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Editor's Note

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Two hundred years ago, the French thinker and father of systematic social science, Comte de Saint-Simon, "the most encyclopedic mind of his age," foresaw the potential emergence of authoritarianism, even totalitarianism, from democracy. He posited that social and political institutions are but ideas in action. Crises occur in government and society when major institutions are unable to respond adequately to general, typically inchoate ideas prevalent or rising among the public. All societies require educated leadership, an elite; it takes the emergence of a new elite, one "adequately educated according to the present state of knowledge" to restrain the unruly "ambition of peoples and kings" and bring an end to instability.

Saint-Simon theorized that this continuous inarticulation between changing public sentiment and governing institutions led to the alternation of (a) long "*organic*" periods during which social and political institutions are "in harmony with the state of civilization" and (b) "*critical*" or revolutionary periods marked by chaos, conflict, and often destructive criticism. Thus, his philosophy would say that an organic state preceded the critical period during which Greek philosophy flourished. And to him, the establishment of the Church in Europe constituted the commencement of a new organic period. Were he alive today, he might write that a long organic period is now ending in the United States, one which began with Franklin Roosevelt, brought the New Deal to the common man, built a large American middle class, and lasted for over eight decades.

Moreover, to Saint-Simon, should a cloud move in, and a nation suddenly lose the leadership of its elite, its productive scientists, artists, engineers, professionals, it will become a "lifeless corpse." Society is endangered when, under those who rule, respect for scientific knowledge fades — or is rejected altogether; ignorance prevails when "in every sphere men of greater ability are subjected to the control of men who are incapable."

So, following the unexpected triumph in the fall elections of anti-intellectualism and bigotry, and the concomitant failure of those who stood for climate science, environmental protection, healthcare for all, fair immigration policies, and the promotion of culture and education, amidst ugly political rallies that alternated between pummeling minority students — "throw them out!"— and threatening rote chants of "lock her up!" or "build the wall!", the United States has now entered a Saint-Simonian critical period. Incompetence and ignorance ascend. Unqualified appointees rise on every front. Xenophobia is triumphant.

Did, to some extent, our educated elite fail us this time? Had it been drawn, as another Frenchman, Alexis de Tocqueville, warned was possible, into a world where privilege is divorced from duty, authority is destroyed, and comfort becomes the only prize? Did a "kind of virtuous materialism" emerge, to "not corrupt, but enervate, the soul and noiselessly unbend its springs of action?"

To de Tocqueville, of course, great danger to the American people could arise from the omnipotence or tyranny of the majority, as he wrote in his magisterial work, *Democracy in America*. But our democracy, he also wrote, is perpetually restless. Democratic societies have both a natural taste for freedom and an insatiable passion for equality.

It is now the task of educated men and women, in this restless democracy, to rise to the fundamental challenges newly presented to our nation, to champion science and progress, to oppose bigotry and exclusion, and through leadership built on reason and capability, on knowledge and tolerance, and on education accessible to all, to reverse course, to bring this society safely back to its moorings, established in 1776, back to freedom and equality.

Joseph Drew

As we consider what topics should be weighed in our annual meetings, one proposal would be to institute a continuing education program. Every other profession and field of study has one; why not this one? What specifically might be of most value to those who study and write in the field of comparative civilizations? Perhaps it is a course in methodology. Advances have been enormous over the past few decades, and yet most of the writing we do takes little or no guidance from the growth in research methodology. While comparative civilizationalists often are innovative in their methodology, rarely is whatever model utilized subjected to rigorous examination for its validity and ability to be replicated.

There is a community of men and women interested in the comparative study of civilizations, and many writers for this journal, participants in this community of practitioners, adopt what is today called "qualitative" research. This type of research explores a central phenomenon or issue and rests on the asking of broad questions, analyzing the information garnered for themes, and interpreting the resulting data. But "quantitative research," which examines trends or variables in the literature and utilizes instruments to gather and analyze data collected, often with numbers, has much to offer. A third way is the utilization of what is called "mixed methods," combining both qualitative and quantitative research; it also should be considered. In the field of educational research, these three broad categories offer rich possibilities for dissertations and for the process of undertaking meaningful research.

The field of research methodology is explosive in its growth over recent decades. New methods are emerging constantly, in many countries and in the fields of media and communication, education, medicine, social science, evaluation, social work, family research, nursing, policy research, and physical science research, and finding widespread acceptance. Hundreds of grants from the National Institutes of Health, for example, the National Science Foundation, the British Economic and Social Research Council, and other sources, now involve mixed methods. The new "Oxford Handbook of Multimethod and Mixed Methods Research Inquiry" has over 40 chapters written by authors from around the world.

How have the types of methodological designs grown? Let me quote a listing drawn from the Research Designs section of the Table of Contents found in the Fourth Edition (2011) of John Creswell's fundamental book, "Educational Research: Planning, Conducting, and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research."

1. Experimental Designs
2. Correlational Designs
3. Survey Designs
4. Grounded Theory Designs
5. Ethnographic Designs
6. Narrative Research Designs
7. Mixed Methods Designs
8. Action Research Designs

In addition, today's researchers must consider the paradigm to be adopted in their study, the worldview, conscious or unconscious, taken by the researcher. Different methods relate to different worldviews, with varying philosophical approaches to ontology, epistemology, axiology, and rhetoric. The worldview affects the theoretical lens and, thus, the methodology chosen.

If we consider further what are called today Mixed Methods Designs – the courses I'm teaching this Spring, and several of the dissertations I am supervising, tend to involve the use of such designs – we see three "core" mixed methods emerging, both of a fixed design (i.e., where the use of quantitative and qualitative methods is predetermined) and of an emergent design (where the use of mixed methods arises due to issues that develop during the process of conducting the actual research). Three major types may be discerned: Convergent Design, Explanatory Sequential Design, and Exploratory Sequential Design.

These designs may themselves be built and utilized in a wide variety of ways. Most studies, however, are of a basic, simple nature: thus, a quantitative study, strand one (say, of a large sample drawn from many civilizations) plus a quantitative study, strand two (say, drawn from one civilization or manifestation) plus a qualitative study, strand three (say, drawn from interviews with scholars or experts on the one civilization studied in strand two as compared to the findings for the overall, large sample studied in strand one). Or, comparative civilizationalists might prefer to use the comparative case study approach.

Yet another possibility would be a complex mixed methods approach that is especially valuable when we are examining numerous phases, considering the work of multiple investigators, weighing many previous studies undertaken over the years, connecting a large set of multiple research questions to make an overarching point, or developing a research "map" for foundational purposes in the field. The great expert in this mapping exercise was the late Columbia University Professor Paul Lazarsfeld in his methodological work, "The Uses of Sociology."

Such a mixed methods comparative civilizations research project might begin with a statement of existing theory and research on a phenomenon that has arisen frequently over time in multiple civilizations, then offer a theoretical concept or research map or model as a working hypothesis, then carry out basic research on one civilization using a design that is tentative, and thus formative, for the rest of the study. We would then, based on our findings, modify the originating research or foundational theory (if necessary). Next, we would develop our instrument that arises from our test of the original theory and validate the method we would use to examine the phenomenon in additional civilizations, or aspects of civilizations, that is of interest. Here we might insert a qualitative strand, such as interviewing other scholars and obtaining their observations on our theory and method being used in the study.

Then, we do our research, perhaps modify the theory or research design yet again as new data are uncovered, changing our instrument or design as needed based on our findings (i.e., utilizing grounded theory). We would then validate the revised theory, do final research, and develop a grand, inclusive, summative explanation for the phenomenon we have chosen to examine. This is combining grounded theory design (theory which arises from our study) with several quantitative or qualitative strands, a mixed methods design.

In the field of the comparative study of civilizations, we are addressing what are amongst the largest of human phenomena, developments that arise over very long periods of time. Our findings are therefore likely to be controversial, subject to constant caveats, exceptions, and potential attacks. So, we need to combine the ability to see the big picture, to grasp reality, with a research methodology capable of capturing and organizing data and then supporting an appropriate explanation of the data in a meaningful theory, one open to challenge by other researchers.

The best way to begin, in my opinion, is via a comprehensive, widely acceptable research map. If the field could agree on the key issues and on the boundaries of the domain of study, then solid methodology subscribed to by all experts in the subject could be employed to develop provable theories and premises that constitute foundational bases for research. It would invigorate the study of comparative civilizations.

In the meantime, I urge the International Society for the Comparative Study of Civilizations to consider the institution of a continuing education component to our wonderful annual meetings, this year to be held in sunny California.