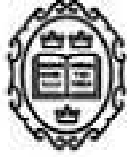


Enlightenment in Global History: A Historiographical Critique
Author(s): SEBASTIAN CONRAD
Source: *The American Historical Review*, OCTOBER 2012, Vol. 117, No. 4 (OCTOBER 2012), pp. xxii, 999-1027
Published by: Oxford University Press on behalf of the American Historical Association
Stable URL: https://www.jstor.org/stable/23427878

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at https://about.jstor.org/terms

Oxford University Press and *American Historical Association* are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *The American Historical Review*

JSTOR

This content downloaded from
149.10.125.20 on Sun, 13 Mar 2022 03:53:33 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

FIGURE 1: Tipu Sultan, the ruler of Mysore and arch-enemy of the British, began in the 1790s to fashion himself as an enlightened monarch: he was one of the founding members of the (French) Jacobin club in Seringapatam, had planted a liberty tree, and asked to be addressed as Tipu *Citoyen*—and he reformed the military and economy according to European models. But his eclectic form of rule also drew on the cultural repertoire of South Asian Hinduism and at the same time, the large Hindu majority of his population notwithstanding, on Islamic traditions. Tipu Sultan corresponded with the caliph of the Ottoman Empire and stylized his resistance against British expansion as a battle between Islam and Christendom. One should not conclude, however, that his interest in things European—he was a collector of clocks and eyeglasses, but also of scientific instruments, and had installed a printing press—was nothing but a fascination for exotic curios. Rather, it needs to be understood as a practice meant to demonstrate the universal character of his rule. Watercolor, ca. 1790, by an anonymous Indian artist.

This content downloaded from
149.10.125.20 on Sun, 13 Mar 2022 03:53:33 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

Enlightenment in Global History: A Historiographical Critique

SEBASTIAN CONRAD

THE ENLIGHTENMENT HAS LONG HELD a pivotal place in narratives of world history. It has served as a sign of the modern, and continues to play that role yet today. The standard interpretations, however, have tended to assume, and to perpetuate, a Eurocentric mythology. They have helped entrench a view of global interactions as having essentially been energized by Europe alone. Historians have now begun to challenge this view. A global history perspective is emerging in the literature that moves beyond the obsession with the Enlightenment's European origins.

The dominant readings are based on narratives of uniqueness and diffusion. The assumption that the Enlightenment was a specifically European phenomenon remains one of the foundational premises of Western modernity, and of the modern West. The Enlightenment appears as an original and autonomous product of Europe, deeply embedded in the cultural traditions of the Occident. According to this master narrative, the Renaissance, humanism, and the Reformation "gave a new impetus to intellectual and scientific development that, a little more than three and a half centuries later, flowered in the scientific revolution and then in the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century."[1] The results included the world of the individual, human rights, rationalization, and what Max Weber famously called the "disenchantment of the world."[2] Over the course of the nineteenth century, or so the received wisdom has it, these ingredients of the modern were then exported to the rest of the world. As William McNeill exulted in his *Rise of the West*, "We, and all the world of the twentieth century, are peculiarly the creatures and heirs of a handful of geniuses of early modern Europe."[3]

This interpretation is no longer tenable. Scholars are now challenging the Eurocentric account of the "birth of the modern world." Such a rereading implies three

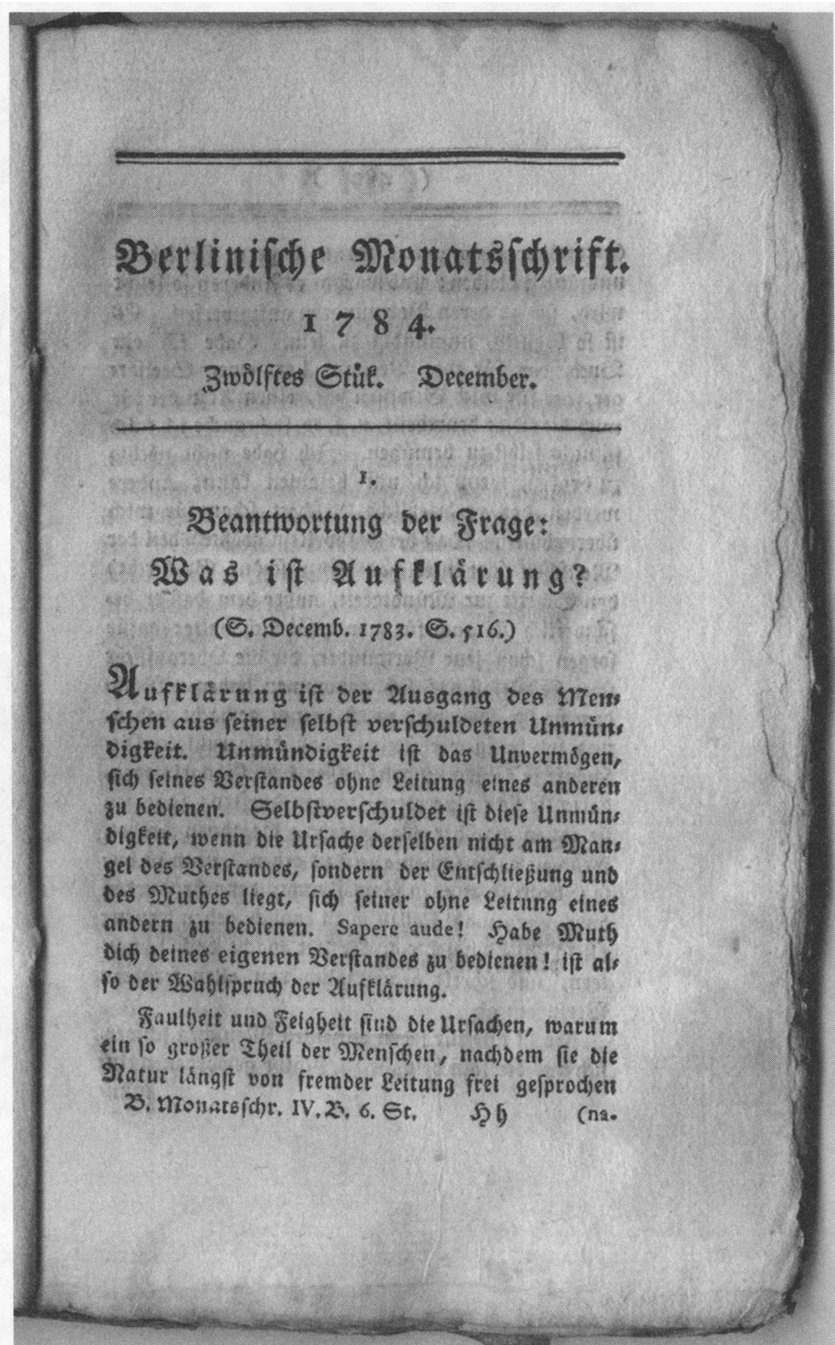
I am grateful to Arif Dirlik, Andreas Eckert, Harald Fischer-Tiné, Sheldon Garon, Stephen Kotkin, Stefan Rinke, Antonella Romano, Martin van Gelderen, Eric Weitz, and the anonymous reviewers for the *AHR* for helpful and stimulating comments on earlier versions of this article. I am particularly indebted to Christopher L. Hill and Gagan Sood for several rounds of very constructive criticism, and to Rob Schneider for a set of final clarifications. This work was supported by the Academy of Korean Studies Grant funded by the Korean Government (MEST) (AKS-2012-DZZ-3103).

[1] Toby E. Huff, *Intellectual Curiosity and the Scientific Revolution: A Global Perspective* (Cambridge, 2010), 4.

[2] Max Weber, "Wissenschaft als Beruf," in Wolfgang J. Mommsen and Wolfgang Schluchter, eds., *Max Weber-Gesamtausgabe*, vol. I/17: *Wissenschaft als Beruf 1917/1919 / Politik als Beruf 1919* (Tübingen, 1992), 9.

[3] William H. McNeill, *The Rise of the West: A History of the Human Community* (Chicago, 1963), 599.

This content downloaded from
149.10.125.20 on Sun, 13 Mar 2022 03:53:33 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms



Berlinische Monatsschrift.

1784.

Zwölftes Stük. December.

1.

Beantwortung der Frage:

Was ist Aufklärung?

(S. Decemb. 1783. S. 516.)

Aufklärung ist der Ausgang des Menschen aus seiner selbst verschuldeten Unmündigkeit. Unmündigkeit ist das Unvermögen, sich seines Verstandes ohne Leitung eines anderen zu bedienen. Selbstverschuldet ist diese Unmündigkeit, wenn die Ursache derselben nicht am Mangel des Verstandes, sondern der Entschließung und des Muthes liegt, sich seiner ohne Leitung eines andern zu bedienen. Sapere aude! Habe Muth dich deines eigenen Verstandes zu bedienen! ist also der Wahlspruch der Aufklärung.

Faulheit und Feigheit sind die Ursachen, warum ein so großer Theil der Menschen, nachdem sie die Natur längst von fremder Leitung frei gesprochen

B. Monatsschr. IV. B. 6. St. Hh (na-

FIGURE 2: The opening page of Immanuel Kant's famous essay "An Answer to the Question: What Is Enlightenment?" *Berlinische Monatsschrift*, December 1784, 481.

This content downloaded from 149.10.125.20 on Sun, 13 Mar 2022 03:53:33 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

analytical moves: First, the eighteenth-century cultural dynamics conventionally rendered as "Enlightenment" cannot be understood as the sovereign and autonomous accomplishment of European intellectuals alone; it had many authors in many places. Second, Enlightenment ideas need to be understood as a response to cross-border interaction and global integration. Beyond the conventional Europe-bound notions of the progress of "reason," engaging with Enlightenment has always been a way to think comparatively and globally. And third, the Enlightenment did not end with romanticism: it continued throughout the nineteenth century and beyond. Crucially, this was not merely a history of diffusion; the Enlightenment's global impact was not energized solely by the ideas of the Parisian *philosophes*. Rather, it was the work of historical actors around the world—in places such as Cairo, Calcutta, and Shanghai—who invoked the term, and what they saw as its most important claims, for their own specific purposes.

Enlightenment, in other words, has a history—and this history matters; it is not an entity, a "thing" that was invented and then disseminated. We must move beyond a preoccupation with definitions that make the meaning of Enlightenment immutable. Ever since Immanuel Kant's famous 1784 essay in the *Berlinische Monatsschrift*, historians have pondered his question "Was ist Aufklärung?" (What is Enlightenment?). The scholarly battle between attempts to define its substance and efforts to legislate its limits has generated a massive bibliography.[4] The responses have been manifold, depending on time and place, but they have not yielded an authoritative definition. Rather, they demonstrate just how malleable the concept really was.

Take, for example, an allegory by the Japanese artist Shōsai Ikkei in 1872 that we can read as one possible answer to Kant, albeit with the benefit of almost a century of hindsight. In his woodblock print titled *Mirror of the Rise and Fall of Enlightenment and Tradition*, he depicts the conflicts and battles between the new and the old in early Meiji Japan (1868–1912), with the new clearly gaining the upper hand. (See Figure 3.) Not all of the items would have made it onto Kant's list: the print shows a Western umbrella defeating a Japanese paper parasol, a chair prevailing over a traditional stool, a pen over a brush, brick over tile, short hair vanquishing the traditional *chonmage* hairstyle with the top of the head shaved, and so forth. The whole process is driven by a steam locomotive, a towering symbol of the spirit of progress that enthralled contemporary Japanese. And in the center of the print, a gas lamp subdues a candle, thus more than symbolically enlightening all that seemed dark in premodern Japan.

The crucial term in the title of the print is *kaika*, conventionally rendered as "Enlightenment"; it is also translated as "civilization" and bears connotations of social evolutionism.[5] In this image, it is depicted less as a quasi-natural development, as suggested by Kant—Enlightenment, he wrote, "is nearly inevitable, if only it is granted freedom"—and more as a violent battle. Civilization/Enlightenment came

[4] Immanuel Kant, "An Answer to the Question: What Is Enlightenment?," in James Schmidt, ed., *What Is Enlightenment? Eighteenth-Century Answers and Twentieth-Century Questions* (Berkeley, Calif., 1996), 58–64. See also the monumental *Encyclopedia of the Enlightenment*, ed. Alan Charles Kors (Oxford, 2002).

[5] Douglas R. Howland, *Translating the West: Language and Political Reason in Nineteenth-Century Japan* (Honolulu, 2002), 40–42.

This content downloaded from
149.10.125.20 on Sun, 13 Mar 2022 03:53:33 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

not only with the power of conviction, but also with the use of force; not only with the promise of emancipation—"mankind's exit from its self-incurred immaturity"—but also with "the mobilization, on its behalf, of effective means of physical coercion," as postcolonial scholars would put it yet a century later.[6]

FIGURE 3: Shōsai Ikkei, *Kaika injun kōhatsu kagami*, 1872. Waseda University Library.

Equally significant is the inclusion of an object in the parade of enlightened modernity that would hardly seem to belong there: a rickshaw. On the right-hand side of the print, a man labeled "rickshaw" is trampling on another representing an oxcart, the preferred conveyance of Tokugawa elites. Unlike the other objects alluded to, the rickshaw was not imported from Europe, but was in fact an invention of the early Meiji period. It nonetheless went on to become a symbol of the new times, together with the brick buildings of the Ginza, the trains, clocks, and artificial light. The depiction of the rickshaw is thus a reminder that what was perceived as new, civilized, or enlightened was in fact highly ambivalent and hybrid, the product of local conditions and power structures more than the actualization of a blueprint conceived in eighteenth-century Paris, Edinburgh, or Königsberg.

Emphasizing the variations in usage of "Enlightenment" around the world implies a rejection of earlier narrow definitions of the term.[7] Recent work on European history has been increasingly skeptical of the idea that the Enlightenment represents a coherent body of thought. Historians focus instead on the ambivalences and the multiplicity of Enlightenment views. One strand of scholarship concerned with the intellectual debates has made it clear that the various European Enlightenments have to be situated in the specific contexts—Halle, Naples, Helsinki, and Utrecht, among others—to which they were responding and within which they generated their sometimes very different and centrifugal dynamics.[8] John Pocock, in a monumental

[6] Kant, "An Answer to the Question," quotes from 59, 58; Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton, N.J., 2000), 44.

[7] For standard accounts of the Enlightenment, see Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation*, 2 vols. (New York, 1966–1969); Dorinda Outram, *The Enlightenment* (Cambridge, 1995); Hugh Trevor-Roper, *History and the Enlightenment* (New Haven, Conn., 2010); John W. Yolton, Pat Rogers, Roy Porter, and Barbara Stafford, eds., *The Blackwell Companion to the Enlightenment* (Oxford, 1992).

[8] Franco Venturi, *Settecento riformatore*, 5 vols. (Turin, 1966–1990); Roy Porter and Mikuláš Teich, eds., *The Enlightenment in National Context* (Cambridge, 1982).

This content downloaded from
149.10.125.20 on Sun, 13 Mar 2022 03:53:33 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

FIGURE 3, *cont'd*

work, has reconstructed the way in which Edward Gibbon engaged with many different "Enlightenments."[9] Jonathan Israel and others have significantly extended the perspective backward in time and thereby complicated our understanding of the Enlightenment.[10] A second strand of scholarship has looked at the social history of ideas and communication, thus further contributing to the idea of Enlightenment heterogeneity. As soon as the focus is moved from lofty philosophical debates to the material production of the public sphere and to the forms of popular mentalities, the picture becomes much less uniform. The Enlightenment, broadly conceived, was thus fragmented, socially and across gender lines.[11] The entrenched dichotomy of Enlightenment and Counter-Enlightenment has also been called into question.[12]

[9] J. G. A. Pocock, *Barbarism and Religion*, 5 vols. (Cambridge, 1999–2011).

[10] Jonathan I. Israel, *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity, 1650–1750* (Oxford, 2001); Israel, *Enlightenment Contested: Philosophy, Modernity, and the Emancipation of Man, 1670–1752* (Oxford, 2008).

[11] Outram, *The Enlightenment*; Robert Darnton, "The High Enlightenment and the Low-Life of Literature in Pre-Revolutionary France," *Past and Present* 51 (May 1971): 81–115; Darnton, *The Literary Underground of the Old Regime* (Cambridge, Mass., 1982); Dena Goodman, *The Republic of Letters: A Cultural History of the French Enlightenment* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1996); Barbara Taylor and Sarah Knott, eds., *Women, Gender and Enlightenment* (New York, 2005); Dena Goodman, *Becoming a Woman in the Age of Letters* (Ithaca, N.Y., 2009).

[12] J. G. A. Pocock, "The Re-Description of Enlightenment," *Proceedings of the British Academy* 125 (2004): 101–117; Robert E. Norton, "The Myth of the Counter-Enlightenment," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 68, no. 4 (2007): 635–658.

This content downloaded from
149.10.125.20 on Sun, 13 Mar 2022 03:53:33 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

And finally, the convenient fiction of the eighteenth century as the Age of Reason has begun to recede. It has become increasingly clear that the Enlightenment cannot simply be equated with secularization, but on the contrary was deeply embedded in religious world views.[13] Therefore, the stylization of the period as an age of disenchantment is itself a modern myth. Instead, popular social practices such as occultism, mesmerism, and magic not only survived, but were enmeshed with elite culture, empirical science, and the celebration of reason.[14]

At present, only a small—if vociferous—minority of historians maintain the unity of the Enlightenment project.[15] Most authors stress its plural and contested character: Enlightenments, or—as the French term, in wise anticipation, has framed it since the eighteenth century—*les lumières*.[16] It is no accident that the very term "Enlightenment" was originally a rallying cry issued by the Catholic and royalist adversaries of the French *philosophes*.[17] The unity of the phenomenon was thus constituted by its enemies. It became further entrenched when it was appropriated in Latin America and Asia as a seemingly integrated and unified body of thought. "Enlightenment" as a reified concept has, in other words, primarily been the slogan used by historical actors to label a movement that should be either fought or imitated. The Enlightenment was "a state of intellectual tension," as Judith Shklar has phrased it, "rather than a sequence of similar propositions."[18]

Such a broad understanding is a helpful point of departure for moving us beyond the different ways in which the current historiography has understood the Enlightenment's role in global history. It may help us focus on the transnational conditions that went into the making of eighteenth-century Enlightenment, mainly in the Atlantic world, but elsewhere as well. Finally, it enables us to move the discussion to the nineteenth century and trace the way in which these debates were extended throughout Asia, as "Enlightenment" became a concern for social reformers across the globe.[19]

[13] David Sorkin, *The Religious Enlightenment: Protestants, Jews, and Catholics from London to Vienna* (Princeton, N.J., 2008); Jonathan Sheehan, "Enlightenment, Religion, and the Enigma of Secularization: A Review Essay," *American Historical Review* 108, no. 4 (October 2003): 1061–1080.

[14] Michael Saler, "Modernity and Enchantment: A Historiographic Review," *American Historical Review* 111, no. 3 (June 2006): 692–716. For a recent overview of the multifaceted approaches, see Karen O'Brien, "The Return of the Enlightenment," *American Historical Review* 115, no. 5 (December 2010): 1426–1435.

[15] In particular, Jonathan Israel, and John Robertson, *The Case for the Enlightenment: Scotland and Naples, 1680–1760* (Cambridge, 2005). Note that each author opts for a very different Enlightenment: for Israel, the "real" Enlightenment is over by the 1740s, while for Robertson it only begins then.

[16] Fania Oz-Salzberger, *Translating the Enlightenment: Scottish Civic Discourse in Eighteenth-Century Germany* (Oxford, 1995). See also Sorkin, *The Religious Enlightenment*; Sheehan, "Enlightenment, Religion, and the Enigma of Secularization."

[17] Darrin M. McMahon, *Enemies of the Enlightenment: The French Counter-Enlightenment and the Making of Modernity* (Oxford, 2001), 11.

[18] Judith N. Shklar, "Politics and the Intellect," in Stanley Hoffmann, ed., *Political Thought and Political Thinkers* (Chicago, 1998), 94–104, here 94.

[19] Such a history could easily be extended into the twentieth century—and into our present—when Marxists, dialecticians of the Enlightenment, postmodernists, and self-styled warriors in the "clash of civilizations" continued to appropriate, and redefine, "the Enlightenment" for their own purposes. For attempts to take stock, see Keith Michael Baker and Peter Hans Reill, eds., *What's Left of Enlightenment? A Postmodern Question* (Stanford, Calif., 2001); Schmidt, *What Is Enlightenment?*; Graeme Garrard, *Counter-Enlightenments: From the Eighteenth Century to the Present* (London, 2005). I will also bracket the strands of anti-Enlightenment thinking, from Edmund Burke, Nietzsche, and Adorno to Gandhi and Kita Ikki, and concentrate on the moments in which "Enlightenment" was invoked as a positive resource.

This content downloaded from 149.10.125.20 on Sun, 13 Mar 2022 03:53:33 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

In privileging connections and synchronic contexts in space over long intellectual continuities in time, a global history perspective has fundamental consequences for our understanding of "Enlightenment." Few other terms are as normatively charged or as heavily invested with notions of European uniqueness and superiority, and few have gained as much potency in contemporary political debates. Situating the history of the Enlightenment in a global context will thus have unsettling and potentially salutary implications. In the last instance, such a perspective de-centers the debate on universalism that is so crucially linked to general notions of Enlightenment thought. It was not so much the inbuilt universality of enlightened claims that enabled it to spread around the world. Rather, it was the global history of references to the Enlightenment, of re-articulation and reinvention, under conditions of inequalities of power, that transformed multiple claims on Enlightenment into a ubiquitous presence.

"Enlightenment scholars," Dorinda Outram has acknowledged, "have yet to come to grips with the issues of the relationship between the Enlightenment and the creation of a global world."[20] To date, three metanarratives have dominated interpretations of the role of the Enlightenment in world history. In general textbooks and survey courses, the Enlightenment is usually portrayed as the apotheosis of universal reason at the expense of religion and traditional cosmologies, and as promoting an encompassing rationalization of social and cultural life. It stands, in short, for secular progress.[21] The birth of the Enlightenment, according to the standard version, was entirely and exclusively a European affair: only when it was fully fledged was it then diffused around the globe. This diffusionist view has led to such questions as why the emancipation of religious authority did not develop outside the West.[22] The standard paradigm is based on a logic of repetition, deferral, and derivation. "The Enlightenment was a European phenomenon," Jürgen Osterhammel has said in summarizing the prevailing view, "that had multifaceted effects around the world but originated only in Europe."[23]

Against this dominant view, a second interpretation has emerged, based on a radically critical view of the Enlightenment. Scholars in the field of postcolonial

For these other trends, see Tetsuo Najita and H. D. Harootunian, "Japan's Revolt against the West," in Bob Tadashi Wakabayashi, ed., *Modern Japanese Thought* (Cambridge, 1998), 207–272; Mark Sedgwick, *Against the Modern World: Traditionalism and the Secret Intellectual History of the Twentieth Century* (Oxford, 2009).

[20] Outram, *The Enlightenment*, 8.

[21] For example, Gertrude Himmelfarb, *The Roads to Modernity: The British, French, and American Enlightenments* (New York, 2004); Tzvetan Todorov, *In Defence of the Enlightenment* (London, 2009); Louis Dupré, *The Enlightenment and the Intellectual Foundations of Modern Culture* (Chicago, 2004); John M. Headley, *The Europeanization of the World: On the Origins of Human Rights and Democracy* (Princeton, N.J., 2008); Stephen Eric Bronner, *Reclaiming the Enlightenment: Toward a Politics of Radical Engagement* (New York, 2004); Robert B. Louden, *The World We Want: How and Why the Ideals of the Enlightenment Still Elude Us* (Oxford, 2007).

[22] See, for example, Anthony Pagden, *Worlds at War: The 2,500-Year Struggle between East and West* (Oxford, 2008).

[23] Jürgen Osterhammel, "Welten des Kolonialismus im Zeitalter der Aufklärung," in Hans-Jürgen Lüsebrink, ed., *Das Europa der Aufklärung und die außereuropäische koloniale Welt* (Göttingen, 2006), 19–36, quote from 19.

This content downloaded from
149.10.125.20 on Sun, 13 Mar 2022 03:53:33 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

studies have focused on direct connections between Enlightenment thinking and imperialism. This view shares with the dominant paradigm of benevolent modernization the assumption that the Enlightenment was a uniquely European invention. It also equates the Enlightenment with the "march of universal reason." In addition, it shares the diffusionist view of the first interpretation. But here the spread of the Enlightenment's message is seen not as emancipation but as deprivation.

Two different but related arguments are involved. The first is the hypothesis that the expansionist desire of the West was rooted in Enlightenment thinking proper. It was only a small step, according to this critique, between positing universal standards and deciding to intervene and to implement those standards, also by force, under the auspices of a paternalistic civilizing mission. In one of the more extreme statements, "the new forms of man-made violence unleashed by post-seventeenth-century Europe in the name of Enlightenment values" are then seen to lead not only to imperialism, but also to "the Third Reich, the Gulag, the two World Wars, and the threat of nuclear annihilation."[24] The second argument is that the spread of Enlightenment cosmology needs to be understood as a form of cultural imperialism with the potential to eradicate alternative world views.[25] Critical scholars have interpreted the spread of Enlightenment tenets in the nineteenth century as a process of coerced and oftentimes brutal diffusion, made possible and driven by highly asymmetrical relations of power.[26]

The postcolonial critique has done much to help us understand the complexities of knowledge transfer under conditions of colonialism. In particular, it has sharpened our sensibility for the asymmetrical structures of exchange and urged us "to write into the history of modernity the ambivalences, contradictions, the use of force, and the tragedies and the ironies that attend it."[27] A critical global history perspective that is not intended to reproduce a liberal ideology of globalization needs to build on these approaches. But that does not imply that eighteenth-century Enlightenment debates already contained the seeds of imperialism; recent scholarship has shown to what extent Enlightenment thinkers were engaged in a fundamental critique of imperialism and its underlying assumptions.[28] And in its more radical formulations, the postcolonial critique runs the danger of postulating incompatible regimes of knowledge, civilizational orders between which dialogue is virtually impossible. Such cultural essentialisms may prevent us from recognizing the extent to which both allegedly pure indigenous traditions and seemingly universal forms of Western knowledge are the result of complex processes of interaction.

Emancipatory modernization and cultural imperialism are both deeply diffusionist and take the Enlightenment's European origins for granted. What is more, they

[24] Ashis Nandy, "The Politics of Secularism and the Recovery of Religious Tolerance," in Veena Das, ed., *Mirrors of Violence: Communities, Riots and Survivors in South Asia* (Delhi, 1990), 90.

[25] See Robert Young, *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West* (London, 1990).

[26] On this issue, see Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York, 1993); Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* (Cambridge, Mass., 1999). See also the contributions in Daniel Carey and Lynn Festa, eds., *The Postcolonial Enlightenment: Eighteenth-Century Colonialism and Postcolonial Theory* (Oxford, 2009).

[27] Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, 43.

[28] See Sankar Muthu, *Enlightenment against Empire* (Princeton, N.J., 2003); Jennifer Pitts, *A Turn to Empire: The Rise of Imperial Liberalism in Britain and France* (Princeton, N.J., 2006); Jürgen Osterhammel, *Die Entzauberung Asiens: Europa und die asiatischen Reiche im 18. Jahrhundert* (Munich, 1998).

This content downloaded from
149.10.125.20 on Sun, 13 Mar 2022 03:53:33 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

rely on the absence of Enlightenment elsewhere as one of their axiomatic tenets. In recent years, however, the European claim to originality, to exclusive authorship of the Enlightenment, has been called into question. Historians have begun to look for parallels and analogies, for autochthonous processes of rationalization that did not depend on developments in Europe but led to similar results. This quest forms part of a larger scholarly debate on the origins of modernity. It was born out of a desire to challenge diffusionist notions of modernization, and to acknowledge the social dynamics that existed in many societies before their encounter with the West. The aim was to replace older notions of traditional societies and "people without history" with a broader understanding of the multifaceted "early modernities."[29]

While much of the scholarship that has attempted to de-Europeanize the Enlightenment has been concerned with Latin America and Haiti, an especially powerful claim to "early modernities" has been made in the context of Asian history. The genealogy of these debates leads us back to such classic works as Robert Bellah's *Tokugawa Religion* (1957). In this book, he attempted to locate the origins of modern Japan in certain strands of Confucian thinking, a "functional analogue to the Protestant Ethic" that Max Weber singled out as the driving force behind Western capitalism.[30] Bellah's analysis set a precedent for an outpouring of works aimed at pluralizing the notion of modernization. In the Islamic world, Peter Gran saw in eighteenth-century Egypt a form of "cultural revival" in the making—specifically Islamic origins of modernization long before Napoleon's Egyptian campaign.[31] In his quest for an independent "Islamic Enlightenment," Reinhard Schulze has argued that the "idea of autonomy of thought that through experience and reason arrives at truth was formulated by a large number of Islamic thinkers" in the eighteenth century.[32] In East Asia, Mark Elvin sees in eighteenth-century China "a trend towards seeing fewer dragons and miracles, not unlike the disenchantment that began to spread across the Europe of the Enlightenment."[33] Likewise, Joel Mokyr is convinced that "some of the developments that we associate with Europe's Enlightenment resemble events in China remarkably."[34]

These recent interventions provide welcome reminders that the image of non-Western societies as stagnating and immobile is wide of the mark. The West did not have a monopoly on cultural transformations and intellectual conflicts. Such an archaeology of independent seeds of the modern is frequently connected to the larger project to revise modernization theory, and to replace it with the paradigm of early,

[29] *Early Modernities*, Special Issue, *Daedalus* 127, no. 3 (1998).

[30] Robert N. Bellah, *Tokugawa Religion: The Cultural Roots of Modern Japan* (New York, 1957), 2.

[31] Peter Gran, *Islamic Roots of Capitalism: Egypt, 1760–1840* (Austin, Tex., 1979).

[32] Reinhard Schulze, "Was ist die islamische Aufklärung?," *Die Welt des Islams* 36, no. 3 (1996): 276–325, here 309. See also Schulze, "Islam und andere Religionen in der Aufklärung," *Simon Dubnow Institute Yearbook* 7 (2008): 317–340.

[33] Mark Elvin, "Vale atque ave," in K. G. Robinson, ed., *Joseph Needham: Science and Civilisation in China*, vol. 7: *The Social Background*, pt. 2: *General Conclusions and Reflections* (Cambridge, 2004), xliv–xliii, here xl. See also the debate about the emergence of a "public sphere" in Qing China; e.g., Frederic Wakeman, "Boundaries of the Public Sphere in Ming and Qing China," *Daedalus* 127, no. 3 (1998): 167–190.

[34] Joel Mokyr, "The Great Synergy: The European Enlightenment as a Factor in Modern Economic Growth," in Wilfred Dolfsma and Luc Soete, eds., *Understanding the Dynamics of a Knowledge Economy* (Cheltenham, 2006), 7–41.

This content downloaded from
149.10.125.20 on Sun, 13 Mar 2022 03:53:33 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

alternative, and multiple modernities.[35] But this refashioning of modernization theory is no less problematic. In the last instance, the paradigm of multiple modernities also posits an identical telos—modern, capitalist society—even if this goal is achieved not by the transformations inspired by contact with the West, but rather on the basis of recently "rediscovered" indigenous cultural resources: a teleology of universal disenchantment, realized in each society internally, but across the globe. It is the specter of parallels—"the search for the Indian Vico, the Chinese Descartes, the Arab Montaigne"—that continues to haunt the recent quest for alternative modernities.[36] The emphasis is on the internal conditions and dynamics of change—and on the "strange parallels" between widely separated parts of the globe.[37] In this way, the history of the modern age is constructed as an order of analogous, autopoietic civilizations, thereby neglecting, and indeed effacing, the long history of entanglements and systemic integration of the world. Reducing the complex and locally specific histories of cultural transformation to an indigenous prehistory of the modern thus tends to obfuscate the larger structures and power asymmetries that brought about the modern world.[38]

THESE THREE PARADIGMS—MODERNIZATION, postcolonialism, and multiple modernities—converge in their methodological bias toward national and civilizational frames. Their many differences notwithstanding, they all rely on internalist logics in their attempt to explain what was in fact a global phenomenon. In response to stimulating recent scholarship, however, we need to place the various notions of "Enlightenment" in the context of connectivities that shaped and reconfigured societies globally. Referring to the issue of modernity, Sanjay Subrahmanyam has argued that it is "historically a global and *conjunctural* phenomenon, not a virus that spreads from one place to another. It is located in a series of historical processes that brought hitherto relatively isolated societies into contact, and we must seek its roots in a set

[35] On multiple modernities, see *Multiple Modernities*, Special Issue, *Daedalus* 129, no. 1 (2000); Dominic Sachsenmaier and Jens Riedel with Shmuel N. Eisenstadt, eds., *Reflections on Multiple Modernities: European, Chinese, and Other Interpretations* (Leiden, 2002).

[36] Sheldon Pollock, "Pretextures of Time," *History and Theory* 46, no. 3 (2007): 366–383, quote from 380. This is true even for one of the most fascinating examples of recent scholarship, *Textures of Time: Writing History in South India, 1600–1800* (Delhi, 2001), by Velcheru Narayana Rao, David Shulman, and Sanjay Subrahmanyam. The authors mine a variety of genres to locate history-writing in the South Asian tradition and thus refute the standard assumption that in the Indian context, a historical consciousness arrived only with the British. Theirs is an exemplary work of philological scholarship and intellectual vision, and it vividly demonstrates the complexity and dynamics of South Indian societies before 1800. At times, however, the authors do not refrain from inserting this new sense of history into the familiar language of individualization, rationalization, secularization, and "the arrival of a certain kind of 'modernity' in the far south" (264). It should be noted that some contributions to the debate on "early modernities" do not embrace the teleological outlook that seems inherent in its label. A good overview on the debate can be found in Lynn A. Struve, ed., *The Qing Formation in World-Historical Time* (Cambridge, Mass., 2004).

[37] Victor B. Lieberman, *Strange Parallels: Southeast Asia in Global Context, c. 800–1830*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, 2003–2004). See also Jack Goody, *The Theft of History* (Cambridge, 2006), 118–121; Goody, *Renaissances: The One or the Many?* (Cambridge, 2009).

[38] For a critique, see Arif Dirlik, *Global Modernity: Modernity in the Age of Global Capitalism* (Boulder, Colo., 2007); Timothy Mitchell, "Introduction," in Mitchell, ed., *Questions of Modernity* (Minneapolis, 2000), xi–xvii.

This content downloaded from
149.10.125.20 on Sun, 13 Mar 2022 03:53:33 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

of diverse phenomena."[39] From such a vantage point, it is less instructive to search for alleged origins—European or otherwise—than to focus on the global conditions and interactions in which the "Enlightenment" emerged.

Debates about Enlightenment were the product of related attempts to come to terms with a global situation. They were conducted within a space that transcended the boundaries of Western Europe, and the circulation of concepts and ideas followed a variety of trajectories.[40] These debates were linked across borders, but they did not unfold everywhere or equally. The trajectory of interactions was not indiscriminate, but was conditioned by the larger structures of the world economy and political powers such as the British Empire. Invoking the "Enlightenment" presupposed some relation with Europe, even when references were primarily rhetorical and strategic. Connections reached beyond the integrated Atlantic world, but the speed and density of contacts was highly uneven; while Madras was part of multiple networks in the Indian Ocean and beyond, Korea, the "hermit kingdom," aimed at isolation, and intellectual transfers reached social elites in port cities earlier than elsewhere, if at all.[41]

Related to these different forms of cultural interaction, a spate of exciting new scholarship has resituated the emergence of Enlightenment thinking. So far, most of these studies have addressed a particular literature, while a synthetic picture has yet to emerge. But drawing on this work allows Enlightenment debates to be read in a context that transcended Europe. The globality of eighteenth-century Enlightenment needs to be located on two levels: it was a product of, and a response to, global conjunctures; and it was the work of many authors in different parts of the world.

The production of knowledge in the late eighteenth century was structurally embedded in larger global contexts, and much of the debate about Enlightenment in Europe can be understood as a response to the challenges of global integration. The non-European world was always present in eighteenth-century intellectual discussions. No contemporary genre was more popular and more influential than the travelogue.[42] Accounts of the Hurons in North America, of the Polynesian Omai who was taken to England by Captain Cook in 1774, and of the Mandarins at the Chinese court reached a broad readership and found their way into popular culture. Most direct was the impact of the idealization of the reign of the Qing emperors Kangxi (1661–1722) and Qianlong (1736–1795); China was posited as the incarnation of an

[39] Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "Hearing Voices: Vignettes of Early Modernity in South Asia, 1400–1750," *Daedalus* 127, no. 3 (1998): 75–104, here 99–100.

[40] See James E. Vance, Jr., *Capturing the Horizon: The Historical Geography of Transportation since the Sixteenth Century* (Baltimore, 1990); Emma Rothschild, *The Inner Life of Empires: An Eighteenth-Century History* (Princeton, N.J., 2011); Osterhammel, *Die Entzauberung Asiens*; Suraiya Faroqhi, *The Ottoman Empire and the World around It* (London, 2004).

[41] See C. A. Bayly, *Imperial Meridian: The British Empire and the World, 1780–1830* (London, 1989); David Armitage and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, eds., *The Age of Revolutions in Global Context, c. 1760–1840* (New York, 2009); C. A. Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780–1914: Global Connections and Comparisons* (Oxford, 2004); Jürgen Osterhammel, *Die Verwandlung der Welt: Eine Geschichte des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Munich, 2009).

[42] Joan-Pau Rubiés, *Travellers and Cosmographers: Studies in the History of Early Modern Travel and Ethnology* (London, 2007); Anthony Pagden, *European Encounters with the New World: From Renaissance to Romanticism* (New Haven, Conn., 1994).

This content downloaded from
149.10.125.20 on Sun, 13 Mar 2022 03:53:33 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

enlightened and meritocratic society—and instrumentalized for criticisms of absolutist rule in Europe.[43]

But the appropriation of the world was not confined to its function as a mirror. In many ways, central elements of the cultural transformations that are customarily summarized as "Enlightenment" need to be understood as a reaction to the global entanglements of the times. The expansion of Europe's horizons that had begun in the Age of Discovery and culminated in the voyages of James Cook and Louis de Bougainville resulted in the incorporation of the "world" into European systems of knowledge. In particular, the emergence of the modern sciences can be seen as an attempt to come to terms with global realities. Further examples include the discussions about the character of humanity following the interventions of Bartolomé de las Casas; the idea of the law of nations and an international world order as proposed by Hugo Grotius; the ethnological and geographical explorations of the globe; the comparative study of language and religion; the theories of free trade and the civilizing effects of commerce; and the notions of race, on the one hand, and cosmopolitanism, on the other. The perception of an increasingly interlinked globe posed a cognitive challenge that was gradually met by reorganizing knowledge and the order of the disciplines.[44]

On this level, the worldliness of the European Enlightenment was not limited to references to distant places, instrumentalized essentially as mirrors of the Self—such as Montesquieu's imagined Orient in his *lettres persanes*. Neither is it helpful to calculate balances of influence, a kind of cultural import-export sheet that weighs the diffusion of Occidental culture against borrowing from the East—porcelain and tea, but also ideas of a just life. Instead, we need to understand the production of knowledge in the late eighteenth century as fundamentally tied to conditions of globality: as a specific way of incorporating the world in the context of the expansion of European trade relations, the annexation of military and commercial bases and colonies, and the cartographic mapping of the globe. Crucially, these debates did more than merely express the fact of entanglement as such; rather, the particular modes and structures of integration affected the terms that were employed and the theories that were developed. Geopolitical hierarchies, in other words, found their way into

[43] D. E. Mungello, *The Great Encounter of China and the West, 1500–1800* (Lanham, Md., 1999); Jonathan D. Spence, *The Chan's Great Continent: China in Western Minds* (New York, 1999); Julia Ching and Willard Gurdon Oxtoby, eds., *Discovering China: European Interpretations in the Enlightenment* (Rochester, N.Y., 1992); Osterhammel, *Die Entzauberung Asiens*, 271–348; J. J. Clarke, *Oriental Enlightenment: The Encounter between Asian and Western Thought* (London, 1997). See also Humberto Garcia, *Islam and the English Enlightenment, 1670–1840* (Baltimore, 2012).

[44] Representative works of this vast literature include Christopher Fox, Roy Porter, and Robert Wokler, eds., *Inventing Human Science: Eighteenth-Century Domains* (Berkeley, Calif., 1995); Larry Wolff and Marco Cipolloni, eds., *The Anthropology of the Enlightenment* (Stanford, Calif., 2007); Lauren Benton, *A Search for Sovereignty: Law and Geography in European Empires, 1400–1900* (Cambridge, 2009); István Hont, *Jealousy of Trade: International Competition and the Nation-State in Historical Perspective* (Cambridge, Mass., 2005); Lynn Hunt, Margaret C. Jacob, and Wijnand Mijnhardt, *The Book That Changed Europe: Picart and Bernard's "Religious Ceremonies of the World"* (Cambridge, Mass, 2010); Karen O'Brien, *Narratives of Enlightenment: Cosmopolitan History from Voltaire to Gibbon* (Cambridge, 1997); Hans Erich Bödeker, Clorinda Donato, and Peter Hanns Reill, eds., *Discourses of Tolerance and Intolerance in the European Enlightenment* (Toronto, 2009); William Max Nelson, "Making Men: Enlightenment Ideas of Racial Engineering," *American Historical Review* 115, no. 5 (December 2010): 1364–1394; Franz Leander Fillafer and Jürgen Osterhammel, "Cosmopolitanism and the German Enlightenment," in Helmut Walser Smith, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Modern German History* (Oxford, 2011), 119–143.

This content downloaded from
149.10.125.20 on Sun, 13 Mar 2022 03:53:33 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

the very content of the vocabulary that was devised to think the world. The dichotomies of civilization and barbarism, as well as the discovery of a progressive regime of time and the stadial theories of history, for example, responded not only to the broadening of horizons, but specifically to emerging European hegemony—or, more precisely, to what Europeans perceived as such, even though their traders were still complying with local rules in Asia, and Lord Macartney was compelled to kneel in front of the Chinese emperor.

Enlightenment debates were thus always political moments, never just intellectual appropriations of an abstract world. The invention of "Eastern Europe," for example, not only represented the stages of civilization prescribed by conjectural history, but was closely tied to power differentials on the Continent.[45] And when Hegel defined freedom in terms of master and slave, he reformulated an Aristotelian ontology that should also be placed within the long history of relentless expropriation and slavery that shaped the Atlantic economy.[46] The mapping of the world was situated in, and corresponded to, the asymmetrical power relationships that structured the integration of the globe.

The intellectual discussions of eighteenth-century Europe not only were situated in a global context, they were also received, appropriated, and indeed made globally. The history of Enlightenment debates was a history of exchanges and entanglements, of translations and quotations, and of the co-production of knowledge. "Whose Enlightenment was it, anyway?" Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra has asked, and this question can easily be extended beyond the Atlantic world.[47] The Enlightenment, as recent scholarship suggests, was the work of many actors and the product of global interactions.

In particular, historians have underscored the global gathering of facts and information and the co-production of modern knowledge regimes. Historians of science have contributed to a broad view of the transregional networks and cross-border circulations that fed into Enlightenment science and world views.[48] The geographic reach of these networks was broad, ranging from Latin America all the way to Tibet, Japan, and Oceania.[49] But in contrast to an earlier literature that was based on a diffusionist reading of scientific encounters, historians have begun to emphasize the degree to which "scientific knowledge [is made] through co-constructive processes of negotiation of skilled communities and individuals" in many parts of the world, "resulting as much in the emergence of new knowledge forms as in a

[45] Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment* (Stanford, Calif., 1994); Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans* (Oxford, 1997).

[46] Susan Buck-Morss, "Hegel and Haiti," *Critical Inquiry* 26, no. 4 (2000): 821–865.

[47] Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra, *How to Write the History of the New World: Histories, Epistemologies, and Identities in the Eighteenth-Century Atlantic World* (Stanford, Calif., 2001), 266.

[48] See Richard H. Grove, *Green Imperialism: Colonial Expansion, Tropical Island Edens and the Origins of Environmentalism, 1600–1860* (Cambridge, 1995); John Gascoigne, *Joseph Banks and the English Enlightenment: Useful Knowledge and Polite Culture* (Cambridge, 1994); Richard Drayton, *Nature's Government: Science, Imperial Britain and the "Improvement" of the World* (New Haven, Conn., 2000); David N. Livingstone and Charles W. J. Withers, eds., *Geography and Enlightenment* (Chicago, 1999); Daniela Bleichmar, Paula De Vos, Kristin Huffine, and Kevin Sheehan, eds., *Science in the Spanish and Portuguese Empires, 1500–1800* (Stanford, Calif., 2009).

[49] See John Gascoigne, *The Enlightenment and the Origins of European Australia* (Cambridge, 2005); Gordon T. Stewart, *Journey to Empire: Enlightenment, Imperialism, and the British Encounter with Tibet, 1774–1904* (Cambridge, 2009); Grant K. Goodman, *Japan and the Dutch, 1600–1853* (Richmond, 2000).

This content downloaded from
149.10.125.20 on Sun, 13 Mar 2022 03:53:33 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

reconfiguration of existing knowledges and specialized practices on both sides of the encounter."[50]

This literature suggests that to a large degree, the production of knowledge in the Age of Enlightenment was not confined to the academy and the laboratory, but came out of forms of "open air science" in a multiplicity of contact zones in Latin America, Africa, and Asia. Circulation itself emerged as a central ingredient of knowledge formation. To be sure, these relationships were by no means equal; economically, politically, and militarily, the balance was skewed, usually—but not always—in favor of Europeans. But the asymmetrical conditions of knowledge production did not preclude the active cooperation of a wide variety of actors. "Important parts of what passes off as 'Western' science," concludes Kapil Raj, "were actually made outside the West."[51]

The philosophical and political vocabulary of the Enlightenment was also a global creation. In many cases, this was a result of the purposeful reformulation of a particular body of thought and practice associated with the "Enlightenment" in Europe. Thus our attention shifts from the salons in Paris, Berlin, and Naples to the conditions under which cultural elites in Caracas and Valparaiso, in Madras and Cairo, engaged with its claims. Engagement with Enlightenment propositions reached well beyond Western Europe—from Greece and Russia, where Catherine II refashioned herself as an "enlightened monarch" intent on correcting the "irrational" course of history, to Philadelphia, the birthplace of the American Declaration of Independence—a document of global reach, "an instrument, pregnant with our own and the fate of the world," as Thomas Jefferson contemplated in retrospect.[52] In cultural centers such as Lima and Bogotá, small groups of Creole "Enlighteners" (*ilustrados*) engaged with the ideas of European philosophers while also mining the earlier works of indigenous elites in their quest to challenge crucial assumptions of European Enlightenment rationality and the Eurocentrism of European theories about Latin America.[53]

The late-eighteenth-century reference to Enlightenment ideas was not confined to the Atlantic world. In other places as well, European expansion set in motion a confrontation with claims for the validity of Enlightenment propositions. In Egypt,

[50] Kapil Raj, *Relocating Modern Science: Circulation and the Construction of Knowledge in South Asia and Europe, 1650–1900* (Delhi, 2006), 223.

[51] Ibid. For similar arguments, see Dhruv Raina and S. Irfan Habib, *Domesticating Modern Science: A Social History of Science and Culture in Colonial India* (New Delhi, 2004); Thomas R. Trautmann, *Languages and Nations: The Dravidian Proof in Colonial Madras* (New Delhi, 2006).

[52] David Armitage, *The Declaration of Independence: A Global History* (Cambridge, Mass., 2007), 1. See also Susan Manning and Francis D. Cogliano, eds., *The Atlantic Enlightenment* (Hampshire, 2008); Henry F. May, *The Enlightenment in America* (New York, 1976); Gordon Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (New York, 1992); Robert A. Ferguson, *The American Enlightenment, 1750–1820* (Cambridge, Mass., 1997); Charles W. J. Withers, *Placing the Enlightenment: Thinking Geographically about the Age of Reason* (Chicago, 2007).

[53] Cañizares-Esguerra, *How to Write the History of the New World*. See also Neil Safier, *Measuring the New World: Enlightenment Science and South America* (Chicago, 2008); and for an early statement, Edmundo O'Gorman, *El proceso de la invención de América* (Mexico City, 1958). For the imperial and Atlantic contexts, see Jeremy Adelman, "An Age of Imperial Revolutions," *American Historical Review* 113, no. 2 (April 2008): 319–340; J. H. Elliott, *Empires of the Atlantic World: Britain and Spain in America, 1492–1830* (New Haven, Conn., 2006); A. Owen Aldridge, ed., *The Ibero-American Enlightenment* (Urbana, Ill., 1971); Renan Silva, *Los ilustrados de Nueva Granada, 1760–1808: Genealogía de una comunidad de interpretación* (Medellín, 2002).

This content downloaded from
149.10.125.20 on Sun, 13 Mar 2022 03:53:33 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

for example, Napoleon's expedition served as a trigger for social transformations that harked back to debates about inner-Islamic reform, but now were also legitimized by referring to the authority of the Enlightenment.[54] In India, it was Tipu Sultan, the ruler of Mysore and arch-enemy of the British, who fashioned himself an enlightened monarch: he was one of the founding members of the (French) Jacobin Club in Seringapatam, had planted a liberty tree, and asked to be addressed as "Tipu *Citoyen*."[55]

Analytically, it is important to recognize that the widespread engagement with these terms and ideas did not leave them unaffected. As actors in different situations and moments mobilized concepts for their own concerns, their re-articulations set in motion a process of displacement. These reformulations were the product of particular historical situations, but their impact went beyond their local effects. Moments of appropriation were thus frequently instances of programmatic radicalization. The most powerful example of this kind of redefinition was the revolution in Haiti (Saint-Domingue) in 1791, only two years after the fall of the Bastille. As Laurent Dubois phrased it, "The democratic possibilities imperial powers would claim they were bringing to the colonies had in fact been forged, not within the boundaries of Europe, but through the struggles over rights that spread throughout the Atlantic Empires."[56]

The most radical revolution of the Age of Revolution had many causes, chief among them structural conflicts in a slaveholder society and the transformations of the Atlantic economy. At the same time, the French Revolution and the symbolic power of the Declaration of the Rights of Man in 1789 were important reference points. The spokespersons for the rebellious slaves and the *gens de couleur* frequently formulated their claims in the language of republican rights.[57] As important as the transfer of ideas was, the rebellion was not just a distant and peripheral effect of the French Revolution. As recent work has amply demonstrated, it had world-historical significance of its own. It was part of the revolution of the public sphere that spanned the Atlantic and beyond, extending to social groups beyond the bourgeois European elites.[58] Most importantly, it reframed the parameters of the debate on human rights, as—the long history of enlightened critique of slavery notwithstanding—the Assemblée nationale in Paris had explicitly denied the extension of civil rights to slaves. The eventual transfer of the rights of man to the slave population "did challenge the ontological and political assumptions of the most radical writers of the Enlighten-

[54] Dror Ze'evi, "Back to Napoleon? Thoughts on the Beginning of the Modern Era in the Middle East," *Mediterranean Historical Review* 19, no. 1 (2004): 73–94. See also Donald Malcolm Reid, *Whose Pharaohs? Archaeology, Museums, and Egyptian National Identity from Napoleon to World War I* (Berkeley, Calif., 2002); Juan Cole, *Napoleon's Egypt: Invading the Middle East* (New York, 2007); Irene A. Bierman, ed., *Napoleon in Egypt* (Reading, 2003).

[55] Kate Brittlebank, *Tipu Sultan's Search for Legitimacy: Islam and Kingship in a Hindu Domain* (Delhi, 1997), chap. 5.

[56] Laurent Dubois, *A Colony of Citizens: Revolution and Slave Emancipation in the French Caribbean, 1787–1804* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 2004), 4–5.

[57] Carolyn E. Fick, *The Making of Haiti: The Saint Domingue Revolution from Below* (Knoxville, Tenn., 1990); Laurent Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass., 2004).

[58] Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (Boston, 2001); Laurent Dubois and Julius S. Scott, eds., *Origins of the Black Atlantic* (New York, 2009).

This content downloaded from
149.10.125.20 on Sun, 13 Mar 2022 03:53:33 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

ment."[59] The notion of *humanité* as it was employed in metropolitan France was based on a largely abstract concern with natural rights; only its refashioning in the Caribbean turned the appeal to "humanity" into the claim with universal reach that it was retrospectively taken to have always been. The universalization of the rights of man—nothing less was at stake—was thus the result of a circulation of ideas and their re-articulation under colonial conditions.[60]

Finally, the appropriation of concepts and ideas needs to be situated in a broad context of transnational entanglements in which transfers from Europe were only one factor, albeit an important one. The global remaking of Enlightenment claims was a result of the hybridization of ideas and practices. As the example of Haiti shows, the various forms of appropriation were part of complex transcultural flows. Radical claims as formulated in Paris were received and mobilized in Haiti, for example by Toussaint L'Ouverture, the leader of the slave rebellion. Toussaint had read the strident critique of European colonialism in Raynal's multivolume *Histoire des deux Indes*, and was particularly impressed by Raynal's prediction of the coming of a "Black Spartacus."[61] But Europe was not the sole source of inspiration. Two-thirds of the slaves had been born in Africa and came from diverse political, social, and religious backgrounds. This enabled them to draw on specific notions of kingdom and just government from Western and Central Africa, and to employ religious practices such as voodoo for the formation of revolutionary communities.[62] The revolution in Haiti was the result of the triangular trade in the Atlantic world, not only in goods and laborers, but in practices and ideas as well. Events in Haiti, for their part, forced the French National Convention to abolish slavery in 1794. The ripples of this transnational event were again palpable in both Americas, and remained an influential reference globally.[63] The processes of mixing and hybridization were characteristic—and indeed constitutive—of the career of Enlightenment ideas and practices. The negotiation of different intellectual and cultural resources was a normal and integral part of this history.

ENLIGHTENMENT WAS MORE THAN a self-contained moment in European history. As recent scholarship has demonstrated, it was produced in a regime of global syn-

[59] Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston, 1995), 82.

[60] See most explicitly Nick Nesbitt, *Universal Emancipation: The Haitian Revolution and the Radical Enlightenment* (Charlottesville, Va., 2008).

[61] C. L. R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint Louverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (1938; repr., New York, 1963), 25. The claim has been disputed by Louis Sala-Molins, *Les misères des Lumières: Sous la raison, l'outrage* (Paris, 1992); but see also Srinivas Aravamudan, *Tropicopolitans: Colonialism and Agency, 1688–1804* (Durham, N.C., 1999); Laurent Dubois, "An Enslaved Enlightenment: Rethinking the Intellectual History of the French Atlantic," *Social History* 31, no. 1 (2006): 1–14.

[62] See David Barry Gaspar and David Patrick Geggus, eds., *A Turbulent Time: The French Revolution and the Greater Caribbean* (Bloomington, Ind., 1997); John K. Thornton, " 'I Am the Subject of the King of Kongo': African Political Ideology and the Haitian Revolution," *Journal of World History* 4, no. 2 (1993): 181–214; Bernard Camier and Laurent Dubois, "Voltaire et Zaire, ou le théâtre des Lumières dans l'aire atlantique française," *Revue d'histoire moderne & contemporaine* 54, no. 4 (2007): 39–69.

[63] David P. Geggus, ed., *The Impact of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World* (Columbia, S.C., 2001); Sybille Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed: Haiti and the Cultures of Slavery in the Age of Revolution* (Durham, N.C., 2004); Doris L. Garraway, ed., *Tree of Liberty: Cultural Legacies of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World* (Charlottesville, Va., 2008).

This content downloaded from
149.10.125.20 on Sun, 13 Mar 2022 03:53:33 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

chronicity. But it did not stop there. Moving beyond that literature, it is possible to trace the trajectory of Enlightenment through the nineteenth century. A case can be made, then, for a long history of Enlightenment. Scholars have so far ignored this possibility, assuming that the development of the Enlightenment substantially came to an end around 1800, if not before, and that it resurfaced as an object of scholarly concern only in the 1930s and 1940s.[64] But this chronology is Eurocentric, in that it erases the vibrant and heated contestations of "Enlightenment" in the rest of the world, particularly in Asia. Crucially, these debates should not be seen as merely the aftereffects of a foundational moment. Instead, the various reformulations of Enlightenment standards were part of its continuous history.[65]

Such a claim may immediately evoke two objections. Was this still "the Enlightenment," and are we justified in subsuming a variety of debates in places such as India, the Philippines, and Korea under that rubric? And if so, was this not essentially a process of diffusion, a process by which a template of thoughts and ideas was transferred from Europe to the rest of the world? This second concern would also suggest that there is not much to learn about the Enlightenment by following the history of its dissemination.

Let us bracket the latter issue for a moment and address the question of the Enlightenment's substance. Do nineteenth-century global appropriations of Enlightenment shed light on "Enlightenment itself"? This question is wrongly put, as it assumes an essential and firmly fixed Enlightenment. Such an axiomatic definition forecloses every possibility of global perspectives, as it reads all variations as deficit and lack. But Enlightenment was not a thing; rather, we should ask what historical actors did with it. Enlightenment should not be confused with an analytical category. It was primarily a concept used to formulate and legitimize particular claims. "Scholars should not try for a slightly better definition," Frederick Cooper has said in his discussion of the term "modernity." "They should instead listen to what is being said in the world." Thus, if Enlightenment is "what they hear, they should ask how it is being used and why."[66]

Indeed, when social reformers around the globe tapped into Enlightenment rhetoric, they were able to filter a multiplicity of claims through its vocabulary. For some, the concept denoted a commitment to reason, to "improvement," and some kind of emancipation, however differently defined. But "Enlightenment" was also employed to dismantle tariffs and to create private property in land; it was invoked to legitimize free love and to allow the remarriage of widows; it was quoted in support of the reform of penal systems and spawned discussions on national character; it was cited as authorizing the introduction of department stores, the use of underwear, the spread of pocket watches and of horizontal script, and the introduction of the West-

[64] Paul Hazard, *La crise de la conscience européenne, 1680–1715* (Paris, 1935); Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung: Philosophische Fragmente* (Amsterdam, 1947). See also Schmidt, *What Is Enlightenment?*

[65] For stimulating works that project intellectual history into a global context, see Christopher L. Hill, *National History and the World of Nations: Capital, State, and the Rhetoric of History in Japan, France, and the United States* (Durham, N.C., 2008); and Andrew Sartori, *Bengal in Global Concept History: Culturalism in the Age of Capital* (Chicago, 2008). See also Carol Gluck and Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, eds., *Words in Motion: Toward a Global Lexicon* (Durham, N.C., 2009).

[66] Frederick Cooper, "Modernity," in Cooper, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History* (Berkeley, Calif., 2005), 113–149, here 115.

This content downloaded from
149.10.125.20 on Sun, 13 Mar 2022 03:53:33 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

ern calendar. "Whenever we open our mouths," confessed the Japanese reformer Tsuda Mamichi in the 1870s, "it is to speak of 'enlightenment.'"[67]

This implies that over the course of its global career, the label "Enlightenment" became to some degree detachable from the notions and ideas with which it was first associated. Thus, for example, the secularizing impulse of the label could be turned on its head: "There is no religion in the world today that promotes enlightenment as does Christianity," Tsuda insisted in words that would have elicited a scowl from Voltaire and Diderot in the eighteenth century—and from Jonathan Israel in the twenty-first.[68] This should not simply be discarded as a cultural misunderstanding. We cannot understand the global manifestations of Enlightenment by comparing them with an abstract blueprint, but only by looking at the concrete constellations in which "Enlightenment" was invoked—as authority, goal, or warning. It is less important, in other words, to compare the demands of, say, Philippine *ilustrados* diachronically with tenets of eighteenth-century Europe than it is to understand what labeling them as part of a Philippine "Enlightenment" implied in the closing years of the nineteenth century.

As dazzling as the variety of references was, it was not indiscriminate. When social reformers tapped into its vocabulary, references were sometimes explicitly to "Enlightenment" and vernacular equivalents of the term. But we do not always find that word. Once a set of ideas had been established and associated with the Enlightenment, it was also possible to appropriate it elsewhere without using the same vocabulary. In these cases, too, reformist elites drew on a specific group of ideas, texts, and authors, frequently sparked by translation movements of various kinds. Works by figureheads of the movement—Rousseau and Voltaire, Adam Smith and Benjamin Franklin, but also Fukuzawa Yukichi and Liang Qichao—were made available to local audiences through publications and translations. Thus we can treat these debates about improvement and change as related but not converging phenomena—even if the labels attached to them ranged from "Enlightenment," as in East Asia, to "Renaissance," as in Bengal and the Arab world.

Nor was the chronology of these debates accidental. The timing typically corresponded to moments in which local crises were linked to the deep social transformations triggered by the integration of these societies into the world economy and imperialist order.[69] In such moments of domestic and external urgency, proponents of change linked their claims for social renewal both to traditional resources and to the newly available Enlightenment discourse in order to link their programs of social reform to the authority of European power. In parts of India, in the context of the self-styled "Bengal Renaissance," tenets of the post-Enlightenment reform era were discussed as early as the 1820s. Rammohan Roy, the most influential actor in the Bengali engagement with the West, fused different traditions in his project of social reform that made him a proponent of a "religion of reason," as Friedrich Wilhelm

[67] Cited in Albert M. Craig, *Civilization and Enlightenment: The Early Thought of Fukuzawa Yukichi* (Cambridge, Mass., 2009), 147.

[68] Cited in William Reynolds Braisted, ed., *Meiroku Zasshi: Journal of the Japanese Enlightenment* (Cambridge, Mass., 1976), 39.

[69] For the fusion of internal and external crises, see Michael Geyer and Charles Bright, "World History in a Global Age," *American Historical Review* 100, no. 4 (October 1995): 1034–1060.

This content downloaded from
149.10.125.20 on Sun, 13 Mar 2022 03:53:33 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

Schelling called him.[70] In the Ottoman Empire, the texts of the French *philosophes* emerged as an important point of reference in the 1830s, while the introduction of these classics into public debate had to wait until mid-century. As a result, Young Ottomans such as Namik Kemal legitimized their cause by referencing the works of Locke, Rousseau, and Montesquieu.[71] In Egypt, Rifa al-Tahtawi was nominated in 1841 to head the translation bureau (Tercüme Odasi) and oversaw the publication of hundreds of European works in the Arabic language.[72] In 1870s Japan, the journal *Meiroku zasshi* introduced crucial new terms such as "rights," "freedom," and "economy" to a larger public, while Fukuzawa Yukichi's bestselling *Conditions in the West* discussed Western institutions, customs, and material culture.[73] In Qing China, Yan Fu emerged as the most prominent translator—of works by Thomas Huxley, Adam Smith, Herbert Spencer, Montesquieu, and others—since the 1890s.[74]

As a consequence of this shifting chronology, debates did not always focus on the same issues. This was primarily because the local contexts in which the term was invoked changed considerably, from 1820s Bengal to 1890s Korea. Moreover, the reference itself changed, too. "Enlightenment" did not mean the same thing in the 1830s that it had in the eighteenth century, and by the 1880s its connotations had been further transformed. As Enlightenment ideas were articulated across the globe, they were gradually fused with other strands of thinking, some of which had originally been formulated against them. Particularly important was the impact of liberalism, of utilitarianism along the lines of John Stuart Mill, of Darwinian and Spencerian evolutionism, and of positivist philosophy as outlined by Comte, often popularized by global bestsellers such as Samuel Smiles's *Self-Help*, and the more specialized handbooks by authors such as Frédéric Bastiat and Henry Wheaton. As a result of this merging of vocabularies, the conceptual content of "Enlightenment" changed, too. The focus now was less on individual consciousness liberated from religious fetters and state oppression, and more on collective and national projects of technical and material improvement. By the 1880s, an unequivocal notion of material progress was firmly entrenched and had lost the sense of ambivalence, and of the possibility of nonlinear alternatives, that had still been present in the eighteenth century. And as paradoxical as it might seem, the inclusion and grafting of different

[70] Schelling cited in Bruce Carlisle Robertson, *Raja Rammohan Roy: The Father of Modern India* (Delhi, 1995), 71. See also David Kopf, *British Orientalism and the Bengal Renaissance: The Dynamics of Indian Modernization, 1773–1835* (Berkeley, Calif., 1969); Lynn Zastoupil, *Rammohun Roy and the Making of Victorian Britain* (Basingstoke, 2010); C. A. Bayly, "Rammohan Roy and the Advent of Constitutional Liberalism in India, 1800–30," *Modern Intellectual History* 4, no. 1 (2007): 25–41. For the 1840s and 1850s, see also Brian A. Hatcher, *Idioms of Improvement: Vidyāsāgar and Cultural Encounter in Bengal* (Calcutta, 1996).

[71] Ibrahim Abu-Lughod, *Arab Rediscovery of Europe: A Study in Cultural Encounters* (Princeton, N.J., 1963); Christoph Herzog, "Aufklärung und Osmanisches Reich: Annäherung an ein historiographisches Problem," in Wolfgang Hardtwig, ed., *Die Aufklärung und ihre Weltwirkung* (Göttingen, 2010), 291–321; Dagmar Glass, *Der Muqtataf und seine Öffentlichkeit: Aufklärung, Räsonnement und Meinungsstreit in der frühen arabischen Zeitschriftenkommunikation*, 2 vols. (Würzburg, 2004).

[72] Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798–1939* (Cambridge, 1983); Roxanne L. Euben, *Journeys to the Other Shore: Muslim and Western Travelers in Search of Knowledge* (Princeton, N.J., 2006).

[73] Braisted, *Meiroku Zasshi*; Carmen Blacker, *The Japanese Enlightenment: A Study of the Writings of Fukuzawa Yukichi* (Cambridge, 1964).

[74] Benjamin I. Schwartz, *In Search of Wealth and Power: Yen Fu and the West* (Cambridge, Mass., 1964).

This content downloaded from
149.10.125.20 on Sun, 13 Mar 2022 03:53:33 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

FIGURE 4: In the Ottoman Empire, reference to the tenets of the Enlightenment emerged as an important element of political discourse in the 1830s. From mid-century onward, Young Ottomans such as Namik Kemal (1840–1888) legitimized their cause by citing the works of Locke, Rousseau, and Montesquieu, which were beginning to be translated. Consequently, Kemal was dubbed the "Voltaire . . . of this nation" by the Ottoman journalist Ebüzziya Revfik in 1903. However, Kemal drew on a variety of intellectual resources in his quest for social and political reform. As his response to Ernest Renan's indictment of Islamic religion in 1893 made abundantly clear, his version of Enlightenment was not a poor copy of French debates in the eighteenth century, but an original position responding to the exigencies of Ottoman society in the late nineteenth century.

This content downloaded from
149.10.125.20 on Sun, 13 Mar 2022 03:53:33 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

strands of thought helped turn the many Enlightenments of the eighteenth century into the singular "hyperreal" Enlightenment of the 1880s.[75] It came to be embraced by a wide variety of actors. Many of them used the terms "Enlightenment" and "civilization" almost interchangeably; at times, they avoided both and merely employed a vocabulary of reform. In Japan, for example, the term *keimō* ("Enlightenment") increasingly gave way to *kaika*, with its strong overtones of social evolutionism.[76]

The equivalence of civilization and Enlightenment points to the degree to which the latter had changed meaning; it was now primarily a gauge for the relative geopolitical position of a given nation in the global arena. This, to be sure, was not entirely new; thinking in stages was one of the ways in which eighteenth-century Enlightenment thinkers translated cultural difference into a language of progress. But while this idea coexisted with other notions of being "enlightened"—the progress of reason, the public sphere, secular world views—by the late nineteenth century, Enlightenment was increasingly inserted into a narrative of evolutionism and the advance of civilization. It was thus transformed from a process into a currency—some had more of it, and some needed tutors to give it to them. This was, by the way, also the case in Europe, where the culture wars that pitted liberal states against the churches were represented as a "great battle" between the light of the Enlightenment and the darkness of the papal Middle Ages, and where Enlightenment in the guise of the civilizing mission rhetoric and international law served as the ideological prop of imperialism.[77]

But this transformation was even more pronounced outside of Europe. The rhetoric of "Civilization and Enlightenment," the potent slogan in Japan, Korea, and China, was widely employed in an attempt to come to terms with the challenges of globality. The notion always encompassed a positioning in the world, as in Fukuzawa Yukichi's influential triptych of barbarism, semi-Enlightenment, and civilization. In many societies, the prevailing view held that Enlightenment was not specifically European, but rather a universal standard. Western societies might well have appeared superior at the time, but that had not always been the case, nor would it be in the future. "Europe which in terms of enlightenment had lagged behind us was now ahead of us," the Korean newspaper *Hwangsŏng sinmun* declared in 1899.[78]

To speak of Enlightenment was thus to think globally—and the urgency with which Enlightenment tenets were invoked was related to differentials of power. Characteristically, the connection between the local and the global was mediated by three fundamental ways in which the nineteenth-century world was transformed: the integration of the world economy, the emergence of a system of nation-states, and the consolidation of imperialism. These large processes established a global framework that seemed to imbue Enlightenment vocabulary with universal exchange value, and generated resonances between otherwise disparate locations.[79] They worked

[75] In this use of the term "hyperreal," I follow Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*.

[76] Alistair Swale, *The Political Thought of Mori Arinori: A Study in Meiji Conservatism* (Richmond, 2000); Howland, *Translating the West*, 40–42.

[77] See Christopher Clark and Wolfram Kaiser, eds., *Culture Wars: Secular-Catholic Conflict in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Cambridge, 2003); Bruce Mazlish, *Civilization and Its Contents* (Stanford, Calif., 2004); Martti Koskenniemi, *The Gentle Civilizer of Nations: The Rise and Fall of International Law, 1870–1960* (Cambridge, 2001).

[78] Cited in Andre Schmid, *Korea between Empires, 1895–1919* (New York, 2002), 83.

[79] Charles Tilly, *Big Structures, Large Processes, Huge Comparisons* (New York, 1984), 147, speaks

This content downloaded from
149.10.125.20 on Sun, 13 Mar 2022 03:53:33 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

thus as enabling contexts and structured the way in which Enlightenment ideas were used. More importantly, the discourse of "Enlightenment" was employed as a means to negotiate these shifting moments and to come to terms with the challenges of living in a global world.

First, the emergence of a worldwide system of markets and capital accumulation not only synchronized nations around the world, but also made reforms aimed at the gradual incorporation of societies into capitalist structures seem a historical necessity. Many of the actors who formulated their goals in Enlightenment rhetoric were aiming to transform society under the auspices of liberalism and market integration. Calls for Enlightenment were frequently linked to demands for new forms of taxation and the introduction of the gold standard, for the liberalization of customs, the regime of free trade, and the opening of ports. Projects to enlighten the populace and to transform an idle population into a diligent workforce were thus also claims to participation in the global economy.

Second, the incorporation of nations into the international state system was accompanied by strategies of nation-building couched in Enlightenment terms. The great "reorganization" (*tanzimat*) of the Ottoman Empire after 1839, the activities of the "Independence Club" in Korea in 1896, and the Guangxu reforms in China in 1898 were all attempts to cluster various strands of reformist thinking into a comprehensive response to the deepening political and social crisis of the polity. Reformers typically used Enlightenment rhetoric in two ways. On the one hand, the new language was employed internally, in an effort to railroad the populace into "civilized" ways of comportment, participation, and work: the civilizing mission within. On the other hand, it was directed against the threat of colonization, one of the central concerns of nation-building. In 1897, King Chulalongkorn of Siam, one of the few non-colonized countries in Asia, took an extended trip to Europe so that he could see firsthand everything—from battleships and fire engines to botanical gardens and hospitals—that made societies "enlightened" and "civilized."[80] In the Spanish colony of the Philippines, self-styled "Enlighteners" invoked the authority of reason and natural law in their nationalistic critique of Spanish rule and the influence of Spanish missionaries. In Java, Raden Ajeng Kartini, one of the few audible voices of women in the political public sphere in Asia, addressed two memoranda to the Dutch colonial government in 1903 in which she drew on Enlightenment principles to call for modern education and social emancipation for Javanese girls and women.[81]

Third, invoking "Enlightenment" was part and parcel of strategies to position the country within the larger imperialist order. Enlightenment rhetoric, in other words, could be used as a tool of empire. For expansionist Japan, the cosmology of different stages of civilization and the differing chronologies of progress were crucial elements in justifying colonial forays into East Asia. In a famous essay, Fukuzawa Yukichi

---

of "two interdependent master processes," to which we must add imperialism as the hegemonic mode of interaction.

[80] Niels P. Petersson, "König Chulalongkorns Europareise 1897: Europäischer Imperialismus, symbolische Politik und monarchisch-bürokratische Modernisierung," *Saeculum* 52, pt. 2 (2001): 297–328.

[81] Barbara N. Ramusack, "Women and Gender in South and Southeast Asia," in Bonnie G. Smith, ed., *Women's History in Global Perspective*, 3 vols. (Urbana, Ill., 2005), 2: 101–138.

This content downloaded from
149.10.125.20 on Sun, 13 Mar 2022 03:53:33 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

FIGURE 5: King Chulalongkorn of Siam (Rama V, r. 1868–1910) continued the modernizing reforms that his father, King Mongkut, had initiated. After study tours to neighboring countries such as Dutch Java and the British colonies of Singapore, India, and Burma, he embarked on a trip to Europe in 1897 and "saw that there is more to do than there is time." He meticulously noted the differences between England and Russia, Hungary and Switzerland ("similar to Java, but 100 times prettier"), Italy, Austria, and Portugal ("I have not seen a country worse than this"). His political and social reforms went beyond the introduction of Western technology and extended to the bureaucracy and the legal system, while his fusion of European ideas of just government with Theravada Buddhist concepts of kingship was to ensure his position of absolutist ruler and enlightened monarch at the same time. George Grantham Bain Collection, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, D.C., LC-DIG-ggbain-05360.

This content downloaded from
149.10.125.20 on Sun, 13 Mar 2022 03:53:33 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

emphasized that "our country cannot afford to wait for the enlightenment of our neighbours and to co-operate in building Asia up. Rather, we should leave their ranks to join the camp of the civilized countries of the West [*datsua nyūo*]." Therefore, he famously concluded, Japan should treat China and Korea "as the Westerners do."[82] This was nothing less than an explicit call for colonization.

In all of these cases, the notion of "Enlightenment" helped historical actors to think globally, and to make a complex world legible. In the face of local, regional, and global challenges, they articulated their claims with Enlightenment discourse not only because it was a lingua franca that promised to endow their ideas with universal validity, but also because "Enlightenment" had been transformed, not least through their efforts, into a language of global positioning. The term was thus employed in ways that departed from earlier usages—but it would be shortsighted to ignore this longer history. "Every reading by later generations of past conceptualizations alters the spectrum of possible transmitted meanings," Reinhart Koselleck reminds us. "The original contexts of concepts change; so, too, do the original or subsequent meanings carried by concepts."[83] This process is particularly salient from a global history perspective: the trajectory of "Enlightenment" and the various ways in which it is used need to be understood as part of its conceptual development.

GIVEN THESE FUNDAMENTAL TRANSFORMATIONS, whether this was more than a history of diffusion may by now appear to be a rhetorical question. But it is worth dwelling on it for a moment, as we need to recognize that conceptual change was not only the result of changing geopolitical contexts, and of European expansion in the Age of Imperialism. Instead, non-European actors increasingly took the lead in pronouncing claims to equality and to Enlightenment promises.[84] Rather than a process of diffusion, the longer history of Enlightenment was the result of its constant reinvention.

We may speak thus of the global co-production of Enlightenment knowledge. This process took many forms, but two mechanisms are of particular salience here. While the rhetoric of Enlightenment remained vested with the authority of European power, it was merged with other cultural traditions and increasingly detached from its sole association with Europe. First, the mixing and hybridization of intellectual resources was characteristic of any attempt to connect the assumed universalism of Enlightenment notions with the specificities of their local manifestation. This pattern was more pronounced in the Asian contexts of the nineteenth century, as endogenous intellectual resources had greater weight, autonomy, and staying power in Asia than in the Atlantic world. The merging with traditions owed also to the strategic need to plant radical visions on familiar terrain. Rammohan Roy's "version of enlightenment," as C. A. Bayly has underlined, "embraced Hindu, Muslim and Western

[82] Fukuzawa Yukichi, "On De-Asianization," in Centre for East Asian Cultural Studies, comp., *Meiji Japan through Contemporary Sources*, 3 vols., vol. 3: *1869–1894* (Tokyo, 1972), 133.

[83] Reinhart Koselleck, "A Response to Comments on the Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe," in Hartmut Lehmann and Melvin Richter, eds., *The Meaning of Historical Terms and Concepts: New Studies on Begriffsgeschichte* (Washington, D.C., 1996), 59–70, quote from 62.

[84] Cemil Aydin, *The Politics of Anti-Westernism in Asia: Visions of World Order in Pan-Islamic and Pan-Asian Thought (1882–1945)* (New York, 2007).

This content downloaded from
149.10.125.20 on Sun, 13 Mar 2022 03:53:33 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

notions of virtue."[85] And when Fukuzawa published his *Introduction to the Countries of the World* (*Sekai kunizukishi*) in 1869, he arranged it in metrical patterns to facilitate its being read in the manner of Buddhist catechisms.[86]

In East Asia, one of the most frequent ingredients in this process, somewhat paradoxically, was Confucianism. Ostensibly relegating the Confucian heritage to the dustbin of history, ideas associated with the Enlightenment were instead fused with the existing cosmology—which in turn was refashioned under conditions of global interaction. In Japan, the term *ri*, which in Confucian thought denotes the principle that bestows order and harmony on human society, was used to express the idea of laissez-faire and the rationality of market exchange.[87] In China, the notion of progress was constructed by drawing both on neo-Confucianist discussions and on social Darwinist texts.[88] And Liu Shipei, intoxicated by his fascination with Rousseau, published his *Essential Idea of the Chinese Social Contract* in 1903, arguing that the essence of Rousseau's project could be found in the much older legacy of Confucianism.[89] As much as this was an ideological strategy to indigenize reformist concepts, it did affect the content of these concepts and enabled, for example, Enlightenment claims to be expressed in a language that was less reliant on an atomized individualism. Sometimes, conversely, Enlightenment rhetoric could help legitimate re-articulations of Confucian thinking in response to new global challenges.[90]

Second, "enlightened" concepts were wrested from their sole attachment to Europe. Around 1900, reference to "Enlightenment" was already globalized to such an extent that Western Europe ceased to be the only location of authority. In Java, for example, Kartini legitimized her demand for women's emancipation not only with Dutch models, but also with the texts of the Indian feminist Pandita Ramabai. Liberal reforms in 1830s Bengal, on the other hand, were fueled by analogies with Ireland and Greece, and especially with the independence movements in Latin America.[91] At the end of the century, the most powerful point of reference was Japan. After the 1905 military victory over Russia, Japan emerged in many parts of the world—including Egypt, Siam, and the Ottoman Empire—as a privileged counterpoint that promised to provide Enlightenment and modernization without the imperialism and race ideology displayed by the "West."[92]

The role of Japan as a cultural mediator was particularly powerful in East Asia.

[85] Bayly, "Rammohan Roy and the Advent of Constitutional Liberalism in India," 29.

[86] Marius B. Jansen, *The Making of Modern Japan* (Cambridge, Mass., 2002), 460–461.

[87] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *A History of Japanese Economic Thought* (London, 1989), 29.

[88] A good overview of intellectual trends in China can be gleaned from Charlotte Furth, "Intellectual Change: From the Reform Movement to the May Fourth Movement, 1895–1920," in Merle Goldman and Leo Ou-Fan Lee, eds., *An Intellectual History of Modern China* (Cambridge, 2002), 13–96. Usually, the term "Chinese Enlightenment" is reserved for the May Fourth movement of 1919. See Vera Schwarcz, *The Chinese Enlightenment: Intellectuals and the Legacy of the May Fourth Movement of 1919* (Berkeley, Calif., 1986).

[89] Xiaoling Wang, "Liu Shipei et son concept de contrat social chinois," *Études chinoises* 27, no. 1–2 (1998): 155–190; Hao Chang, *Chinese Intellectuals in Crisis: Search for Order and Meaning, 1890–1911* (Berkeley, Calif., 1987).

[90] See Viren Murthy, "Modernity against Modernity: Wang Hui's Critical History of Chinese Thought," *Modern Intellectual History* 3 (2006): 137–165; Ban Wang, "Discovering Enlightenment in Chinese History: *The Rise of Modern Chinese Thought*, by Wang Hui," *boundary 2* 34, no. 2 (2007): 217–238.

[91] Bayly, "Rammohan Roy and the Advent of Constitutional Liberalism in India."

[92] Aydin, *The Politics of Anti-Westernism in Asia*.

This content downloaded from
149.10.125.20 on Sun, 13 Mar 2022 03:53:33 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

"Fortunately, Japan has taken the lead in opening the way to enlightenment [*kyohwa*]," wrote the editors of *Hwangsŏng sinmun* in 1899.[93] Attracted by Japan's successful development, but also threatened by its aggressive imperialism, the Korean movement for "Civilization and Enlightenment" (*munmyŏng kaehwa*) was primarily oriented toward the Meiji state. A good example is the influential Enlightenment thinker Yu Kilchun, who began his studies at Fukuzawa's Keiō University. Disillusioned by Japan's modernization, which he felt was an inferior copy and a poor imitation of the West, Yu traveled to the United States to see modernity "with his own eyes." After his return, he published the influential *Observations on a Journey to the West* (*Sŏyu kyŏnmun*), which would make "Enlightenment" a household name in Korea. But even though Yu made every effort to systematically erase all Japanese traces of his encounter with the West, his book remained closely modeled after Fukuzawa's *Seiyō jijō*. Indeed, Fukuzawa subsidized publication of the book, which was produced in Japan on his printing press because by 1895 there were not yet any printing presses in Korea with Hangul script.[94]

Japan also emerged as an important agent of intellectual innovation in Qing China. In the wake of the failed 1898 coup, Tokyo was a magnet for reform-minded Chinese. For many of them, the sojourn in Japan was perceived as a crucial turning point. "Books like I have never seen before dazzle my eyes. Ideas like I have never encountered before baffle my brain. It is like seeing the sun after being confined in a dark room," confessed Liang Qichao, the most influential Chinese thinker of the turn of the century, who intended to transfer Japan's *bunmei kaika* to China in the form of a general "Enlightenment": "I am like a different person."[95] In the years to come, the ferment generated by this exchange would enable the production of new knowledges. Japanese teachers worked as consultants for the reform of the Chinese educational system. Liang founded a bureau of translation in Shanghai, and up to 1911, about 1,000 Japanese works were published in Chinese. Most importantly, Japanese neologisms were imported to China: "science" and "labor," "nation" and "equality," "society" and "capitalism" were among the hundreds of terms newly coined in Japan—by building in turn on classical Chinese characters.[96] The authority of forms of knowledge that were associated with Japan was immense; imitating Japan seemed to promise a shortcut to modernization in comparison to learning from the "West." At the same time, cultural borrowing from Japan was legitimized as tapping into an already "Asianized"—and hence different—version of modernity, devoid of the kind of individualism bordering on the egotistical that many observers saw as

[93] Cited in Schmid, *Korea between Empires*, 90.

[94] Ibid., 110–111; Lee Sang-Ik, "On the Concepts of 'New Korea' Envisioned by Enlightenment Reformers," *Korea Journal* 40, no. 2 (2000): 34–64; Shin Yong-ha, "The Thought of the Enlightenment Movement," *Korea Journal* 24, no. 12 (1984): 4–21.

[95] Cited in Douglas R. Reynolds, "A Golden Decade Forgotten: Japan-China Relations, 1898–1907," *Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan* 4, no. 2 (1987): 93–153, quote from 116. See also Reynolds, *China, 1898–1912: The Xinzheng Revolution and Japan* (Cambridge, Mass., 1993); Paula Harrell, *Sowing the Seeds of Change: Chinese Students, Japanese Teachers, 1895–1905* (Stanford, Calif., 1992). Specifically on Liang and his transnational agenda, see Xiaobing Tang, *Global Space and the Nationalist Discourse of Modernity: The Historical Thinking of Liang Qichao* (Stanford, Calif., 1996); Joshua A. Fogel, ed., *The Role of Japan in Liang Qichao's Introduction of Modern Western Civilization to China* (Berkeley, Calif., 2004).

[96] See Lydia H. Liu, *Translingual Practice: Literature, National Culture, and Translated Modernity—China, 1900–1937* (Stanford, Calif., 1995).

This content downloaded from
149.10.125.20 on Sun, 13 Mar 2022 03:53:33 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

prevalent in Europe. "Japan has certain advantages over the West," Zhang Zhidong emphasized in 1898. "China and Japan share similar circumstances and customs, making it easier [for us] to copy from Japan."[97]

The result of these processes of mixing, and of expanding the range of models, was a transnational production of knowledge that cannot be reduced to a European genealogy. Social groups in Istanbul, Manila, and Shanghai literally *made* the Enlightenment; they were not merely on the receiving end of innovations conceived elsewhere a century earlier. Historians have tended to read the history of knowledge as a script that is written in one place and then adopted and adapted in another, influencing if not determining the thoughts and actions of the recipients. But the reverse trajectory is at least as important. Speaking "Enlightenment" in Seoul was a response to a specific situation in Korea in the 1890s, and not a belated answer to Voltaire.

THE ENLIGHTENMENT WAS OBSESSED with the problem of origins. Surely this was not in itself original, as the search for origins has preoccupied intellectuals since the Age of Humanism. But at the end of the eighteenth century, the quest for origins took center stage and corresponded with the general trend toward historicizing science and philosophy. As biblical and divine authority no longer guaranteed absolute certainty, genealogy and attempts to trace all phenomena back to their earliest origins took its place. Even if the Enlightenment was defined by privileging rationality, future orientation, and progress—Ernst Cassirer was one of the first to point out this paradox—it was at the same time tied to the spirits of the past and the fascination with beginnings. "The specter of origins," according to Pierre Saint-Amand, "is the skeleton in the closet of Enlightenment political philosophy, the evil spirit that haunts it, the ever-present threat of incompletion."[98]

Thus Condillac sought the origins of human knowledge, and Rousseau explored the origins of inequality. The quest for origins—and foundations—of law, of national consciousness, of religion, was an ongoing concern of scientific research, philosophical speculation, and erudite discussion. Winckelmann and later Schiller initiated the cult of antiquity, the Archimedean point of departure of European culture. Archaeology was complemented, in the wake of Napoleon and Champollion, by Egyptology. Colonial expansion extended the quest for origins—of Europe, of Man, of the modern—to the whole world: ethnographers searched for the "primitive peoples"; William Jones in Bengal inquired into the common origins of Greek and Sanskrit; linguists and anthropologists scrutinized the roots of the Indo-Germanic language and the Aryan origins of European civilization. Also beyond Europe, the quest for origins was a strategy to tap into this discourse: Hindu reformers in Bengal looked for the oldest available texts in order to define the cultural foundations of India, and José

[97] Cited in Reynolds, "A Golden Decade Forgotten," 113. For an instructive case study, see Joan Judge, "The Ideology of 'Good Wives and Wise Mothers': Meiji Japan and Feminine Modernity in Late-Qing China," in Joshua A. Fogel, ed., *Sagacious Monks and Bloodthirsty Warriors: Chinese Views of Japan in the Ming-Qing Period* (Norwalk, Conn., 2002), 218–248.

[98] Pierre Saint-Amand, "Hostile Enlightenment," in Jean-Joseph Goux and Philip R. Wood, eds., *Terror and Consensus: Vicissitudes of French Thought* (Stanford, Calif., 1998), 145–158, quote from 145.

This content downloaded from
149.10.125.20 on Sun, 13 Mar 2022 03:53:33 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

Rizal in the Philippines constructed a precolonial "Golden Age" whose accomplishments dwarfed European civilization.

Not only was this fetishization of the origin part of Enlightenment discourse; it has been at the core of metanarratives about the Enlightenment ever since. Attempts to situate the Enlightenment in world history, in particular, have operated within the framework of a history of origins. Historians have looked for the emergence of what they saw as the core of the Enlightenment—in substance, in space, and in time—and have tended to read its further history as one of gradual diffusion, if not dilution. Typically, this was a history in which eighteenth-century Europe served as the point of origin, and the rest of the world was but the site of a derivative discourse.[99]

The Enlightenment of the eighteenth century, however, was not the intellectual monopoly of Europeans. It needs to be understood as a result of the transnational co-production of knowledge by many contributors around the world. This is not to deny that particular debates were also deeply embedded in European traditions, and were shaped by specific situations in places such as Edinburgh, Halle, and Naples. But the intellectual dynamic as well as the revolutionary impact of the transformations of the late eighteenth century was very much energized by global conditions.

Moreover, the Enlightenment was not confined to its Atlantic moment in the eighteenth century; it had a much longer course. This was a history not so much of its diffusion as of its permanent reinvention. Groups and social milieus that pressed for social and cultural change invoked the authority of the Enlightenment while fusing it with other traditions. In the process, what was seen as the core of the Enlightenment changed profoundly, both because of the creative merging of elements from a variety of cultural backgrounds, and because these ideas were proposed in geopolitical contexts that differed greatly from eighteenth-century Europe. Increasingly, Enlightenment was employed as a concept that allowed historical actors to think globally and to position their communities on a world stage.

This requires a rethinking of the spatiality and temporality of the global Enlightenment. Its history was shaped more by the specific constellations in the locations in which it was invoked than by the texts of European sages. To be sure, the gradual translation and circulation of their writings, and of vulgarized handbooks, did have an impact and was discussed in places as distant as Chile and Vietnam. But even more important than this centrifugal dissemination was the use to which it was put: elites in Calcutta, Lima, and Tokyo invoked Enlightenment ideas for purposes and claims of their own—and thus transformed the connotations of the concepts. In spatial terms, then, the globality of the Enlightenment cannot be explained simply as emanation from a center. Its temporality also needs to be rethought, as it was determined not by origins and continuities, but rather by simultaneity and conjunctures. Eighteenth-century Paris, in other words, was not the model and 1900s Shanghai the sequel. Elites in late Qing China were shaped by forces and concerns of their own time, and the way in which the *philosophes* were translated, cited, and hijacked was structured by these conditions.

[99] On the notion of derivative discourse, see Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse* (Minneapolis, 1986). The internalist view of European history is widespread. One of its most vociferous proponents is David S. Landes, *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations: Why Some Are So Rich and Some So Poor* (New York, 1998).

This content downloaded from
149.10.125.20 on Sun, 13 Mar 2022 03:53:33 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

An assessment of the Enlightenment in global history, therefore, should not be concerned primarily with origins, either geographically or temporally. Instead, the focus needs to be on moments of articulation and invention, and these moments need to be understood in their constellations of global synchronicity. On its most general level, the dynamic of appropriation was conditioned and mediated by the geopolitical order of the world and the capitalist integration of the globe in an age of imperialism. Under these conditions, ideas that were (sometimes strategically) associated with Europe were taken up by different actors, and they were connected to other bodies of cultural practice and thought.

Ultimately, however, it was only this process of global circulation, translation, and transnational co-production that turned the Enlightenment into the general and universal phenomenon that it had always purported to be. The discourse of eighteenth-century Europe relied on a language of universal claims and worldwide validity. But to make these claims valid in practice, and indeed to convince—and frequently force—people around the world to accept their claims, more was needed than the allegedly inherent power of reason. This implementation was the work of many different actors, influenced by geopolitics and the uneven distribution of power, fed by high hopes and utopian promises, by threats and violence.[100] Only this complex and nonlinear process of global actualization was able to render the universalist claims of the Enlightenment ubiquitous—and in this restricted sense universal.

[100] Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*.

Sebastian Conrad holds the Chair in Modern History at Freie Universität Berlin, where he has taught since 2010. He is the author of *German Colonialism: A Short History* (Cambridge University Press, 2012), *Globalisation and the Nation in Imperial Germany* (Cambridge University Press, 2010), and *The Quest for the Lost Nation: Writing History in Germany and Japan in the American Century* (University of California Press, 2010). He is currently writing an introduction to debates in the field of global history.

This content downloaded from
149.10.125.20 on Sun, 13 Mar 2022 03:53:33 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms