriegk, 19 vols., 1844–57).[10] These works, which include Leopold von Ranke's swansong, *Weltgeschichte* (9 vols., 1881–8) and, at the end of this particular tradition, Hans Delbrück's *Weltgeschichte* (5 vols., 1923–8), were histories of civilization and state-building in Europe, usually with some introductory remarks on Babylon and Egypt, and with occasional side glances at the Byzantine Empire and its Ottoman successors. They were never meant to include every continent, and should not be judged by an abstract ideal of what world history ought to be.[11]

[9] J. W. Burrow, 'Historicism and Social Evolution', in Benedikt Stuchtey and Peter Wende (eds.), *British and German Historiography, 1750–1950: Traditions, Perceptions, and Transfers* (Oxford, 2000), 251–64, at 260.

[10] Hans Schleier, *Geschichte der deutschen Kulturgeschichtsschreibung*, 2 vols. (Waltrop, 2003), i. 233–55.

[11] Hartmut Bergenthum, *Weltgeschichten im Zeitalter der Weltpolitik: Zur populären Geschichtsschreibung im wilhelminischen Deutschland* (Munich, 2004).

By the turn of the century—at the zenith of Europe's imperial and colonial supremacy—an upswing of economic and migratory globalization and a proliferating rhetoric of 'world power' and 'world politics' had contributed to a new awareness of global interaction. The artefacts collected by ethnologists and exhibited in museums or *expositions universelles*, and the rise of new disciplines like *Religionswissenschaft* (comparative religion), vastly augmented the available knowledge about civilizations on every continent. However, new perceptions and additional information were slow to translate into new historiographical sensibilities. Multi-volume publishing projects, above all in Germany, assembled the expertise of regional specialists, but only the one edited by an academic outsider, the geographer Hans Ferdinand Helmolt, offered a minimum of conceptual originality.[12] A small number of imaginative historians saw the need to think about new ways of doing world history: for example Karl Lamprecht, who laid the foundations for an Institute for Cultural and World History at the University of Leipzig, and Kurt Breysig, the most theoretically minded among German historians of the early twentieth century.[13] Neither Breysig nor Lamprecht attempted to write a broadly synthetic work of transcultural history. Such a work was Eduard Meyer's *Geschichte des Altertums* [History of Antiquity] (5 vols., 1884–9, much revised in later editions)—a comprehensive (though unfinished) history of Near Eastern and Mediterranean antiquity, unrivalled in any language. Meyer combined a theoretical mindset with extraordinary linguistic skills and a supreme mastery of the sources. His work, the creation not of an outsider but of one of the great academic mandarins at the University of Berlin, demonstrated for the first time that a history, if not of the entire world then at least of a vast multicultural space, could be written without sacrificing the most demanding professional standards.

No counterpart to Meyer emerged in any other European country. The most important collaborative project of the early twentieth century was organized by the French philosopher Henri Berr, again an outsider in academia. Around 1900, Berr, who kept his own evolutionist philosophy of history unobtrusively in the background, began to advocate his ideal of a new 'historical synthesis', and in conjunction with this he created several publishing platforms for bringing together historians and scholars of neighbouring disciplines. Between 1920 and Berr's death in 1954, fifty-two volumes of his series *L'évolution de l'humanité* appeared. They were of varying quality and did not always follow the original

[12] Hans Ferdinand Helmolt (ed.), *Weltgeschichte*, 9 vols. (Leipzig, 1899–1907).

[13] Roger Chickering, *Karl Lamprecht: A German Academic Life, 1856–1915* (New Jersey, 1993); Matthias Middell, *Weltgeschichtsschreibung im Zeitalter der Verfachlichung und Professionalisierung: Das Leipziger Institut für Kultur- und Universalgeschichte 1890–1990*, 3 vols. (Leipzig, 2005), i. 216–409; and Bernhard vom Brocke, *Kurt Breysig: Geschichtswissenschaft zwischen Historismus und Soziologie* (Lübeck, 1971).

grand design, but added up to something like the best world history available during the first half of the twentieth century.[14]

A final legacy of the *fin de siècle* was the massive work of Max Weber. It did not achieve worldwide fame before the 1960s. Weber had no patience with the idea of world history. He sharply distanced himself from any kind of evolutionism or holism, and from the belief in 'laws of history' common among his contemporaries, including Karl Lamprecht and Max's own brother Alfred Weber. And yet he formulated his categories and ideal types, such as 'charisma', 'patrimonialism', and 'the city', in view of their universal applicability; and he took his examples and illustrations from all over the world. Weber's voluminous studies of belief systems and social structures in various major civilizations, collected in *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie* [Collected Essays on the Sociology of Religion] (3 vols., 1920–1), have been among the most influential examples of comparative sociology ever written.[15] They and even more so the analyses in his fragmentary treasure trove, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* [Economy and Society] (1921–2), continue to impress world historians, even if he never proposed a detailed narrative of world history that went beyond his general concept of the rationalization of the world.

As was the case with Weber in his time, the authors identified with world history in the aftermath of the First World War were solitary figures. Oswald Spengler's best-selling *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* [*The Decline of the West*] (2 vols., 1918–22), carrying the word 'Weltgeschichte' in its subtitle, was a vastly extended contemplation of the fate of (some) civilizations. Hovering idiosyncratically between the narrative confidence of an earlier epic age, perhaps Rankean in nature, and the urge to coin a very peculiar terminology, the work attracted its audience mainly through a conservative and pessimistic message. Spengler cultivated the posture of a visionary amateur and treated professional historians with (heartily reciprocated) disdain. Although, in his *Outline of History* (1920), H. G. Wells offered an expression of a progressist outlook entirely different from that of the brooding Spengler, he also addressed the general public—in his case the schoolboy and common man, rather than the *Bildungsbürger* and the cultivated philistine. Though Wells relied more on the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* than on specialized scholarship,[16] one of the greatest of professional historians,

[14] Lutz Raphael, 'The Idea and Practice of World Historiography in France: The *Annales* Legacy', in Benedikt Stuchtey and Eckhardt Fuchs (eds.), *Writing World History 1800–2000* (Oxford, 2003), 155–71, at 155–60.

[15] From among the vast literature on Weber see, in particular, Stephen Kalberg, *Max Weber's Comparative-Historical Sociology* (Cambridge, 1994); Wolfgang J. Mommsen, *Max Weber: Gesellschaft, Politik und Geschichte* (Frankfurt, 1974); and Joachim Radkau, *Max Weber: A Biography*, trans. Patrick Camiller (Cambridge, 2008), orig. pub as *Max Weber: Die Leidenschaft des Denkens* (Munich, 2005).

[16] Paul Costello, *World Historians and Their Goals: Twentieth-Century Answers to Modernism* (DeKalb, Ill., 1993), 36–45.

Marc Bloch, treated him with a surprising amount of respect while taking issue with the novelist's penchant for hasty and ill-considered judgements.[17] But all this being said, the influence of both Spengler and Wells on more contemporary world historical writing has turned out to be negligible.

The most famous world historian of his time was Arnold J. Toynbee, a professor of history with a background in ancient and modern Greek studies who spent much of his life in the comfortable combination of research director at the Royal Institute of International Affairs and independent gentleman scholar. In 1947 he turned down an offer to become Regius Professor of History at Cambridge—the most prestigious historical position in the United Kingdom.[18] His twelve-volume *A Study of History* (1934–61) is a work of more than 5,500 pages, with volumes one to six, published in 1934 and 1939, generally believed to comprise its best part. Though it has attracted vehement criticism on empirical grounds (this was especially the case from 1947 onwards, when, at the same time, Toynbee's fame began to surpass that of any previous historian), its standing as a feat of industry and sustained reasoning has rarely been doubted. Eventually, a skilful abridgement to a little over 900 pages put the work within the range of the average educated reader. A few basic themes could now enter the public mind, such as Toynbee's 'challenge and response' model—one of several guaranteeing the coherence of his huge venture. Nevertheless, despite its impressive nature, Toynbee's achievement appears to have had little lasting influence. It is still acclaimed as the first truly non-Eurocentric construction of world history, but few world (and other) historians today study Toynbee and consider themselves in his debt. Toynbee can hardly be read for pleasure (as Gibbon still can be), while his categories and propositions have failed to convince many, and his message that mankind needs a new spirituality—a message propagated in his later volumes—has stood at some remove from a secular age. Toynbee's concept of 'civilization' is less refined than the same concept as developed by historical sociologists such as S. N. Eisenstadt.[19] Since he was not interested in connections between individual civilizations, he cannot really qualify as a patron saint of current global history. At the time of his death in 1975 he was more a symbol of infinite intellectual aspiration: something like the historical profession's response to Einstein, rather than an active inspiration.

[17] Marc Bloch, 'Une nouvelle histoire universelle: H. G. Wells historien', *La Revue de Paris*, 29 (1922), 860–76; and cf. Ernst Troeltsch's review in *Historische Zeitschrift*, 126 (1922), 271–9.

[18] William H. McNeill, *Arnold J. Toynbee: A Life* (New York/Oxford, 1989), 208–9.

[19] S. N. Eisenstadt, 'Civilizations', in Neil J. Smelser and Paul B. Baltes (eds.), *International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 26 vols. (Amsterdam, 2001), iii. 1915–21.

POPULAR WORLD HISTORIES, VIRTUOSO PERFORMANCES, IDEOLOGICAL MESSAGES

By the end of the Second World War, the international situation had changed fundamentally. To a new generation of professional historians, the extant historiographical tradition seemed to offer no trustworthy guidance. Among a vast number of intellectual responses to the post-war age, world history was not at first a privileged one, remaining at the margins of historians' concerns from 1945 into the 1980s. Decisive intellectual advances over Toynbee's work in the 1930s and that of some of his broader-minded contemporaries were very rare. The victory of the democracies over their German and Japanese enemies seemed to confirm the superiority of 'Western' societies and their value systems—an impression in turn encouraging neo-Hegelian interpretations of world history, seen as having been fulfilled in the North Atlantic West. The Soviet Union's military successes and the communist revolution in China supported a different reading of 'world historical' tendencies. It was thus no surprise that teleological narratives of progress flourished among both Cold War antagonists. The ten volumes of the *Vsemirnaia Istoriia* [World History] (1955–65), authored by an elite of Soviet historians under the general editorship of the Japonologist Evgenii M. Zhukov, were held together by the dogma that all nations—and the nation or nation-state remained the basic unit in this work—would sooner or later run through a fixed sequence of stages ending in socialism and communism. But this simplistic idea did not prevent complex analyses of the coexistence and transformation of 'societal formations'. Hence the underlying approach within this historical schema was not totally deterministic, Soviet historians having decided to give revolutionary class struggle preference over the development of 'productive forces' as the main mover of progress. Still, categorization of nations in terms of a higher or lower maturity remained at the heart of official Soviet world history.[20]

In a sense, the modernization theory reaching its peak of influence in American social science during the early 1960s was a mirror image of the Soviet theory. It too was a story of the 'rise of the West', this time not with the socialist bloc but with the United States as the model of perfection—a realized utopia of liberty and enterprise.[21] In its scholarship and analytical refinement, William H. McNeill's *The Rise of the West* (1963), by far the most influential English-language text on world history during the three subsequent decades, surpasses

[20] Thomas M. Bohn, 'Writing World History in Tsarist Russia and in the Soviet Union', in Stuchtey and Fuchs (eds.), *Writing World History*, 197–212, at 207–8.

[21] On the history of modernization theory, see Nils Gilman, *Mandarins of the Future: Modernization Theory in Cold War America* (Baltimore, 2003); and Wolfgang Knöbl, *Spielräume der Modernisierung: Das Ende der Eindeutigkeit* (Weilerswist, 2001).

anything produced by the modernization school in American sociology. But the book does share the general spirit of the period around 1960, presenting a kind of moderate occident-centrism that has retreated a few steps from Toynbee's Olympian relativism: an influence both acknowledged and partly repudiated by the University of Chicago historian. McNeill's virtues were twofold: he was the first major historian to root world history firmly in the most advanced research on the various regions of the world, and who recast it as just one perspective on the past among many others—and not a superior perspective. In this manner, McNeill downsized world history from metahistory and prophecy to a research programme. At the same time, he proved a master of proportion, finding elegant balances between the innumerable time–space patterns and historical factors that needed to be handled in a synthesis of universal scope. In the end, his book's main innovation is, perhaps, its demonstration that world history can be written without mystification, clumsiness, or triviality. In many subsequent works, McNeill developed his views in close touch with changing themes and concerns, and he eventually turned a critical eye on his own early masterpiece.[22]

While teleologies offering meaning for the present and confidence for the future were in great demand, some historians had begun to understand that triumphalist accounts culminating in the modern West were no longer sustainable. The English medievalist Geoffrey Barraclough, who in 1956 succeeded Toynbee as Stevenson research professor at the Royal Institute of International Affairs, was foremost among these historians. He suggested a wide-ranging interpretation of the twentieth century in *An Introduction to Contemporary History* (1966) that has not been entirely superseded by Eric Hobsbawm's more detailed and better-known *Age of Extremes* (1995), edited the best world-historical atlas published up to then, *The Times Atlas of World History* (1978), and wrote a survey for UNESCO on *Main Trends in History* (1978) that covered all major areas of the world. Barraclough and others doubted whether continuing to write history Spenglerian style, as an account of 'major' civilizations, could any longer be justified: a question to be repeated by the anthropologist Eric R. Wolf in his empirically flawed but seminal *Europe and the People without History* (1982).

Despite McNeill's prominence and influence, it would be inaccurate to claim that the locus of world history writing had definitively moved in a Hegelian way to the Western hemisphere. Historians in the new nation-states created by decolonization were mostly preoccupied with establishing an academic infrastructure and providing students and the reading public at home with versions of their own national pasts before and during colonialism. But reflections on global hierarchies and on the colonial experience of dehistoricization were never far

[22] William H. McNeill, '*The Rise of the West* after Twenty-Five Years', *Journal of World History*, 1 (1990), 1–21.

from their minds. The great Jawaharlal Nehru had set a precedent by spending his time in prison reading H. G. Wells and pondering lessons of the past.[23] At the same time, multi-volume compilations of chapters on every part of the world were being produced in Europe (rather than the United States)—one example among several being the German *Propyläen Weltgeschichte* [Propyläen World History] edited by Golo Mann (11 vols., 1960–5), which combined a high standard of scholarship with a low level of thematic integration.[24] Several journals were now specializing in world history—above all, the *Cahiers de l'histoire mondiale* [Journal of World History] (1953–72), a forum of exchange for historians from virtually all over the world that served as a testing ground for the *History of Mankind* (6 vols., 1963–9) published under the auspices of UNESCO. This work reveals some of the weaknesses of history-writing by committee. It gives surprisingly much weight to Europe, especially in its ancient and medieval volumes. The volume on the twentieth century, however, written by Caroline F. Ware from the United States, K. M. Panikkar from India, and Jan Romein from the Netherlands, implemented a highly innovative approach and structure, relegating conventional political and military history to an inferior position. A few years earlier, Romein had published a substantial book on the rise of Asia in the first half of the twentieth century entitled *De eeuw van Azië* [The Asian Century] (1956), an almost visionary account at a time when decolonization was far from completed.

France had a long tradition of histories of civilization, beginning with Voltaire and Condorcet. With its competence in sinology and Arabic studies, the country was in a strong position to contribute to world history of a new type. A few authors reached a large audience: for example, René Grousset, a learned and industrious semi-popularizing historian and member of the Académie Française who focused on Eurasia in its entirety. The considerable French expertise in non-European civilizations was effectively deployed in several handbooks within the *Clio* (1934–52) and *Nouvelle Clio* series (1963–). Yet the most innovative branch of French historical scholarship, the group centred around the famous journal *Annales d'histoire économique et sociale*, showed little genuine interest in world history. Marc Bloch's plea of 1928 for large-scale comparisons within Europe was not read as a call to transgress the Occident's boundaries, despite Bloch's own brief remarks comparing European and Japanese feudalism. The great exception to the rule was Fernand Braudel, whose *Grammaire des civilisations* [Grammar of Civilizations] (1963) offered a first inkling of his global interests.

[23] Jawaharlal Nehru, *Glimpses of World History* (London, 1934); and Michael Gottlob, 'India's Connection to History: The Discipline and the Relation between Center and Periphery', in Eckhardt Fuchs and Benedikt Stuchtey (eds.), *Across Cultural Borders: Historiography in Global Perspective* (Lanham, 2002), 75–97, at 89–90.

[24] An earlier work by the same title had been edited by Lamprecht's successor, Walter Goetz: *Propyläen-Weltgeschichte: Der Werdegang der Menschheit in Gesellschaft und Staat, Wirtschaft und Geistesleben*, 10 vols. (Berlin, 1929–33).

This work was followed by the more original *Civilisation matérielle et capitalisme* (1967), and then by a full development of the approach outlined in that earlier book in his trilogy, *Civilisation matérielle, économie et capitalisme* [*Civilization and Capitalism*] (1979). The trilogy's worldwide influence was assured through Braudel's dialogue and cooperative relationship with the sociologist Immanuel Wallerstein, whose world-system theory replaced modernization theory as one of the leading paradigms in American social science. But Braudel goes beyond the considerable theoretical sophistication of his American disciple, his spatial and temporal models allowing him to create a history of a global early modern epoch (*c.*1400–*c.*1700) that combined coherence with theoretical stringency and a narrativity typical of the Annales School. Writing at the threshold of a new boom in world and global history, Braudel offered a masterful historical view of 'early modernism' that rivalled McNeill's in astuteness—without, however, making a similar impact on Anglophone historiographical culture.[25] Together with the Swiss economic historian Paul Bairoch, he is the most seminal figure in twentieth-century Francophone world history.[26]

During the three or four decades after 1945, that form of history continued to be practised mainly within national contexts. The growing ecumenical orientation of many historians had not yet erased traces of national traditions. German contributions, other than Marxism in the German Democratic Republic, shunted aside economic history, so dear to Braudel, instead emphasizing the unity of humankind in a rather idealistic way. The old German preoccupation with consciousness and ideas (including religious ideas) was now transformed into an 'historical anthropology' that investigated manifestations of basic human desires and life forms across as many civilizations as possible (since 1950, this was especially apparent in the journal *Saeculum: Jahrbuch für Universalgeschichte*). In Britain a small number of solitary scholars insisted on the need to widen history's horizon. Barraclough was one of the first prominent historians with a background in the occidental tradition to acknowledge and welcome the enormous quantity and innovative power of recent research on the history of what was then called the Third World. By 1978, several fields had been created virtually from scratch. African history, Caribbean history, and Southeast Asian history, until then domains explored by a few outsiders, had become well-established research fields. These were mainly located in the United States, where 'area studies' had injected resources into regional histories, but also in Britain, France, the Netherlands, and several countries outside Europe. The results of this research formed the basis for a new kind of empirically grounded world history.[27] By 1975, achievements emerging from a few decades of international historiographical

[25] Raphael, 'The Idea and Practice of World Historiography in France', 162–71.

[26] Paul Bairoch, *Victoires et déboires*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1997).

[27] H. L. Wesseling, 'Overseas History', in Peter Burke (ed.), *New Perspectives on Historical Writing* (Cambridge, 1991), 67–92.

effort had made it possible to launch the *Cambridge History of Africa*—the first of many multi-volume series on non-European areas of the world, together representing the most important publishing venture to date in the effort to promote a pluralistic view of global history. At this research juncture, the ever-attentive Barraclough warned against any world-historical illusions of detached omniscience: 'There is, after all, no reason to assume that the view of world history from the Tarim basin and the view of world history from the Thames valley will ever be broadly identical.'[28]

While Barraclough kept a distance from the speculative constructions of universal history, he recommended comparative history in Weber's tradition as an honest and practicable way to move beyond Eurocentric or other 'centrist' approaches. Comparison was indeed perhaps the most important American contribution to post-war world history before the 1980s. It was epitomized in the journal *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, launched in 1958, and achieved prominence through tightly argued studies, mainly written by historical sociologists such as Barrington Moore, Theda Skocpol, and Charles Tilly.[29] Of course, this raised the issue of disciplinary identities: why get historians to take world history seriously when comparative sociologists appeared to be just as good at 'macro' history? But the retreat of American sociology during the 1990s away from comparison and causal explanation, empirical history, and Weberian *grandeur*, opened up a space that the new global history was quick to capture.[30] In any case, the reputation of both universal history and the philosophy—as opposed to the methodology—of history has generally been higher in Europe than in the United States, where it has not been regarded as an intellectual enterprise of the first order. Francis Fukuyama's *The End of History and the Last Man* (1992) did not change this assessment. The best works of 'philosophical history' have been written by European authors—none of them an historian by training and vocation: Karl Jaspers, Ernest Gellner, and Jean Baechler.[31] Only 'big bang' history, with its proximity to the natural sciences (especially cosmology), qualifies as an American contribution to speculations about the past that defy the ordinary historian's sense of professional responsibility.[32]

[28] Geoffrey Barraclough, *Main Trends in History* (New York, 1978), 156.

[29] Barrington Moore, *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy* (Boston, 1966); Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions* (Cambridge, 1979); and Charles Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States, AD 990–1990* (Oxford, 1990).

[30] For the development of historical sociology, see Theda Skocpol (ed.), *Vision and Method in Historical Sociology* (Cambridge, 1984); and Julia Adams, Elisabeth S. Clemens, and Ann Shola Orloff (eds.), *Remaking Modernity: Politics, History, and Sociology* (Durham, NC, 2005).

[31] Karl Jaspers, *Vom Ursprung und Ziel der Geschichte* (Munich, 1949); Ernest Gellner, *Plow, Sword and Book: The Structure of Human History* (London, 1988); and Jean Baechler, *Esquisse d'une histoire universelle* (Paris, 2002).

[32] See, for instance, David Christian, *Maps of Time* (Berkeley, 2004).

BETWEEN THE NATION-STATE AND THE WORLD

The picture furnished by simply opposing world history and national history would be distorted. Below the level of the nation-state, histories of sub-national regions, landscapes, cities, towns, and rural communities have flourished in many countries. Between the nation-state and the world, numerous layers of spatial structuring have attracted the attention of historians. Apart from the highly theoretical construction of the Wallersteinian world-system, three such strata deserve to be mentioned. First, we have the history of international relations, which ever since Arnold Hermann Ludwig Heeren has been more than a mere account of foreign-policy decisions and events. Heeren, and after him Ranke, founded a tradition based on examining Europe as a state-system with overseas extensions.[33] After the Second World War, diplomatic history, following the 'realist' paradigm of 'great powers' driven by particular reasons of state and the logic of state interests, yielded a few masterpieces such as A. J. P. Taylor's *Struggle for Mastery in Europe* (1954), without ever entering the historiographical avant-garde. More than forty years later, Paul Kennedy returned to the same themes as Taylor, but now on a broader canvas (including the United States and Japan) and over a longer period, with the addition of economic and military dynamics to the overall picture, and effectively using a Gibbonian language of cyclical boom and bust. Kennedy's *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers* (1988) made international history palatable to critics of diplomatic history and to a wider reading public. Already since the 1920s, the French school of international history, founded by Pierre Renouvin and continued by his pupil Jean-Baptiste Duroselle and others, had enriched the complexity of international analysis far beyond the dogmas of realism, paying attention to geopolitical and demographic factors, financial flows, norms, values, mentalities, and public opinion.[34] From the mid-1960s onwards, scholars such as Akira Iriye in the United States and Christopher Thorne in Britain would pioneer the multilateral study of power and culture. Then, in the mid-1990s, Paul W. Schroeder discovered the European state system's normative and peace-preserving undercurrents in his influential *Transformation of European Politics, 1763–1848* (1994). Interestingly, while international history found it difficult to respond to the challenge of social history, it was more successful in appropriating stimuli emanating from the new cultural history emerging in this period. The culture of the Cold War became a particularly fruitful research area, one of its most salient conclusions being that the nuclear

[33] Arnold Hermann Ludwig Heeren, *Geschichte des europäischen Staatensystems und seiner Kolonien* (Göttingen, 1809); and Leopold von Ranke, *Die großen Mächte* (1833).

[34] Wilfried Loth and Jürgen Osterhammel (eds.), *Internationale Geschichte: Themen, Ergebnisse, Aussichten* (Munich, 2000); and Michael J. Hogan (ed.), *Paths to Power: The Historiography of American Foreign Relations to 1941* (Cambridge, 2000).

confrontation between two highly militarized and ideologically antagonistic blocs strongly stamped the sense of reality of a broad range of societies affected by the confrontation to a greater and lesser degree. Correspondingly, opening up a new phase of research after the Soviet Union's collapse, Odd Arne Westad portrayed the Cold War as a conflict played out in many different arenas all over the world in *The Global Cold War* (2005). In this way, international history caught up with developments in the new global history that was then reaching maturation.

A second historiographical stratum involves the history of empires. At times, this has taken the form of a history of colonialism and colonies and, by extension, of the postcolonial nations. At the same time, comprehensive accounts of the larger modern empires have been compiled, including the five-volume *Oxford History of the British Empire* (1998–9), under the editorship of William Roger Louis, and with contributions by historians from every continent. Imperial history is a field with high theoretical standards and where an inter-imperial comparative methodology has been used to great effect: for example, in John H. Elliott's *Empires of the Atlantic World: Britain and Spain in America, 1492–1830* (2006). Working out from studies of the British Empire, it has not been difficult to extend imperial history into global history, as suggested and exemplified by C. A. Bayly and A. G. Hopkins.[35] Among the other empires, the Tsarist empire with its considerable ethnic diversity has become a focal point for particularly innovative research. A new early twenty-first-century development has been an amalgamation of scholarship on maritime and continental empires.[36] In this manner, imperial history has turned out a useful link between the national and global perspectives.

The third stratum is occupied by the history of large regions and entire continents. Perspectives and conceptual tools used for writing integrated histories of multicultural, politically heterogeneous, and ecologically diversified regions are more similar to those of world history than to the common frameworks of national history. They usually lack a political centre, have to deal with plural identities, 'hybridity', shifting cultural boundaries, long-distance trade, and so on. Braudel's work on the Mediterranean already referred to earlier, established a model for regional panoramas of this kind. An ambitious project on Asia was K. N. Chaudhuri's *Asia before Europe: Economy and Civilization of the Indian Ocean from the Rise of Islam to 1750* (1990). Chaudhuri started his career as an historian of the East India Company, gradually extending his reach, first to the Indian Ocean as an area of trade and dominion, and then to a history of all the major adjacent civilizations. His idea of integrating continental and maritime Asia into

[35] C. A. Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World 1780–1914* (Oxford, 2004); and A. G. Hopkins (ed.), *Globalization in World History* (London, 2002).

[36] For a new synthesis, see John Darwin, *After Tamerlane: The Global History of Empire since 1405* (London, 2007).

one vast framework has proved difficult to follow. But the history of the Indian Ocean as an area of multilayered interaction has stimulated a lot of imaginative research. Historical commonalities in Eurasia, especially in pre-modern times, make it possible to surmount the orientalist divide between East and West. Central Asia gains in importance as a source for the medieval unification of large parts of the continent through the Mongol Empire, and also as a region of Chinese, Russian, and British empire-building in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It also emerges as a framework for cross-cultural comparison. Jack Goldstone, an historical sociologist, was the first to explore this approach's potential in *Revolution and Rebellion in the Early Modern World* (1991). A Eurasian perspective on the history of the Old World had already been suggested by several eighteenth-century European writers; it had some relevance for nineteenth-century debates on Russia's position between Western Europe and China, and it became popular with geopolitical strategists before 1914. The new 'Eurasianism' is free from such ideological baggage and mainly takes its cue from the recent rise of China.

The concept of 'Atlantic history' achieved some prominence during the Cold War when it tended to be a history of liberty in opposition to communist dictatorship. But reminders that no comprehensive history of the Atlantic can ignore slavery, and the slave trade spoiled this simplified picture. A 'black Atlantic' characterized both by coercion and cultural creativity was suggested as a counter-model to the 'white' or even Anglo-Saxon Atlantic. Three guiding concepts for an Atlantic history have proved viable: first, the concept of a common origin of modernity, spanning both sides of the Atlantic, in an age of revolution between the 1760s and the 1820s—a concept first suggested by the French historian Jacques Godechot and the US historian R. R. Palmer;[37] second, the concept of colonial identities in the Atlantic world; and third, a broad concept of migrations including the coerced transportation of slaves to both South and North America, and the mass exodus of Europeans to the Western Hemisphere, starting in the mid-nineteenth century, that is itself just one of several migratory systems operating simultaneously in several parts of the world.[38]

Serious world history rarely covers the entire planet. Many of the most fruitful hypotheses have been developed and tested in the study of supranational regions, and much of the best research originated from the study of international systems, empires, or large spaces. Networks and communities of scholars have more easily formed around such extensive but delimited entities than on the level

[37] Jacques Godechot, *Histoire de l'Atlantique* (Paris, 1947); and R. R. Palmer, *The Age of the Democratic Revolution: A Political History of Europe and America, 1760–1800*, 2 vols. (Princeton, 1959–64).

[38] See Bernard Bailyn, *Atlantic History: Concept and Contours* (Cambridge, Mass., 2005); and Thomas Benjamin, *The Atlantic World: Europeans, Africans, Indians and Their Shared History, 1400–1900* (Cambridge, 2009).

of an abstract history of the world in its totality. Some of the most dynamic fields of historical scholarship since 1945 have followed such a 'transnational' agenda. Perhaps the most impressive of them is the history of slavery and the slave trade. In addition to the core topic of the Atlantic 'plantation complex', with its repercussions in the history of European consumption of colonial products, it includes the 'production' of slaves in Africa, the oriental slave trade in East Africa and the Indian Ocean—a trade independent of that in the Atlantic but comparable in its effects—and both the various paths towards emancipation and the trajectories of post-emancipation societies.[39]

THE NEW GLOBAL HISTORY AT THE TURN OF THE MILLENNIUM

The rise of world history and global history in the 1980s was a new phenomenon; it would begin to unfold spectacularly starting around 1990.[40] Professional associations were formed, journals were created such as the *Journal of World History* (1990–) and the *Journal of Global History* (2006–), and Internet platforms were established. World history topics found their way onto the agendas of national and international historical congresses. Graduate training was established at a growing number of universities. Teaching requirements created a new demand for printed and electronic materials. Experts on particular non-Western regions of the world discovered that the new label 'global history' added to the respectability of their own work and helped move them towards the centre of the profession. For the first time ever, world history crystallized as a movement aimed at procuring a place as one of the dominant historiographical paradigms. Broadening the attitude pioneered by William H. McNeill, the intuitions of earlier world historians were transformed into research programmes. Conventional topics were reframed in a global perspective. A new type of book appeared on the market and began to displace the large synthesis as the representative embodiment of global history: the 'lateral' analysis of a problem, cross-cutting established political and cultural boundaries and based on primary sources in several languages.

This revival, extension, and professionalization of world history was a development mainly taking place in the United States. Even international networks usually had their centre of gravity there. By 2010, a few other countries were catching up. The largest communities of world historians outside the United States appear to be located in Japan and China. In Europe there has rarely been anything like the 'Western civilization' courses typical of American colleges and

[39] See Seymour Drescher, *Abolition: A History of Slavery and Antislavery* (Cambridge, 2009).

[40] For institutional developments, especially in the United States, see Patrick Manning, *Navigating World History: Historians Create a Global Past* (New York, 2003), 79–85.

universities, and world history thus has to struggle much harder for acceptance into curricula and syllabi. Everywhere in Europe, universities have remained reluctant to create professorships in this domain, with a few exceptions confirming the rule. World history's American centre of gravity has been reflected in English being the unchallenged idiom of publication and communication between scholars—a growing communicative uniformity accompanied, nevertheless, by increasing thematic diversity.

It is too early to suggest definitive explanations for world history's resurgence at the turn of the millennium. To define it as a new paradigm assuming the place of the cultural history that was internationally dominant in the 1980s would give too coarse a picture. Global history was not simply a macrobacklash against the microconcerns of cultural history. Global historians were careful to incorporate the perspectives and findings of cultural history. The catchphrase 'glocalization' suggests a superficial rapprochement, but cannot serve as a substitute for a methodological discussion about levels of analysis. The upsurge of world history responded to an experience of 'globalization' that had become overpowering by the 1990s. After the end of the Cold War, international harmony seemed to be closer than ever before. At the same time, intercultural conflict and worldwide material inequality appeared to be increasing rather than diminishing. Other problems, mainly ecological ones, were of a truly planetary nature, demanding solutions transcending the cleavages between nation-states and civilizations. The past century's closing years also saw a revolution in academic communication, with the Internet accelerating the circulation of information and ideas, thus both facilitating the growth of international scholarly networks and improving access to sources and literature. Likewise, the life-world of students was more and more shaped by experiences of globality. A conventional concentration on national history, important as it remained for many reasons, came to contradict both cultural sensibilities and the demands of the academic labour market.

In 2011, many theoretical issues pertaining to globality and history remain unresolved. Debates tend to centre around the difference between 'world' and 'global' history, with discussions continuing between adherents of one or the other label regarding temporal coverage and topical preferences. Many historians favour the less demanding term 'transnational' history, but this is a term even more difficult to define than 'global history' since it remains unsupported by theoretical help from the social sciences. In such a fluid situation the historian of historiography can merely point to a few features seen by the movement's protagonists as embodying its peculiar strengths.[41]

In the first place, looking back on the tendency of cultural history to privilege the small, the local, and the marginal, global historians have rediscovered some of the major problems of an historiography that uses the past to throw light on the

[41] For a wide-ranging survey of the basic issues, see Eric Vanhoute, *Wereldgeschiedenis: Een inleiding* (Gent, 2008).

present. None of these problems has been more prominent than the question of a 'Western special path' in history and the reasons for the West's comparative material success.[42]

Second, the question of the 'European miracle' overlaps, but is not identical with, the history of economic globalization. The time frame of the latter is usually shorter, beginning after the middle of the nineteenth century, and the guiding question is that of long-term tendencies of integration and disintegration in the international economy. Global historians usually take a broader view of 'globalization'. To the economic dimension they add the study of political internationalism and of cultural transfers.

Third, a particular strength of global history has been the history of migration. The Atlantic slave trade was a foundational topic for the discipline, with Philip D. Curtin's brilliant *The Atlantic Slave Trade* (1969) as one of its most seminal texts. The novelty of a global approach involves the interlinkage of various migratory systems—the approach taken, for instance, in Dirk Hoerder's *Cultures in Contact: World Migration in the Second Millennium* (2002).

Fourth, another classical testing ground for global history has been medical and environmental history. Here, Alfred W. Crosby has been a much-admired pioneer, while William H. McNeill already discovered the topic in the mid-1970s. More recently, J. R. McNeill has greatly added to the topic's substance.[43]

In spite of a persistent fragmentation of the field, in the early twenty-first century global historians appear to agree on a number of general attitudes (rather than theoretical propositions). They do not deny the significance of the nation and the nation-state as elements of historical interpretation, but they are unwilling to accept them as 'natural' units. They insist on the constructed and variable nature of all spatial framings employed by historians to organize their work. Global historians share a 'metageographical' attentiveness.[44] They are also strongly opposed to Eurocentrism, although many of them warn against moralizing the issue and taking the project of 'provincializing' Europe too far. Only a minority believe that the heavy weight of Eurocentric historiography should be compensated for by a radical reshifting of historical emphasis. The question of how and to what extent a 'methodological Eurocentrism' should, and can, be avoided still awaits discussion.[45] A further feature of global history is its thinking in terms of relations. On a philosophical level, this is linked to a postmodern

[42] See Ch. 6 by Peer Vries in this volume.

[43] Alfred W. Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe* (Cambridge 1986); William H. McNeill, *Plagues and Peoples* (Harmondsworth, 1976); and J. R. McNeill, *Something New under the Sun: An Environmental History of the Twentieth-Century World* (New York/London, 2000).

[44] The term is used in the sense of Martin W. Lewis and Kären E. Wigen, *The Myth of Continents: A Critique of Metageography* (Berkeley, 1997).

[45] For a good discussion of Eurocentrism, see Dominic Sachsenmaier, 'World History as Ecumenical History?' *Journal of World History*, 18 (2007), 465–89.

critique of essentialism. Culture and society are seen as constituted through action, practice, and cognitive construction. Therefore, both the 'laws of history' popular with earlier world historians and any kind of diffusionism find little favour with present-day global historians. The concept of 'agency', nothing entirely new for those familiar with the tradition of *Historismus*, has assumed an enormous importance, especially in conjunction with the idea of what the Germans term *Handlungsspielräume*—spaces for manoeuvre or action.[46]

Unlike other tendencies in contemporary historiography, world and global history are projects whose basic viability, and ability to meet technical and professional standards, face fundamental objections. But whatever world history's future, it has already succeeded in creating a 'transnational' space for the encounter of historians from the most variegated backgrounds. As a result of this normalization process, one no longer has to be a solitary genius to attach the label of world history to one's own work.

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[46] See Sebastian Conrad and Andreas Eckert, 'Globalgeschichte, Globalisierung, multiple Modernen: Zur Geschichtsschreibung der modernen Welt', in Sebastian Conrad, Andreas Eckert, and Ulrike Freitag (eds.), *Globalgeschichte: Theorien, Ansätze, Themen* (Frankfurt/New York, 2007), 7–49, at 32–3.

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