

Global History and the Present Time

Wolf Schäfer

*There are three times: a present time of
past things; a present time of present things;
and a present time of future things.
St. Augustine¹*

It makes sense to think that the present time is the container of past, present, and future things. Of course, the three branches of the present time are heavily intertwined. Let me illustrate this with the following story. A few journalists, their minds wrapped around present things, report the clash of some politicians who are taking opposite sides in a struggle about future things. The politicians argue from historical precedent, which was provided by historians. The historians have written about past things in a number of different ways. This gets out into the evening news and thus into the minds of people who are now beginning to discuss past, present, and future things. The people's discussion returns as feedback to the journalists, politicians, and historians, which starts the next round and adds more twists to the entangled branches of the present time. I conclude that our (hi)story has no real exit doors into "the past" or "the future" but a great many mirror windows in each human mind reflecting spectra of actual pasts and potential futures, all imagined in the present time. The complexity of the present (any given present) is such that nobody can hope to set the historical present straight for everybody. Yet this does not mean that a scientific exploration of history is impossible. History has a proven and robust scientific method. I would like to begin this chapter, therefore, with a homage to historical criticism in the Augustinian realms of the *memory* of past things, *expectation* of future things, and *perception* of present things.²

The Memory of Past Things

The historical-critical method is a sharp and unforgiving tool. It produces the facts of history and the gift of unexpected discovery; it clears the fog of false intelligence about past presents and allows judicious historians to distinguish between reliable information, fraud, and fantasy. As Peter Gay put it, "the cure for the shortcomings of enlightened thought lies not in obscurantism but in further enlightenment."³ The enlightening power of the historical-critical method combats historical obscu-

rantism and false memories of past things. Examples for the power of historical criticism are not hard to find.

In the second century BC, Alexandrian scholars like Aristarchus of Samothrace used an early form of methodical historical enlightenment, textual criticism, to determine the “original” conclusion of the *Odyssey*. The historical enlightenment itself is a good example; it stands for a great idea that has lost its 18th century luster. We judge it now as a Eurocentric phase of history that claimed equal rights for “man” at the universal level but did nothing for the working man at the local level; now we see that “mankind” included men, especially white men, and left women and children out. One can feel the sting of these historical deconstructions, yet appreciate them as a welcome confirmation that historical-critical inquiry can cut through the blinkered memories of the past.

If a student of ancient history does not know that Alexander the Great (356-323 BC) died at the age of thirty-three in Babylon, probably a victim of “Macedonian drinking,” we would tell him to read O’Brien.⁴ But if this student would tell us that Alexander circumnavigated the Arabian Peninsula, rebuilt Necho II’s canal between the Gulf of Suez and the Nile, moved the capital of his kingdom from Babylon to Alexandria, captured Carthage in 319 BC and opened the Straits of Gibraltar for commercial shipping, we would ask him to leave us alone. Yet if our student would add that he was just recounting an exercise in “what if” history by Arnold Toynbee (1969) quoted by a German classicist investigating the benefits of counterfactual history, he would be in good standing again.⁵

An Italian humanist, philosopher, and literary critic, Lorenzo Valla (1407-1457), challenged the papal claims to secular power in 1440 by analysing the content, language, and style of the donation of Constantine in a book entitled *The Falsely-Believed and Forged Donation of Constantine*. He argued that the document, which was supposedly given by the Roman emperor Constantine to Pope Sylvester I (314-335), was concocted centuries later by “some foolish petty cleric who does not know what to say or how to say it.”⁶ Reading Valla can still teach us a lesson about profound rhetoric and rigorous method. Jean Mabillon (1632-1707), a Benedictine monk, pioneered the study of ancient handwriting (paleography) during the scientific revolution in the 17th century. He and his colleagues developed sophisticated principles for determining the authenticity and dates of medieval manuscripts. Mabillon made his critical tools available in *De Re Diplomatica* (1681) knowing very well that the science of diplomatics⁷ would help to detect the genuine sources of history amidst a large number of retouched, interpolated, and entirely forged documents in the archives of his beloved Roman Catholic Church.

The historical-critical method, developed over centuries of careful application and refinement, has enabled the students of history to separate the wheat from the chaff when considering evidence and to regard passionate human beliefs and

wishes with equanimity. The historians who applied the critical method distinguished between authentic and attributed works (was Moses the author of the five Books of Moses?), discovered fictions and forgeries (were the Hermetic texts written before or after the writings that they had supposedly inspired?), dispelled errors, myths, and legends (did Christopher Columbus prove that the world was round?).⁸ Historical criticism has solved these and similar problems. When the French historian Marc Bloch (1886-1944) reviewed the history of historical criticism in his posthumous *Apologie pour l'Histoire* (1952) he remarked that the “mythomaniac epochs” did not shy away from inventing false memories of their pasts.

The Middle Ages knew no other foundation for either its faith or its laws than the teachings of its ancestors. Romanticism wished to steep itself in the living spring of the primitive, as well as in that of the popular. So it was that the periods which were the most bound by tradition were also those which took the greatest liberties with their true heritage. It is as if ... they were naturally led, by the sheer force of their veneration of the past, to invent it.⁹

The Expectation of Future Things

Historians pursue historical truth not only with regard to the concoctions of backward-looking times but also with respect to the expectations of futuristic epochs like the Modern Age. We can count on history to falsify our expectations but we can also ask: why did people have these particular expectations in the first place? We can dismiss the utopias from Francis Bacon to H. G. Wells as “utopian” but we can also perceive them as indicative of the forward-looking tendencies of the last five hundred years. Our understanding of the workings of history in the present time can only improve when we use the historical-critical method to assess past expectations retrospectively.¹⁰

Historical enlightenment can compare the various products of Musil’s creative “sense of possibility”¹¹ with actual developments. One can juxtapose factual data with historical prophecies, predictions, and simulations. It has been shown for the United States between 1890 and 1940 that forecasts of technological change stretching ten or more years into the future were more often wrong than right. The 20th century did not turn into an age of electric railways, as the “electrical enthusiasts” predicted around the turn of the century, but into an age of mass-produced automobiles. “Nobody imagined in the 1930s that the TV would have such a great influence on our everyday lives. No one saw that automobile exhaust might lead to global warming.”¹² One can prove that concrete predictions of technological inventions and innovations have a higher batting average than the predicted social, economic, and cultural effects of these novelties.¹³ Thus, historical enlightenment

about the outlook of future-oriented societies can document the unintended consequences of forecasting and analyse the paradoxical interactions between historical expectations and subsequent outcomes.

We can easily imagine different futures but not “the” future. The future is another present time and we are not in it. We often wish we could enter this dimension and explore it like a real place though we know that this is not possible. The space of the future is a metaphor and does not exist as real estate. This means that one can enter the intriguing space of the future only through language. We can fire up our imagination and put ourselves in other periods of time but we are bound to operate in the temporal spaces of the present time. So, without exit doors from the present and forced to look into the diffracting lenses of the present time, what do we see? Windows painted in the style of René Magritte. The window in Magritte’s painting *The Key to the Fields* is not made to be *looked* through but to be *thought* through. The painter had this to say about his key window:

Let us take any window. The windowpane breaks and with it the landscape that could be seen behind it and through it. When that really does happen one day, which, after all, is possible, then I would like a poet or philosopher – my friend Marcel Lecomte for example – to explain to me what these broken shards of reality mean.¹⁴

The meaning of Magritte’s reality shards is no clearer to the historian than it was to the philosophising artist. All the historian knows is that those shards are his documents and that he must take these fragments of previous world perspectives and try to reconstruct the social constructions of the present time that once was.

The year 1989 yielded a lot of shards, and it is likely go down in history as prominently as 1789. In 1989, the University of Chicago Press published a “history of the future” by Warren Wagar, who characterised his book as “the work of a professional historian who has applied the methods and mind-set of historians” to the task of “unscrolling” the history of “the next two centuries.” The author approached this assignment with the venerable hypothesis of the “future demise of world capitalism, leading to proletarian socialism and finally pure communism.” The year of publication could not have been worse timed for this prognosis; but the real irony was expressed in the title of Wagar’s book – *A Short History of the Future* – because no scroll of the future could have been any shorter than this one, which was torn up by real and present events the very instant it appeared.¹⁵

What can we learn from this debacle? First, one can neither reliably predict nor perceive the future. We must go where the present time goes and cannot run on ahead to observe our own future because we cannot live simultaneously in two present times, the present present time and a future present time. Second, a reliable

“history of the future” cannot be written before the future has become a past present. Third, attempts to force open the window to an expected future will merely break the painted glass, so to speak, and reveal nothing new. However, one can study the broken shards retrospectively and reconstruct the different views that generated the various landscapes of expected futures. Magritte’s key window gives us only one view but the historian can recreate numerous outlooks and try to see what a given time had “in mind.” Fourth, we must distinguish between forged and authentic relics of the past on the one hand and right and wrong expectations of future things on the other. Truthful historical reconstruction can work with both kinds of expectations as well as with the revelation of false memories.

The Perception of Present Things

It may now be asked what can the historical-critical method do for the present? My answer would be: all of the above. The present time contains false and fair memories as well as false and fair expectations and thus provides the fuel for our method. But historical enlightenment about the present time goes beyond critical bookkeeping about the usage of the past and consumption of the future; it can also help to navigate the hot zones of contemporary history. Historical criticism can begin to distinguish between false and fair perceptions of present things, such as globalisation for example, perhaps the most present, contentious, and loose thing of all at this point. Like my initial story about the entangled branches of historical time, the struggle for and against globalisation excites journalists, politicians, historians, and people worldwide.

The Field of Global History

Increasingly conscious of all its others and ecocentric, humankind has made some progress with regard to itself and its global environment. Contemporary history has become global in many ways, but more historians are still being sought for local history than for global history. To work the planetary dimensions of contemporary history into the local perspectives of American, Argentinean, German, Turkish and all other national histories is still by and large a task to be attacked, but the task has become clear.

I try to differentiate between global history with capital and lowercase letters. Lowercased global history is not limited to certain parts of the globe but involves the whole planet and transcends the local stomping grounds of every nation and tribe. Capitalised Global History is researched and written; it investigates, documents, and interprets the transgressive forces of global history. To put my perceptions of global history and the present time on the table, let me introduce a few additional distinctions.

Global History is not a globalised World History. It is neither an epic history of civilisations nor a total history of everything, but a new field of history that concentrates on history in the present time – Martin Albrow’s “Global Age” if you want.¹⁶ Global historians explore the global in the cascades of local activities. They go at the roots of current events and if these roots are old or ancient, they trace them back in time. However, the main axis of global history is lateral and runs between the nodes of actions in, and reflections of, the three present times.

Global History works with globality and “glocalisation.” Globality, the product of numerous globalisations and benchmark of the present time, has replaced the old concepts of modernity and universality. “Glocalisation” or the blending of global and local was used to describe the adaptation of Japanese products to local markets; Roland Robertson developed it as a space-sensitive alternative to globalisation. The generalised sociological meaning explains the cascades of simultaneous interactions in the present time, where global fashions meet up with local mentalities, local mentalities with global institutions, global institutions with local organisms, local organisms with natural resources, natural resources with local waste, local waste with global tourists, global tourists with local products, local products with global methods, global methods with local resistance, local resistance with global strategies, global strategies with global companies, global companies with local data, local data with global machines, global machines with local interpretations, local interpretations with global diseases, and so on, in turbulent streams.¹⁷

Glocal actions and reflexive reactions make global history in real time. Some people say that migratory streams, flows of goods, natural, cultural, and commercial cycles were always global, and they may be right. But they are forgetting the huge difference that real time makes. Yesterday’s local actors had to wait ages, sometimes literally, for the completion of a global chain reaction like the Neolithic Revolution. The Greeks and Romans, for example, could not see that the domestication of plants and animals was slowly making its way around the globe. Today’s actors can think globally and act locally without losing track of the whole because all parts of the whole are wired into the interlocking networks of global communication and information.

Global History is interdisciplinary. The phenomena of global history breach not only national and geographic but also disciplinary boundaries. For that reason, contemporary global history cannot be handled by a parochial discipline. Global History has to team up with the history of science and technology to understand global technoscience or with atmospheric sciences and environmental history to grasp the impact of the exploding population of motorcars on global climate change. Global historians must work with social and cultural historians, explore the histories of race and gender, and collaborate with political scientists and econo-

mists. Other configurations can range from medicine to theology or from communications research to musicology.

Global History employs a postconventional epistemology. The linear thinking of modernity is discredited; the one-dimensional approach of modernisation theory has done more harm than good; the isolated standpoint of the external observer has been deconstructed; research has become a form of sociocultural intervention. Classical physics no longer provides the only model for scientific inquiry; the integration of what “is” with what “should be” or “should not be” has gained paradigmatic significance in genetic engineering and global ecology; the monsters of mathematics have become everyday figures; turbulence is no longer merely a disturbance but a potential source of structure. Chaos and order are no longer opposites; global and local have converged; the periphery appears in the center and the center at the periphery.

The grand narrative of Global History is about decontinentalisation. The human race of this planet migrated out of Africa into disconnected local sites on widely separated continents. Yet as humans have moved from local arts to global technoscience and thus from local cultures into a global civilisation that affects and infects their communities everywhere, a consciously shared global environment has emerged and the splitting apart of Alfred Wegener’s supercontinent Pangaea has been reversed.¹⁸ Now technoscience is defragmenting the globe with its networks, and the new global drift towards a technoscientific Pangaea Two is bringing the world into the present time.¹⁹

The “Presentism” of Global History

True or false, it seems to me that all humans are put on the same temporal plane by globalisation so that the temporal regime of global history pivots around contemporaneity, the consciousness of being together in the present time which is enabled and enforced by global technoscience (especially networks of global communication, information, and transportation). Thus the temporal focus of global history is neither the past, as in mythomaniac times, nor the future, as in modern times, but the present contemporaneity of all humans. This leads Global History to critique *the ideology of non-contemporaneity*, the claim that not all contemporaries are contemporaneous.

I shall be arguing that global history privileges contemporaneity and dispels the idea of non-contemporaneity, which was built deep into the historical system of the Modern Age and has created temporal haves and have-nots among peoples and cultures since the days of Columbus. Today, the classification of fellow human beings as “non-contemporaneous others” (i.e. primitives) would appear to be a shame ethically and a mistake politically. The Taliban were not remnants from the past or simply backward others; they participated in contemporary global history with

modern weapons and a debatable cultural alternative. Yet coming to terms with the complexity of the present time, which results from the massive parallelism of cultural contemporaneities, is obviously one of the great challenges of global history.²⁰ So, how did the new temporal order come about and what does it mean to be knowingly contemporaneous (in the present time) with everybody else on earth?

Global information and communication in real time have become a reality in the second half of the 20th century. Today, all human societies on this planet can communicate simultaneously with one another. Thus the present time is in an excellent position from a communications point of view. The spatial distance between individuals and societies no longer delays the transmission of news. The barriers of geography that have existed since time immemorial have been reduced to virtually nothing insofar as the exchange of information is concerned. Geography has lost much of its hindrance to the transport of people and goods to every corner of the planet. Images, sounds, texts, data, and software generated at one “end” of the earth can be received by people at the other “end” within seconds. That has never been the case before.

When Thomas Jefferson was President of the United States, he said to his Secretary of State one day: “Mr. Secretary, we have not heard from our Ambassador to France for two years. If he doesn’t write by Christmas, we might send him a letter.”²¹ This historical anecdote would not have survived if such a tolerant approach towards a lackadaisical ambassador had not been as remarkable then, nearly two centuries ago, as it would be today. Of greater interest to us, however, is the implicit message about the snail’s pace of long-distance communication in the past, up to the early 19th century.

Jefferson wanted to keep the United States out of the Napoleonic wars in Europe and was keen to receive news from France; he himself was once the American envoy to Paris and was involved in drafting the French *Declaration of the Rights of Man*. Yet even a less patient president would have expected news from abroad to be delayed. Moreover, it would have never even occurred to him that one might be able to communicate with Paris *contemporaneously*. At the time, the fastest means of sending a letter from Washington to Paris was by coach and sailing ship – in other words, it was several weeks in transit, and so was the reply. Communication about current events depended upon the distance from the event and, for that reason, it invariably lagged behind the events themselves. The geographical distance between various locations imposed a temporal gap in communication that increased in proportion to the distance and the difficulties of travel. There was no difference with regard to this predicament between the Egyptian Pharaohs and Jefferson: long-distance communication was only possible non-contemporaneously.

Geography mattered because long-distance communication was overwhelmingly tied to transportation. The message could not travel faster than the human or

animal messenger. Communication was either face-to-face and immediate or messenger-dependent and lagging. Contemporaneity (like community) was based on personal communication and linked to the range of the human voice. For hundreds of thousands of years, real-time communication required close physical proximity and took place exclusively within the range of the eyes and ears of the partners in communication. The dissemination of information was a function of the serene pace at which the small bands of Stone Age hunters and gatherers moved around on the face of the earth. Later, after the Neolithic Revolution, messengers on horseback began to accelerate the transmission of news to an average maximum speed of about 15 kilometers per hour. The speed of light was achieved occasionally with mirrors, flags, smoke signals in daylight or fire beacons by night. Legend has it that the news of the fall of Troy was transmitted immediately by nightly fire signals to Clytaemnestra, 600 kilometers away.²² But soon after Jefferson, in 1837, the long duration of geographical constraints to communication began to break down with Samuel Morse's electrical telegraph.²³

Around 1830, a letter from Europe to India via the Cape route took between five and eight months by sea. The sender had to wait about a year for the reply. But twenty years later, in 1850, thanks to the combination of rail and ocean steamer, a letter from London would arrive in Calcutta 30 to 45 days after it was sent. The few telegraph dispatches, which were exchanged in the summer of 1858 between the United States and Europe via the first transatlantic submarine cable, included the news that a planned shipment of British troops from Canada to India was no longer necessary due to a change in circumstances.²⁴ One of the many excited friends of the new technology calculated that the money saved as a result amounted to about half the cost of the cable. During the American Civil War, Abraham Lincoln and his generals kept in contact with several front lines via telegraph connections. Lincoln was among the first Commanders in Chief with the technical capability to be physically absent, yet able to take action on various fronts almost simultaneously.²⁵

James Clerk Maxwell's electromagnetic waves circle this planet a good seven times per second and transport their cargo via fiberoptic cable and satellite to every point on earth instantaneously. Today we can assume, therefore, that what happens on earth happens simultaneously. People have grown accustomed to the fact that everything that takes place anywhere can be shared and discussed everywhere else. Communication at the speed of light has become the global standard. Demonstrators in non-English-speaking countries hold up their placards in English in front of the ubiquitous TV cameras to globalise their concerns without delay. The first Persian Gulf War showed the world that the American President could fight a war and play golf at the same time. Thanks to global news in real time the deception of an opponent and the simultaneous disinformation of one's own population

have now become routinely linked, too.²⁶ Reinhart Koselleck has summarised the historical trend toward instant communication as follows.

Much of our empirical data since the eighteenth century can be plotted along exponential time curves, which confirm that the process of change is accelerating. (...) Information technology has thrown a net of communications over the globe such that the transmission times between event and information about it are approaching zero, whereas in the past news would take days, weeks, months or years to travel.²⁷

The zero point at the end of the explosive acceleration and globalisation of communication and information was targeted in the 20th century by telephone, transistor radio, and television; it was reached in the 1990s with the spectacular growth of e-mail and the World Wide Web. This long-awaited “annihilation of time and space” (a popular phrase since the telegraph days) marks the true arrival of two-way communication and information in real time independent of location. The known laws of nature, the state of technoscience, and the modest size and favorable features of “spaceship earth” have made it possible to pull virtually every living person into the global maelstrom of intelligence about everything, from the most minute triviality to the largest accident.²⁸ It is this permanent visual and acoustic contemporaneity of all people and events that distinguishes the present time from all other historical periods as far as the potential conversation of the whole human species is concerned.

Of course, the global contemporaneity of all people and events applies *only* to terrestrial distances on our comparatively small planet and not for really long-distance conversations, say, with interlocutors in outer space. Communication with an ambassador on the moon would entail a delay of about four seconds (just under two seconds for the signals each way); the two-way transmission of a conversation with an envoy on Venus, the planet closest to us, would take about five minutes; and if we attempted to e-mail our friends on the nearest stars, Alpha Centauri and Proxima Centauri, circa 4.3 light years away, we would have to wait nearly nine years for the answer. The recently conquered non-contemporaneity of long-distance communication will come back with a vengeance when one travels beyond this globe and moves from acting globally to acting galactically.

I mention these facts to highlight the favorable position of communications on earth at the present time. Instant communication independent of location is a privilege of global history that is tied to the earth. Galactic communication will be fantastically non-contemporaneous for everyone involved. However, despite the great achievement of technically optimal conditions of communication on this planet, it does not follow that equal social and cultural relations of communication have also

been established. On the contrary, the political economy of global communication is still extremely unequal.²⁹ I would like to turn to this problem now, yet with a twist. Socioeconomic differences are well known, but the *sociotemporal* equivalents of equality and inequality, contemporaneity and non-contemporaneity, have not been perceived so clearly.

The Ideology of Non-Contemporaneity

In 1493, on his way back from the assumed discovery of the western route to the “East Indies,” which were in fact the West Indies and Bahamas, Christopher Columbus wrote to the Spanish court that the natives of these isles were not dangerous at all and knew of “neither iron nor steel.” Other observers commented on the archaic level of written Amerindian culture, while still others noted that the useful applications of the wheel – as a wagon wheel, spinning wheel, milling wheel or potter’s wheel – were not known in Central America. The transoceanic seafarers from Western Europe brought the news home that the Christian world shared the earth with an abundance of unknown religions, cultures, and peoples, creatures that may not have descended from Adam. The infinitely strange multireligious, multicultural, and multiethnic world with scores of different customs and practices, which unfolded in the 16th century as a fantastic reality, confronted Christendom with an intellectual challenge. All of a sudden the earth had become very hard to grasp in its totality, and eventually people began to look for geographic, theological, and anthropological explanations.³⁰

In the wake of their voyages of discovery, Europeans began to compete not only with themselves and the dead cultures of ancient Greece and Rome but also with the living peoples and cultures of Central America, Africa, and Asia. The question of how to deal with the presence of so many new and unfamiliar human beings became a crucial issue for the Modern Age. Europeans were already convinced about the superiority of Christendom but the belief in their culture’s instrumental predominance grew as a matter of practical proof. From the 16th century onwards, Europe’s scientific, technological, and military capabilities were aggressively and repeatedly demonstrated.³¹ European colonisers, theologians, philosophers, historians, sailors, merchants, soldiers, and adventurers pronounced and consolidated the occidental claim to combined religious, political, and civilising ascendancy over all “savages.” They invented a temporal order of peoples and cultures that legitimised Europe’s leadership role for centuries to come.

The growing complexity of the scope of humanity in the modern world appeared as a problem. The Modern Age established a solution that was simple and ingenious but also devastating for large parts of the human race: temporal cleansing through modernity. Modernity became the benchmark of the new order. It drastically reduced the rising number of “others” in the world by placing all non-Europe-

ans on lower evolutionary levels. The contemporaneity of Europeans with ever more different others was thus made to disappear. Others became unmodern and therefore non-contemporaneous; they were still there but no longer in the present time.³² Military and bureaucratic approaches were taken to constrain the physical existence of others (if the reduction of complexity was not accomplished by famines or diseases), but neither fate nor force could remove all others from the present. It was the temporalisation of the geoethnic space of the globe which secured the monopoly on the sociocultural present by the West from the Renaissance into Postmodernity. It accustomed the beneficiaries of this worldview to the vertical hierarchy of a temporal order of humans and things and caught even progressive thinkers in its trap. Some examples will show how the ideology of non-contemporaneity worked.

In May 1789, the German poet Friedrich Schiller (1759-1805) who was in dire need of a livelihood and had just become a history professor at the University of Jena for that reason, delivered his inaugural lecture on *What Is and To What End Does One Study Universal History?* He stepped up to the lectern, read with a strong and steady voice, criticised his colleagues and praised world history as a process culminating in himself, the “educated man of the world” and “philosophical mind.”³³ Schiller preached the logic of non-contemporaneity with great aplomb. He made it known to his students that the “raw tribes” found by European seafarers “stand like children of various ages around an adult and, by their example, remind him of what he himself once was.” According to Schiller, the savages know nothing about the bond of marriage, have no idea about property, always fight, and often eat the flesh of their enemies. Schiller declared that Universal History provides the answer to the question as to how the human species advanced from “contemptible” beginnings, i.e. “from the unsociable cave dweller to the brilliant thinker” of the contemporary period; he imputed a “rational purpose to the way of the world and a teleological principle to world history.” Schiller’s lecture made a big impression. He was honored with a serenade and given three cheers.

The hubris and arrogance of the European enlightenment, which only Voltaire in France and Samuel Johnson in England found somewhat offensive and inappropriate, is now apparent and intolerable. Schiller’s World History with its stepladder of cultures and a white genius perched on the highest rung was not an exception but the rule. The enlightened ideal that “all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights” and should not become victims of discrimination, is only slowly becoming the global norm.³⁴ The fundamental equality of all human beings has still to be defended against racist and sexist manifestos and murderous acts. That much is obvious. But temporal discrimination – the modernity syndrome – has more or less escaped public attention. The modernity syndrome creates unmodern people and repudiates their right to be part of the present. Even the most

progressive of bourgeois society, who could be on the Left politically, have often been blinded by their elitist cultural modernism. They would do almost anything to avoid appearing unmodern. Let me illustrate this syndrome with a few passages from the Austrian architect Adolf Loos (1870-1933), who is deserving of our admiration in many respects. In the essay "Ornament and Crime," he complained about all the temporal "stragglers" sharing his time in 1908.

The speed of cultural development is hampered by the stragglers. I may be living in the year 1908, but my neighbor is living around 1900 and that person over there in the year 1880. (...) The peasant in Kals³⁵ lives in the twelfth century. And there were tribes in the anniversary parade who would have been considered backward even at the time of the great migration. Happy is the country that does not have such stragglers and marauders. Happy America! Over here, there are unmodern people even in the cities, stragglers from the eighteenth century, who are outraged by a picture with violet shadows because they are not yet able to see the violet.³⁶

The Viennese functionalist proudly declared: "I preach the aristocrat." Did Loos realise that he had internalised the temporal reconstruction of the hierarchical social order of Europe's prenational court society? Not at all. Loos was an aristocratic cultural modernist with no doubts. The aesthetic details of a neighbor's clothing told him that the fellow next door was of a lower time rung (not necessarily from a lower social class), a backward fellow and straggler, or worse, a plunderer of what had survived or, worst of all, a degenerate; for "what is natural in the Papuan and in the child is a sign of degeneracy in the modern person."³⁷

A man like Loos, who saw Karl Kraus as standing "on the threshold of a new age,"³⁸ must be judged by his choice of language, which, as Theodor W. Adorno remarked, has a ring to it that puts him in a company of which he would not have approved. Loos, anticipating Bertolt Brecht, proclaimed "Ich esse roastbeef" and then goes on in brazen tones to talk about "the pinnacle of humanity" by which he means "our level of culture." The ideologue of non-contemporaneity looks down on "uncultivated people." He peers into the richly populated depths of some 10, 20, 100, or 1.000 years and makes out "degenerates" and "marauders" at the very bottom; he designs an escalator of decreasing contemporaneity. On its cultural time steps, with the obvious exception of the top level, non-contemporaneous contemporaries are assembled on a declining scale, with increasingly unmodern people toward the bottom. Loos is ready to "tolerate" the ornaments of "the Kaffir, the Persian, the Slovakian peasant woman, the ornaments of my shoemaker" because "all these people have no other means to reach the high points of their being," but he cannot grant "these people" historical contemporaneity.³⁹

The non-contemporaneity of the simultaneous is the temporal equivalent of the hierarchically graded sociopolitical order of the chief estates under the *ancien régime* (nobles, clergy, and commons). Yet whereas the order of the estates was fairly static, the temporal order of aesthetic modernism and cultural modernity is dynamic. The old order was rendered into gas when all that was solid melted into air. The odious molecules of non-contemporaneity can envelop anyone and everything. The value of people and things is not set once and for all, but fluctuates. An individual may be awarded the seal of contemporaneity for one thing and can be dismissed the next moment as non-contemporaneous for something else.

The German philosopher Ernst Bloch (1885-1977) used the topos of *contemporaneous non-contemporaneity* to come to grips with German fascism. He developed a “theory of non-contemporaneity”⁴⁰ in *Heritage of Our Times*, a collection of essays published in Zurich in late 1934,⁴¹ which fused contemporaneity and non-contemporaneity with Marxian terms. The chapter of the book that develops Bloch’s historico-philosophical theory is entitled “Non-Contemporaneity and Obligation to its Dialectic”; it dates from May 1932 and begins deceptively low-key and crystal-clear:

Not all people exist in the same Now. They do so only externally, through the fact that they can be seen today. But they are thereby not yet living at the same time with the others.⁴²

What did Bloch expect from the concept of non-contemporaneity? The answer is hinted at a few lines down: “(...) the intolerable Now seems different with Hitler, because he paints good old things for everyone.”⁴³ Bloch wanted to beat Hitler with Hitler’s own weapon, the exploitation of non-contemporaneity. But Bloch could not simply embrace non-contemporaneity. Marxism could not rival Nazism uncritically. So, unlike Schiller and Loos, Bloch had to locate something of value in the realm of the devalued remnants of the past. He found his answer in a non-linear concept of history.

History is no entity advancing along a single line, in which capitalism for instance, as the final stage, has resolved all the previous ones; but it is a polyrhythmic and multi-spatial entity, with enough unmastered and as yet by no means revealed and resolved corners.⁴⁴

Bloch set out to open Marxism for the promising corners of the past. He drafted “a multi-layered dialectic” of history and made “the turbulent Now broader” by adding a couple of temporal contradictions to the traditional one between capital and labor. Bloch achieved his broadening of the present by distinguishing between con-

temporaneous and non-contemporaneous contradictions of history in the present time. The contemporaneous contradiction was the orthodox one between capitalism and the proletariat, whereas the new and innovative non-contemporaneous contradiction was between “the falsely and the genuinely non-contemporaneous.” False or subjective non-contemporaneity was defined as “non-desire for the Now” and genuine or objective non-contemporaneity as “surviving being and consciousness” of the past.⁴⁵

Bloch tried not to ridicule Nazism as wholly non-contemporaneous because he wanted to control the fascist “explosion of the non-contemporaneous” by creating the socialist art of making the irrational “safe, indeed helpful.” He thus conceived of dividing the non-contemporaneous into good and bad anachronisms in order to oppose Nazism with the genuine non-contemporaneity “of a not wholly refurbished past.”

The subjectively non-contemporaneous contradiction is accumulated rage, the objectively non-contemporaneous one unfinished past; the subjectively contemporaneous one is the free revolutionary action of the proletariat, the objectively contemporaneous one the prevented future contained in the Now, the prevented technological blessing, the prevented new society with which the old one is pregnant in its forces of production.⁴⁶

The philosopher of contemporaneous non-contemporaneity aligned himself with the proletariat “as the historically decisive class today.” He proposed to raid the “treasure vaults” of the unfinished past and turn the weapons of unreason against the forces of reaction. He offered Marxism a position with a “more genuine awareness of ‘Irratio’ than the Nazis and their big business partners” – in short, Bloch tried to occupy the objective part of non-contemporaneity and give it a positive spin because he theorised that it was “high time to mobilize contradictions of non-contemporaneous strata against capitalism under socialist direction.”⁴⁷

My critique of Bloch, as my preceding critique of Loos, is ignited by specific elements of Bloch’s language and not by Bloch’s attempt to contend with Hitler for the “non-contemporaneous strata.” Bloch – like Loos – displayed very little respect for the natives of Papua New Guinea when he spoke of “false non-contemporaneity which only appears in the guise of Papua in so far as it is not up-to-date.” The temporal arrogance of the modernity syndrome informed Bloch’s language and choice of words.

The employee lashes out wildly and belligerently, still wants to obey, but only as soldier, fighting, believing. The employee’s desire not to be proletarian intensifies into an orgiastic desire for subordination, for a magical bureaucratic exist-

tence under a duke. The employee's ignorance, which seeks past stages of consciousness, transcendence in the past, intensifies into an orgiastic hatred of reason, into a 'chthonism' in which there are berserkers and crusade images, indeed in which – with a non-contemporaneity which becomes extraterritoriality in places – negro drums rumble and central Africa rises.⁴⁸

Thus Schiller's "raw tribes" appeared in Loos' anniversary parade as "degenerates" and overwhelmed Bloch as "employees" with "rumbling negro drums." Yet how do we speak about other cultures, peoples, groups, individuals, institutions, identities, lifestyles, and modes of behavior? Are we less likely than Schiller, Loos, and Bloch to question the contemporaneity of our global neighbors? Have we gone beyond the ideology of contemporaneous non-contemporaneity? The problematic heritage of five centuries of temporal discrimination has given the West a powerful cultural attitude that cannot be underestimated.

The Postmodern Continuity

Today, the phantom of the non-contemporaneous other seems to haunt postmodernist thinkers. They have turned the ideology of non-contemporaneity on its head and regard it as something to be cherished, especially the non-contemporaneities of non-Western cultures. One of the initiators of this complete reversion was Ernst Bloch again, who championed the emancipation of the "third world" in the 1950s when he was teaching in Leipzig.⁴⁹

Bloch combined the prescribed Marxist-Leninist philosophy of history with his theory of a temporal "multiverse" of peoples and cultures.⁵⁰ He emphasised the "togetherness of different times" and thus gave an optimistic slant to contemporaneous non-contemporaneity to allow for the "present awakening of Africa and Asia."⁵¹ Bloch declared that the Western idea of progress did not imply a European, Asian, or African avant-garde but rather a "whole better earth."⁵² He celebrated the "polyrhythmic and polyphone" processes of decolonisation and the anticipated result, the unity of the human species, not as the product of one culture but as the convergence of all past, present, and future cultures. His hope for the world was a unified humanity at the end of history.⁵³

The positive variant of the ideology of non-contemporaneity idealised the non-western others as potential carriers of a global liberation but still had them standing on wildly different levels of societal development. Postmodernism and postcolonialism have praised non-contemporaneity as a human resource. They also made the reverse side of positive non-contemporaneity a target of their critique against cultural hegemony and racial supremacy and thus created negative contemporaneity. Lothar Baier expressed this view eloquently in a public forum on "The Matter with Time" in June 1991 in Frankfurt am Main. He identified

contemporaneity as the “secret Utopia of Western civilization” and attacked “world-wide contemporaneity” as the West’s “most totalitarian project” to date. The archetypical “other” emerged in Baier’s talk not as Papuan but as Hopi. Baier praised the non-contemporaneity of the Hopi people because Hopi-time is subjective and would not allow contemporaneity, yet this was no longer a shortcoming for Baier but a cultural heritage threatened by industrial progress. He deplored the loss of the wealth of non-contemporaneities as the drainage of the “old strands of time.”

Uncultivated time has become a luxury since western modernity manages time like other resources ever more rationally. The old strands of time are surveyed, aligned, fenced in, and covered with concrete. What is washed ashore cannot lie around and perhaps take root. The encounters of cultures multiply but they happen in the shock of a moment and create nothing that is new and needs time to develop. The multiculturalism of our present time relates to the processes of past creolizations, like safe instant sex is to the formerly risky, involved, protracted and occasionally grave affair of passionate love. Modern cultural contact wears a condom. Our strands of time are narrow and sterile; a Creole or Yiddish language could not develop on them. The time of Western civilization dominating now without eastern borders has the characteristic ability to expand and contract in a double movement thereby compressing the multitemporality of the world into the homogenous contemporaneity of the *quartz watch epoch*.⁵⁴

There is no question that the asymmetry between the power of a “world market civilization” on the one hand and the weakness of subordinate groups, cultures and nations on the other, is a scandal of global history. But the continuing temporal discrimination, lately along the lines of “oh, how beautiful is your non-contemporaneity,” is scandalous too.

Conclusion

We may be nearing the final hours of the politics of non-contemporaneity. Global history has opened the doors to the present time for all people. If access to the present time was once a privilege of the few and powerful, it has now become a basic condition of globality. The sociotemporal world order is changing in favor of contemporaneity for all, and the neopaternalistic attempt to denounce contemporaneity may not please the indigenous people of our time. The sociocultural contemporaneity of those who were until recently non-contemporaneous – *poor* guest workers, *weak* women, *backward* Indians, *underdeveloped* countries, *uncivilised* nations of the Third World and all peoples *without history* – is a fact of global history.

This historical change can be underlined with a quote that indicates the end of the non-contemporaneous as well as the beginning of a contemporaneous world situation in the 1960s. In Cheikh Hamidou Kane's *Ambiguous Adventure*, a Senegalese novel from 1961 by a Muslim politician and writer, the father of Samba Diallo, a young African revolutionary, reaches out to Paul Lacroix, a French teacher and representative of the modernising colonial power.

We have not had the same past, you and ourselves, but we shall have, strictly, the same future. The era of separate destinies has run its course. In that sense, the end of the world has indeed come for every one of us, because no one can any longer live by the simple carrying out of what he himself is.⁵⁵

This remark is true in both a descriptive and a normative sense. The way things were *de facto* is definitely no longer the way they are, and the way things were *de jure* is certainly no longer how they should be. The sands of non-contemporaneous time have run out. Everybody lives, or is soon going to live, under conditions of global contemporaneity and has an undeniable right to be in the present time. It is no longer allowed to declare someone non-contemporaneous because of his skin color, sex, age, religion, nationality, class, income, mode of production, and kind of society or culture. The wealth of synchronic global contemporaneities has become accessible to everybody in real time. The world's old and new connections have become so widely globalised and strongly intertwined in the last fifty years that the whole world has gained a new quality. The local consequences of global warming and the worldwide audience of the Olympic Games, for example, make globality and humanity concrete. Our historical situation is clearly marked by the contemporaneity of local activities, processes and events with global reach and global meaning. Multicultural societies are constituted by the unprecedented collision and fusion of these contemporaneities. Astute observers of the present time have noticed that the modern emphasis on the future has been invalidated by a thickening of the present.⁵⁶

The "present time of present things" is becoming what the past used to be for traditional societies and the future for industrial modernity. If Fernand Braudel was right to say that the present consists, to ninety percent, of the past then this is no longer true. The inhabitants of the global present have less memory of past things, more expectation of future things, and a lot of perception of present things. Synchrony is getting the edge over diachrony in terms of historical significance and now we have to learn how to deal with the new global history that has moved everybody everywhere into the present time.

Notes

An earlier version of this paper was published in Wolf Schäfer, *Ungleichzeitigkeit als Ideologie: Beiträge zur Historischen Aufklärung* (Frankfurt am **Mein**: Fischer, 1994), 132-155. I would like to thank Spencer Segalla for his critical and helpful reading of this chapter.

- 1 See St. Augustine, *Confessions*, Book 11, chapter 20: *tempora sunt tria, praesens de praeteritis, praesens de praesentibus, praesens de futuris*. Some later theorists have responded favorably to Augustine's idea or thought along the same lines, especially George Herbert Mead, "The Present as the Locus of Reality," in George H. Mead, *The Philosophy of the Present* (La Salle, Ill: The Open Court Publishing Company, 1959), 1-31.
- 2 St. Augustine used "memory" for the presence of past things (*praesens de praeteritis memoria*), "expectation" for the presence of future things (*praesens de futuris expectatio*), and "perception" for the presence of present things (*praesens de praesentibus contuitus*).
- 3 Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation. The Science of Freedom* (New York and London: W. W. Norton, 1996), 567.
- 4 John M. O'Brien, *Alexander the Great: The Invisible Enemy. A Biography* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992).
- 5 Alexander Demandt, *Ungeschehene Geschichte: Ein Traktat über die Frage: Was Wäre Geschehen, Wenn ...?*, 2nd ed. 1986 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1984), 69-74.
- 6 Olga Z. Pugliese, *Lorenzo Valla: "The Profession of the Religious" and the Principal Arguments from "The Falsely-Believed and Forged Donation of Constantine"* (Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 1985), 70. – Carlo Ginzburg's reading of Valla has shown that Valla's approach to rhetoric followed Aristotle and not Cicero. Aristotle, Valla, and Ginzburg oppose the "current self-referential image of rhetoric" and hold that rhetoric and methodical proof are compatible because proof is "the rational core of rhetoric." Carlo Ginzburg, *History, Rhetoric, and Proof* (Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 1999), 62.
- 7 A medievalist who taught diplomatics in Marburg always asked in the first meeting of his class: "Who wants to learn something about political history here?" He never failed to disappoint a few students with the revelation that diplomatics was not about diplomacy; I was one of these ignoramuses.
- 8 Having a reliable tool and using it are two different things. Russell showed that 19th- and 20th-century writers, including historians, created the nonsense of the medieval belief in a flat earth; Jeffrey B. Russell, *Inventing the Flat Earth: Columbus and Modern Historians* (New York: Praeger, 1991).
- 9 Marc Bloch, *The Historian's Craft* (New York: Vintage Books, 1953), 95.
- 10 Lynn White, "Technology Assessment from the Stance of a Medieval Historian," *American Historical Review* 79 (1974), 1-13.
- 11 The Austrian writer Robert Musil wrote: "To pass freely through open doors, it is necessary to respect the fact that they have solid frames. This principle, by which the old professor had always lived, is simply a requisite of the sense of reality. But if there is a sense of reality, and no one will doubt that it has justification for existing, then there must also be something we can call a sense of possibility." Robert Musil, *The Man Without Qualities* (New York: Knopf, 1995), 10-11.

- 12 Sungook Hong, "Unfaithful Offspring? Technologies and Their Trajectories," *Perspectives on Science* 6 (1998), 259-287, 263.
- 13 See George Wise, "The Accuracy of Technological Forecasts, 1890-1940," *Futures. The Journal of Forecasting and Planning* 8 (1976), 411-419, 414; his sample of 1556 predictions broke down as follows: "fulfilled: 499 predictions (32%); in progress: 121 predictions (8%); not proven: 420 predictions (27%); and refuted: 516 predictions (33%)."
- 14 Quoted in René Magritte (Munich: Kunsthalle der Hypo-Kultur-Stiftung, 1987), 39 "La Clef des Champs, 1933." Magritte's comment is translated from the German translation; the catalog lists as source for this comment the film by Luc de Hensch from 1960 ("Magritte on la leçon de choses"). – A scanned image of The Key to the Fields can be found in the Global History Gallery at Cgh.stonybrook.edu/ghg/.
- 15 W. Warren Wagar, *A Short History of the Future*, 2nd ed. (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1992), XIV, XV and XIII. The foreword to the second edition states that substantial parts of the book have been rewritten. The original foreword appeared unchanged in the second edition, but chapters two and five, and substantial portions of other chapters, were rewritten "to take account of the new face of international politics" (IX). I wonder: is a second (or third, fourth and fifth) account in the best interest of futures studies? How can we learn from our failed expectations if we overwrite them with new guesswork?
- 16 Martin Albrow, *The Global Age: State and Society beyond Modernity*, 2nd ed. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997).
- 17 Roland Robertson, "Glocalization: Time-Space and Homogeneity – Heterogeneity" in Mike Featherstone, Scott Lash, and Roland Robertson, *Global Modernities* (London: SAGE, 1995), 25-44. – Cascades could replace the singular event as the basic unit of historical analysis. Rosenau has developed some interesting ideas in this direction (applied to post-international politics) including thoughts about the scope, intensity, and duration of cascades; James N. Rosenau, *Turbulence in World Politics: A Theory of Change and Continuity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 298-305.
- 18 Alfred Wegener (1880-1930), a German meteorologist, developed the theory of continental drift. Wegener contended from 1912 on that the earth's continents were not fixed, and that a large landmass or supercontinent (*Pangaea*) had begun to split apart some 200 million years ago. Wegener's basic idea was debated back and forth during his lifetime; it was eventually confirmed by the development of the widely accepted theory of plate tectonics in the 1960s; Alfred Wegener, *The Origin of Continents and Oceans* (New York: Dover Publications, 1966). See A(nthony) Hallam, *A Revolution in the Earth Sciences: From Continental Drift to Plate Tectonics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973); Ursula B. Marvin, *Continental Drift: The Evolution of a Concept* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1973).
- 19 Wolf Schäfer, "The New Global History: Toward a Narrative for Pangaea Two," *Erwägen Wissen Ethik* 14 (2003), 75-88; *ibid.*, "Making Progress with Global History," *Erwägen Wissen Ethik* 14 (2003), 128-135; *ibid.*, "Global Civilization and Local Cultures: A Crude Look at the Whole," *International Sociology* 16 (2001), 301-319.
- 20 Luhmann's approach is similar ("Wir gehen von einer ebenso trivialen wie aufregenden These aus: dass alles, was geschieht, gleichzeitig geschieht") but unhistorical ("Gleichzeitigkeit ist eine aller Zeitlichkeit vorgegebene Elementartatsache"); see Niklas Luhmann,

- “Gleichzeitigkeit und Synchronisation,” in Niklas Luhmann, *Soziologische Aufklärung*, vol. 5: *Konstruktivistische Perspektiven* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1990), 95-130, 98. The construction of contemporaneity as a fundamental fact outside history makes little sense for historians; we have to think of contemporaneity as a historical development and not as a given.
- 21 R. Buckminster Fuller, *Utopia or Oblivion: The Prospects for Humanity* (New York: Bantam Books, 1969), 208.
- 22 See Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, 281ff. “Chorus: And at what time hath the city been sacked? Clytaemnestra: I say in the night that hath now brought forth this day. Chorus: And what messenger could come with such speed? Clytaemnestra: Vulcan [Hephaestus], sending forth a brilliant gleam from Ida; and beacon dispatched beacon of courier-fire hitherward (...).” Quoted after Gerard J. Holzmann and Björn Pehrson, *The Early History of Data Networks* (Los Alamitos, CA: IEEE Computer Society Press, 1995), 16-17 [available online at vvv.it.kth.se/docs/early_net/toc.html].
- 23 In 1837 Morse responded to a U.S. Senate call for proposals for a nationwide telegraph system. The senators were thinking of an optical system like the ones developed in France by Claude Chappe or in Sweden by Abraham Edelcrantz. Morse proposed an electromagnetic telegraph, and eventually won the government's support. The most important thing about Morse's telegraph, however, was not the use of electricity but what Carey has called the “effective separation of communication from transportation”; James W. Carey, *Communication as Culture: Essays on Media and Society* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 203.
- 24 The message concerned the ending of the Sepoy Mutiny (1857-1858), a rebellion against British rule by Indian troops (sepoys) of the East India Company. The first successful transatlantic telegraph cable failed after a few weeks (the very first attempt in August 1857 had failed altogether). 732 messages were sent in 1858, each took over one hour; “it took twenty-six hours to get the first message across”; Steven Lubar, *InfoCulture: The Smithsonian Book of Information Age Inventions* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1993), 85.
- 25 See Edward Hagerman, *The American Civil War and the Origins of Modern Warfare: Ideas, Organization, and Field Command* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), 87: “The Military Telegraph with its Morse equipment had largely taken over telegraphic field communications during the Gettysburg campaign. It connected Meade's headquarters to the headquarters of all corps and divisions. The army of the Potomac set organizational precedent when, ‘for perhaps the first time in military history the commanding general of a large army was kept in communication during active operations with his corps and division commanders.’”
- 26 CNN boasted in 1991 that its reporter (Peter Arnett) was sending “for the first time in history” live pictures of an ongoing war to the entire world from behind enemy lines. But the American information policy took that into account; neither CNN nor the other networks could get through American censorship to cover American troop movements; Lubar, *InfoCulture*, 260.
- 27 Reinhart Koselleck, *Wie neu ist die Neuzeit?* (Munich: Oldenbourg 1991), 41.
- 28 Barbara Ward, *Spaceship Earth* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966); Nigel Calder, *Spaceship Earth* (London: Viking, 1991).

- 29 Cf. Thomas L. McPhail, *Electronic Colonialism: The Future of International Broadcasting and Communication* (Newbury Park, CA: SAGE, 1987); Gerald Sussman and John A. Lent, eds., *Transnational Communications: Wiring the Third World* (Newbury Park, CA: SAGE, 1991); Edward A. Comor, ed., *The Global Political Economy of Communication: Hegemony, Telecommunication and the Information Economy* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994).
- 30 The newly reached parts of the planet did not immediately displace the traditional concerns of people. In 1584, the miller Domenico Scandella (Menocchio) still talked about the *Travels* of John Mandeville (a mid-14th century book). Ginzburg remarked: "It's well known that throughout the 16th century the circulation of descriptions of the Holy Land continued to outnumber those of the New World." Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), 42.
- 31 For the historical development of the theory and practice of Western dominance, see Michael Adas, *Machines as the Measure of Men: Science, Technology, and Ideologies of Western Dominance* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1989).
- 32 For an excellent exposition of this change, see Margaret T. Hodgen, *Early Anthropology in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1964), 389-390; also Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983).
- 33 I translate from "Was heißt und zu welchem Ende studiert man Universalgeschichte?" in Friedrich Schiller, *Werke in drei Bänden*. Vol. 2 (Munich: Hanser, 1966), 9-22.
- 34 Quoted from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (article 1, first sentence), which was completed by the U.N. Commission on Human Rights in June 1948 and adopted by unanimous vote by the General Assembly at its Paris session on Dec. 10, 1948 (with the members of the Soviet bloc, Saudi Arabia, and the Union of South Africa abstaining).
- 35 A village near the highest mountain (Großglockner) in Austria.
- 36 I translate from the German edition: Adolf Loos, *Sämtliche Schriften in zwei Bänden*. Ed. by Franz Glück (Wien and Munich: Verlag Herold, 1962), 280-281. A selection of Loos' essays has finally come out in English in 1998 but the translation is poor.
- 37 *Ibid.*, 287 and 277.
- 38 The text is from 1913: "Er [Karl Kraus] steht an der Schwelle einer neuen Zeit und weist der Menschheit, die sich von Gott und der Natur weit, weit entfernt hat, den Weg. Den Kopf in den Sternen, die Füße auf der Erde, schreitet er, das Herz in Qual über der Menschheit jammer. Und ruft. Er fürchtet den Weltuntergang. Aber, da er nicht schweigt, weiß ich, dass er die Hoffnung nicht aufgegeben hat. Und er wird weiter rufen und seine Stimme wird durch die kommenden Jahrhunderte dringen, bis sie gehört wird. Und die Menschheit wird einmal Karl Kraus ihr Leben zu danken haben." *Ibid.*, 328.
- 39 *Ibid.*, 280, 286, 283 and 287.
- 40 This term was used by Ernst Bloch in "Bemerkungen zur 'Erbschaft dieser Zeit,'" in *Philosophische Aufsätze zur objektiven Phantasie*. Werkausgabe, vol. 10 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1985), 31-53, 45.
- 41 The first edition of *Erbschaft dieser Zeit* states 1935 as the year of publication. However, the book was already distributed in November or December 1934 as we know from a letter that Walter Benjamin wrote to Gershom Scholem on 26.12.1934: "Da ist zum Beispiel seit

- Wochen Blochs 'Erbschaft dieser Zeit' erschienen (...)." Walter Benjamin and Gershom Scholem, *Briefwechsel 1933-1940* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1980), 182.
- 42 Ernst Bloch, *Heritage of Our Times* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991), 97.
- 43 Ibid.
- 44 Ibid., 62.
- 45 Ibid., 113, 108 and 109.
- 46 Ibid., 185, 112 and 113; the latter quoted passage is printed in italics for emphasis.
- 47 Ibid., 110, 112 and 2.
- 48 Ibid., 108 and 102.
- 49 In a lecture on "Differenzierungen im Begriff Fortschritt," originally given in the German Democratic Republic (GDR) in 1955; Ernst Bloch, "Differenzierungen im Begriff Fortschritt," in *Tübinger Einleitung in die Philosophie*. Werkausgabe, vol. 13 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1985), 118-147. – Bloch went into exile in 1933, first in Europe (1933-1938) and then in America (1938-1949). He remigrated to East Germany where he taught philosophy in Leipzig for a number of years before he was forced to retire from academic life (after the revolution in Hungary 1956). Bloch did not return to the GDR from a trip to West Germany after the erection of the Berlin Wall in 1961; he stayed in West Germany and became a Professor at Tübingen University. Bloch influenced the West German student movement in 1968 not least through his friendship with Rudi Dutschke (1940-1979), a charismatic student leader, and also an émigré from the GDR.
- 50 "(...) die gesellschaftlichen Stufen der Völker auf der Erde [sind] alles andere als 'gleichzeitig'. (...) die Topisierung verlangt, mindestens als universalhistorische, ein *Multiversum* – auch in der Zeit." Ibid., 128-129.
- 51 Bloch continued: "Diesen Kontinenten eben ist die weiße Vergangenheit nur knapp ihre eigene, und Geschichte überhaupt wird den mannigfach zukunftslos gewesenen Völkern dasjenige, was morgen beginnt." Ibid., 145.
- 52 "Der westliche Fortschrittsbegriff hat immerhin in seinen Revolutionen keine europäische (freilich auch keine asiatische oder afrikanische) Spitze impliziert, sondern eine (...) bessere Erde." Ibid., 146.
- 53 Ibid., 147.
- 54 Lothar Baier, "Das dumme Gefühl, an den Rockschoßen des Zeitgeistes zu hängen: Gleichzeitigkeit – die heimliche Utopie der Westlichen Zivilisation," *Frankfurter Rundschau* (22.6.1991), 12.
- 55 Cheikh Hamidou Kane, *Ambiguous Adventure* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1972), 79-80.
- 56 Cf. Helga Nowotny, "From the Future to the Extended Present," in Guy Kirsch, Peter Nijkamp and Klaus Zimmermann, eds., *The Formulation of Time Preferences in a Multidisciplinary Perspective: Their Consequences for Individual Behaviour and Collective Decision-Making* (Avebury 1988), 17-31, 26.

The present is therefore experienced as emancipation or enclosure, and the perspective of the future is no longer reassuring, since it is perceived not as a promise, but as a threat. Hartog's resonant readings show us how the motor of history(-writing) has stalled and help us understand the contradictory qualities of our contemporary presentist relation to time. eISBN: 978-0-231-53876-3. Subjects: History, Language & Literature. At the time this book was first published, in 2003, it already talked of a crisis of time, but obviously not of the crisis that has engulfed us since 2008—and I would not go so far as to claim for myself the gift of prophecy (not even with hindsight). However, it is not hard for historians to pursue historical truth not only with regard to the concoctions of backward-looking times but also with respect to the expectations of futuristic epochs, like the Modern Age. We can count on history to falsify our expectations but we can. economic, and cultural effects of these novelties.¹³ Thus, historical enlightenment. Global History and the Present Time 105. about the outlook of future-oriented societies can document the unintended consequences of forecasting and analyse the paradoxical interactions between historical.