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Abstract

Historical sociology is divided between two broad approaches, Weberian and Marxist. The first utilises a methodology of ideal types, presenting a largely endogenous examination of Western history in its account of modernity. The second acknowledges capitalism as a ‘world system’, but also identifies its central dynamic with processes having a European origin. Within the Weberian tradition, theories of multiple modernities allow modernity to be understood as culturally inflected and diverse in its instantiations, but retain the idea of a distinctive European modernity against which other forms are measured. Similarly, within Marxism, the emphasis on a distinctive capitalist mode of production allows space for uneven development globally, or the contingent association of non-capitalist forms, but retains an account of the logic of capitalism derived from European experience. Although the social relations of colonialism, imperialism and slavery are coextensive with capitalism, each tradition renders them peripheral to the development of capitalist modernity. This article discusses the limitations of the two approaches, arguing that any model that posits a world historical centre from which developments diffuse outwards is problematic, especially when such a model does not address the ‘others’ with which it comes subsequently to engage. What is needed is a ‘connected histories’ approach counter to the otherwise dominant forms of historical sociology.

Keywords

connected histories, historical sociology, Marxism

Introduction

Sociology’s orientation to history is based around agreement on the importance of key substantive issues concerning the emergence of modernity and the related ‘rise of the

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West', as well as agreement around a stadial idea of progressive development and the privileging of Eurocentred histories in the construction of such a framework.¹ Within these areas of broad agreement, however, there are also key points of contestation between the strong forms of macro-sociology as embodied, in particular, by Marxist and Weberian approaches, for example, Brenner,² Anderson³ and Wallerstein⁴ on the one hand, and Runciman,⁵ Giddens⁶ and Mann⁷ on the other. The sites of contestation include addressing the precise nature of the origins of capitalism, the importance of the commercial versus the agrarian mode of production in the transition to capitalism, or arguments about how later developing countries might accommodate forms of modernity already established, for example, as in the multiple modernities debates. What these debates all have in common is that they can be carried out in the context of a standard framework of comparative sociology, a framework that I will argue is unable to address the issues raised by the turn to postcolonial studies and global history.⁸

For those who are outside either position (Marxist or Weberian), the debate has some interesting characteristics. Proponents of each are frequently willing to agree with criticisms made of the other, but resist the suggestion that such criticisms apply equally to their own position. Nowhere is this more evident than in discussions of Eurocentrism where Marxist historical sociologies allow that the criticism is aptly made of Weberian historical sociologies and their problematic of the West. However, amongst Marxist historical sociologists, there is an unwillingness to recognise that the same applies to their own position. On the face of it, their concern with global processes gives some credence to this view, but, as I shall argue, Eurocentrism is as much a part of the Marxist undertaking as it is of the Weberian. In laying the charge of

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1. Gurinder K. Bhambra, *Rethinking Modernity: Postcolonialism and the Sociological Imagination* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).
 2. Robert Brenner, 'Agrarian Class Structure and Economic Development in Pre-industrial Europe', *Past and Present* 70 (February 1976): 30–75; Robert Brenner, 'The Origins of Capitalist Development: A Critique of Neo-Smithian Marxism', *New Left Review* 104 (1977): 25–92.
 3. Perry Anderson, *Lineages of the Absolutist State* (London: Verso, 1974).
 4. Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System I: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century* (New York: Academic Press, 1974); Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Capitalist World-Economy: Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979); Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System II: Mercantilism and the Consolidation of the European World-Economy, 1600–1750* (New York: Academic Press, 1980).
 5. W. Garry Runciman, *A Treatise on Social Theory, Volume III: Applied Social Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).
 6. Anthony Giddens, *The Nation-State and Violence, Volume Two: A Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1985); Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990).
 7. Michael Mann, *The Sources of Social Power, Volume I: A History of Power from the Beginning to A.D. 1760* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Michael Mann, *The Sources of Social Power, Volume II: The Rise of Classes and Nation-States, 1760–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).
 8. For a discussion of the contemporary debates within historical sociology with reference to the field of International Relations in particular, see Gurinder K. Bhambra, 'Historical Sociology, International Relations and Connected Histories', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 23, no. 1 (2010): 127–43. See also the chapter by John Hobson, George Lawson and Justin Rosenberg, 'Historical Sociology', in *The International Studies Encyclopaedia*, ed. Robert A. Denemark (Wiley-Blackwell: International Studies Association, 2010).

Eurocentrism against Marxism, I am seeking a broader dialogue, one that brings the non-West more thoroughly into understandings of the construction of the modern world and, further, that displaces the privileged position of the West within comparative historical-sociological accounts.

It has often been argued that sociology has been historically oriented from the outset.⁹ I would suggest, however, that in its initial phase, sociology represented a continuation of the tradition of conjectural or speculative history that by the end of the 19th century had been brought to a close in history proper. Rather than grounding its activities in the more recent methodologies of historical enquiry, sociology took as its underlying assumption a generalised historical narrative based on the Scottish Enlightenment idea of 'stages'. This background assumption of sociology has been reproduced in subsequent theoretical and substantive initiatives. The evidential basis for this historical narrative remains weak precisely because it has become embedded in the conceptual framework of sociology, and, as we shall see, the orientation to the historical record tends to be one of confirming the general scheme rather than subjecting it to counter-evidence (and-argument). It is this attachment to the general framework as well as hostility to the particularity of evidence-based historical research that sets sociology up in opposition to history and also, as we shall see, sets Marxist theoretical accounts up as hostile to reconstruction.

Sociology, History and the Challenge of Postcolonialism

The dominant sociological approaches to modernity have argued for distinct developmental types of society and have suggested that the question of social development needs to be approached in terms of a comparative historical sociology which takes modernity as its (value-relevant) point of reference.¹⁰ This comparative sociology treats different types of society as distinct and bounded and proceeds by a method of ideal-typical abstraction from wider interconnections and complex circumstances. This abstraction is designed to render certain interconnections 'visible' and capable of being submitted to systematic examination. What is neglected is the extent to which that systematic examination reinforces the 'invisibility' of other connections that might have been the object of investigation. What are generally rendered invisible in most considerations of modernity are the colonial relationships which have comprised a significant aspect of modernity from its inception and have been no less systematic than the interconnections that have otherwise been represented within dominant sociological approaches. While it is accepted that it is impossible to address 'everything', the selections made need to be justifiable on their own terms and the terms of the others who come to engage with them. Where the selections are deemed inadequate, it is necessary not only to make other selections, but

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9. Philip Abrams, 'History, Sociology, Historical Sociology', *Past and Present* 87 (May 1980): 3–16; Andrew Abbott, 'History and Sociology: The Lost Synthesis', *Social Science History* 15, no. 2 (1991): 201–38.
 10. Reinhardt Bendix, 'Tradition and Modernity Reconsidered', *Comparative Studies in Society and History: An International Quarterly* IX (1967): 292–346; Johann Arnason, 'Communism and Modernity', *Daedalus: Multiple Modernities* 129, no. 1 (2000): 61–90; Shmuel N. Eisenstadt, 'Multiple Modernities', *Daedalus: Multiple Modernities* 129, no. 1 (2000): 1–29.

also to understand why particular selections were initially made and how these can be enhanced and reconstructed through further engagement.

Increasing recognition of the global context within which sociology exists as a discipline is evident in arguments against the supposed methodological nationalism¹¹ of the past and in attempts to bring the 'rest of the world' back into classical Marxist debates on the nature and history of capitalism.¹² As with feminism before it, global and postcolonial history has the potential to open up an area of dialogue between sociology and history and transform the research agendas of both.¹³ Whereas feminism primarily challenged the nature of connections internal to particular societies, global and postcolonial history points to a change in discussions of the nature of wider connections beyond the boundaries of particular national societies or then regional areas. Marxist approaches with their emphasis on 'totality', whether 'expressively' given or 'conjuncturally' determined (to use Althusser's formulation),¹⁴ would seem necessarily to be about connections. However, I shall argue that Marxist historiographies are similarly flawed to those of Weberian historical sociology. It will be evident by the end of this article that I locate my own concerns within a reconstructed historical sociology, rather than historical materialism.

The perceived 'gap' between general historical frameworks and the particular experiences from which they abstract can, I believe, be overcome by addressing difference in the context of what the historian Sanjay Subrahmanyam calls 'connected histories'.¹⁵ In making an argument for 'connected histories', Subrahmanyam potentially provides an innovative and productive way out of the bind that sees much historical sociology caught between an evolutionary universal scheme on the one hand, where differences are placed within particular hierarchies depending on the model being used, and a culturally relative exoticism on the other, which reifies and privileges difference. If the dominant cartographies of Western historiography have been effectively criticised by postcolonial theorists, as I suggest they have, postcolonial historiography has nonetheless reproduced some equivalent hierarchies in its own representation of history from the point of view of the subaltern. 'Connected histories' would allow the deconstruction of dominant narratives at the same time as it is open to different perspectives and seeks to reconcile them systematically and dialogically, both in terms of the reconstruction of theoretical categories and in the incorporation of new data and evidence. This is the promise of historical sociology, I will suggest, that it has so far failed to fulfil.

Standard Historical-Sociological Response

The standard historical-sociological response to the recent critiques has been to reaffirm the central framework of sociological theory, while admitting of the multiplicity or variety

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11. Ulrich Beck, 'The Cosmopolitan Perspective: Sociology of the Second Age of Modernity', *British Journal of Sociology* 51, no. 1 (2000): 79–105.
 12. Kamran Matin, 'Uneven and Combined Development in World History: The International Relations of State-Formation in Premodern Iran', *European Journal of International Relations* 13, no. 3 (2007): 419–47.
 13. Gurminder K. Bhambra, 'Sociology and Postcolonialism: Another "Missing" Revolution?', *Sociology* 41, no. 5 (2007): 871–84.
 14. Louis Althusser, *For Marx* (Allen Lane: London, 1969).
 15. Sanjay Subrahmanyam, 'Connected Histories: Notes towards a Reconfiguration of Early Modern Eurasia', *Modern Asian Studies* 31, no. 3 (1997): 735–62.

of that framework in other contexts.¹⁶ This has been most pertinently expressed in the work of the theorists of multiple modernities, which examines the trajectory of modernity into divergent forms.¹⁷ Whereas modernisation studies was tied, to a large extent, to the political and economic developments of the modern state, the new paradigm of multiple modernities brings in an important cultural focus in its attempt to move beyond the perceived deficiencies of the earlier paradigm. It allows scholars to theorise differences between peoples and acknowledges the existence of a plurality of civilisations that, in its own terms, goes beyond earlier binaries of ‘civilised’ and ‘non-civilised’, modernity and tradition.

In developing this approach, theorists of multiple modernities believe that two fallacies are to be avoided. The first, associated with earlier modernisation theories, is that there is only one modernity. The second is that of Eurocentrism, or: ‘that looking from the West to the East legitimates the concept of “Orientalism”’.¹⁸ Here the argument is that while the idea of one modernity, especially one that has already been achieved in Europe, would be Eurocentric, theories of multiple modernities must, nonetheless, take Europe as the reference point in their examination of alternative modernities.¹⁹ Thus, while theorists of multiple modernities point to the problem of Eurocentrism, they do so at the same time as asserting the necessary priority to be given to the West in the construction of a comparative sociology of multiple modernities. I take issue with their claim that this can avoid a charge of Eurocentrism. Their position, I argue, is based on an understanding of globalisation in terms of the world *becoming* global through the process of *incorporating* other parts of the world into a system whose defining features drive expansion forward, but are essentially *defined independently of interconnections that are argued to come in the wake of globalisation*.

Within the paradigm of multiple modernities, modernity is theorised simultaneously in terms of its institutional constellations, that is, its tendency ‘towards universal structural, institutional, and cultural frameworks’,²⁰ as well as a cultural programme ‘beset by internal antinomies and contradictions, giving rise to continual critical discourse and political contestations’.²¹ *Multiple* modernities are, thus, seen to emerge from the encounters ‘between Western modernity and the cultural traditions and historical experiences’ of other societies.²² This explains the apparent paradox that theorists of multiple modernities can dissociate themselves from Eurocentrism at the same time as apparently embracing its core assumptions, namely, ‘the Enlightenment assumptions of the centrality of a Eurocentred type of modernity’.²³ It is a form that is seen to have achieved expression without relation to others in order to produce modernity’s common framework of institutions such as the market economy, the modern nation-state and bureaucratic rationality.

16. This section is an abbreviated version of the argument made in Bhambra, *Rethinking Modernity*, chapter 3.

17. See, for example, the two volumes of *Daedalus on Early Modernities* (1998) and *Multiple Modernities* (2000).

18. Shmuel N. Eisenstadt and Wolfgang Schluchter, ‘Introduction: Paths to Early Modernities – A Comparative View’, *Daedalus: Early Modernities* 127, no. 3 (1998): 2.

19. Eisenstadt and Schluchter, ‘Introduction’, 2.

20. *Ibid.*, 3.

21. Eisenstadt, ‘Multiple Modernities’, 7.

22. *Ibid.*, 23.

23. Eisenstadt and Schluchter, ‘Introduction’, 5.

These institutions, having originated in Europe, are then subsequently exported to the rest of the world, where they are inflected within different cultural meanings. Colonialism is neither seen as integral to the construction of modern institutions, nor, even within the diffusionist account proposed, seen as a mechanism of diffusion.

While the recognition of 'difference' within the schema of multiple modernities can be seen to be an important corrective to the earlier dominant universalising tendencies within social science, simply recognising difference is not sufficient.²⁴ 'Difference' also has to *make a difference* to the assumptions that informed the initial enquiry – in this case, the endogenous origins and initial development of modernity in Europe. As I have argued in greater detail elsewhere, acknowledging the multiplicity of cultural forms of modernity does nothing to address the fundamental problems with the conceptualisation of modernity itself.²⁵ All that the idea of 'multiple modernities' does, as Dirlik argues, is 'contain challenges to modernity by conceding the possibility of culturally different ways of being modern'.²⁶ There is no examination of what could be learnt from 'our' engagements with 'them' and how we might reconstruct our categories of understanding as a result of the new knowledge gained.

Marxist Alternatives

The trail laid by Weber in seeking to determine the causes of the 'rise of the West' and 'the European miracle' has been followed by subsequent theorists attempting to account for the miracle *in* Europe, that is, the presumed initial emergence of modernity there. While Weberian historical sociology has addressed the question of modernity specifically, Marxist historical sociology has taken up the issue of *capitalist modernity*. In doing so, Marxists believe in the 'world-historical significance' of capitalism, even if that significance ultimately resides in its transformation and transcendence. Many Marxists within the academy no longer accept the plausibility of that subsequent transcendence, maintaining it, at best, as a utopian hope.²⁷ Indeed, the fact that formerly existing state socialist systems seem to be on the road from socialism to capitalism means that current Marxism tends to have fallen back onto the world-historical significance of capitalism pure and simple. Again, there may be a formal disavowal of the 'miracle of Europe' as a bourgeois conceit, but insofar as capitalism is analysed as having its origins in Europe, in terms of processes specific to Europe, then I suggest its distance from that position is rhetorical rather than substantial.

The issue of Marxist approaches is complicated by the division between self-consciously 'internalist' approaches, for example, in the work of Robert Brenner²⁸ and

24. For fuller discussion of the way in which multiple modernities' theorists reproduce earlier critical positions without due acknowledgement, see Bhambra, *Rethinking Modernity*, chapter 3.

25. Bhambra, *Rethinking Modernity*.

26. Arif Dirlik, 'Global Modernity? Modernity in an Age of Global Capitalism', *European Journal of Social Theory* 6, no. 3 (2003): 285.

27. See, for example, Erik Olin Wright's 'Real Utopias Project'. Available at: <http://www.ssc.wisc.edu/~wright/RealUtopias.htm>.

28. Brenner, 'Agrarian Class Structure'; Brenner, 'The Origins of Capitalist Development'.

Ellen Meiksins Wood,²⁹ and those which emphasise inter-societal interconnection, for example, scholars such as Immanuel Wallerstein,³⁰ Fernand Braudel³¹ and, more recently, Justin Rosenberg.³² However, it will perhaps not come as much of a surprise if I suggest that this distinction operates in much the same way as the modernisation–multiple modernities problematic in Weberian historical sociology, where the internal diffusionist approach organised around the idea of convergence is moderated by an emphasis on external dynamics which are subsequently incorporated into the world-system of capitalist modernity. It should also be clear that, from its own perspective, the defining feature of any Marxist approach (precisely what distinguishes it from historical *sociology*) is the emphasis on modes of production and their determinate processes. The ‘internalism’ of some Marxist approaches may be tempered by an emphasis upon ‘uneven and combined development’, but the meaning of the latter – that is, *development* – is given in the central role attributed to the mode of production, which renders other processes (those of colonialism, for example) secondary, however *empirically* significant they are allowed to be. While historical-materialist approaches acknowledge the operation of capitalism as a ‘world-system’, then, they usually also identify its central dynamic with processes having a *European* origin. Any model that posits a world-historical centre from which developments diffuse outwards is problematic. What is needed is a decentred conception of ‘totality’; decentred not just spatially, but also conceptually (that is, my ultimate concern would also be to decentre the idea of ‘modes of production’ in these debates).

Perry Anderson directly echoes Weber in his posing of the following question: ‘how is the unique dynamism of the European theatre of international feudalism to be explained?’³³ And this is followed with a claim that no historian has suggested that industrial capitalism has developed spontaneously anywhere other than Europe and the US. It was the spontaneous emergence of industrial capitalism in Europe ‘and its American extension’ that gave it an economic primacy and enabled it to conquer the rest of the world and subsume it also to the capitalist mode of production.³⁴ In addressing the relationship between feudalism and the subsequent development of capitalism, Anderson argues that while feudalism could have been regarded as existing across the Eurasian land mass, it was the peculiarity of the structures of sovereignty and legality in the western reaches of this land mass that is ‘capable of explaining the differential development of the whole mode of production’.³⁵ While accepting the existence of some form of feudalism in other places, for example, in Japan, Anderson nevertheless points to the ‘divergent outcome’ of these initially fundamentally parallel processes.³⁶ He argues for

29. Ellen M. Wood, *The Origin of Capitalism: A Longer View* (London: Verso, 2002).

30. Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System I*; Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System II*.

31. Ferdinand Braudel, *Civilization and Capitalism 15th–18th Century: The Perspective of the World* (London: Fontana Press, 1985 [1979]).

32. Justin Rosenberg, ‘Why Is There No International Historical Sociology?’, *European Journal of International Relations* 12, no. 3 (2006): 307–40; Justin Rosenberg, ‘International Relations – The “Higher” Bullshit: A Reply to the Globalisation Theory Debate’, *International Politics* 44, no. 4 (2007): 450–82.

33. Anderson, *Lineages*, 402.

34. *Ibid.*, 402–3.

35. *Ibid.*, 403.

36. *Ibid.*, 419.

the transition to capitalism within Europe to have been accomplished ‘under its own impulsion, in a process of constant global expansion’, and for Japan to have achieved industrialisation only as a consequence of ‘the impact of Euro-American imperialism’ and ‘the import of Western technology’.³⁷

Here, the parallel to the multiple modernities approach of Weberian historical sociologists is most apparent. In both forms of argument, a process that is understood as international or global in scope, is regarded as having an originary core that is located in western Europe (and its north American extension); similarly forms of indigenous dynamism are admitted, but these forms only achieve maturity as a consequence of the impact of the West upon them. While in Anderson’s account this ‘impact’ is understood in terms of ‘imperialism’, whereas most Weberian accounts subsume the processes of colonialism, imperialism and slavery to the euphemism of ‘diffusion’, Western imperialism is nevertheless regarded as *consequent* to capitalism, as opposed to *constitutive* of it; in other words, when considered as a ‘type’, capitalism can be imagined without imperialism (and usually is!).

Wallerstein, similarly, identifies Europe as the origin of his world-system and argues for it to be understood in terms of the expansion of the European economy, which subsequently incorporated much of the world within its ambit. Prior to the 18th century, however, as Washbrook demonstrates,³⁸ there were a number of different regional networks with the characteristics ascribed by Wallerstein to the European one – such as relations between core and periphery – in which Europe either did not participate or was the peripheral member.³⁹ As Washbrook argues, once the commercial centres across various regions are linked up into circuits of trade, we see that ‘South Asia was the hub of several of these circuits, [and] was responsible for a much larger share of world trade than any comparable zone’, with the weight of its economic power reaching, for example, Mexico.⁴⁰ As such, explanations for Europe’s subsequent dominance that rest on an endogenous account for its rise are inadequate in the longer (and wider) view. It is this idea, then, that industrial capitalism is/was something which emerged in western Europe and then diffused outwards, that connects Weberian and Marxist accounts most closely.

The recent re-emergence of another Marxist position, that of Trotsky’s idea of ‘uneven and combined development’, owes no small debt to the work of Justin Rosenberg and his use of Trotsky’s writings to examine the possibility of formulating a social theory of the international.⁴¹ In brief, Rosenberg’s argument is that a social theory of the international

37. *Ibid.*, 419, 420.

38. David A. Washbrook, ‘Progress and Problems: South Asian Economic and Social History c.1720–1860’, *Modern Asian Studies* 22, no. 1 (1988): 57–96.

39. See also Janet L. Abu-Lughod, *Before European Hegemony: The World System A.D. 1250–1350* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989); Frank Perlin, ‘Proto-industrialization and Pre-colonial South Asia’, *Past and Present* 98 (1983): 30–95; Frank Perlin, *Unbroken Landscape: Commodity, Category, Sign and Identity: Their Production as Myth and Knowledge from 1500* (Hampshire: Variorum, 1994); Subrahmanyam, ‘Connected Histories 735–62.

40. Washbrook, ‘Progress and Problems’, 60.

41. See the 2009 issue of *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 22, no. 1, which was devoted to the development of ‘uneven and combined development’ within International Relations.

is necessary as, without it, ‘we would be left with an impossibility: a social phenomenon without a sociological foundation’, and that in developing such a theory Trotsky’s notion of ‘uneven and combined development’ potentially (probably) provides the key.⁴² I have no wish to get into the intricacies of the debate itself, but rather seek to address the very notion of ‘uneven and combined development’ in relation to the arguments of Eurocentrism which are central to this article.

While the concept of ‘uneven and combined development’ is seemingly sensitive to the issues of difference, development and underdevelopment in a global context, its sensitivity is predicated on a problematic assumption: namely, that its underlying framework is one of a linear stadial theory. The stadial (or stages) theory of history, as developed by the thinkers of the Scottish Enlightenment, was posited as a solution to the problem of accommodating difference within a universal framework. Although these thinkers were not the only ones to consider the diversity of social practices and institutions present in the world, they were seen as among the first to attempt ‘to place this diversity in some sort of order’.⁴³ While the stages are seen as morally progressive, with each stage marking an advance over the previous ones, the ultimate stage of commercial society was seen both as a distinct stage and as existing contemporaneously with other modes of subsistence, not necessarily supplanting them. With the emergence of industrial societies, the distinction between modern commerce and earlier commercial forms became easier to identify and, at the same time, commercial society was provided with a ‘principle’ that guaranteed its dominance. The principle, or logic, of transformation was generally taken to be technological development through market competition, and/or class struggle related to the mode of production.

The essential idea of the stages theory of history, and one that was picked up and developed subsequently within sociology, and within Marxist accounts, was that ‘societies undergo *development* through successive *stages* based on different *modes of subsistence*’.⁴⁴ The shift from ‘modes of subsistence’ to ‘modes of production’ was, of course, the specifically Marxist contribution. The identification of an ‘unbound Prometheus’, to use Landes’ graphic image,⁴⁵ that is, an innate characteristic which, in its diffusion outwards, would give rise to its supplanting of other forms of society, was part of the process by way of which the ‘cosmopolitanism’ of commercial society gave way to the evolutionary teleology of industrial capitalism and standard Marxist accounts. The turn to ‘uneven and combined development’, then, could be seen as a return to the cosmopolitanism of earlier theories of commercial society with their emphasis on the coexistence of differing modes of subsistence within a universal framework (i.e. totality).

While ‘uneven and combined development’ is able to offer an explanation for neo-colonialism – that is, the unevenness of relations in our contemporary times – it has no space for the colonialism that is a part of the development of unevenness. Colonial

42. Justin Rosenberg, ‘Basic Problems in the Theory of Uneven and Combined Development: A Reply to the CRIA Forum’, *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 22, no. 1 (2009): 108.

43. Christopher J. Berry, *Social Theory of the Scottish Enlightenment* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997), 88.

44. Ronald Meek, *Social Science and the Ignoble Savage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 6.

45. David S. Landes, *The Unbound Prometheus: Technological Change and Industrial Development in Western Europe from 1750 to the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969).

relations are created in the ‘stadiality’ of the underlying framework, and yet colonialism has no part to play in the development of that framework. Most accounts of capitalism, Marxist and other, posit imperialism as a subsequent, later stage of capitalism proper, as something that occurs as a consequence of capitalism’s imperative for economic expansion.⁴⁶ I would argue, in contrast, that capitalism emerges as a consequence of overseas domination, not before it.⁴⁷ As Rosenberg writes, within this schema, ‘development’ is posited ‘ontologically as the subject matter of the analysis’ and, in doing so, ‘it identifies the evolution of social structures in historical time as the basis of its explanatory method’.⁴⁸ In this context, ‘unevenness’ becomes a teleological statement that cannot address issues of domination and subordination that are integral to the emergence of that ‘unevenness’. The ‘unevenness’ in ‘uneven and combined’ is argued to be a consequence of the modes of production *internal* to societies, not a consequence of relations between societies.

The capitalist mode of production argument that is central to this conceptualisation is immune to transformation in light of such critiques, as the mode of production is given a status outside of ‘empirical’ considerations. Basically, the capitalist mode of production is said to rest on a singular relation between capital and labour that is argued to be its intrinsic form. This is the ‘purely economic’ wage contract that, as Anderson puts it, paraphrasing Marx, rests in ‘the equal exchange between free agents which reproduces, hourly and daily, inequality and oppression’.⁴⁹ No other relations – that is, forms of unfree labour such as slave labour or bonded labour – are allowed to be integral to the emergence and development of capitalism. The singularity of the capital–labour relation that is allowed distorts the significance of other forms of labour that were predominant at the time Marx was writing and obscures the already existing international context within which such forms emerged, as well as ‘displacing’ forms that developed subsequently.

In contrast, Shilliam uses the approach of ‘uneven and combined development’, together with the concept of ‘creolisation’, to examine the production of New World identities in the context of a consideration of one form of unfree labour, that of the

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46. As Allinson and Anievas write, paraphrasing Trotsky, the socio-economic sources of unevenness ‘are only articulated with the emergence of capitalism and, subsequently, the “imperialist stage” of capitalist development’ (p. 50). They go on to quote Trotsky directly to illuminate this argument: ‘capitalism inherently and constantly aims at economic expansion, at the penetration of new territories’ (p. 50). Jamie C. Allison and Alexander Anievas, ‘The Uses and Misuses of Uneven and Combined Development: An Anatomy of a Concept’, *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 22, no. 1 (2009): 47–67. Ashman similarly argues that the ‘great transformation’ in England and Holland preceded ‘external expansion’ – her euphemism for colonialism, slavery and imperialism – ‘which further aided the development of capitalism at home’. Sam Ashman, ‘Capitalism, Uneven and Combined Development and the Transhistoric’, *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 22, no. 1 (2009): 36–7.
47. In a related discussion on modernity, Gyan Prakash suggests that the erroneous assumption, perpetuated by many theorists, is that the West ‘had forged its characteristic commitment to modernity before overseas domination’ as opposed to through it. Gyan Prakash, *Another Reason: Science and the Imagination of Modern India* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), 12.
48. Alex Callinicos and Justin Rosenberg, ‘Uneven and Combined Development: The Social-Relational Substratum of “the International”? An Exchange of Letters’, *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 21, no. 1 (2008): 86.
49. Anderson, *Lineages*, 403.

Atlantic slave trade. He suggests that Atlantic slavery ‘constitutes the deepest structural unevenness upon and through which the modern *world* order developed’ and that it is not possible to understand the emergence of the modern world without a consideration of this phenomenon.⁵⁰ His argument, in brief, is that the imaginary of ‘the Atlantic’, within the discipline of International Relations, is generally understood in terms of being an extension of the (white) European community that, in turn, creates a unified (unifying) sense of a Western civilisation. However, he argues, there is also ‘the Black Atlantic’ which has a history ‘deeper and wider than even this’.⁵¹ This Atlantic history, Shilliam continues, requires us to acknowledge the ‘generative’ aspect of slavery ‘in the construction of a new cultural and political grammar of New World identity’.⁵² To this, he also adds ‘economic’, in that the force of his argument rests on the following claim: that ‘the *direct* experience of slavery in the New World provided an impulse towards – and dissemination of – novel processes of creolisation before and also coeval with capitalist industrialisation which were not endogenous to Europe’.⁵³

The connections to which Shilliam points are a necessary corrective to the standard histories of the Atlantic utilised by theorists of international relations, and to the silences around the issue of slavery in the constitution of the modern (capitalist) world. Slavery, in his account, is seen as generative of a capitalist modernity that is no longer to be understood solely as European, but as emerging through the interconnections identified. As he states in conclusion, it is not sufficient simply to disturb ‘the domestic analogy’ within International Relations; there is a need ‘to push further and disturb the regional analogy of “Europe” to the “West” to the “World”’.⁵⁴ Disturbing these analogies also requires rethinking the framework – of a Eurocentred type of capitalist modernity – within which new interpretations are to be located. Newly understood histories and newly understood connections provide the basis for thinking anew the previous schemas which were deficient in their failure to address issues now regarded as integral. It is not sufficient, as Trouillot argues, to add native, stir and continue as normal.⁵⁵

Shilliam enlarges the standard scope of the Atlantic within International Relations with reference to Atlantic slavery, and there are further silenced histories which could also be included. The forms of unfree labour as constituted through African slavery were supplemented by indentured labour, not only contemporaneously from Europe, as Shilliam notes, but also, subsequent to the formal abolition of slavery, from the Indian subcontinent and elsewhere.⁵⁶ The intermingling between the various groups contributed

50. Robbie Shilliam, ‘The Atlantic as a Vector of Uneven and Combined Development’, *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 22, no. 1 (2009): 72, emphasis in original.

51. Shilliam, ‘The Atlantic’, 75; see also Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993); William Boelhower, ‘The Rise of the New Atlantic Studies Matrix’, *American Literary History* 20, nos 1–2 (2008): 83–101.

52. Shilliam, ‘The Atlantic’, 77.

53. *Ibid.*, 82.

54. *Ibid.*, 84.

55. Michel-Rolph Trouillot, ‘Anthropology and the Savage Slot: The Poetics and Politics of Otherness’, in *Recapturing Anthropology: Working in the Present*, ed. R.G. Fox (New Mexico: School of American Research Press, 1991).

56. Lomarsh Roopnarine, *Indo-Caribbean Indenture: Resistance and Accommodation, 1838–1920* (Mona, Jamaica: University of the West Indies Press, 2007); H. Tinker, *A New System of Slavery – The Export of*

to the 'creolisation' that Shilliam mentions, and was further complicated by the ideology of 'caste' brought over by the Indian bonded labourers, and their experiences also fed into the emerging discourse of decolonisation in the Caribbean and further afield.⁵⁷ Alongside these interconnections, there were, of course, also earlier ones between the Iberian peninsula, the continent of Africa and the Americas.⁵⁸ These can be seen to have contributed to particular instantiations of capitalist modernity and need to be recognised not simply as part of an age of commerce that was subsequently supplanted by an age of conquest, as Pagden would like to argue, but as an age of conquest which laid the groundwork for the more dominant age of colonisation that followed. These interconnections also require consideration as part of the connected history of the Atlantic with their own specific contribution to 'creolisation' through 'cafrealisation' – a stigmatising designation for Portuguese men who adopted the ways of the African people among whom they lived⁵⁹ – and the deracialising of social relations through 'miscegenation'.⁶⁰

Constructing the discourse of capitalism as a process that became global over time, whether 'unevenly' or not, posits 'historical time as a measure of the cultural distance (at least in institutional development) that was assumed to exist between the West and the non-West'.⁶¹ We were all seen to be headed in the same direction and Europe, or the West, simply provides the model of where it is that the rest of the world would arrive. Chakrabarty argues that if we examine the epistemological assumptions underlying Marx's use of categories like 'bourgeois' and 'prebourgeois', or 'capital' and 'precapital', then we see that the 'prefix *pre* here signifies a relationship that is both chronological and theoretical', with 'capital' being posited as a philosophical and universal category by which history, and the rest of the world, is knowable in terms of its differences from it.⁶² The narrative of historical transition, in this case of 'uneven and combined development', is reified as *the* narrative of history – where 'unevenness' points to difference and 'development' to the universal framework within which those differences are to be located – and the histories of the rest of the world are understood within the problematics of this narrative.

Indian Labour Overseas, 1830–1920 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974); Clare Anderson, 'Convicts and Coolies: Rethinking Indentured Labour in the Nineteenth Century', *Slavery & Abolition* 30, no. 1 (2009): 93–109.

57. See N. Natarajan, 'Atlantic Gandhi, Caribbean Gandhian', *Economic and Political Weekly* 44, no. 18 (2009): 43–52; David Dabydeen and Brinsley Samaroo, *Across the Dark Waters: Ethnicity and Indian Identity in the Caribbean* (London: Macmillan, 1996).
58. C.R. Boxer, *The Portuguese Seaborne Empire, 1415–1825* (London: Penguin Books, 1973); Anthony Pagden, *European Encounters with the New World: From Renaissance to Romanticism* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993).
59. Boaventura de Sousa Santos, 'Between Prospero and Caliban: Colonialism, Postcolonialism, and Inter-identity', *Luso-Brazilian Review* 39, no. 2 (2002): 24.
60. Santos, 'Between Prospero and Caliban', 27.
61. Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000).
62. Dipesh Chakrabarty, 'Postcoloniality and the Artifice of History Who Speaks for "Indian" Pasts?', special issue 'Imperial Fantasies and Postcolonial Histories', *Representations* 37 (Winter 1992): 3.

Conclusion: Global Historical Sociology

The idea within Marxist international relations, that capitalism ought to be regarded as ‘an integrated totality’ which contains difference, as well as divergent paths and forms, is not that far removed from the idea of multiple modernities. Both approaches seek to accommodate difference within an already accepted ‘universal’ framework of categories which is, in fact, articulated in relation to an initial core that is European. While the convergence of earlier models of both modernisation theory and standard Marxist approaches is disavowed, the acknowledgement of difference in the subsequent models does little to mitigate the basic Eurocentric assumptions informing the underlying frameworks within which that difference is to be contained. Two illustrations follow from historical-sociological and historical-materialist accounts:

a set of technological, economic, and political institutions, with their origins in the context of Western Europe, have become diffused across the globe, at least as ideals, sometimes also as working realities . . . these different cultural entities have to adapt to and refer to a set of globally diffused ideas and practices.⁶³

Changes in capital – its restructuring and transformation in the ‘core’ of the world economy – are *transmitted* to the colonial world where social relations are *restructured* in varying and complex ways, transforming some class relations and preserving others.⁶⁴

In both examples, the origins of the phenomenon under consideration are unproblematically assumed to rest in Europe, or the Western core more generally. The processes are assumed to be diffused or transmitted elsewhere with little explanation of the mode of that transmission (even if one were to accept the possibility of unidirectional transmission as the basis of world history). Finally, the ‘cultural entities’ and ‘social relations’ in other places have to adapt to, and be restructured by, these globally diffused processes. The colonial world is set up as existing independently from the ‘core’, and thus independently of (though subsequent to) capitalism, and colonialism appears to involve simply the ‘restructuring’ ‘in varying and complex ways’ of existing social relations – a rather benign description of processes that others have defined in somewhat stronger terms.⁶⁵

The ‘writing out’ of colonialism, even in accounts that are ostensibly responding, at least in part, to the challenge posed by postcolonial and development studies for an acknowledgement of ‘difference’ elsewhere, is not accidental, nor an individual error. It is a methodological assumption that rests on the believed ‘undeniability’ of particular ‘facts’ – namely, that Europe is the origin of particular processes – such that even if it is accepted that ‘Eurocentrism’ is inappropriate as a methodological assumption, it cannot be denied as ‘fact’. However, in earlier work I have challenged the ‘facts’ of

63. Bjorn Wittrock, ‘Modernity: One, None, or Many? European Origins and Modernity as a Global Condition’, *Daedalus: Multiple Modernities* 129, no. 1 (2000): 54–5.

64. Ashman, ‘Capitalism, Uneven and Combined Development’, 37 (emphasis added).

65. See, for example, Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 1968 [1961]), trans. Constance Farrington.

modernity to show that they *can be challenged* and that, moreover, a different kind of historical-sociological approach – one oriented to interconnections – would provide a different understanding of modernity and the diversity of contributions to it.⁶⁶ These include both the contributions of non-European ‘others’ and the contribution of European colonialism – the one innovation associated strongly with Europe that is systematically disregarded in favour of other ‘European’ innovations in standard narratives explaining the reasons for Europe’s world-historical significance. Eurocentrism, however, is perhaps more easily disavowed than avoided.

Dirlík, for example, argues that even voices critical of Europe subscribe to a form of Eurocentrism as a consequence of their *focus* on Europe.⁶⁷ To the extent that criticism of ‘Europe’ simply inverts the dominant paradigm and offers a particularity in contrast to that universal, then his argument has force. However, I have sought to do something different. I have sought to understand the conceptual frameworks of historical-sociological discourses on modernity and Marxist accounts of capitalist modernity, and to deconstruct their claims for the possibility of a universal framework of categories that transcends the problem of Eurocentrism through a recognition of the ‘false universalism’ that underpins their accounts. The problem, I argue, is methodological in as much as it is substantive, in that the issue of Eurocentrism is inscribed in the methodology of ‘ideal types’ and in the development of the ‘concrete abstractions’ favoured by Marxists as an apparent alternative to ‘ideal types’.⁶⁸

Where frameworks of categories have been constructed on the basis of particular historical narratives, but are nonetheless argued to be universal in character, I argue they embody a form of unacknowledged Eurocentrism carried in the very separation between a ‘universal’ framework on the one hand, and ‘particular’ differences (whether convergent or divergent) on the other. The evidential basis for the historical narrative, within historical sociology or Marxist accounts, is reinforced in terms of the connections studied and those which are not considered. Where ‘ideal types’ or ‘concrete abstractions’

66. Looking at the history of cotton provides one pertinent example of this. As Washbrook argues, cotton first came to Britain from India, as did the knowledge of how to design, weave and dye it. It was grown in the southern states of the US by Africans who had been transported there as a consequence of the slave trade. It was then shipped to the mills in Manchester and Lancaster and the fabric produced was in turn distributed to markets further afield – many of them were opened up to British goods through force and the subjugation of local populations and their activities. By addressing the Industrial Revolution from this wider perspective, we see that it is not something that emerged endogenously within Britain, or even Europe, but rather that it had global, and colonial, conditions of emergence. The Industrial Revolution was not something that became global subsequent to its initial emergence. David A. Washbrook, ‘From Comparative Sociology to Global History: Britain and India in the Pre-history of Modernity’, *Journal of Economic and Social History of the Orient* 40, no. 4 (1997): 410–43.

67. Arif Dirlík, ‘History without a Centre? Reflections on Eurocentrism’, in *Across Cultural Borders: Historiography in Global Perspective*, eds E. Fuchs and B. Stuchey (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2002).

68. As Holmwood and Stewart argue, while ‘ideal types’ are regarded by Weberians as abstracting from the real in a one-sided manner, nowhere to be found in their pure form, and thus to be regarded as fictions, Marxists see ‘concrete abstractions’ as capturing real forces such that there is a unity between ‘concept’ and ‘reality’. Given the introduction of additional factors and so on intervening between concept and reality, however, concepts begin to take on an ‘ideal-typical’ status in neo-Marxist developments. John Holmwood and Alexander Stewart, *Explanation and Social Theory* (London: Macmillan, 1991).

have been constructed in relation to particular historical narratives, we need a new narrative and method for global historical sociology; this is a narrative of interconnection and a methodology of ‘connected histories’. Some of what is to be understood by ‘connected histories’ is to be found in Shilliam’s account of Atlantic slavery and its importance in the construction of New World identities and capitalist modernity.⁶⁹ The connections he identifies can be extended further, but, more significantly, what is required is to understand those connections as the basis for rethinking the standard historical sociology, be it Weberian or Marxist – to engage in a dialogue with others that makes a difference to what was initially posited. The narratives of interconnection – coming primarily from the turn to global and postcolonial histories – should thus pose significant problems for the macro-assumptions of sociology, as well as provoking a reconsideration of the very organisation of historical sociology and historical materialism, their categories, and their hierarchies.

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69. Shilliam, ‘The Atlantic’; see also Tarak Barkawi, ‘Connection and Constitution: Locating War and Culture in Globalization Studies’, *Globalizations* 1, no. 2 (2004): 155–70.