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## Provincializing for a Planetary Perspective

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**Bo Stråth**

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The article takes its point of departure from the dynamics between Enlightenment modernity as it unfolds from the perspective of Marx (History 1 in *Provincializing Europe*) and the corrective counter-narratives, in the form of a protest against the former, as in the view of Heidegger (History 2 in *Provincializing Europe*), the dynamics that provides the central argument in *Provincializing Europe*. On this basis, the present article explores how and why these dynamics were severed by a growing polarization between the globalization narrative, the new History 1 after 1990, and the new-old brutal ethnic nationalism emerging after the neoliberal collapse in 2008, the new History 2. The article ends by discussing the question of how the modernity-protest dynamics between History 1 and History 2 can be reformulated from a planetary perspective.

Keywords: Enlightenment, modernity-protest, planetary perspective, ecology-economics.

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### **Provincializar por uma Perspectiva Histórica**

Este artigo toma como ponto de partida as dinâmicas entre a modernidade iluminista, tal como esta se desenvolveu na perspectiva de Marx (História 1 em *Provincializing Europe*), e as contra narrativas que a ela se opuseram, como no pensamento de Heidegger (História 2 em *Provincializing Europe*), dinâmicas essas que formam o argumento central de *Provincializing Europe*. Neste sentido, o artigo explora o como e o porquê de estas dinâmicas terem sido interrompidas por uma polarização crescente entre a narrativa da globalização, a nova História 1 depois de 1990, e o novo-velho nacionalismo étnico que emergiu, com toda a sua brutalidade, na sequência do colapso neoliberal de 2008, a nova História 2. O artigo conclui com uma reflexão em torno da questão do modo como as dinâmicas de modernidade-protesto entre a História 1 e a História 2 podem ser reequacionadas numa perspectiva planetária.

Palavras-chave: Iluminismo, modernidade-protesto, perspectiva planetária, economias ecológicas.

# Provincializing for a Planetary Perspective

Bo Stråth\*

*Provincializing Europe* was, when it appeared in 2000, an immediate success in its brave approach and bold arguments. It renewed the post-colonial debate and took it out of the shadow of the neoliberal globalization narrative that had prevailed since the 1990s. It provided a new perspective on the world after formal colonialism, where the structures of inequality remained but were repressed by the powerful globalization discourse of the time. The book reintroduced Karl Marx into a debate from which he had more or less disappeared since the early 1990s at the latest. The revival of what had become a historical relic occurred in a surprising but fruitful comparison with Martin Heidegger, another marginalized figure in the mainstream debate after his allegiance to national socialism from the 1930s. The book emphasized the role of the nation as a framework for human agency in a time which played down the importance of national borders, and it drew attention to the manner in which nations were situated in the North–South framework of rich and poor, a theme that had disappeared in the neoliberal narrative of equal opportunities after decades of debate on development and development aid.

*Provincializing Europe* brought together macro and micro perspectives, history and philosophy in an innovative methodology focusing on the role of language, culture, and norms. The analysis drew on fiction

\* Bo Stråth (bo.strath@helsinki.fi). Centre of Nordic Studies, University of Helsinki, Yliopistonkatu 3, Porthania, K00201, Helsinki, Finland.

literature and poetry as sources. The book explored the preconditions of modernity in an era that referred to itself as postmodern. It was complex in its emphasis on, and exposure of, ambiguities and contradictions. At the same time, it was clear in its argumentation. *Provincializing Europe* was not a project of persistently avoiding or getting rid of Europe. On the contrary, at the end of European imperialism, European thought as it had been formed in the Enlightenment program was a gift to the world, Dipesh Chakrabarty argued. It was a gift through the invitation to critique and social reform for a better world built into the Enlightenment program, however such a better world was conceived in practice. A key dimension of European thought could be turned against Europe as an instrument in the struggle for more global justice and equality. “We can talk of provincializing it only in an anticolonial spirit of gratitude,” as the final sentence of the book concluded.<sup>1</sup>

In the prevailing language of globalization at the time of the book’s publication, the market was celebrated as an ahistorical and automatic force of change. The future, which since the emergence of Enlightenment philosophy had been imagined in terms of progress driven by human plans and actions, had become vaguer and its contours more shrunken as open-ended human agency was increasingly downplayed as a driving force of history. The book circumvented the vocabulary of global and globalization. It used the term ‘universal’ in reference to the Enlightenment, but, of course, ‘universal’ was not equated to Europe.

Chakrabarty retained the older view of human agency as the primary driving force of social change in the world. The focus of *Provincializing Europe* on modernity and progress through social critique and protest again gave the future a more distinct profile of progress towards a fairer world of diversity, but through a shifting of perspectives beyond the Western world, and opposed to the imaginary of the self-propelled market. The future was human-made on the basis of common experiences and their translation into the critique of existing institutions and

<sup>1</sup> Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe. Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020), 255.

norms in the process of forging action-orientated horizons of expectation. This was a clear break with the mood of the time.

Chakrabarty operated with two levels of historical time. History 1 was the progressive history of Marx towards ever higher developmental stages, which led Eric Hobsbawm to refer to the subaltern peasant peoples as pre-political. It was the history of the unfolding of the logic of capitalism and its structures. History 2 was the man-made modification of, and resistance to, History 1 by means of myths, religious beliefs, normative cultural orders, traditions, conventions, and everyday practices that did not comport with the unfolding reason at level 1. This was the domain of Heidegger. It was a domain that Chakrabarty took seriously, instead of rejecting it as the world of superstition. A history of political modernity could not be written only along the lines of progressive history. Neither could one build a story of repressive colonialism and confront it with a robust native nationalism and traditionalism as a program because capitalism, as Marx conceived of it, was not regressive. The problem was the same as that faced by social protest movements in Europe: how to influence and control modernity building on experiences without rejecting the idea of progress.

Chakrabarty argued against the view of modernity and human autonomy as a ceaseless unfolding of unitary historical time along a teleological developmental line. He challenged the idea of a single, secular, progressive historical time and the idea that the human is ontologically singular. What was explained away as superstition was existentially coeval with the human and had to be integrated into histories in the plural. The universal was plural. History 1 and 2 were entangled or had to be entangled in the writing of history. History 1 was not integral but continuously out of joint because of History 2. Time out of joint in Shakespeare's Hamlet was a metaphor likening historical progress to a shoulder out of joint. As we know, Hamlet hesitated and failed to twist it right again. Like Hamlet, the historians have failed because it is impossible to find a time in equilibrium. A master narrative on modernization or globalization does not help. History 2 continuously modifies and disturbs History 1. More precisely, the question is what interrupts and defers capital's self-realization when History 2 confronts it.

Chakrabarty frames History 1 as the European story of the unfolding of capitalism, and History 2 as the story of comments on it by the formerly colonized peoples. However, in principle one might also attribute opposition to History 1 to European protest movements acting alone, in parallel or in solidarity with the anticolonial protest movements of History 2. The main point is that the former colonized peoples are not just passive lookers-on but active shapers of the world from their normative points of departure.

*Provincializing Europe* was not about rejecting European thought but dealt with the problem of how to cope with the fact that it was both inadequate and indispensable in the writing of histories of political modernity in non-Western nations.

The argument here is that the most innovative long-term implication of Chakrabarty's approach was that it opened up a planetary perspective. He develops the contours of a non-Eurocentric Enlightenment legacy as a kind of overall framing of global coexistence on the basis of political strife and struggle for social improvement in terms of more justice in a universal perspective. As opposed to the globalization perspective of free-floating individuals on automatically-proceeding markets without boundaries, the planetary perspective emphasizes the bound- edness of the planet as an entity along with human responsibility and human agency in the struggle over the distribution of limited resources. In so doing it draws attention to the potential of cohabitation on earth by national populations challenging and transcending differences between poor and rich peoples dissolving oppositions like the modern and the traditional. Chakrabarty's world was bounded and the future he envisaged was shaped by expectations of social and political change.

There is a continuity from this perspective to his more recent works on humans in the Anthropocene exposed to environmental and resource constraints that establish boundaries for the action potential of human collectivities and at the same time initiating action that has led to an entanglement between human historical time and the geological time of the planet. However, there is, of course, with the time difference of 20 years, also a new accentuation of the argument advanced

in 2000, and a development of it in new directions. The question of the preconditions of human agency has been given a new twist and the philosophy of time has shifted its focus from the problem of trend progression and teleology in modernity to the tension between geological time and world-historical time in the Anthropocene. The planetary perspective was rather implicitly conceptualized in contrast to market-automatic globalization in *Provincializing Europe* and is much more explicit in the exploration of the Anthropocene. The climate and environmental problem has become the central issue, as opposed to the problem of global resource distribution and power, although the climate and environmental crisis is to a considerable extent a problem deriving from the unequal distribution of resources. Human agency in the Anthropocene is ambiguous. It can mean human agency as a collective, anonymous general power influencing the earth in relation to geological time, and it can mean human agency in contention over the resources of the earth in relation to world-historical time, human agency as an anthropological or a historical force.<sup>2</sup>

The problem of the limitations and restrictions of cohabitation on earth underlined in Chakrabarty's recent works dealt, in *Provincializing Europe*, rather with the failing of Western social science in explaining the historical experiences of political modernity in South Asia (and implicitly other parts of the poor South). Chakrabarty confronted the Enlightenment pretension to apprehend European human experience as universal and to understand modernity as a Western teleology of secularization. However, his project was not about rejecting European thought straight out but of renewing it "from and for the margins" (16), integrating a plurality of histories of human being and belonging into an overall framework of universal coexistence. Chakrabarty's mission was history – rather than histories – in the plural and the pluralization of planetary political modernity. The continuous challenging of the existing order in the struggle for a fairer and less unequal world was a non-teleological struggle for improvement without an end. Through

<sup>2</sup> Dipesh Chakrabarty, "Anthropocene Time," *History and Theory* 57, no. 1 (March 2018): 5–32.

this struggle the contours of a world kept together by the work on improvement emerged.

*Provincializing Europe* was a challenge to the globalization narrative and the previous teleological discourse on development and development aid. The hegemony of globalization prevailed for a decade after the publication but eroded rapidly after 2008.

Europe at the time of the book's publication was like what has been said about Karl Marx's communism: a specter walking the world, feared by many and welcomed by many, unclear as to its more precise shape and substance. As Chakrabarty notes, Europe at this time had taken to provincializing itself because nobody believed in it as embodying a universal human history, as the Enlightenment claim had been. Fukuyama's vulgarization of Hegel's end of history in his comment on the collapse of the Soviet system – one world-historical stage before Marx – was not taken seriously by professional historians, although it spurred the neoliberal ideology builders. The European specter was the idea of Europe, the imaginary of political modernity based on modern states and institutions and an expanding capitalism hand in hand with imaginaries of democracy and the vocabulary of citizenship, civil society, the public sphere, human rights and individual rights based on equality before the law. Social rights were a historical claim by increasingly marginalized groups who wanted full membership, but the claim was never as central as other rights. On this point the neoliberal approach demarcated itself from the Keynesian decades after the Second World War when the welfare state became a guiding principle. The neoliberals opposed the principle in the 1990s, when the concept of the welfare state shifted to public service supplied as a commodity on a market.

The discourse on these and other key concepts that built up the idea of Europe and modernity laid out a universal and secular version of humanity and humanism despite the fact that since the nineteenth century its practical embodiment had come to reside in a cluster of nations and practices of colonialism. As Chakrabarty observes, the European colonizers preached Enlightenment humanism at the same time as, in



practice, they denied the colonized peoples access to the vision to which they were invited. This was the weak point that he, in the wake of Fanon, wanted to exploit. The colonized peoples should invite themselves to shape their own versions of the Marxist and liberal thought that constituted the core of the Enlightenment project, was his conclusion.

In the globalization discourse, the capitalist market society's imaginary of the New Economic Man, independent and free, went hand in hand with that of civic individuals emancipated from suffocating states and bureaucracy in their market-orientated civil societies. The ex-colonized countries were freed from humiliating aid packages and invited to become partners on global free trade markets to the benefit for all. The questions of social equality, redistribution of scarce resources through progressive taxation, power and hierarchy disappeared in the language of networking, equal opportunities, and partnership in the one world of formally (but not really) equal individuals and peoples, although the language of competition, efficiency and struggle for survival rumbled on in the background. Marx was out but there was a lingering debate on whether postcolonialism might best be understood as neocolonialism.

The social and political Europe which around 1990 seemed headed towards a federation became ever more the market Europe of competition between its nations guided by concepts like benchmarking, best practices, and 'the method of open coordination.' The nations were still based on civic citizenship resembling Giuseppe Mazzini's liberal imaginary of the 1830s, where nationalism and cosmopolitan Europeanism mutually reinforced each other. The nations that Dipesh Chakrabarty referred to as collective agents of historical change were still the nations which Benedict Anderson famously portrayed as imagined communities united by the spread of civic education in historical learning processes of emancipation from the feudal order of birth privileges.<sup>3</sup> Chakrabarty

<sup>3</sup> Chris A. Bayly and E. F. Biagini, *Giuseppe Mazzini and the Globalisation of Democratic Nationalism, 1830–1920* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Stefano Recchia and Nadia Urbinati, ed., *A Cosmopolitanism of Nations: Giuseppe Mazzini's Writings on Democracy, Nation Building, and International Relations* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009); Benedict Anderson, *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991).

critically explored this order by posing questions about how the ex-colonized but still poor peoples could claim their rightful place in it.

In the 1990s, the European model's central point of reference became ever more the market. The European Union increasingly became a market as opposed to a federal project. Democracy was ever more understood in terms of market-compliance. This was a development towards what later was described as low-intensity democracy.<sup>4</sup> The promises of mutually reinforcing dynamics between capitalism and democracy in the 1990s became ever more the practices of a new phenomenon that Edward Luttwak has called turbo capitalism, which was ruthless and laissez-faire, speculative and exorbitant.<sup>5</sup>

These developments were obviously different from what Chakrabarty observed in his analysis of the tension between Marx's promise of progress and the accommodation of religious and cultural experiences in Bengal to the progressive worldview and vice versa. The development towards market excesses with an ever more speculative punch blossomed out in the 2000s after the publication of *Provincializing Europe*. A first culmination of the trend occurred in 2008 with the collapse of the global financial markets which, in turn, eroded neoliberal credibility. In response to this development, the benevolent civic nationalism that accompanied the globalization narrative shifted to a more aggressive, xenophobic and exclusive ethnic-based nationalism. The dynamic interplay between History 1 and History 2 lost force.

The rest of this chapter will a) explore the growing polarization between the globalization narrative, the new History 1 unfolding since 1990, and the new-old brutal xenophobic nationalism emerging after 2008, and b) discuss the preconditions of a planetary re-establishment of the dynamics between Chakrabarty's History 1 and 2.

<sup>4</sup> Peter Mair, *Ruling the Void: The Hollowing of Western Democracy* (London: Verso, 2013); Susan Marks, *The Riddle of All Constitutions: International Law, Democracy and the Critique of Ideology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

<sup>5</sup> Edward Luttwak, *Turbo Capitalism: Winners and Losers in the Global Economy* (New York: Harper Collins, 1998).

*The Dynamics between History 1  
and History 2 Escaping Chakrabarty*

The ever-louder xenophobic nationalism all over the world is different to the Heideggerian corrective to Marxian modernity that *Provincializing Europe* lays out. The rather robust nationalism that we have begun to see is not so much ranged against the regressive colonialism that Chakrabarty warns of (15) as it is against a regressive capitalism running out of self-control. Otherwise put, we could say that the protest embodied in this rising tide of nationalism has shifted character from a civic and inclusive to an ethno-xenophobic and exclusive nationalism. We might also do well to read this transformation as a response to the mutation of Marx's progressive industrial-capitalist modernity – where the future was foreseeable, or at least believed to be – into the algorithmic finance capitalism which operates with nanoseconds day and night in every corner of the world. This new form of capitalism escapes the Heideggerian correctives at the same time as it provokes more robust reactions. Since 2010 it has been visible all over Europe and in the USA, in particular on their southern borders, where the free movement of capital has triggered the unfree movement of people looking for a better life, which, in turn, has provoked a more brutal nationalism. Isn't Modi's Hindu nationalism a version of this robust kind, too?

This xenophobic ethno-nationalism has a history in Europe, with the 1870s as its birth and the 1930s as a peak period, and now again a resurgence from 2010. The history of this nationalism is embedded in Romanticism, a term that Chakrabarty only briefly refers to (12), however, as an expression of anachronism and backwardness (peasants as premodern, in Hobsbawm's conceptualization) from the perspective of the Marxian History 1 of progressive modernity. In *Provincializing Europe* historicism frames the outline of progressive modernity as the unfolding of a general developmental trend along with the benevolent civic nationalism à la Anderson.

Historicism – like nationalism – is a concept with several meanings, however. It is the translation of the German *Historismus* “nurtured by the German historical school and by the many facets of the Romantic

movement.”<sup>6</sup> *Historismus* was hermeneutics in search of *Sinn*, meaning, developing a search for the generic, for the true nature of development. The groundwork for what was to become Heidegger’s nationalistically infused historicism is prepared here against the neoclassical economists such as Carl Menger and the historian Karl Lamprecht, who argued in a positivist vein that history conformed to law. Menger accused hermeneutics of taking the definition of historicism away from the economists. Then there was Karl Popper, who in a famous book criticized historicism and what he saw as its two main strands – the pro-naturalistic application of the methods of physics in a nomothetic manner and the anti-naturalistic, idiographic approach – with both approaches holding that history is predictable.<sup>7</sup>

Chakrabarty’s definition and application of historicism clearly conforms to the first of Popper’s two versions but it is unclear whether there is a connection between his History 2 and the Historicism (*Historismus*) of the historical school and Romanticism; that is, whether the protest/correction/moderation of modernity along History 2 can or must be thought not only as a narrative source of emancipation from without Europe but also as a warning example from within it. *Historismus* is where the beginning of xenophobic ethno-nationalism must be sought. Deviating from his teacher, Immanuel Kant, Johann Gottfried Herder developed Romanticism as a mode of distance-taking from, and reaction to, the rationalizing, systematizing and individualizing Enlightenment philosophy at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The critique of the Enlightenment emerged at German universities in several academic disciplines such as law, philology, literature, ethnology, theology, philosophy, economics and political science. Law was particularly prominent, where Friedrich Carl von Savigny developed the historical school which emphasized the historical tradition as opposed to the speculation that characterized natural right philosophy. The historical school criticized the classical economists for describing the economic process as an auto-

6 Calvin G. Rand, “Two Meanings of Historicism in the Writings of Dilthey, Troeltsch, and Meinecke,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 25, no. 4 (1964): 503–18.

7 Karl Popper, *The Poverty of Historicism* (London: Routledge 1957).

matic cycle of equilibriums and disequilibriums around individuals with a society but without community, and developed responses to the growing social critique in the wake of industrial capitalism and wage labor, focusing on the question of social community.

This was the historical legacy which supplemented the liberal Enlightenment program by lending it a social dimension and at the same time criticized it. However, the German historical school and its *Historismus* took on a new focus in the 1870s. Romanticist nationalism became not only nation- but also state- building. The German war against France in 1870–71 triggered the revolutionary Paris Commune, which shook the European establishment, who feared a Marxist world revolution. The collapse of world capitalism in a speculative bubble in 1873, causing what soon was called the Great Depression with an extended economic crisis and unemployment, underpinned the perception of a deep systemic crisis with a potentially revolutionary dimension. The threat animated conservative and liberal regimes all over Europe, who launched social politics aimed at better integrating the workers into the nations under the motto of state or national socialism against the class-struggle socialism of the workers. Academic knowledge production in the social sciences supported the politics of social integration. The German Association for Social Policy (1873) was paradigmatic. It was a professorial society for the development of a social policy program, the *Kathedersozialisten* as their liberal adversaries condescendingly called the members referring to their academic chairs. Bismarck and Disraeli were two of the main protagonists driving this approach. Another response to the economic crisis, which after the next Great Depression in the 1930s began to be referred to as the Long Depression, was armament and intensified colonialism. State-sponsored imperialism, armament and growing capital concentration tied Europe and the colonies together into increasingly menacing conflicts in the colonies and then in Europe itself. The supporting nationalism that accompanied the politics of welfare and warfare became ever more ethnic and xenophobic. This nationalism was embedded in a romanticist program that was more state-orientated than the romanticism in the early nineteenth century.<sup>8</sup> Its development paved the way to 1914.

<sup>8</sup> Bo Stråth, *Europe's Utopias of Peace: 1815, 1919, 1951* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016).

The cycle running from crisis to world war recurred a second time in the 1930s. The memories of these two cycles disappeared from public debate under the hegemony of the neoliberal globalization narrative. The rupture in 1989–91 cut the connection to the history of welfare and warfare, economic crisis, and xenophobic nationalism. The connection became just history, without any further relevance. This long history was off-frame when Dipesh Chakrabarty wrote and published *Provincializing Europe*. Nobody foresaw a new deep crisis or the return of a more brutal nationalism a decade later. The economic crisis after 2008 promoted xenophobic ethno-nationalism again. The question is how to reestablish his model again, which assumed a check on/corrective to capitalism through the critique from History 2, while taking into account our new historical experience since 2008 with the different experiences of both capitalism and nationalism.

*The Power of Discourse  
and the Shifting Conceptualization of Time*

In the discussion of this question it might be important to think of History 1 as a discourse as much as History 2. History 1 is not a capital logic unfolding as a natural force driven by the imaginary of progress towards ever higher development stages. For no more than Hegel's world spirit did Marx' capitalism operate according to its own self-contained logic. What matters is the narrative and the extent to which people believe in it. Marx's working class and bourgeoisie are fictions as much as Hegel's world spirit. Of course, there are really existing workers and capitalists of flesh and blood, but they do not proceed according to a pre-written screenplay. Rather, they move in unpredictable historical contexts of conflicts and compromises, navigating between opportunities and constraints, conditioned by changing power relationships. Their actions can only be evaluated in retrospect. These meetings and confrontations of historical forces are, in the case of capitalism, recognizable as discursive struggles about the definition of concepts like profit, wage, employment, unemployment, reform, wealth, poverty, climate and the environment.

The neoliberal globalization narrative that became hegemonic in the 1990s came close to a liberal version of Marx's logic of capital; or, better, to the academic logic-of-capital interpretation of Marx: a powerful unfolding history of capitalism and democracy in mutually reinforcing dynamics. Hegel had defeated Marx. This was not seen as a discourse but as a new historical logic – the end of history, in some arguments. As structuralist and filled with reason as the Marxist story once had been.

History disappeared in this discourse, though it did not end, even if this was what some people believed. The globalization language about a borderless global market performing automatically and hierarchies transformed into horizontal networks with hidden power relationships made the future open; indeed, it became borderless, too. A wide-open future meant a vaguer future. Its guiding key term, 'progress,' became fuzzier and the idea that the future could be shaped through political plans surrendered to the idea that automatically operating markets created the future. Previously the dynamics between the perceptions of the future and the past had formed the present. The continuously moving present, as constituted by this dynamic tension, lay at the core of the progressive time regime. Now the future collapsed into the present and as this happened the past began to underpin the emerging presentism.

François Hartog referred to 'the presentism of our time' and the emergence of a new 'regime of historicity,' the way in which the relationships between past, present, and future are understood in times of crisis. Before 1789 the past informed the present in a cyclical perspective, which originated in Aristotle's political theory. Soon after 1789, a temporalization of time emerged. The onset of modernity meant that expectations of the future began to connote a planned but unknown future with the help of the term 'progress.' Modernity opened a gap between experiences and expectations in the making of the future. The conception of progress was, of course, contentious. It was not discernible *ex ante* which interpretations were better: this could be determined only in retrospect, although never as a matter of consensus. The experience

of time after 1989 shifted back to an emphasis on the present opening onto endless opportunities for the future, but few new horizons of expectation emerged. At the same time as the narrative on global markets performing like a self-playing piano broke through, the contours of the future began to grow indistinct and its twin concept, progress, receded from the debate. The end of what Hartog labeled the regime of progressive time was marked by the end of history euphoria in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union, with the presentism that followed from that collapse invoking the past and the future only to confirm the present in a manner that did away with any pretension to learn from the past or shape the future.<sup>9</sup> This collapse of the future and the past into the present was in a certain sense the end of history, and underpinned the belief in it, but differently than what Fukuyama thought.

The presentism of the time undermined Reinhart Koselleck's identification of social dynamics under the motto of progress. In his critique–crisis scenario social protest and critique brought societies into crisis, which provoked reforms as attempts to respond to the critique. The critique–crisis cycle was continuous. It rested on the almost anthropological human capacity to reflect on experiences and translate them into mobilizing horizons of expectations. This translation nurtured the belief in progress. Koselleck was skeptical of the wide horizons of expectation brought about by the global political and social radicalization around 1970 ('1968') and the social crisis it resulted in. This was the occasion when the Third World stood up and demanded a New International Economic Order (NIEO) based on global equality and redistribution of resources. If radical expectations were not redeemed one day but instead were to become experiences of great disappointment it might be difficult to develop new mobilizing expectations, Koselleck thought. One might assume that he had in mind the expectations that the crisis in the 1930s provoked in Germany. The denial of the expectations of the 1970s twenty years later did not generate disappointment, however, but euphoria. However, the peaking expectations that this

<sup>9</sup> François Hartog, *Régimes d'historicité. Présentisme et expériences du temps* (Paris: Seuil, 2003).



euphoria expressed collapsed in the extended financial crisis after 2008. The euphoric core of the expectations made them vague and unprecise. This was perhaps why the experiences of disappointment became particularly deep. It was not a particular project that collapsed but a whole worldview.<sup>10</sup>

The crisis that began in 2008 changed the presentism that had prevailed since the 1990s. No other great horizon of expectation has emerged. So far, ongoing disappointing experiences of crisis are firm and persevering because there is no new master narrative, no breakthrough of social critique through a new language of progress. There are no new horizons of action-oriented expectations in progress. In a certain sense the historical time regime of presentism continues. However, the lack of a mobilizing future goes hand in hand with the strong discursive construction of an idealized past. Xenophobic nationalism, racism, and right-wing populism and extremism are at the heart of this radicalization and form a pattern that is the foremost expression of the failure of progress and the lack of viable horizons of expectation.

### *The Planetary Perspective*

There are obvious connections between Koselleck's critique-crisis and experience-expectation dynamics and Chakrabarty's account of the dynamics between History 1 and 2. The question is how to revitalize them in a truly planetary perspective, meaning that the critique is not of a Western model from without but of a global capitalism from within, that is, from within the whole world, the planet. There might be potential pivots for the planetary launching of critique and requests for reform of the prevailing system. These are, however, potentials that need to be activated. They center on the growing global differences in

10 Reinhart Koselleck and Carsten Dutt, *Erfahrene Geschichte. Zwei Gespräche* (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag, 2013); Reinhart Koselleck, "Die Verzeitlichung der Utopie," in *Utopieforschung. Interdisziplinäre Studien zur neuzeitlichen Utopie*, ed. Wilhelm Voßkamp (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1985 [1982]), 1–14; Reinhart Koselleck, *Kritik und Krise: Eine Studie zur Pathogenese der bürgerlichen Welt* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1959), English translation: *Critique and Crisis: Enlightenment and the Pathogenesis of Modern Society* (Oxford: Berg, 1988); Reinhart Koselleck, *Zeitschichten. Studien zur Historik* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 2000).

the wake of the practices of neoliberalism since the 1990s with regard to the distribution of resources, incomes and fortunes, which Thomas Piketty has mapped in great empirical detail and Samuel Moyn has addressed from a moral perspective. The neoliberal bottom-up redistribution of resources and incomes from the poor to the rich is, as Piketty emphasizes, not the consequence of some logic of capitalism but ideologically legitimized and politically implemented. Moyn argues on moral grounds not only for a global income floor but also a ceiling and a global redistribution regime.<sup>11</sup>

The second potential pivot for new global critique would be the environment and climate issue, which the Coronavirus crisis has silenced. It is an open question what impact the pandemic will have once it is somewhat under control, but fears of a new pandemic might be widespread and trigger a new concern for wellbeing on the planet for all rather than a few. Observing the situation from within the eye of the pandemic storm when writing this article, it is possible at least to think of, to imagine possibilities to activate critique and call for correction of the world order along the lines just outlined. Dipesh Chakrabarty has been delivering arguments for a critical planetary perspective on the climate crisis in his recent publications and his new book in print, and this work remains essential to any such critical project.<sup>12</sup>

Following the spirit of Chakrabarty's earlier work on historical retrieval, as discussed above, one might also revisit the 1970s in the search for a different past for a different future than that which the propagators of the vibrant xenophobic nationalism of our time have found and are consolidating. In 1971 the post-1945 Western order based on the dollar collapsed. The breakdown signaled a decrease in power for

11 Thomas Piketty, *Le capital au XXI<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris: Seuil, 2013). English translation: *Capital in the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014); Thomas Piketty, *Capital et idéologie* (Paris: Seuil: 2019); Samuel Moyn, *Not Enough: Human Rights in an Unequal World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018).

12 Dipesh Chakrabarty, *The Crisis of Civilization: Exploring Global and Planetary Histories* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2018); Chakrabarty, "Anthropocene Time.:" Dipesh Chakrabarty, "The Planet: An Emergent Humanist Category." *Critical Inquiry* 46 (Autumn 2019), 1-31; Dipesh Chakrabarty, *The Climate of History in a Planetary Age* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2021).

the old European industrial economies, which failed to arrest the fast erosion of their dollar-based Keynesian welfare economies, alongside a growing scope for action by the raw material-producing countries of the so-called ‘Third World’, which had already begun to self-identify as the poor South. The South stood up, with the UN General Assembly as their forum for resolutions requiring “redistributive justice, colonial reparations, permanent sovereignty over natural resources, stabilization of commodity prices, increased aid, and greater regulation of transnational corporations.”<sup>13</sup> This was the substantive content of the demands for the NIEO mentioned above.

Decolonialism had mutated into neocolonialism through private investments from the rich world, the voices of the rising South argued. The proponents of the NIEO argued that Europe and the US could no longer unilaterally determine the global terms of trade in the established neocolonial way. The Vietnam War played a particularly decisive role in propelling this shift through its financial burden on the dollar and the massive global protests against the American war makers.

The 1973 to 1974 period looked like an almost revolutionary situation, not in the sense of violent revolution, but rather a *kairos* situation of winning or losing with everything at stake. Southern critique, as expressed in agitation for the NIEO, called for a more radical, top-down redistributive embedding of capitalism globally and superimposed a new division between North and South upon the East–West division of the Cold War. The aim of the NIEO was to close the gap between the North and the South through planetary consensual top-down redistribution from the rich to the poor. Developments in the 1960s had built up structures that seemed to explode now. The socially embedded welfare capitalism in a small part of the world was exposed to pressures and critique in the rich industrial as well as the poor, raw materials-producing world for not being equal enough, for polluting the environment and exhausting the natural resources of the world. The backdrop of the

13 Quinn Slobodian, *Globalists: The end of empire and the birth of neoliberalism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018), 219.

protest was also the 1972 Club of Rome Report on the limits of growth and the exhaustion of the resources of the earth, which attracted much public attention and debate. The report was a plea for a new knowledge regime by seeking to correct the assumptions of permanent growth, with the planet's air, water and environment conceived as free and infinitely replenishable resources in economic theories. The Club of Rome argued for more ecological perspectives on growth and consideration of the limitations of natural resources in economic reasoning.

At the same time, the neoliberals began to challenge the Keynesian view of top-down redistribution within nations. The neoliberals did not want to make Keynesianism global, as the Southern protest movement did, but to abolish it. The neoliberal knowledge regime was radically reductionistic and economistic, with economics elevated to a superior form of knowledge. Neoliberal economics competed with the potential of an ecological economic knowledge regime, both globally conceptualized.

The problems that the global protest of the time and the Club of Rome highlighted have not disappeared. Indeed, they are still very much with us. The 1970s is the period that set the course towards many of the problems of our present, while also retrospectively highlighting the lost opportunities that the *kairos* situation of the time contained. By returning to the 1970s we can throw into relief both the architectonic features of today's world and the hidden potentialities it contains.

The contours of new global power relationships emerged then, and Europe feared being on the losing side. With these tensions rising, the 1970s witnessed a general reformulation of the optimism of the 1960s in both the North and the South, which had been based on the imaginary of cooperation for development through aid between the ex-colonies and their former (and in many respects remaining) masters. It was an intellectual reformulation that saw North and South as permanent antagonists. However, there were also serious attempts to cope with these challenges in constructive ways. There was a tension between warding off the claims from the poor countries and the Club of Rome and responding to them in affirmative ways. The Brandt Commission,

chaired by Willy Brandt, was initiated in 1977 by Robert McNamara, the Director of the World Bank, with the mission of bridging the gap and finding ways of forging a new start in relationships between the North and the South in a bid to replace the disturbed relationships that had emerged during the 1970s.

The Brandt Commission, officially the Independent Commission on International Development Issues, delivered two reports: *North–South* (1980) and *Common Crisis* (1983).<sup>14</sup> The reports emphasized the biases built into North–South relationships in terms of economic power, food and agricultural development, the exploitation of natural resources, energy provisions, and the rules of global trade, and underlined the need for aid, for international monetary and financial reform and for global negotiations. The Club of Rome report helped to establish the parameters within which these recommendations were made. The Brandt reports also addressed problems they considered common to both the North and the South, such as natural resource exploitation, environmental degradation, the arms race, population growth, and the uncertain prospects of the global economy. These problems ultimately concerned the survival of all nations, the Commission concluded. Its recommendations were presented as a structural program to address the world’s problems collectively, as a global Marshall Plan. The work of the Brandt Commission and its failure is an essential historical landmark to return to in order to shed new light on our own time and reconfigure the dynamics between the discourses of History 2 and 1, critique and crisis, and experiences and expectations.

14 *North–South: A Programme for Survival*. Report of the Independent Commission on International Development Issues, with an introduction by Willy Brandt (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1980); *Common Crisis North–South: Cooperation for World Recovery*. Report of the Independent Commission on International Development Issues, with an introduction by Willy Brandt (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1983).

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