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Ancient history as a social science

Social scientists since Marx and Weber have made ancient history central to their explanations of the transition to modernity. Moses Finley brought some of Weber and Polanyi's key questions and methods into professional ancient historians' discussions. But despite demands that we move beyond Finley, ancient historians have shown little interest in developments in the social sciences since the 1950s. After defining some of the basic terms, this paper explains some of the questions social scientists now ask and the methods they use to answer them; what they contribute to ancient history; what ancient history can contribute to the social sciences; and new questions that are emerging from dialogues between these groups.