

STS.007 Fall 2010

Reading questions for Christian, *Maps of Time*, Chapter 14

From the perspective of “big history,” what are some of the most important events of the 20th century? (440)

How is the Modern Revolution a “phenomenological one,” i.e. one in which the frameworks of existence –space and time—have changed? Recall that the subtitle of Schivelbusch’s book *The Railway Journey* is “the industrialization of time and space in the 19th century,” and recall also the description in the Communist Manifesto that “all that is solid melts into air...” Does this suggest that time and space began to be compressed/expanded before the 20th century? According to Christian, what is distinctive about the way they have changed in the 20th century? (440-42)

How has world population grown in the 20th century? (442-43 including table on 443)

How has world production grown in the 20th century? (444-46) What does the table on p. 445 tell you about the organization of production in the 20th century?

What are some of the largest and most obvious “waves of innovation” in the 20th century? What assumptions are made when the role of technology in history is described in this way? (442-44)

Compare capitalist cycles of over-abundance with Malthusian cycles of scarcity. Have the former displaced the latter or do they coexist, perhaps in new combinations? How do they result in new ways of thinking about history itself (to paraphrase Hobsbawm, p. 442)? How do they result in new roles for governments? For non-governmental corporations? (refer back to table on p. 445) How is “tribute” exacted in the age of consumer capitalism?

What are some of the ethical and behavioral changes that have emerged in an age of consumer capitalism? (447-48)

According to Christian, what is the historical relationship between equality and productivity in modern capitalist societies? Do you find his analysis convincing? What evidence does he provide of inequities within and among nations? What is the direction of change in equity of distribution? Can you imagine a role for “technology in history” that alters the current trend towards greater inequity? If so, what would that role be? (448-51, including tables on p. 450 and 452)

The “creative destruction” of capitalism (Schumpeter’s expression) continues to render extinct long-established ways of life. What are some of them? What others would you add from your own experience of knowledge? (451-54)

How has capitalism also rendered extinct, or nearly so, traditionally organized tributary empires? What are some examples? How does Christian explain his paradoxical listing of Communist empires under this heading? Do you find his analysis persuasive? Can you think of other parts of the world where governments are not primarily organized around capitalist methods and values? (454-57)

How do the war-related conflicts of the 20th century compare with such conflicts in earlier centuries? Consider how this analysis connects with what we learned about the American Civil War as an “industrial war.” What are Christian’s predictions regarding the future of warfare? (457-59)

How does Christian measure and summarize changes in the relationship between humanity and our home planet in the 20th century? What are some of the obvious critical limits that need to be dealt with in the 21st century? How do you find yourself reacting to this summary of serious problems? What is the role of “technology” in addressing them? What other forms of creativity are needed? (459-63)

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