CONCLUSION

The Nineteenth Century in History

"A general history of the world is necessary but not possible in the present state of research. . . . But we need not despair: particular research is always instructive when it produces results, and nowhere more so than in history, where even in deep recesses it always encounters a living element with universal significance."[1] These words of Leopold von Ranke, written in 1869, still hold true today. This book has attempted a piece of impossible, though perhaps not "general," global history. In the end, both reader and author should return to particular concerns, not soar upward into even more ambitious generalizations. The panoramic view from a summit is an impressive experience. But—as the great German medievalist Arno Borst asks—how long can a historian remain on a summit?[2] The following remarks do not offer the distilled essence of an epoch or a speculation about the spirit of the age. They are meant as a final comment, not as a summation.

1 Self-Diagnostics

The opening chapter presented the nineteenth century as an age of increased self-reflection. From Adam Smith in the 1770s until Max Weber in the early decades of the twentieth century, grandiose attempts were made to grasp the whole of the contemporary world and to place it within the historical *longue durée*. Diagnoses of the age did not appear only in Europe. They are found wherever societies developed the type of the scholar or intellectual, wherever ideas were written down and discussed, wherever observation and criticism gave an impetus to reflections on one's own lifeworld and its broader spatial and temporal preconditions. Such reflections did not always take a form that can be easily identified from today's retrospect as "diagnosis of the times" or "theory of the contemporary age."[3] They could be clad in the most diverse genres: as contemporary history in the Egyptian Abd al-Rahman al-Jabarti, for example, who experienced the Napoleonic occupation of his country and gave a detailed account of it,[4] or in the famous historian of antiquity

Barthold Georg Niebuhr, who also lectured on his own times, the "Age of Revolution"; as taking a position on political events of the day, as in Hegel's 1831 essay on the English Reform Bill or Marx's stirring polemic against Louis Napoleon and his shift from president by election to dictator by acclamation (*The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon*, 1852); as philosophical criticism of contemporary culture in Madame de Staël (*De l'Allemagne*, 1813), Alexis de Tocqueville (*Democracy in America*, 1835–40), or the Egyptian educational reformer and translator Rifaa al-Tahtawi (*A Paris Profile*, reporting on his stay in the French capital in 1826–31, first published in 1834);[5] as a regular journal in Edmond and Jules de Goncourt (covering the years 1851–96) or the Japanese army doctor and poet Mori Ōgai (for his stay in Europe between 1884 and 1888); as autobiography in the black ex-slave, intellectual, and civil rights activist Frederick Douglass (the most important of his three books of memoirs: *My Bondage and My Freedom*, 1855) or the American historian Henry Adams (*The Education of Henry Adams*, 1907 privately, published in 1918); or, finally, as disparate journalism in John Stuart Mill (whose diagnosis of the age is found more in short *pièces d'occasion* than in his principal works) or Liang Qichao (who for three decades commented on and helped to shape political events in China).

Sociology, as it emerged around 1830 on older foundations, was an endeavor to interpret the contemporary world. Initially associated with political economy and the newly rising science of ethnology, it developed basic models for an understanding of the age that are still discussed today: for example, the transition from status to contract as the organizing principle of society (in the legal historian Sir Henry Maine, *Ancient Law*, 1861) or the related opposition between community and society (*Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*) in the eponymous book by Ferdinand Tönnies (1887). Karl Marx analyzed capitalism as a historically determinate social formation—and Friedrich Engels added many insightful points relating to the diagnosis of his time. John Stuart Mill had earlier produced a great synthesis of classical political economy (*Principles of Political Economy*, 1848). Herbert Spencer tried to show how a peaceable industrialism had evolved out of a military barbarism into which it might one day relapse (*Principles of Sociology*, vol. 1, 1876). Fukuzawa Yukichi inserted Japan into the general development of civilization (*Bummeiron no gairyaku* [Sketch of a theory of civilization], 1875);[6] the Armenian Iranian Malkom Khan interpreted European modernity in the light of Islamic values (*Daftar-i Tanzimat* [Book of reform], 1858).[7] Philosophers and literary critics such as Friedrich Schlegel and Heinrich Heine (especially in his *History of Religion and Philosophy in Germany*, 1835), Ralph Waldo Emerson and Matthew Arnold, Friedrich Nietzsche, and at the end of our period, Karl Kraus and Rabindranath Tagore registered the cultural sensibilities and contradictions of their age.[8] The rich self-diagnoses of the nineteenth century must be the starting point for any attempt to grasp its specific signature.

2 Modernity

On top of these come the interpretations offered by present-day sociology, which revolve around the concept of modernity.[9] Mostly they also have something to say about the past, therefore referring explicitly or between the lines to the nineteenth century, but often the net is cast more widely to take in the whole of the European modern age. A category such as "individualization" can hardly be pinned down to a particular period. By tradition and custom, virtually the entire modern discourse of sociology limits itself to Western Europe and the United States. Since about 2000, however, the research agenda of "multiple modernities," championed by the great sociologist S. N. Eisenstadt, has brought an important advance. What Eisenstadt sees in the nineteenth century is above all a divergence between European and North American paths, so that modernity for him has by no means shaped a homogenous West, while in the non-Western world the characteristic features of modernity are recognizable only in Japan, if only with many special twists.[10] It is indeed difficult, for the period roughly between 1800 and 1900, to find distinctive Indian, Chinese, Middle Eastern/Islamic, or African paths to modernity independent of the West European model. Such differentiation became noticeable only after the turn of the century, at first less structurally than in the history of ideas.

If historians today want to operate meaningfully with the category "modernity," they must guide themselves by theories at the highest level that sociology has to offer. At the same time, they should bear in mind how the nineteenth century interpreted itself, and they ought to strive for greater spatial and temporal precision than is usually to be found in social science literature. Sweeping conceptions of "the bourgeois subject," "functional differentiation," or "civil society" become serviceable only if it is possible to specify their reference in historical reality. Any attempts to postulate the spontaneous emergence of modernity in the course of the nineteenth century only remain contentious. The intellectual foundations of modernity were laid during the "early modern" age in Europe, between Montaigne and Bacon at the beginning and Rousseau and Kant toward the end of the period.

What is the *primary* understanding of modernity? Is it an incipient long-term rise in national income; the conduct of life involving rational calculation; a transition from status to class society; the growth of political participation; a legal basis for relations of political rule and social intercourse; destructive capacities of a quite new dimension; or a shift in the arts away from imitation of tradition to the creative destruction of aesthetic norms? There is no concept that would hold all these aspects (and others) in neutral equilibrium, and a mere listing of characteristics would remain unsatisfactory. Concepts of modernity always pose priorities and—even if they are not monothematic—place the various aspects in a ranking order. As a rule, they do not disregard the fact

that these aspects were in harmony with one another in only a few historical cases. It is enough to look closely at a country like France, a pioneer of modernity, to encounter discrepancies and obstructions. The Enlightenment philosophes were in their century the most "modern" group of thinkers anywhere in the world, and the French Revolution, especially the phase before the execution of Louis XVI and the onset of the Terror, appears to many historians and theoreticians even today as a highly important source of political modernity. On the other hand, France was a country where, outside Paris and a few other large cities, archaic social forms persisted well into the nineteenth century, at a time when they were much rarer in England, the Netherlands, or southwestern Germany.[11] Moreover, it took a full ninety years after the beginning of the Great Revolution for the French political system to stabilize as a parliamentary democracy. Lengthy processes were necessary to translate the "birth of modernity" at the level of ideas into institutions and mentalities that came close to the definitions of modernity used in today's social theory. Also the experience of the nineteenth, and even more the twentieth, century shows that economic modernity can go together with politically authoritarian conditions. It is also true that aesthetic innovation is improbable under extreme repression (Dmitri Shostakovich or Anna Akhmatova were exceptions that proved the rule in the Stalinist period), but it does not necessarily flourish where the most modern political conditions prevail. Thus, around 1910 the capital of the Habsburg monarchy was in no way inferior as a cultural center to London and New York, the metropolises of democracy and liberal capitalism.[12]

There is a further problem with "modernity." Are we interested mainly in its "birth," which by definition could happen only once at a particular time and place? Is it enough that modern principles came into the world somewhere and sometime? Or are we more concerned with how it spread and took effect, and with the point at which whole societies could be described as modern or thoroughly modernized? How can such gradations of modernity be determined? When fully developed, "high" modernity is no longer an insular tendency but has become the dominant way of life; it is no longer norm-breaking and revolutionary, as in the period of its "birth," but an everyday routine productive in turn of antimodern or postmodern tendencies. Since the concept of modernization receded in the late twentieth century before the concept of modernity, such questions about the breadth or systematic character of modernity are seldom raised. One would not wish to describe many countries in the world around 1900 as predominantly modern; the list would include Britain, the Netherlands, Belgium, Denmark, Sweden, France, Switzerland, the United States, the British dominions (Canada, Australia, and New Zealand), and with some reservations Japan and Germany. In relation to Europe east of the Elbe or Spain and Italy, there would be doubts about whether they were ripe for modernity. But what is to be gained by such evaluations?

3 Again: The Beginning or End of a Century

Historians today need not allow political rhetoric to drive them into making essentialist statements about Europe. Their discipline is in the fortunate position of being able to leave behind old political-ideological struggles over the conception of Europe. The issue is now seldom any more whether it should be Catholic or Protestant, Latin or Germanic (or Slav), socialist or liberal-capitalist, although older cleavages along a north-south axis have reemerged during the financial crisis of the 2000s. Also there is broad agreement in the literature about Europe's most important characteristics and tendencies in the long nineteenth century.[13] For the most part, however, it cannot clarify the extent to which such features and processes constituted a special European role in history, because it still rarely uses the possibilities of a comparison with regions outside Europe. We should note with the German historian Jost Dülffer: "Europe cannot be presented or understood from within itself";[14] only comparison with Japan or China, Australia or Egypt, can bring out its distinctive profile. This is especially productive if it is undertaken by non-Europeans, since they are struck by many cultural peculiarities that Europeans take for granted. Of course, a global historical perspective must do without such opportunities for an external or ex-centric viewpoint. The world as a whole cannot be contrasted with anything else.

What other picture of the nineteenth century results if the vantage is not purely European? The first point to make is that a long nineteenth century, from the 1780s to the First World War, remains a useful assumption or auxiliary construction, but it should not be taken as a natural or globally valid form of the past. Even if one does not stick pettily to the European outer dates of 1789 and 1914, whole national and regional histories elude this framework. It may be applicable elsewhere, but sometimes for reasons that have little to do with Europe. The fact that Australia's recorded history begins in 1788, with the first penal convoy, is not related in any way to the French Revolution. And if the years between the abdication of the Qianlong Emperor in 1796 and the Revolution of 1911 have a certain unity within the political history of China, this has reasons internal to the dynasty and cannot be attributed to European activities in East Asia. There are numerous instances in which a different periodization should be preferred. In Japan, the years between the opening of 1853 and the collapse of the empire in 1945 constitute a complete historical cycle. Latin America's nineteenth century stretches from the independence revolutions of the 1820s (whose causes go back to the 1760s) to the eve of the Great Depression of 1929. As far as the United States is concerned, the Civil War of the 1860s ended a first era that had begun with the transatlantic crisis of the 1760s, and the new epoch of political and social history certainly did not end in 1914 or 1917–18 but rather in 1941 or 1945 or, from the important point of view of race relations, as late as the 1960s. For the whole of Africa—with the exception of Egypt and South Africa—neither the years between 1800 and 1900 nor the "long" nineteenth century seem a relevant

time frame. The colonial invasion of the 1880s opened an age that lasted beyond the First World War to the peak of decolonization in the 1960s. It follows that a global historical periodization cannot work with precise cutoff points like those that mark particular national histories or the history of Europe. The beginning and end of the nineteenth century must remain open.

Yet the various narrative threads of this book do yield a pragmatic solution. A new era gradually began in the 1760s with a multiple political crisis throughout the Atlantic space, Britain's colonial implantation in India, and the development of new production techniques. It ended in the course of the 1920s, as the manifold consequences of the First World War (some of them positive in East Asia and Latin America) became visible, and movements for national autonomy arose all over the colonial world (except for tropical Africa) and other regions held down by the West. Another process with far-reaching implications was the transformation of the Soviet regime from a center of world revolution to a neo-imperialist power. Over a vast territory, the most important nineteenth-century current of dissident ideas—socialism—crystallized into a state with no precedent in history, introducing new polarities into world politics and, in the initial period, a new kind of revolutionary ferment.

The First World War had disenchanted the West and placed a question mark over its claim to rule over, or at least to act as a civilizing guardian for, the rest of humanity. Many global interrelations of the prewar period had thinned out.[15] The new order that emerged from the peace conferences of 1919–1920 was not totally misconceived, but it was not capable of fulfilling many expectations; Wilson had not brought about perpetual peace. The forces of capitalist regeneration seemed to be stretched beyond the limit, at least in Europe. Liberalism in all its four aspects—moral/individual-ethical, constitutional-political, international, and economic—was under strong legitimation pressure and losing influence worldwide.[16] The 1920s marked the decisive passage from the nineteenth century to another age.

4 Five Characteristics of the Century

How should this long nineteenth century, open at either end, be characterized from the point of view of global history? We cannot try to summarize the content of this book in a few sentences, nor will it advance our knowledge to repeat the headings conventionally, and accurately, used to describe the main trends of the age: industrialization, urbanization, state building, colonialism, globalization, and a few more besides. Instead, let us propose five less common angles of vision.

(1) The nineteenth century was an age of *asymmetrical efficiency growth*. An overall gain in efficiency manifested itself in three spheres. First, the productivity of human labor increased in a degree that outstripped growth processes in earlier

epochs. Even if statistics cannot meet the challenge of quantification, no one disputes the fact that in 1900, material value creation per capita of the world population was considerably higher than a century before. Per capita income had risen, humanity had become materially richer, and long-term growth, with conjunctural fluctuations oscillating around a steady upward trend, had been achieved for the first time in history. One of the two factors underlying this was the spread of the industrial mode of production, marked by an extensive division of labor, factory organization, and coal-powered machinery—a process with a very uneven regional distribution, even in the most developed industrial heartlands of northwestern Europe and the northern United States. It rested to some extent on scientific principles known for some time. Innovative routines, together with new market structures and legal conditions capable of making them worthwhile, developed in a few countries in Europe and North America and, as the century wore on, gave rise to self-reproducing systems of knowledge production and "human capital" formation, both in public or private higher education and within industry itself. "The greatest invention of the nineteenth century," as the philosopher Alfred North Whitehead trenchantly remarked in his Lowell Lectures of 1925, was "the invention of the method of invention."[17]

The other source of increased wealth was the opening up of new frontiers in every continent: from the American Midwest to Argentina, from Kazakhstan to Burma. This, too, was bound up with particular visions of modernity; not every kind of nineteenth-century modernity was placed in an industrial frame. A kind of agrarian revolution preceded the Industrial Revolution, above all in England. Later, accompanying the uneven and often less-than-revolutionary spread of industrialization, there was a much wider extension of land use, resulting in higher productivity for individual producers in some frontier areas. The typical products of these frontiers were geared not to local consumption but to intercontinental trade, which was no longer simply trade in luxury goods. The application of industrial technology in the form of steamships and railroads rapidly lowered transport costs, thereby boosting the export of classical frontier items such as wheat, rice, cotton, and coffee. The opening up of agrarian frontiers was linked to industrialization insofar as demand grew for raw materials, and food had to be found for the industrial workforce newly released from the land. But only in the twentieth century do we see an industrialization of agriculture itself and the global rise of agroindustry.

A third domain clearly displaying efficiency growth was the armed forces. The killing capacity of an individual soldier increased, not as a direct result of industrialization but in close parallel to it. Along with innovation in weapons technology, advances in organization and strategy were an independent factor in efficiency gains—another precondition being the political will to divert government resources to the military. International discrepancies in these respects became noticeable in the German wars of unification, the numerous colonial wars of the time, and the Russo-Japanese War. In 1914, military apparatuses

scarcely susceptible to political control entered into open conflict with one another. These apparatuses with their real or imagined inherent dynamism—one famous example of such a clockwork-like autonomous logic was the war plan of Alfred von Schlieffen, the chief of the Imperial German General Staff—made an incompetent or irresponsible foreign policy even more dangerous than in the past. The potential destructiveness of the instruments multiplied the risks of political folly.

The World War itself created the occasion for further efficiency gains at several levels, including the organization of a war economy in Germany, Britain, and the United States. At the end of the century, the unevenness of the distribution of military power around the world was without precedent. It had become identical with industrial might, in a way that had not been the case at all in 1850. There were no longer any nonindustrial great powers. Although Afghans, Ethiopians, and Boers scored some momentous victories in passing, no non-European military player—bar Japan—could withstand the armored powers of "the West." This military "great divergence" gradually receded again only in the early 1950s, when China resisted the United States in the Korean War and the Vietnamese defeated the French at Dien Bien Phu in 1954.

A fourth field of increased efficiency was the greater control of state apparatuses over their own population. Administrative regulations became denser; local authorities took on additional powers; official agencies registered and classified the population, as well as its ownership of land and fiscal potential; taxes were skimmed off more fairly and with greater regularity from a growing number of sources; police forces were strengthened in both depth and breadth. On the other hand, there was no straightforward correlation between the political system and the intensity with which government steered people's lives. Up to today, a democracy may be densely administered, while a despotic regime may have only a weak presence at the base of society. The nineteenth century saw the emergence of new technologies of local governance—prerequisites also for universal conscription and state education and welfare systems. The state began to develop into a new Leviathan, but one that did not necessarily have to be a monster.

This increase in the effective reach of the state was also very unevenly distributed: Japan was more thoroughly penetrated by the state than China; Germany more than Spain. Almost everywhere, the colonial state had the will to register and regulate its subjects, but often it lacked the financial resources and the personnel to carry it out. The idea of the nation-state that emerged in the nineteenth century, involving a coincidence of state form, territory, and culture (language), stood in a mutually determining relationship with state intervention. Members of a nation wanted not to be subjects but rather free citizens treated equally within a homogeneous collective; they strove for their country to be recognized internationally and to be held in high esteem. Yet, in the name of national unity, national honor, and the national interest, people endured a regulation frenzy that they would have opposed in earlier times.

Partial efficiency increases occurred in many places around the world. In no way was industrialization an independent variable or a demiurge unleashing all other kinds of dynamic: agrarian frontiers were more widely spread than industrial heartlands; Washington and Suvorov, Napoleon and Wellington conducted preindustrial wars. Nor did the three spheres of growing efficiency—the economy, the armed forces, and the state—reinforce one another in a predictable manner. In the Ottoman Empire, a "modern" state bureaucracy began to develop without a significant industrial backdrop. The United States in the decades after the Civil War was an economic giant but a military dwarf. Russia industrialized and had a huge army, but it is questionable how deeply its state penetrated society before 1917, especially in the countryside. In fact, only Germany, Japan, and France remain as models of a modern nation-state in every conceivable dimension. Britain, with its modest territorial army and relatively nonbureaucratic local government, was as much a case on its own as the United States.

Nevertheless, the rise of Europe, the United States, and Japan in comparison with the rest of the world was more than ever before or since an incontrovertible fact. There were a whole series of reasons for this. At least until the First World War, their success story was self-sustaining. The dominant countries profited from a liberal world economic order of their own creation, which in turn supported economic growth that could be profitably steered in such a way as to finance a position of power in the international arena. Imperialism could also be a good investment. Although colonial expansion may not in every case have directly yielded monetary gains to the national economy, military superiority meant that it was relatively cost-effective to conquer and administer a colony. Imperialism was politically worthwhile so long as it cost the state little or nothing; and it called forth vested interests prepared to lend it political support.

(2) Less need be said about the epochal marker of increased *mobility*, since the relevant chapters above speak for themselves. The whole of recorded history is rife with movement: travels, mass migration, crusades, long-distance trade, spread of religions, languages, and art styles. Three things were new in the nineteenth century.

First, the scale of human mobility sharply increased. Earlier history knows no examples on a par with the emigration to North and South America, Siberia or Manchuria, nor has the magnitude of permanent relocation during the years between 1870 and 1930 been repeated since. It is a striking global characteristic of that period. The circulation of goods reached a new level too, when the luxury businesses of early modern merchants trading in silk, spices, tea, sugar, and tobacco were overshadowed by mass transfers of food staples and industrial raw materials. Aggregate figures for the expansion in world trade, far exceeding increases in output, clearly demonstrate this point. Capital in general was mobilized on a large scale only during this period. Before the middle of the century, wealthy individuals had lent money to princes and certain others who needed

it. The early modern chartered companies had been, by the standards of their time, complex financial operations. But it was only after 1860 or thereabouts that something like a capital market came into being. Driven even more by railroad construction than by the industrial factory economy, paper capital "flowed" for the first time around the globe—no longer (or not only) as actual bullion in ships' bellies. The age of liquidity was dawning. The steamship and the railroad increased the mobility of people and goods, while the telegraph, and later the telephone, facilitated the communication of information.

Second, these technical innovations speeded up all forms of circulation. Things moved faster even within cities, as the pedestrian gave way to the streetcar. To see this acceleration as a hallmark of the age has become almost a banality, but it is difficult to exaggerate the historic impact on human experience represented by the ability to move faster and more reliably than a horse or to travel on water without being at the mercy of the wind. By 1910 the railroad was established on every continent, even where there was little industry to speak of. For ordinary people in India, the chance of working on the railroad or one day traveling by train was considerably greater than that of seeing the inside of a factory.

Third, mobility was only now underpinned by infrastructure. Although we should not underestimate the complexity of communications in the Inca world, in the thirteenth-century Mongol Empire, or the mail coach network of Regency England, the fact remains that the laying of railroads, the initiation of global shipping lines, and the cabling of the planet brought a quite different level of technological application and organizational permanence. Mobility was no longer just a way of life for nomadic peoples, an emergency for refugees and exiles, or a way for seamen to keep body and soul together. It had become a dimension of organized social existence whose rhythms differed from those of local everyday routines. These trends continued without interruption into the twentieth century. The keyword "globalization" finds its place here, if we define it roughly—without exhausting the potential scope of the term—as accelerated and spatially extended mobilization of resources across the boundaries of states and civilizations.

(3) A further striking feature of the nineteenth century may be described, somewhat technically, as its tendency to *asymmetrical reference density*. "Increased perception and transfer across cultures" would be a less cumbersome, but also less precise, formulation for the same phenomenon. What is meant is that ideas and cultural content in general—more than the pieces of information transmissible by telegraph—became more mobile in the course of the nineteenth century. Again, we should not underestimate what happened in earlier epochs. The diffusion of Buddhism from India to many regions of Central, East, and Southeast Asia was an immense, multifaceted process of cultural migration often quite literally carried by the feet of itinerant monks. The novelty of the nineteenth century was the spread of media that allowed people to send news over great

distances and across cultural boundaries and to make themselves familiar with the ideas and artifacts produced in distant lands. There were more translations than in previous times: not only within Europe (where the eighteenth century had already been a great age of translation) but also in the more difficult interchange between European languages and others more remote from them. In 1900, the major libraries of the West had available in translation the basic texts of the Asiatic tradition, while European textbooks in many branches of knowledge, as well as a selection of writings in political philosophy and legal or economic theory, were accessible to readers of Japanese, Chinese, and Turkish. The Bible, of course, was translated into a great number of languages some of which had lacked a script before the advent of Christian missionaries. Some grasp of foreign languages, especially English and French, made it easier for educated elites in the East to become familiar with Western ideas at first hand.

"Greater reference density" means more, however, than a mutual widening of horizons. The American sociologist Reinhard Bendix has underlined the power of the "demonstration effect" in history: that is, the existence of "reference societies" serving as a model for imitation but also as a focus for the formation of identities through rejection and discriminating critique.[18] In the eighteenth century, France with its tension between court and salon was such a reference for large parts of Europe; and long before, Vietnam, Korea, and Japan had taken their bearings from China. Two things happened in the nineteenth century. On the one hand, such external orientations grew in number: while a great majority of the world population continued to know nothing of life in foreign countries, or else associated it with only the haziest imaginings, the educated elites began to observe the outside world more closely than ever before. On the other hand, the reference became asymmetrical or unipolar. Instead of a multiplicity of cultural models, the West now appeared as the global standard. But "the West" certainly did not mean the whole of Europe, nor did it always include the United States (which acquired importance as a distinct civilizational model only around the end of the century). For China, Japan, Mexico, or Egypt in 1870 or 1880, "the West" was first Britain, then France. Where the elite was impressed by the military and scientific achievements of the Bismarckian state—which it was in Meiji Japan, for example—Germany came to feature as an additional model.

Peripheries whose "Western" credentials were not entirely beyond doubt could also be found within the geographical confines of Europe. Russia, with its long experience as an outpost of Christianity, continued to see itself as a periphery in relation to the French, British, and German West. Debates there between "Westernizers" and "Slavophiles" bore more than a passing resemblance to those in the Ottoman Empire, Japan, or China. The spectrum of possible attitudes ranged from genuine enthusiasm for Western civilization—associated with a critical, indeed iconoclastic, relationship to one's own tradition—to contemptuous dismissal of Western materialism, superficiality, and arrogance. The convictions of most "peripheral" intellectuals and statesmen hovered in an ambivalent

middle. In many places across the globe, debates were raging about whether or how it might be possible to appropriate the technological, military, and economic achievements of the West without capitulating to it culturally. In China this was expressed in the pithy *ti-yong* formula: Western knowledge for application (*yong*), Chinese knowledge as cultural substance (*ti*). The same challenging paradox was familiar in a wide variety of contexts.

A perception that the Western model of civilization, with all its unconcealed internal differences, made it essential to find some political response resulted in various strategies of defensive modernization, from the Tanzimat reforms in the Ottoman Empire to technocratic rule in the Mexico of Porfirio Díaz. In general, these were motivated by a sense that something useful could be learned from the West, but usually they also involved strengthening the country to forestall military conquest or colonization. Sometimes this was successful, but in many other cases it was not.

Liberal patriots, spread widely outside Europe if only in tiny circles, found themselves in a particularly difficult position. As liberals they enthusiastically read Montesquieu, Rousseau or François Guizot, John Stuart Mill or Johann Kaspar Bluntschli, and demanded freedom of the press and association, religious tolerance, a written constitution, and representative government. As patriots or nationalists they had to oppose the very West from which all these ideas stemmed. How was it possible in practice to separate the good West from the bad? How could controlled imports of culture or even finance be achieved *without* imperialism? This was the great dilemma of politics in the nineteenth-century peripheries. But once imperialism had struck, it was too late to oppose it for the time being. The room for maneuver shrank dramatically, the range of options was hugely reduced.

Greater reference density was neither something as innocuous as a simple gain in knowledge and education nor so free of contradictions that it could be summed up in the crude term "cultural imperialism." In most cases it was a question of politics, but not always with one clear way forward. Almost never was the power of European colonial masters great enough to force on unwilling subjects the most prestigious of all Western cultural exports: the Christian religion. Reference density was asymmetrical not only within the (always unbalanced) colonial relationship but for two other reasons besides. First, the major European powers repeatedly abandoned their fragile alliances with Western-oriented reformers in the East and the South, if this seemed to be advisable in pursuit of national or imperial interests. By the turn of the century, scarcely anyone in Asia or Africa believed that the West, committed to hard-nosed *realpolitik*, was interested in the genuine modernization of colonies and of those independent peripheral states that thought of themselves as promising aspirants to modernity. The utopia of a benevolent West-East partnership in modernization, having peaked in the 1860s, 1870s, and 1880s with the late Tanzimat reforms, the khedive Ismail in Egypt, and the Rokumeikan period in Meiji Japan,[19] had given way to a deep mistrust of Europe.

Second, knowledge of the non-European world increased appreciably in the West, thanks to the rise of Oriental philology, ethnology, and comparative religious studies, but it yielded no practical consequences. Whereas the East borrowed all it could from the West—from legal systems to architecture—no one in Europe or North America thought that Asia or Africa offered a model in anything. Japanese woodcuts or West African bronzes found admirers among Western aesthetes, but no one suggested, for example, taking China as a model for the organization of the state in Western Europe (as some had done in the eighteenth century when the Chinese bureaucracy won a number of admirers in the West). To some degree reciprocal in theory, cultural transfer was in practice a one-way street.

(4) Another feature of the century was the *tension between equality and hierarchy*. In a major textbook, the Swiss historian Jörg Fisch has rightly described "the successive realization of legal equality through the removal of particular areas of discrimination and the emancipation of groups affected by them" as one of the central processes in Europe during the second half of the nineteenth century.[20] This tendency toward legal equality was associated with rules and patterns of societal stratification that reduced the importance of family origin, making the market more important than ever before in determining social position and possibilities of advancement up the ladder. With the abolition of slavery, the transatlantic part of the West, already less marked by status hierarchies than the Old World, joined the trend toward *general* equality.

Europeans were thoroughly convinced of the perfection and general validity of their conceptions of social order. As soon as elites in non-European civilizations became familiar with European legal thinking, they realized that it was both specific to Europe and capable of universalization; it contained a threat and an opportunity, according to circumstances and political belief. This applied especially to the postulate of equality. If Europeans denounced slavery, the inferior position of women, or the repression of religious minorities in non-European countries, this was liable to present an explosive challenge to the established order. The outcome had to be radical changes in power relations: a limitation of patriarchy, the toppling of slave-owning classes, or the ending of religious and ecclesiastical monopolies. Social equality was not just a European idea: utopian visions of leveling, fraternity, and a world without rulers were widespread in many different cultural contexts, In its modern European guise, however, whether based on Christian humanitarianism, natural law, utilitarianism, or socialism, the idea of equality became a matchless weapon in internal politics. Conservative reactions were inevitable, cultural battles between modernists and traditionalists became the rule.

The commitment of Westerners to their own principle of equality, however, proved to be limited. New hierarchies formed in international relations, for example. The Peace of Westphalia (1648) had substituted a simpler ranking system

for the older plethora of finely shaded relations of subordination and privilege—even if it is much too simple to imagine that the diplomats at the peace congress instantly created a "Westphalian system" that would last until 1914 or even 1945.[21] Only in the nineteenth century, and above all after the geopolitical upheavals of the 1860s, do we see the disappearance of small and medium-sized international actors from the European political scene (temporarily, as developments in the late twentieth century were to show). Only then did the famous "pentarchy" of great powers have things all to themselves. Any country that could not keep up in the arms race ceased to count in world politics. The Netherlands, Belgium, and Portugal, for example, were demoted to the status of low-ranking owners of colonies without political clout. The extent to which the weaker countries of Europe became irrelevant was demonstrated in 1914 when Germany violated Belgian neutrality without any scruples.

Non-European countries, including the Ottoman Empire (a sixteenth-century superpower) but obviously not the United States, were assigned places at the bottom of the hierarchy. Only Japan, relying on unprecedented national exertions, an astute foreign policy, and a little luck, managed to break into the exclusive circle of the major powers. But it did so at the expense of China and Korea, after one of the bloodiest wars of the age, and not without some galling snubs from the "white" protagonists of world politics. The decisive turning point came at the Washington Conference of 1921–22, which finally recognized Japan's position as a front-ranking naval power in the Pacific and hence its great-power status.

What might be called the "secondary" hierarchies, newly established in the last third of the century, further sabotaged the postulate of equality. The achievement of equal civil rights by the Jewish population of Western Europe was followed in short order by their subjection to social discrimination. And the abolition of slavery in the United States soon led to novel practices of segregation. The new social distinctions were formulated at first in the language of fully attained versus deficient "civilization," and later in a racist idiom scarcely ever called into question in the West. The racist cancellation of the principle of equality pervaded the international order for an entire century, from about the 1860s through decolonization. Only a quiet revolution in international human rights norms, also involving antiracism, more robust principles of territorial sovereignty, and a strengthening of the right to national self-determination, has finally led since the 1960s to a turning away from the nineteenth century.

(5) The nineteenth century was also a century of *emancipation*. This will hardly sound surprising. We read again and again about an Age of Revolution, stretching either from 1789 to 1849 or covering the whole period down to the Russian revolutions of 1905 and 1917, and also about "emancipation and participation" as basic tendencies of the epoch.[22] This always refers to Europe alone. The word "emancipation," derived from Roman law and emphatically European, is far less

likely to be applied to the world as a whole. Emancipation means, in the words of a political scientist, "the self-liberation or release of groups in society from intellectual, legal, social, or political tutelage or discrimination, or from forms of rule that are perceived as unjust."[23] The term also often refers to national liberation from the rule of an empire or neighboring state. Should we then extend to the rest of the world Benedetto Croce's idealist view of 1932, in which the drive for liberty was a major motivating force of nineteenth-century Europe?[24] To some extent, yes.

A number of emancipation processes were successful. They led to greater freedom and equal rights, more rarely to actual equality. Slavery disappeared as a legal institution from the countries and colonies of the West. European Jews to the west of the Tsarist Empire achieved the best legal and social position they had ever had. The European peasantry was released from feudal burdens. The working classes fought for and won the freedom of association and, in many European countries, the right to vote. The balance sheet is harder to draw in the case of women's emancipation, which first became a theme of public debate only in the nineteenth century. Here the British dominions and the United States led the way in terms of political rights and opportunities. But it is not possible to say in general, even for Europe, whether the position of women in relationships and the family also improved. The bourgeois family brought constraints of its own into play.

If we assume that the revolutions of the age were also about emancipation, the successes are more conspicuous than the failures—perhaps an illusion, given that history prefers to remember the victors. There were ambiguous cases, such as the French Revolution: its early goals of representative democracy were finally achieved in the Third Republic after many system changes, whereas the direct democracy model of the Jacobin dictatorship foundered and sank, making only one brief reappearance in the Paris Commune of 1871. Nor were the revolutions of 1848–49 unequivocal in their effect; complete failures they were undoubtedly not, if compared with such abortive and ultimately inconsequential experiences as the Tupac Amaru uprising in Peru or the Taiping Revolution in China.[25] In the interplay between revolution and reformist prophylaxis or postrevolutionary absorption of revolutionary impulses, Europe did in the end—at least west of the Tsarist Empire—achieve a gradual broadening of constitutional provisions for civic involvement. The fact that representative government had deeper roots here than in other parts of the world made this evolution easier. But on the eve of the First World War there were not so many democracies in the late-twentieth-century sense of the term. Not every state that had given itself a republican form, as most Latin American countries and China recently (1912) had done too, thereby provided the substance for democratic politics. The vast colonial sphere was divided between the very democratic British dominions (by now essentially independent nation-states) and the invariably autocratic colonial systems of what was then known as the "colored world."

All in all, the picture is ambiguous and contradictory even for Europe. In 1913, with regard to the trends of recent decades, it was possible to speak of the spread of democracy but not of its irresistible triumph, while political liberalism already had its best years behind it. Nevertheless, it was a century of emancipation or, more plainly put, a century of revolt against coercion and humiliation. Traditional forms of domination were less routinely perpetuated than in previous ages. The development of a huge federal polity in North America showed that contrary to all theoretical prognoses, a major country was capable of surviving on the basis of citizenship and participation. Monarchical absolutism was in crisis far beyond the borders of Europe—seemingly least in the Tsarist Empire, but all the more dramatically there as things turned out in 1917–18. Where the legitimation model of divine right persisted (as it did in Russia), major propaganda efforts were required to make it palatable to the population. Strong monarchies, such as Japan's system of imperial rule, did not rely on an uninterrupted continuum with the past but were self-consciously neo-traditionalist. European constitutionalist theory found serious and enthusiastic advocates in large parts of noncolonial Asia and Africa. The British Empire, by far the largest, sported constitutional rule in its dominions and, shortly before the First World War, indicated a willingness to consider timid constitutional concessions in India.

Emancipation pressure kept mounting "from below," from a "people" that, by virtue of the great revolutions at the beginning of the period, had become a real player as well as a legend that was often evoked. Slaves put up resistance, therefore making modest but incremental contributions to their own liberation. The Jewish population of Western Europe did not wait for effusions of grace from enlightened rulers but set in motion a great project of self-reform. Social interests organized themselves on a permanent basis; never before had there been anything like labor unions or mass socialist parties.

Even at the height of colonialism and imperialism, the concept of emancipation was not entirely out of place. Despite the fact that things quieted down in many colonies after the wars of conquest, perhaps even bordering on something like internal peace, foreign colonial rule could base itself on scant legitimacy. There was a thoroughly pragmatic reason for this, since the most popular justification—the "civilizing mission"—could easily be measured by its results. The colonized peoples might accept the self-serving rhetoric of the colonizers if the intervention actually brought the much-heralded benefits: security, justice, a little more prosperity, slightly better health care, and new educational opportunities not offered in exchange for complete cultural estrangement. Alien rule is an age-old phenomenon in history. So, in the eyes of many of its subjects, European colonialism was not more objectionable per se than any other kind of foreign rule: that of the Moguls in India, the Ottomans in Arabia, the Manchus in China, and so on. But if the promised advances failed to materialize or if living conditions became worse, the colonial reserves of legitimation soon ran out. This was the case in many places even before the First World War. The liberation

movements of the later Third World—whether or not we call them "nationalist" for the early twentieth century—emerged in response to this credibility deficit. It was not difficult for critical intellectuals in the colonies or in exile to uncover the contradictions between the West's universal principles and its often deplorable behavior on the spot. After the Age of Revolution, colonialism was therefore ideologically unstable (and controversial also among the public of the colonial powers);[26] and even before any nationalist program entered the equation, pressure for emancipation was part and parcel of a colonial system resting on inequality, injustice, and hypocrisy—on "the unblushing selfishness of the greatest civilized nations" (as the outspoken naturalist and explorer Alfred Russel Wallace put it in 1898 in his review of the period).[27]

The nineteenth century did not end abruptly in August 1914, before Verdun in 1916, or with Lenin's arrival at the Finland Station in Petrograd in April 1917. History is not a theater where the curtain suddenly falls. In autumn 1918, however, it was widely noted that the "world of yesterday" (the title of the Austrian writer Stefan Zweig's important memoirs, posthumously published in 1942)[28] had gone up in smoke. In Europe some felt nostalgic for it, while others glimpsed the opportunity for a new beginning beyond the now disenchanted "belle époque." The US president Woodrow Wilson and his supporters around the world hoped to have finally overcome the discredited past. The twenties became the decade of global reorientation, a hinge period between the centuries, at least in a political sense.[29] Economically, they turned out to be the prelude to the Great Depression, a crisis more global still than the World War. Culturally, they prolonged in Europe the artistic avant-garde of the prewar period, while elsewhere they marked the start of something new in aesthetic terms. Whether it serves historical understanding to apostrophize the years between 1914 and 1945 as a "Second Thirty Years' War" must remain undecided. In any event, the analogy could apply only to Europe.

Let us try a different tack. Between 1918 and 1945, the world came up with unusually few constructive and durable solutions. The First World War had revealed many problems of the nineteenth century, while the interwar period offered not enough responses to those that still persisted. Many questions that had arisen in the nineteenth century retained their virulence even after 1945. Tendencies carried over from the late nineteenth to the late twentieth century. The *second* postwar period attempted a reset—not always successfully, but on the whole more so than the first. Some of the older men and women looking for new directions after 1945 had been born and socialized in the nineteenth century. Many had already been politically influential, or at least gained political experience, in 1919 or the years immediately after: for example, Winston Churchill, Konrad Adenauer, John Foster Dulles, Joseph Stalin, Yoshida Shigeru, and Mao Zedong. Others, such as John Maynard Keynes and Jean Monnet, had been active as advisers. Great philosophers, scientists, engineers, writers, composers, painters, and architects who had left their mark on the times before 1914

continued their labors. The nineteenth century had paved the way for the disasters since 1914; the philosopher Hannah Arendt and others held it responsible for them.[30] But other traditions in readiness after 1945 (liberalism, pacifism, trade unionism, or democratic socialism, for example) were not completely tainted or decrepit. From the retrospect of 1950, the year 1910—when, as Virginia Woolf once quipped, human character changed—appeared to be infinitely remote. In many respects, however, it was closer than the horrors of the most recent war.

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For Sabine and Philipp Dabringhaus