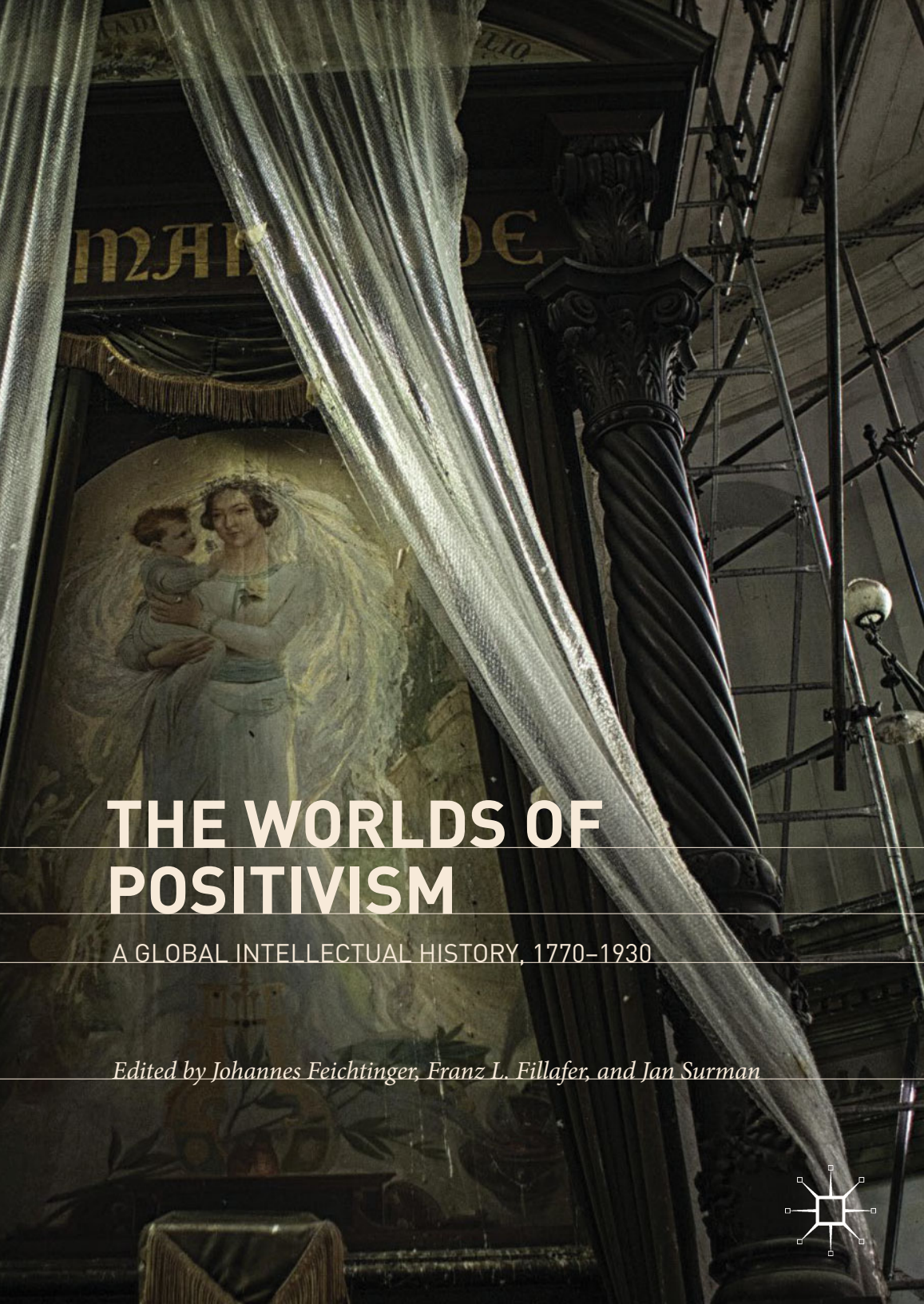

THE WORLDS OF POSITIVISM

A GLOBAL INTELLECTUAL HISTORY, 1770–1930

Edited by Johannes Feichtinger, Franz L. Fillafer, and Jan Surman

The Worlds of Positivism

Johannes Feichtinger · Franz L. Fillafer
Jan Surman
Editors

The Worlds of Positivism

A Global Intellectual History, 1770–1930

palgrave
macmillan

Editors
Johannes Feichtinger
Austrian Academy of Sciences
Vienna, Austria

Jan Surman
University of Erfurt
Erfurt, Germany

Franz L. Fillafer
Department of History and Sociology
University of Konstanz
Konstanz, Germany

ISBN 978-3-319-65761-5 ISBN 978-3-319-65762-2 (eBook)
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-65762-2

Library of Congress Control Number: 2017951535

Cover credit: Cover image courtesy of Nadia Shira Cohen

Printed on acid-free paper

This Palgrave Macmillan imprint is published by Springer Nature
The registered company is Springer International Publishing AG
The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

The original version of this book was revised: Belated corrections have been incorporated throughout the book and an acknowledgement has been included in Frontmatter.

Acknowledgements

This book originated in the Vienna-based international research project *Positivism–Power–Enlightenment* which was generously funded by the Austrian Academy of Sciences whom we thank for its support. We are extremely grateful to all contributors for their patient and dedicated work as well as for their kind forbearance during the gestation of the present volume. The excellent infrastructure provided by the University of Konstanz greatly facilitated the work of the editors, and the research assistants of Sven Reichardt's Chair for Contemporary History deserve special praise for their committed copy editing before the submission of the manuscript.

Contents

Editors and Contributors

About the Editors

Johannes Feichtinger is Senior Research Associate at the Austrian Academy of Sciences and Visiting Professor for Modern History and the History and Philosophy of Science at the University of Vienna. His publications include *Wissenschaft zwischen den Kulturen: Österreichische Hochschullehrer in der Emigration 1933–1945* (Frankfurt and New York: Campus Verlag, 2001), *Wissenschaft als reflexives Projekt: Von Bolzano über Freud zu Kelsen: Österreichische Wissenschaftsgeschichte 1848–1938* (Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2010). Among the 15 collected volumes he co-edited are *Understanding Multiculturalism: The Habsburg Central European Experience*, ed. with Gary B. Cohen (Oxford and New York: Berghahn Books, 2014), *Deploying Orientalism in Culture and History: From Germany to Central and Eastern Europe*, ed. with James Hodkinson, John Walker, and Shaswati Mazumdar (Rochester, New York: Camden House, 2013), and *The Academy of Sciences in Vienna 1938 to 1945*, ed. with Herbert Matis, Stefan Sienell, and Heidemarie Uhl (Vienna: Austrian Academy of Sciences Press, 2014).

Franz L. Fillafer is Lecturer in Modern and Contemporary History at the Department of History and Sociology of the University of Konstanz. His main fields of study are eighteenth and nineteenth-century Central Europe, the global history of positivism, and Eurocommunism in the twentieth century. His most recent publications include "A World Connecting? From

the Unity of History to Global History," *History and Theory* 56 (2017), 3–37, "Österreichislam," in Johannes Feichtinger and Heidemarie Uhl (eds), *Habsburg neu denken: Vielfalt und Ambivalenz in Zentraleuropa—30 kulturwissenschaftliche Stichworte* (Vienna: Böhlau, 2016), 163–70, and, co-written with Jürgen Osterhammel, "Cosmopolitanism and the German Enlightenment," in Helmut Walser Smith (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Modern German History*, 2nd edn, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 119–43. He is currently finishing a monograph on the Enlightenment and its aftermath in the Habsburg Empire.

Jan Surman is a visiting scholar at the Max Weber Centre for Advanced Cultural and Social Studies, University of Erfurt. His publications include *Habsburg Universities 1848–1918: Imperial Space and the Circulation of Knowledge* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, forthcoming), *Language as a Scientific Tool: Shaping Scientific Language across Time and National Traditions*, ed. with Miles MacLeod, Ekaterina Smirnova, and Rocío G. Sumillera (New York: Routledge, 2016), *Nomadic Concepts in Biology*, ed. with Katalin Straner and Peter Haslinger as a Special Panel in the Studies in History and Philosophy of Science Part C: Studies in History and Philosophy of Biological and Biomedical Sciences, vol. 48 B, 2014, and *The Nationalization of Scientific Knowledge in the Habsburg Empire*, 1848–1918, ed. with Mitchell G. Ash (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

Contributors

Jorge Fernández-Santos Ortiz-Iribas was educated at Cornell University, KU Leuven and the University of Cambridge. His research has been funded by the Gerda Henkel Stiftung, Düsseldorf, and the Spanish Ministry of Science and Technology. He currently teaches at the Universidad Rey Juan Carlos (Madrid, Spain). His monograph on the seventeenth-century Spanish polymath Juan Caramuel Lobkowitz, entitled *Juan Caramuel y la probable arquitectura* (Madrid: CEEH, 2014), represents a contribution to the understanding of the Spanish pre-Enlightenment from the standpoint of architectural theory. *Kulturtransfer* between Italy and Spain in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries constitutes a central concern of his publications, covering areas such as architectural history, urbanism, diplomacy, and scientific and artistic patronage.

Geraldine Forbes is Distinguished Teaching Professor Emerita in the Department of History and program in Women's and Gender Studies at the State University of New York at Oswego. Her first book, *Positivism in Bengal* (Calcutta: Minerva Associates, 1975), was selected for the prestigious Rabindra Puraskar Award. A pioneer in researching and writing women's history in colonial India, she was series editor of *Foremother Legacies: Autobiographies and Memoirs of Women from Asia, Africa, and the Middle East*. Her publications on women in colonial India include: *Shudha Mazumdar: Memoirs of an Indian Woman* (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe 1989), *Manmohini Zutshi Sahgal: An Indian Freedom Fighter Recalls Her Life* (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 1994), *Women in Modern India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), and *Women in Colonial India: Essays on Politics, Medicine and Historiography* (New Delhi: Chronicle Books, 2005) as well as several articles. "*Because I am a Woman*": *Child Widow: A Memoir from Colonial India* (New Delhi: Chronicle Books, 2010) was published in collaboration with Tapan Raychaudhuri. She is currently working on a number of projects including "Mahatma Gandhi and Saraladevi Chaudhurani," "Women and Family Photographs in Colonial India," and "An Early Missionary in the Naga Hills."

Sara Muniain Ederra is Professor of Art History and Architectural History at the School of Architecture of the Universidad San Jorge (Zaragoza, Spain). As a cultural historian, she has focused on the wide range of artistic relations between the Iberian and Italian peninsulas in the eighteenth century. She has written a monograph on the royal residence of the new Bourbon dynasty built in Madrid after the Habsburg Alcázar burnt down 1734, focusing on the Enlightenment agenda according to which it was conceived and erected: *El Palacio Real de Madrid en el marco de la Ilustración española* (Madrid: FUE, 2000). Other publications include "Arquitectura de la Arcadia y crisis de la magnificencia: las exequias de Luis I y Felipe V en Roma," *Römische Historische Mitteilungen*, 47 (2005), 279–334) and (with Jorge Fernández-Santos) "Pendre modèle sur Télémaque: The Fénelonian Underpinnings of 'Cultural Policy' at the Court of Philip V of Spain," in *Fénelon in the Enlightenment: Traditions, Adaptations, and Variations* (New York and Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2014), 129–46).

Eric S. Nelson is Associate Professor of Philosophy at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology. He has published over 70 articles

and book chapters on Chinese, German, and Jewish philosophy. He is the author of *Chinese and Buddhist Philosophy in Early Twentieth-Century German Thought* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017) and is currently working on a GRF funded project on the early modern German reception of Chinese philosophy. He is the co-editor with François Raffoul of the *Bloomsbury Companion to Heidegger* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016) and *Rethinking Facticity* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2008). He has also co-edited *Between Levinas and Heidegger* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2014), *Anthropologie und Geschichte. Studien zu Wilhelm Dilthey aus Anlass seines 100. Todestages* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2013), and *Addressing Levinas* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2005). He has edited special topic issues of *Frontiers of Philosophy in China* and the *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*.

Thomas Nemeth is currently a Writer-in-Residence at the Jordan Center for the Advanced Study of Russia at New York University. He is the author of *Kant in Imperial Russia* (New York: Springer, 2017) and a volume examining the early works of Vladimir Solov'ëv entitled *The Early Solov'ëv and His Quest for Metaphysics* (New York: Springer, 2014). Nemeth has also published a critical translation of Solov'ëv's *Justification of the Moral Good* (Springer, 2015). He has authored numerous articles on nineteenth and twentieth-century Russian philosophy as well as pieces on Kant, Husserl, and Italian philosophy. His translation of Gustav Shpet's 1914 treatise *Appearance and Sense* remains the only complete English translation of any of Shpet's books. Nemeth has contributed entries on Russian neo-Kantianism and specific Russian philosophical figures to the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. He has also translated Shpet's lengthy essay "Consciousness and Its Owner" and continues to pursue studies of Shpet, Solov'ëv, and the influence of German philosophy on classical Russian idealism. He is also a member of the editorial board of the Russian journal *Соловьевские исследования/Solov'ëv Studies*.

M. Sait Özervarlı is Professor of Intellectual History at Yildiz Technical University, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences. He has published several journal articles, book chapters, and encyclopedia entries. Among his books in English are *Aspects of Ottoman Intellectual History* (Istanbul: Kent Publications, 2009). He is also the co-editor of *Istanbul as Seen from a Distance* (Istanbul: The Swedish Research Institute, 2011). He is currently contributing to the new edition of Friedrich

Ueberweg's *Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie* with chapters on pre-modern and modern Ottoman philosophy.

Elías José Palti obtained his Ph.D. from the University of California at Berkeley in 1997. He pursued postdoctoral studies at El Colegio de México and Harvard University. He currently teaches at the University of Buenos Aires and the University of Quilmes, Argentina, and has taught as an invited professor at universities in Europe, the USA and Latin America. He is also a researcher at the National Research Council of Argentina and has been recently appointed as the director of the Center for Intellectual History at the University of Quilmes. He is the author of 14 books. His latest one is *An Archaeology of the Political: Regimes of Power from the Seventeenth Century to the Present* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017). He currently serves on the editorial board of the *Journal of the History of Ideas*. In 2009, he was awarded the Guggenheim Fellowship, among other prizes and fellowships.

Denise Phillips is Associate Professor of History at the University of Tennessee, where she teaches European history and history of science. Her first book, *Acolytes of Nature: Defining Natural Science in Germany, 1770–1850*, was published by the University of Chicago Press in 2012. She also co-edited *New Perspectives on the History of Life Sciences and Agriculture* (New York: Springer, 2015), and has published numerous articles. The relationship between knowledge and social order has been a prevailing theme in her research, and she is currently completing a book about Kleinjogg, an eighteenth-century peasant who became a hero of the enlightened Republic of Letters.

Nathalie Richard is Professor in Modern History at Le Mans University (France). She is a member of the Centre de recherches historiques de l'Ouest (CERHIO, CNRS). Her research themes are the history of human and social sciences and the history of archaeology in nineteenth-century France. She has recently published *Hippolyte Taine. Histoire, psychologie, litterature* (Paris: Garnier, 2013) and La Vie de Jésus *de Renan: La Fabrique d'un best-seller* (Rennes: PUR, 2015), and edited (with Hervé Guillemain) "The Frontiers of Amateur Science (18th–20th Century)," *Gesnerus* 73(2) (2016).

Johan Strang is Lecturer at the Centre for Nordic Studies at the University of Helsinki. Interested in the intellectual and political history of twentieth-century Scandinavia, Strang has published extensively

on the history of analytic philosophy, Scandinavian legal realism, and Nordic democracy (*Rhetorics of Nordic Democracy*, Finnish Literature Society 2010). Recently, he edited the volume *Nordic Cooperation: A European Region in Transition* (New York: Routledge, 2016). Together with Stefan Nygård he has also contributed to the discussion on transnational history from the perspective of small states with the articles "Facing Asymmetry: Nordic Intellectuals and Center–Periphery Dynamics in European Cultural Space," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 1 (2016), 75–97 and "Conceptual Universalization and the Role of the Peripheries," *Contributions to the History of Concepts*, 1 (2017), 55–77.

List of Figures

CHAPTER 1

Introduction: Particularizing Positivism

Franz L. Fillafer, Johannes Feichtinger and Jan Surman

The worlds of positivism were an unintended creation. Positivists imagined one world, but their efforts spawned many. Universalist by ambition and design, positivism was contingent upon local and cultural circumstances. This volume connects and compares the variegated concepts, scientific cultures, and sociopolitical contexts of positivism on a global scale. This inquiry results in an overdue reappraisal of what was, together with Marxism and historicism, one of the three major intellectual formations of the nineteenth century. Today positivism may seem *passé*, evoking the skirmishes of the 1960s, when the Frankfurt School opened fire on Popperian critical rationalism, or recalling Marxist anti-positivist diatribes. Other than in the realm of international

F.L. Fillafer (✉)
Department of History and Sociology, Universität Konstanz, Konstanz, Germany

J. Feichtinger
Austrian Academy of Sciences, Vienna, Austria

J. Surman
University of Erfurt, Erfurt, Germany

J. Feichtinger et al. (eds.), *The Worlds of Positivism*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-65762-2_1

jurisprudence, where the critical legal positivism pioneered by Hans Kelsen retains a formidable presence, positivism appears as defunct and marginalized.

Yet it seems too early to bury positivism. Positivists unraveled the rules nature and society obeyed and they claimed that social progress and moral regeneration across the planet depended on the success of their doctrines. The key epistemic and political problem nineteenth-century positivism raised has lost nothing of its urgency. The universality of knowledge about the world remains a burning issue wherever global theories surreptitiously arbitrate between, adjust to, or repudiate rival knowledge and validity claims, and particularly so when it comes to the sprawling debates on human rights, cultural relativism, and constructivism. The practitioners of positivism aspired to universality, but their sharp disagreement about wherein universality was to be based cut to the very heart of their project: Are there discoverable, general laws of nature and society, or does universality reside in a set of methods whose applicability extends to all cultures and disciplines? Or is there no such universality at all, given the increasingly widespread contention that not only knowledge but also its very claim to universal validity are culturally conditioned? What have scientists since made of this pledge, and how do they deliver on their promise in present-day societies?

It is time for a reappraisal of positivism that situates it in its global intellectual and political frameworks. This permits us to recover the conditions surrounding the emergence and the political objectives of an intellectual program that claimed to be universally valid, free of ideology, and secularist. Positivism was predicated on an all-encompassing science-based and normative vision that should make it applicable to every society. The science positivists envisaged and practiced relied on an epistemic merger between nature and society: the laws of nature and the laws of society were perceived as analogous or identical, requiring related methods of inquiry. The universalism positivists professed was all-embracing in a double sense: it aimed both at the planet in its entirety and at comprehensive knowledge of this world. Many acolytes of positivism believed that the validity of their findings was detached from all cultural connotations as well as immune to disciplinary specificities.

This universalist premise constitutes the point of departure for the present book. Adopting a global and comparative perspective, our volume

seeks to dismantle positivist universalism. In what follows, the authors particularize positivism by looking beyond its French and English iterations in order to demonstrate how it evolved from a bricolage-like merger of Comtean and Millean ancestries. At the same time, the book offers a fresh view of the politics of scholarly disciplines. It locates the sites and settings in which positivist doctrines and methods were formulated and propagated, explores how they received their universalist imprint, and analyzes how they became part of the traffic in concepts between distinct branches of scholarship as they emerged. The study of the selective appropriation and reinvention of positivism across and beyond Europe gives us a fine sense of its intersection with pre-existing local traditions. It also alerts us to the struggle over positivist knowledge between imperial elites and those intellectuals who forged the scientific aspirations of nascent nations within these empires. The nineteenth-century transmission of positivist doctrines and practices shows how brittle and fluid the frontiers of Europe were and how the "West" was constructed in a process whereby "positivist" knowledge was deracinated, tweaked, and readjusted while being transplanted. The global intellectual history of positivism is not a history of local adaptations of a pristine universal body of knowledge, instead it lays bare the local origins of these apparently universally valid conceptual resources and traces how they were reparticularized elsewhere.

This book explains the relevance positivism acquired across the globe and across disciplines from the late eighteenth to the early twentieth century. Its time frame spans the period from the 1770s to the 1930s, while its geographical scope ranges from India to France and from Brazil to Russia. The chapters that follow are not simply case studies of self-contained national movements, nor are they confined to the reception of the ideas of Auguste Comte and John Stuart Mill, the two pivotal figures of positivist thought. Instead the authors of this book respond to an overarching question: How was a set of ostensibly universal concepts and methods inflected to serve concrete scientific and political purposes on local, national, and imperial levels around the world? By studying positivism in regions outside of the North Atlantic archipelago, the book shows how its Millean and Comtean versions were updated, conceptually refashioned, and amalgamated to fit local needs. Thereby the book contributes to the ongoing debate about the benefits and discontents of global intellectual history.

The Promise and Perils of Global Intellectual History

"Global intellectual history" is a burgeoning cottage industry within the discipline, but its key premises remain ill-conceptualized.[1] Recent work on matters cognate and adjacent to the theme of the present book, for instance on global Spencerism and Darwinism,[2] amply demonstrates that a transnational perspective is stimulating because it helps dispel ingrained Eurocentric prejudices, while mitigating some of the less salutary effects of the contextualist paradigm in the history of political thought.[3] The claim that a given utterance can only be exhaustively understood by situating it in a specific framework of contemporary concerns, that is, by establishing its context of emergence, has acted as an antidote against perennialist conceptions, some of whose adherents traced the life cycles of coherent and self-sufficient ideas over the centuries. Yet contextualism has also reinforced assumptions about the authenticity of pristine and primordial ideas, suggesting that these ideas, while pure at their sources, were skewed and garbled once appropriated beyond the narrowly defined environments in which they originated.[4] This presumption in favor of the autarky of contexts—often understood in national terms—has made it exceedingly difficult to trace larger chains of filiations across time and space.

This volume embraces the stimulating advances promised by the emerging design of global intellectual history. Superficially, positivism may lend itself to a classical diffusionist history of the sort that traces how European thinkers civilized and enlightened the rest of the world. In the diffusionist model,[5] transfers are self-propelling, dispensing the historian from the arduous task of clarifying who acts for what purpose and under what constraints. Here a set of benignly liquid, mellifluous metaphors ("flows," "influences") conceptually sustains lubricant-like, smoothly all-permeating "transfers." In contrast to the diffusionist model, the chapters of this volume combine an interest in positivism as an intrinsically universalist program tied to a specific mode of "world-making"[6] with a focus on its agents and on their strategies of appropriation across the globe.[7] What emerges from the following pages are the "brokered worlds"[8] of positivism. Comtean positivism can be seen as the first modern organized movement that systematically sought to spread its worldview and techniques of knowledge-acquisition across the globe. Comte's

liaison men, like Gustave D'Eichthal, acted to that effect across Europe as well as in the Americas. Scholarly and political go-betweens traveled to the centers of positivism to creatively appropriate the messages enunciated there. For example, Young Turk intellectuals like Ahmed Rıza flocked to Paris to study with Comte's heir Pierre Laffitte while Austrian philologist Theodor Gomperz's English sojourn was punctuated by meetings with John Stuart Mill and George Grote. Spanish adherents of the German philosopher Krause received his adaptation of Comte's philosophy refracted through the French renderings of Krause's works, while Polish promoters of positivism became acquainted with John Stuart Mill's works at the imperial hub of St Petersburg and prepared their Polish versions of his writings on the basis of Russian translations.[9] The English disciples of Richard Congreve, the leader of the Religion of Humanity in the British Isles, who served as officials in colonial administration, mediated between Comte's philosophy and Hindu activists in Bengal.

The context-sensitive study of purposeful appropriations permits us to reassess the universal validity and scope of positivism. Positivist universalism was conditioned by and geared toward local circumstances. It did not produce a coherent "global" entity but a multi-pronged, polygonal structure of scientific-political pursuits. The perspective adopted by the authors of this book renders the dichotomy between a creative European center and a receptive, emulative extra-European periphery obsolete. This decentering of the history of positivism clarifies that there was no clear-cut, stable "doctrine" that could be "disseminated" from Europe to the wider world. The European "center" crumbles, revealing a process of blending and appropriation that was in no way superior to or different from those taking place elsewhere in the world. "Positivism" was fabricated at the interstices of Millean and Comtean philosophies in the 1860s, a program whose immediate appeal was not only due to its strong sociopolitical promise but also to its malleable philosophical content. The following chapters unveil the sociopolitical aspirations, infrastructural prerequisites, and daily reality of these adaptations. The book reparticularizes the universalist aims and global structure of positivism. The laboratories of positivism explored on the following pages are imperial and regional spaces rather than "nation states," thereby the book also restores zones of contact and interaction obliterated by twentieth-century national historiographies of science.

The Fabrication of Positivism: Auguste Comte and John Stuart Mill in Context

Auguste Comte's quest for positive knowledge was inextricably connected to the crisis of France that permeated all spheres of its social, political, and scholarly life since the Revolution of 1789. Born in 1798 in Montpellier, Comte started off as a secretary of Count Henri de Saint-Simon in Paris. He imbibed the pure milk of radical Saint-Simonianism when seeking to construct a "new unified system of knowledge for the modern, industrial era."[10] While eking out a living as an adjunct examiner of the Paris École Polytechnique, Comte worked on a philosophy of knowledge and society that should be "positive," that is based on scientific ideas, and devoted to the common good. Between 1830 and 1842, Comte published his six-volume *Cours de philosophie positive*.[11] Here, Comte identified the famous three phases of lawful development all sciences invariably passed through, moving from the theological through the metaphysical to the positive stage. The havoc and turmoil experienced by France epitomized the general misery and social disarray of the modern world, so Comte's aim was to formulate a science of society that would propel the study of the social and moral realm onto the "positive stage" that other branches of knowledge had already achieved. This new science of society, which Comte called "sociology" in 1838, was universal in a twin sense: it "would unite all knowledge" and encompass all of humanity. "Humanity would be the object of study of all the sciences." Once all knowledge was based on scientific laws, everyone would agree on the most essential intellectual and, by implication, political principles.[12] This social dimension was far from fortuitous: once the sciences reached "positivity," Comte argued, they could no longer be cultivated for their own sakes; rather they should be predicated on a moral-political agenda to uplift society. Comte's new science was supposed to cure the ills of society: it was to guarantee stability and spiritual authority in an age of untrammeled political radicalism and capitalism. By combining the clarification of the relationships that obtained between objects of inquiry with the cultivation of the spiritual and affective bonds between human beings, Comte aimed at an "altruistic"—another one of his neologisms—regeneration of society (Fig. 1.1).

In the 1840s and 1850s, Comte grew increasingly convinced that his science constituted a novel type of religion that dispensed with the belief in God but was instead based on "demonstrable principles" and on positive knowledge about the world that would reintegrate society.

Fig. 1.1 The Paris statue of Auguste Comte. This monument was erected to commemorate Auguste Comte as the founding father of sociology and philosophy of science, on the Paris Place de la Sorbonne in 1902. Designed by the sculptor Jean-Antonin Injalbert, the monument also features a figure embodying the working class immersed in intellectual self-perfection and Clotilde de Vaux as a Virgin Mary-like allegory of Humanity whose worship Comte had pioneered. She gratefully adorns the pedestal with a palm of glory. John Heseltine/Alamy Stock Photo.

Comte's passionate and unrequited love for Clotilde de Vaux which had begun in 1844 and ended abruptly with de Vaux's early death two years later. Clotilde's example inspired Comte to make the social equilibrium

he yearned for hinge on spiritual values. "Humanity" was elevated on a pedestal, becoming the object of veneration, with Clotilde acting as the saccharine heroine and patron saint of the novel Religion of Humanity. She was likened to Isis and Mary when depicted as the Virgin with child in the religion's shrines and on the monuments that commemorated Comte.[13] Comte began to advertise his Religion of Humanity[14] in the mid-1840s and worked indefatigably for the spread of "intendancies" and "foyers," associations that would form a "Positivist Society" to promote his philosophy. Its "militant diffusion" took on apostolic and encyclopedic guises.[15] The Society churned out "positivist calendars" and compiled a library of 150 great books. The Comtean Religion of Humanity, whose temples were erected from Latin America through Victorian Britain to the Indian subcontinent, administered its "sacraments"—baptisms, marriages, funerals—to aspiring local devotees.[16] Chastising radicalism (particularly of the Right) in his 1848 *Discours sur l'ensemble du positivisme* which would later constitute the first volume of the *Système de la politique positive*,[17] Comte remained politically versatile himself. While he had sought to curry favor with the restorational Ultras in the 1820s, he turned to Napoleon III in the early 1850s, hoping to convert him to positivism, and, after this plan proved abortive, to the revolutionary socialists Proudhon and Blanqui.[18] Comte's disciple Émile Littré initiated and organized the "Positivist Subsidy," a fund-raising organization for the positivist doctrine, before quitting the Society appalled by his teacher's authoritarian and sacerdotal leanings.

Comte was acutely aware that his universal scheme had to be predicated on global support, so he dispatched letters and missives to Nicolas I and former Grand Vizier Mustafa Reşid Paşa.[19] Comte's "positive" philosophy would reconcile East and West. He considered Constantinople, not Paris, the rightful capital of positivism,[20] a prediction colored by his fascination with the Orient as a counter-model to the West, which he regarded as marked by avarice, greed, and spiritual desiccation, and by his admiration of "pure," "practical," and "reasonable" Islam.[21] Comte relentlessly criticized colonial rule, slavery, and Christian missions,[22] and strenuously denied the racial inferiority of China and Japan.[23] He publicly rejected the British oppression of China, its colonial rule over Ireland and India, and chastised French domination in Tunisia and Algeria.[24] According to Comte, there was no moral justification for Europe's world supremacy and control of subject populations across the globe. His anti-imperialist pronouncements were grist to the

mill of colonized populations who aspired to self-rule. The conceptual arbitrators between the universal and particular forged by these critics of empire, as well as their recirculation of positivist doctrines, are discussed in greater detail in the chapters of this volume.

John Stuart Mill's creative refashioning of Comte is highly relevant to the establishment of "positivism" as a philosophical stance and viable sociopolitical agenda, and it also illuminates the vicissitudes of the processes of translation investigated in the present volume. Comte's *Cours* hit the English audience in 1853, when Harriette Martineau's abridged translation appeared,[25] but John Stuart Mill had become acquainted with Comte's early writings already in the 1820s. Mill was a child prodigy, trained by his father James Mill, the radical philosopher and close associate of Jeremy Bentham, to become the head of English utilitarianism. John Stuart Mill read Comte's Saint-Simonian works when he began to rebel against his upbringing and against the arid, morally depleted, philosophy of his father.[26] Young Mill's philosophical parricide involved his turn to Romantic visions of society, and he found Comte's writings supportive and salutary in this shift. Mill's critique of jejune Benthamism was far from all-encompassing, as he retained the Benthamite repudiation of eighteenth-century abstract universal rights rhetoric and contractualism, a critique shared by Comte and the Saint-Simonians more broadly. Indeed, Mill used the writings of the Saint-Simonians to dissociate himself from the Enlightenment moral and social philosophy under which he now subsumed the philosophical radicals, Bentham and his father. For Mill, this Anglo-French philosophical cross-pollination supplied a set of devices that permitted him to revamp the utilitarian tradition in which he had been reared, invoking foreign authorities to mend and surreptitiously alter its central doctrines.[27] It was for good reason that the Saint-Simonian account of the French Revolution as the end of an exhausted "metaphysical stage" of politics and social science appealed to Mill, since it permitted him to tarnish the Benthamites as adherents of an obsolete, anachronistic doctrine. What Mill adopted from Comte was a strenuous critique of utility and egotistical pleasure-maximizing as the basic scheme for explaining all human desires and for attaining the greatest happiness of the greatest number in society. Mill also applauded the Saint-Simonian attack on economic liberalism; he rejected the idea that the protection of private property and inheritance was the indefeasibly supreme aim of society, and he shared Comte's critique of the pervasive idolatry of the freedom of production and exchange.[28]

Auguste Comte and John Stuart Mill repudiated "metaphysics" both in the natural and social realms: they rejected the ideas of natural, abstract rights, and of a preordained plan of nature that arranged a purpose for mankind. Both sought to uncover observational methods that would allow for the accurate analysis and prediction of causative sequences. By the same token, they became trailblazers for a novel conception of scholarship. Comte and Mill subscribed to programs of scientific objectivity that did not amount to impartiality, to a detachment from political life, but instead envisaged scholars as pacesetters of sociopolitical progress, as they developed panaceas to cure the moral, economic, and spiritual ills of their age. While the line of attack was comfortably clear, there was little agreement as to what should replace the pernicious remnants of the bygone "metaphysical age." In the hands of Comte's and Mill's adherents, "metaphysical" became a multipurpose term of attack, used by champions of either camp to ostracize and dispossess the other of "positivism" proper. Already in 1829, Mill had voiced guarded criticism of Comte's work: he rejected what he perceived as Comte's partisanship for all-encompassing, invariant laws of social and historical development[29] and the paternalist, elitist conclusions that Mill took to result from this premise. Mill also cast doubt on Comte's account of unbridled human instinctuality, which to Mill curtailed free will, and he reiterated that self-perfection through education was the only way of ensuring moral and intellectual advancement.[30]

Mill told his readers in 1873 that Comte had reinforced his early belief that the methods of political science should be modelled after physical science,[31] but from the beginning there was no consensus about *which* science should supply the "foundations for the whole doctrine of the conditions of human knowledge"[32] positivists promised. While Comte advocated phrenology and excoriated psychology, Mill championed the latter: to him and his adherents, the facts of internal consciousness, memory, and self-observation were amenable to direct scientific study.[33] Mill acknowledged his debt to Comte when it came to his theory of induction,[34] but also found that he lacked the solicitude required for a positive philosopher, as Comte neglected causative analysis.[35] We have already touched on Mill's critique of universal laws and on his qualms about Comte's paternalism, but Mill's skepticism extended to the status of technocratic guardianship in society more broadly. Comte

held that the mass of mankind would forever remain forced to rely on the authority of experts not only in the technical, but also in the social and moral domains,[36] a view that cut against Mill's advocacy of individual liberty. It was to the establishment of individual liberty through education, to its preconditions and safeguards in the realm of science, that Mill devoted much of his work.[37] The rule of experts, Comte promised, would make politics with its piecemeal engineering and inherited animosities superfluous, whereas Mill maintained that conflict was indispensable for moral and material progress.[38]

While Mill was a failure as a follower, a wayward and refractory disciple who diluted Comte's work before making it percolate in England, he arrived at his full stride as a founder. With his 1865 *Auguste Comte and Positivism*, Mill fashioned a scientific and political agenda. He downplayed Comte's significance to the "positivism" he elaborated by integrating his philosophy into a sequence of liberating advances in what seems a pastiche of the French philosopher's law of inexorable progress. "The philosophy called positive," Mill stressed in 1865, "is not a recent invention of M. Comte, but a simple adherence to the traditions of all the great scientific minds whose discoveries have made the human race what it is."[39] "Positive" and "positivism," Mill continued, have become "symbols of a recognized mode of thought" which induces "almost all" who discuss the great problems of the age to take it "into serious consideration, and define their own position, more or less friendly or hostile, in regard to it."[40] "Positivism," in Mill's concise recapitulation, denotes the inductive examination of observable phenomena and of the regular causative sequences that connect them, which in turn permits generalization:

> The fundamental doctrine of a true philosophy, according to M. Comte, and the character by which he defines positive Philosophy, is the following: — We have no knowledge of anything but Phaenomena; and our knowledge of phaenomena is relative, not absolute. We know not the essence, nor the real mode of production, of any fact, but only its relations to other facts in the way of succession or of similitude. These relations are constant; that is, always the same in the same circumstances. The constant resemblances which link phaenomena together, and the constant sequences which unite them as antecedent and consequent, are termed their laws. The laws of phaenomena are all we know respecting them. Their essential nature, and their ultimate causes, either efficient or final, are unknown and inscrutable to us.[41]

This crisp summary turned "positivism" into a comfortably capacious category, an umbrella term for "anti-metaphysical," "universal," and "positive," that is empiricist, agendas. What can be learned from our skeletal outline is that positivism emerged as a linkage between two particular, local arrays of concerns, a linkage that was philosophically brittle but politically and socially potent in its empirical, anti-metaphysical, and universalizing significance. Two intermediary results follow from this, one regarding the conditions and functions of the Anglo-French amalgamation of "positivism," and one concerning the complex solvents that lay beneath the apparently solid crust of positivist "universalism."

First, in analyzing Mill's appropriation of Comte and the adaptation of Mill's *œuvre* by Comte's disciples in France, we can grasp the cultural prestige associated with such "translations." Advance praise, anxieties of influence, and a set of auto-stereotypes about the English "empirical" and the French "systematic" philosophical cultures interacted here.[42] Mill, as we have sketched above, used Comte's system from the 1820s onward to demolish the utilitarian schemes of his father, while suspecting that it was just another incarnation of the very doctrines he tried to shake off.[43] In France, by contrast, Mill's *System of Logic* was welcomed in the 1860s by critical disciples of Comte such as Émile Littré who used it as a tool for revising the message of the founder himself. Littré's 1864 re-edition of Comte's *Cours* emphasized the logical and epistemological aspects of positivism, curtailing Comte's religious and political ideas and turning the *Cours* into the French equivalent or archetype of Mill's *Logic*, supplying "a general system of sciences classified according to the nature of their objects, and no longer according to the abstract principles of faculties of the mind."[44] The second aspect, the intricacies of positivist universalism, deserves a fuller exposition.

Rival Universalisms

The Anglo-French traffic of slogans, templates for social analysis,[45] and prestigious founding figures highlights the glimmering promise and glaring contradictions contained in the universality of positivism. Positivists' frameworks of universality were themselves dependent on and attuned to local conditions, and this insight is highly illuminating for positivist world-building, for its vision of globality. Comte's universalism was predicated on humanity's co-productive, shared discovery of laws of development as well as on the recruitment of global elites as future guardians of

"regeneration." Comte staunchly rejected colonialism, slavery, and civilizing missions (including the spread of Christian religions), alloying his scheme for the discovery of the laws of nature and society with a full recognition of cultural diversities. Contrary to what the often-reiterated handbook cliché about Comte as partisan of immutable laws of social and natural development suggests, he acutely appreciated that scientific laws were products of specific milieus whose social and epistemic needs they served.[46] When analyzing the past and present of world development, Comte contended that all three stages of his far-flung scheme coexisted in every age of mankind and formed different patterns of dominance and subordination.[47] Comte's recognition of cultural specificities was also crucial when he turned to planetary progress: these specificities constituted pristine, "fetishistic"—another term Comte invested with social-analytical potential—traits of primordial worldviews common to all mankind. Equally crucial, these worldviews permitted those who held them to "leapfrog" to positivism. These pristine social configurations opened potential shortcuts from primeval "fetishistic" stages to the "positivist" stage, skipping the intermediary "metaphysical" level.

Mill found Comte's confidence in primeval fetishism "repugnant to the fundamental principles of positive philosophy" because it was retrograde, obscurantist, and nativist. It degraded feeling, intelligence, and conduct because it abandoned the task of enlightening less fortunate, "primitive" peoples about nature beyond their modes of experience. Mill disputed the existence of Comtean universal, immutable laws[48] but grounded his claim about the ubiquitous and unlimited validity of "positive philosophy" across space and disciplines in his universal method. While Mill tied this universalism to an eloquent defense of individual liberty, including equal rights for women, he clearly distinguished between civilizational dispositions, between barbaric savages and advanced Europeans, thereby conceptually sustaining imperialism and colonial rule.[49]

Auguste Comte's universalism was grounded in laws of development whose discovery was a social process that reflected the needs and proclivities of the respective law-making milieu. By contrast, in Mill's scheme the method applied to attain knowledge about this world created universality. What does this imply for the recognition of cultural differences and for imperialism? Comte and his followers recognized and appreciated cultural distinctions while Mill affirmed the superiority of European civilization and regarded cultural divergences as something to be gradually