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The Path Not Taken: French Industrialization in the Age of Revolution, 1750-1830, by Jeff Horn

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The Path Not Taken: French Industrialization in the Age of Revolution, 1750–1830. By Jeff Horn (Cambridge, Mass., The MIT Press, 2006) 383 pp. \$45.00

This book presents a well-documented but selective account of how a succession of French governments from the late Ancien Regime (1780s) to the Bourbon Restoration (1815–1830) attempted to promote domestic industry. Although the book contains some discussion of iron, steel, and the arms industry, its focus is mainly on the textile industry and how it was affected by the vicissitudes of trade policy and by the battles over control of workers and the workplace.

Horn consistently argues that France's path to industrialization differed from Britain's, but exactly how it differed seems to change as the book progresses. At the outset, Horn strongly endorses O'Brien and Keyder's thesis that the key difference between the two lay in France's commitment to small-scale artisanal production.¹ But later Horn concedes (rightly) that by the 1830s large-scale mechanized production had become the order of the day in France as well as in Britain (at least in textiles), leaving the book to focus on how events from 1789 to 1815 delayed, but did not prevent, France following Britain's lead. Hence, "the path not taken" refers not so much to a different kind of industrialization as to a different institutional framework for industrialization. Indeed, Horn's signal contribution is to show how, amid the upheavals of the Revolution and Napoleonic Empire, the French worked out a unique blend of laissez-faire and statist policies to promote industrialization. Horn dubs this blend "Chaptalian" for the role that Jean-Antoine Chaptal, Napoleon's minister of the interior from 1800 to 1804, played in formulating it.

The most original and controversial sections of the book deal with the role of labor militancy in determining industrial policy in France. Horn provocatively argues that the main reason that France did not adopt the "liberal" industrial policies of the British was the power of French workers and the fear of worker revolt in the aftermath of the Revolution. Apparently, British industrialists could count on the "weak" British state to keep workers in their place, but French industrialists could not similarly count on the "strong" French state. Not everyone will find this explanation convincing.

Methodologically, this is very much a historian's book. In addition to a wide range of secondary sources, Horn draws heavily on materials in various French archives, especially reports and memoranda by government officials. The emphasis throughout is on qualitative rather than quantitative evidence. Although the metaphor of a path of development is at the heart of the book, Horn makes little explicit reference to, or discussion of, path-dependency theory. Theoretically and quantitatively oriented economic historians may find this absence troubling. However,

1 Patrick O'Brien and Caglar Keyder, *Economic Growth in Britain and France, 1780–1914: Two Paths to the Twentieth Century* (London, 1978).

the exposition is clear and free of social-science jargon. In the end, the book makes a positive contribution to the comparative study of French and British industrialization. It will serve, in the words of the liner notes, to “stir debate among historians, economists, and political scientists.”

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Disciplining Statistics: Demography and Vital Statistics in France and England, 1830–1885. By Libby Schweber (Durham, Duke University Press, 2007) 277 pp. \$84.95 cloth \$23.95 paper

Schweber examines the history of “discipline” formation for what became the fields of vital statistics and demography in the mid-nineteenth century in Britain and France. She organizes the book as a comparison of the processes in the two countries, using that counterpoint to illustrate the similarities and differences between the two nations. Her work adds to a growing body of literature about the origins of the new social sciences in the nineteenth century, and their relationship to other sciences, the state, and public-policy formation.

“Statistics” is a remarkably slippery discipline to examine historically since the boundaries of the field reach from mathematics and astronomy to accounting, social welfare, and public policy. Moreover, like the emergence of other social and natural sciences in the nineteenth century, the development of the field or fields took place in many countries, involving many different languages, educational systems, and forms of scientific organization. Schweber’s close reading and analysis of the British and French cases therefore is a significant contribution to the histories of the two nations, to the history of the social sciences, and to the study of knowledge formation in general.

The work is a closely argued, careful, and detailed reading of the organizational forms, intellectual debates, and scientific practices created by the men who defined, literally named, and built the new population sciences. As Schweber notes, what looks at first blush to be similar processes in the two nations are actually remarkably different trajectories of development. To pick just one thread of her argument, although the British state was fundamentally stable and prosperous at the time because of rapid industrialization, Victorian society was confronting horrific problems of poverty. Vital statistics was about “public health”; the debates and institutions focused on developing and deploying data and methods to deal with infant mortality, cholera epidemics, and class differences in living standards. In France, the July Monarchy gave way to the 1848 Revolutions and the Second Republic, the Second Empire, the Franco Prussian War and the Commune, and the Third Republic. Within this political turmoil, demography was concerned with how to conceptualize a “population”—as a “body,” an aggregation of individual parts, or something in between—and how to understand the problem