

Editorial

<https://doi.org/10.1515/ngs-2021-0034>

Keywords: globality, globalization, Bruce Mazlish, global studies, global history

Twenty years ago, this journal's founder, Bruce Mazlish, along with Akira Iriye, introduced a seminar in global history at Harvard University. It may be hard to believe today, but that seminar, one of the first of its kind, was then regarded as a pedagogical curiosity.

The course proved popular and so did its syllabus, which was later published as a book (*The Global History Reader*, Routledge, 2005). That book joined others sponsored by the Toynbee Prize Foundation's initiative on New Global History, based informally at MIT and Harvard, and with the collaboration of a new Center for the Study of Globalization at Yale under the direction of Nayan Chanda. Founding a journal of global history seemed like a natural next step. A proposal was accepted by a publisher and this journal was on its way to producing its inaugural issue when a new *Journal of Global History* was announced by Cambridge University Press. Out went the publisher and the title, but not the journal. Renamed *New Global Studies*, it celebrates the publication of its 15th volume, now with the imprimatur of De Gruyter.

The change was fortuitous because it forced the journal to become more transparently multidisciplinary than it had initially set out to be, and it underscored its emphasis on the contemporary period, when globalization, though not unprecedented, has spread so far and wide in human affairs that it is possible to acknowledge for the first time in history a truly global human consciousness. Today most people on the planet are aware, in theory and in practice, of the existence of a single planet, and of their own existence as inhabitants on this planet. The human mind – and therefore the mind of humanity – had changed.

For that reason we devote this double issue to the theme of globality. The articles in the pages that follow address it from a number of disciplinary perspectives and emphasize several types of global interconnections, material as well as immaterial. In recruiting authors for this issue, we asked a few broad questions: How has globality transformed scholarship and public discourse in art, the humanities, and science? How has globality itself been transformed by globalization? How has “global” been refined (and/or obscured) during the past few decades by the proliferation of work on global studies, global history, and globalization? How have

global subcultures, regionalisms, and related terms (“Global South,” etc.) redefined globality? What is the evolving relationship between global thought and other geocultural mentalities, concepts, and ideologies (universalism, etc.)? And, what might the future hold for globality?

Professor Mazlish, an American historian of technology, knowledge, and the mind, died in 2016, shortly after the death of two other founders of global studies: Ulrich Beck and Christopher Bayly. Beck was a German sociologist of change, adaptation, and vulnerability. Bayly was a British historian of politics, empire, and trade. All three scholars were generous polymaths. Some people are fond of triptychs, and these three allow for one regarding the contemporary understanding of global studies in the juxtaposition of their work on consciousness, modernity, and materiality.

The contributors to *New Global Studies*, its editors, and its reviewers have aimed during the past decade and a half to disseminate work that combines those three elements. It is now difficult to discuss most contemporary phenomena, from territoriality to migration to economic interdependence to cultural appropriation, in any other way. Yet, the jury is still out on their relative weight vis-à-vis one another. Does globalization make possible a global consciousness? Or does it happen more the other way around? Do early modern and even pre-modern manifestations of such a consciousness relative to time, space, place, and value, enhance or diminish the significance of the kind of globality that we experience today?

To take the comparison a step further, we could apply to the triptych another juxtaposition once applied by the historian David Armitage to three types of Atlantic history with the prefixes of circum-, trans-, and cis-. The terms “global” and “universal” are still not synonyms, which is to say that the world is still large and diverse enough to remain particular, distinct, and divided. Yet, here again, it has become nearly impossible to study or understand most aspects of today’s world without reference to how people, goods, ideas, and most other subjects of inquiry cross a border, compare to subjects on the other side of the border, or affect multiple other subjects elsewhere. The ubiquity of circum-global, trans-global, and cis-global scholarship moreover suggests that, to paraphrase Professor Armitage, we are all globalists now.

The open-endedness of the above questions is as obvious as it is important. The surfeit of “global” scholarship during the past two decades does not guarantee that they will be answered fully any time soon. That is not because the proliferation of global forms of inquiry (and, increasingly, of meta-inquiry) is necessarily a source of confusion; or, alternatively, because more necessarily means better. Rather, to raise such questions about globality presses further on the conflation of normative and empirical orientations of scholarship which still attaches to the

nature of global studies. Simply stated, it is still difficult to convince skeptics that to be a proponent of global studies, and especially of inter- and multidisciplinary, is not necessarily to be a proponent of globalization – a point that is emphasized in several of the essays that follow – or that many contemporary phenomena, including globalization, have a meaning and significance which can only be understood by historicizing human consciousness.

Bruce Mazlish liked to say about his skeptics, “they just don’t get it.” This anniversary volume is dedicated to his memory with the assurance that now, because of this collaboration, many more of them do.