Origins

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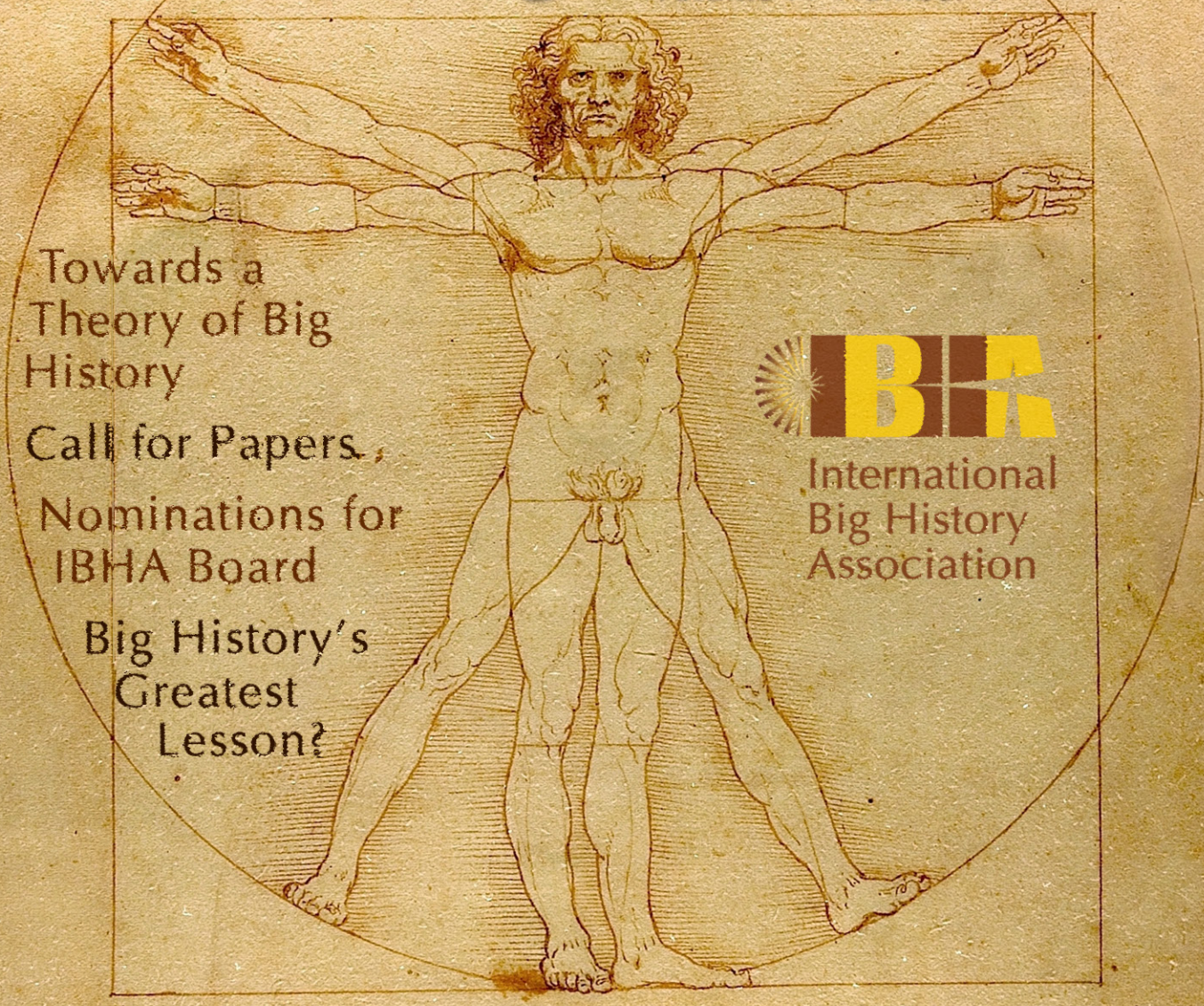

Towards a Theory of Big History

Call for Papers

Nominations for IBHA Board

Big History's Greatest Lesson?

International Big History Association

Towards a Theory of Big History

David Blanks
Chair, Department of History
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Big History began as a teaching rubric, an interdisciplinary way of presenting the past that helps students locate themselves in relation to the universe, the planet, other living creatures, and other people. Quickly those teaching the course discovered some remarkable patterns, and over time an increasingly unified narrative took shape in the hands of scholars that saw this as both desirable and possible. Rules, shared goals, and methods were agreed upon; a professional organization was created; a journal will soon follow; and scholarly boundaries were established. Inevitably, as Big History gets bigger, those outside this emerging discipline will begin to take notice, and they will feel compelled to comment. Many will not like it. Their motives will vary, but might well be summed up in the biblical injunction, "Cursed be he that removeth his neighbour's landmark" (Deuteronomy 27:17).

As the debate unfolds, we need to be prepared to explain what we are doing in a way that makes good theoretical sense, especially to those working in fields such as historiography, the philosophy of science, and the sociology of knowledge. In order to do so, we must have a clear understanding among ourselves, and now that Big History has been established as a discipline in its own right, it is time to get our theoretical house in order. It was what David Christian had in mind when he wrote, "Only when a modern creation myth has been teased out into a coherent story will it really be possible to take the next step: of criticizing it, deconstructing it, and perhaps improving it."[1]

My aim here is to initiate a theoretical inquiry by erecting some signposts pointing towards the sorts of problems and solutions we should be thinking about. Much of the discussion will revolve around two fundamental questions: "What is history supposed to do?" and, if we can agree upon that, "How do we present our ideas?." A vast literature already exists on these subjects, but a book is needed that addresses them specifically in Big History terms; this would require taking a fresh look at the issue of whether history can be scientific, and re-examining the necessity of presenting Big History in narrative form, which isn't scientific at all.[2] For now, though, to get us headed in the right direction, I would like to set out by looking at three closely related and immediate concerns: the theory-of-everything problem, the problem of scale, and the problem of meaning.

The Theory-of-Everything Problem

The beauty of Big History is that it is a simple, elegant, evolutionary epic that "attempts to explain the widest range of phenomena with the fewest possible principles."[3] Those attracted to the field appreciate this approach because it fits their world picture. Indeed, it *is* our world picture. (Or at least part of it.) The problem is that we are not in agreement about what these principles are, much less how few there should be. Moreover, we have not done a very good job of explaining why they are necessary, and we have made no attempt whatsoever to respond to those who argue that a theory of everything is *neither* desirable *nor* possible.

In *Maps of Time*, Christian adopts what he calls a "wide definition" of Big History, which is the one I am using here, but even within a wide definition, it matters, from a theoretical perspective, whether Big History is a full-blown theory, a new paradigm, a system of knowledge, a structuring principle, or a scientific creation myth. In regards to any claims to being a unified study of all existence, each version employs its own set of weights and measures. Do we want to be the Newtons of history? Are we teachers trying to connect our students and ourselves to everything in the universe? Or is it something else?

As to why it is important to search for a unified theory/approach, this needs to be explored through a much more fully developed historiography.

We are only just getting to the point where we can do this, but now that a modern creation myth has been teased out into a coherent story, the time is upon us. In addition to looking at earlier examples of Big History as we think of it, we need to trace the intellectual roots of the idea that everything should be explained through a single theory. Arguably in the western tradition this goes back to Democritus (or Heraclitus, take your pick) and can be followed via Lucretius through the Renaissance to Galileo, Newton and beyond;[4] but in our contemporary, modern sense, especially in regards to the discipline of history, I think a good case can be made that this urge to understand everything through a unified scientific approach began with Auguste Comte.

This is important because it suggests that our belief in a unified, scientific worldview is just that, a belief, and that it is not itself a proposition that can be either defended or proven scientifically (an idea I will return to in the section on meaning). This does not make it any less true, but it is vital that we are clear about the intellectual and cultural underpinnings of our basic assumptions so that we can explain our concepts to others, and so that we can defend them against those who believe that a scientific approach to the past negates the human element that they think history is supposed to be about in the first place.

The greatest challenge to our goal of finding a unified theory for Big History is that a number of eminent scientists and philosophers have abandoned the idea—or at least think that it is not possible given our current state of knowledge. From a philosophical perspective, these critiques revolve around the reasons (primarily anti-religious) that we are driven towards a theory of everything in the first place. From a scientific point of view, they are caught up in what is increasingly seen as the failure of reductionism, even within physics, let alone the notion that biology can be reduced to physics; biology's inability to explain consciousness, cognition and value through natural selection; and the growing recognition that "the evolution of the biosphere, human economic life, and human history are partially indescribable by natural law."[5] A possible way out of this is being suggested from within Big History by William Grassie, who calls for a nonreductive methodology and "intellectual nonviolence."[6]

The Problem of Scale

Another charge that has been leveled against Big History is that it is "anti-humanist," meaning that the emphasis on large time scales reduces humanity to a biological species. We are accused of shifting the focus of history away from a human-centered approach towards a depiction of natural processes, and thereby losing touch with the core concepts of civilization, culture and community. What we offer, some critics say, is not the origins of humanity, but the origins of matter.[7]

This, I think, is patently false, and stems from a rather superficial knowledge of the discipline gathered from web sites and news reports and unencumbered by any reading of actual Big History texts. It is, at bottom, not so much an insightful criticism as it is an ideological position. It is an argument not about potential theoretical difficulties inherent in Big History, but about what history is supposed to do. One cannot, however, criticize a project's goals on the grounds that those are not the ones you would pursue if you were doing it. Big History must be allowed to set its own agenda.

Big History is humanist to its core: its foremost concern is the fate of humanity; it is rooted in the liberal tradition; its understanding of mind is that it is the universe made conscious.

I would further argue that Big History is humanist to its core: its foremost concern is the fate of humanity; it is rooted in the liberal tradition; its understanding of mind is that it is the universe made conscious—a version of what physicists think of as the "anthropic principle;" it asks human-centered questions such as "Why are we here?" and "What does it all mean?;" and it acknowledges frankly and openly that its central narrative is a human construct. Big History chooses to emphasize large time scales and natural processes because it is interested in obtaining an overall perspective on the unfolding of human history; it sees itself as partner to traditional approaches rather

than a replacement for them. What could be more humanist in the twenty-first century than writing the story of all of us? If some prefer old-fashioned national history that is fine; Big History (at present) is working on a different problem all together.

And yet there *is* something troubling here for it raises the question of human agency. Big History is commonly defined as the exploration of the past on all different scales up to the scale of the universe itself. And when we write it and teach it, naturally, we are looking at far-reaching patterns. Rarely do we get down to talking about individual human achievements—and this is what critics mean when they say that we deny human agency.

Seen from the outside it might indeed seem like Big History is solely about the origins of matter and the effects of natural processes, and that human beings are thereby made insignificant. Is not history supposed to be about people? It is a justifiable concern. We have a lot to say about cities and states and the emergence of the agricultural revolution, but where are the farmers?

We are troubled by this from the inside as well as is seen in our ongoing debate about how to conduct Big History research. The broad theoretical model has been laid out; it works extremely well in the classroom; and it provides us with a framework for understanding the history of everything. But then what? Big History begins with an exploration of the universe, but where does it end? Having attained such heights, how do we climb back down? Can I study not only the way in which increased energy flows led to the formation of Sumerian city-states, but also the daily life of a peasant from Ur? What was his role in all of this? Who invented the plough? And how? Surely this has to be part of the story of the agricultural revolution. But is it still Big History? Where does Big History end and something else begin? What is the *smallest* scale at which Big History can be practiced?

The answer to these questions, and the solution to the problem of scale, might be found if we think carefully about the way in which we conceptualize our discipline. David Christian thinks that Big History should aspire to its own paradigm;[8] but Big History, especially to the extent that it wants to see itself as a science, cannot be a paradigm for all history because history itself—if we want to follow the Kuhnian approach—is divided into separate fields such as intellectual history, social history, and national history in the same way that science is divided into disciplines such as astronomy, geology, chemistry and biology. Big History could, however, be a paradigm for world history, in the same way that "collective learning" or "energy flow and the emergence of complexity" could be paradigms for Big History.

Leaving that discussion aside for the time being, for our present purposes, the idea of Big History as a paradigm has the virtue of solving the problem of scale, and along with it the question of human agency. In order for this to work, however, we will have to think of Big History not as a purely scientific enterprise, but as a framework for understanding the past that exhibits some characteristics of science and some of the social sciences and the humanities. A good analogy is the way that quantum theory employs both the wave model and the particle model at the same time. They cannot always be satisfactorily unified, but taken together they provide a fuller explanation than either would alone. It is what physicist Niels Bohr called the Complementarity Principle, the recognition that "a complete elucidation of one and the same object may require diverse points of view which defy a unique description."[9]

According to Kuhn, paradigms are sufficiently open-ended to leave all sorts of problems for a group of practitioners to solve. They need not, as theories, explain all the facts. What scientists do, then, is to take their paradigms as the baseline after which they no longer need to attempt to build the field anew, to start from first principles, and to justify each concept every time they produce a new article or book. Instead, once a paradigm has been widely accepted, they can get on with what Kuhn calls "normal science," which is a sort of mopping-up operation that aims to explore the phenomena revealed by the new paradigm, match the facts with the paradigm's predictions, and further articulate the paradigm

itself.[10]

To address the problem of scale, we must go into normal science mode. A good example of this is Robert N. Bellah's recent study, *Religion in Human Evolution: From the Paleolithic to the Axial Age*. Bellah writes: "I have by calling my book *Religion in Human Evolution*, chosen to take as my primary narrative the modern creation myth that David Christian describes."[11] Bellah's book is a Durkheimian analysis of the development of religion in ancient Israel, Greece, China and India but makes little mention of big bang cosmology. He just takes it as a given. This, I think, is exactly what Kuhn had in mind.

The Problem of Meaning

As should by now be apparent, the theory-of-everything problem and the problem of scale are both closely connected to questions of meaning, which will be central to what I see as an emerging debate concerning the nature and validity of Big History. Those who know Kuhn well could object to my proposed solution to the problem of scale by reminding me that Kuhn also said that, "Like the choice between competing political institutions, that between competing paradigms proves to be a choice between incompatible modes of community life."[12]

Science is just one department of thought and it doesn't need to take over the others. It doesn't have to be infallible and answer all questions.

What Kuhn meant by this was that paradigms are a type of background thinking that reflect values about the legitimate problems, standards and methods of science. Sixty years after the publication of *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Kuhn's analogy about competing paradigms being like incompatible modes of community life is in the humanities and social sciences even more widely held than it was then. Thus, from the perspective of those academic neighbors who feel threatened by the removal of their boundaries, Big History is not as objective as it claims to be; it is just another mode of community life.

Their argument will go something like this: Big History calls itself a modern creation myth. It claims to be a powerful and true scientific story based upon the best available empirical evidence and scholarly methods, but it is built upon an underlying world picture, a set of assumptions about the nature of the world we live in and how we ought to understand it. This world picture is a form of scientism, or what has elsewhere been called the Scientific Enlightenment narrative, the belief that science is somehow omnicompetent. Big History is thus a way of organizing the facts into a sort of drama: one that incorporates notions of self-interest, competition, individualism and progress (especially in its understanding of biological and cultural evolution); one whose narrative of origins implicitly endows the unfolding of time with purpose, gives its followers a sense of belonging to a whole greater than themselves, and often ends up in an attitude of either cosmic pessimism or cosmic optimism.

But science is just one department of thought and it doesn't need to take over the others. It doesn't have to be infallible and answer all questions. Big History then becomes a large-scale ambitious system of reasoning designed to articulate, defend and justify these underlying ideas. But having a paradigm does not make it a science. In any case, arguments for a faith in science lie outside of science. Belief in the scientific method cannot itself be determined scientifically: it seems self-evident, but is actually a value judgment. Although Big Historians acknowledge that theirs is but one way of answering questions such as Who am I? Where do I belong? and What is the totality of which I am a part?, and while they admit to the problems inherent in narrative, what these caveats amount to are what might be called a "flannel for the general public," and it constitutes a kind of ritual, which itself is a mark of religion, here, the religion of science. There is no getting around the problem of meaning because Big History raises questions it is not capable of answering.[13]

This is a powerful critique, one that touches upon all of the issues raised in my brief, initial inquiry into the theory of Big History. A well-developed response will require a lot of intellectual

heavy lifting: but as my sole purpose here is to point us in the right direction, I will keep my concluding remarks equally brief for, as Nietzsche noted, "Big problems are like cold baths: you have to get out as fast as you got in."[14]

Even though these arguments will be hard to swallow, especially for the more scientifically-oriented among us, they should be taken seriously. There are solid philosophical and methodological grounds for accepting the idea of paradigm as background thinking, and I believe we must be prepared to criticize our imaginative frameworks directly in their own suitable terms.[15] To the questions "What is history?" and "How do we write it?" we must add "Who is history for?"[16] Those working in the philosophy of history and the sociology of knowledge, and those working in Big History, are not only talking past one another, they are largely unaware of each other's existence, but this state of affairs will not continue for very long, and it should not. What we need to do now is to reintegrate the humanities and the social sciences into our scientific creation myth.

What we need to do now is to reintegrate the humanities and the social sciences into our scientific creation myth.

(Endnotes)

1 *Maps of Time: An Introduction to Big History* (Berkeley: University of California Press), p. 10.

2 As a way of thinking about whether Big History can truly be scientific, and where the idea of scientific history comes from, I highly recommend Ian Hesketh, *The Science of History in Victorian Britain*: *Making the Past Speak* (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2011) and of course William H. McNeill, "History and the Scientific Worldview," *History and Theory* 37:1 (February, 1998): 1-13.

3 Eric J. Chaisson, *Cosmic Evolution: The Rise of Complexity in Nature*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001), p. 211.

4 See Stephen Greenblatt, *The Swerve: How The World Became Modern* (New York and London: W. W. Norton and Co., 2011).

5 Stuart A Kauffman, *Reinventing The Sacred: A New View of Science, Reason, and Religion* (New York: Basic Books, 2008), p. xi. See also Mary Midgely, *The Myths We Live By* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003) and Thomas Nagel, *Mind and Cosmos: Why The Materialist Neo-Darwinian Conception of Nature Is Almost Certainly False* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

6 *The New Sciences of Religion: Exploring Spirituality from the Outside In and Bottom Up* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010).

7 Frank Furedi, "'Big History': The Annihilation of Human Agency," *Spiked*, 24 July 2013, http://www.spiked-online.com/newsite/article/frank_furedi_on_history/13844#.Uvtjt_tDqcA. Also see Stephen Beale, "New Gates History Curriculum Closes Young Minds," Crisis Magazine, 24 July 2013, http://www.crisismagazine.com/2013/new-gates-history-curriculum-closes-young-minds-to-god.

8 "Bridging the Two Cultures: History, Big History, and Science," *Historically Speaking* 6:5 (May/June 2005): 21-26.

9 *Atomic Theory and the Description of Nature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1934), p. 36. Cited in Ian G. Barbour, *Religion and Science: Historical and Contemporary Issues* (New York: HarperCollins, 1997), p. 117.

10 Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Third Edition (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), pp. 10-24. First published in 1962.

11 (Cambridge, Mass. and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011), p. 45.

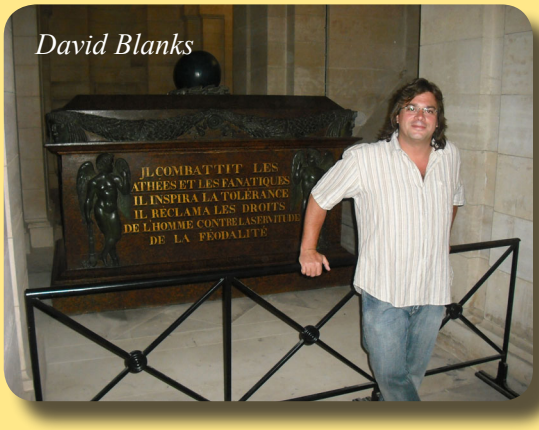
12 *Structure of Scientific Revolutions,* p. 94.

13 On the Scientific Enlightenment narrative, see Christian Smith, *Moral, Believing Animals: Human Personhood and Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 71. See also Mary Midgely, *Science As Salvation: A Modern Myth and Its Meaning* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002) and *Evolution As A Religion: Strange Hopes and Stranger Fears*, Revised Edition (London and New York: Routledge, 2002). First published in 1985.

14 Quoted by Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge, Mass.: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 12.

15 Midgley, *Evolution*, p. 30.

16 See Keith Jenkins, *Re-Thinking History* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991) and, especially important for world and Big History, William H. McNeill, "Mythistory, or Truth, Myth, History, and Historians," *The American Historical Review* 37:1 (February, 1986): 1-10.



Big History's Greatest Lesson? How to Find Humility in Our Commonality

David Gabbard
Boise State University

I came to Big History as a scholar in the field of Educational Foundations. Foundations has a long history in teacher preparation programs, dating back to the 1930s, and involves an interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary approach to the study of education, education policy, and schools. As teacher education programs increasingly succumb to pressures of high stakes testing and accountability, coursework in the history and philosophy of education has lost ground over the past two decades. Foundations scholars, such as myself, largely now teach diversity courses. That is, we work with students to explore issues of class, race, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation as they impact teaching and learning in schools.

While strongly opposing any form of discrimination or inequalities of opportunity in our schools and society, I have grown increasingly uncomfortable with traditional approaches to these issues. The majority of teacher education majors continue to be females from largely white, middle-class backgrounds. With noted Slovenian philosopher, Slavoj Žižek, I began to question the efficacy of what he calls "anemic liberal multiculturalism" with its emphasis on tolerance and celebrating diversity. I also questioned the more aggressive approach of forcing students to confront the privileges afforded to white, heterosexual, males by the structural and ideological influences of racism, sexism, classism, and homophobia. This approach, I noticed, tends to breed resentment among the largely white, heterosexual population that I teach. While I would never deny the reality of those forms of privilege, I empathize with those students who resent being pushed to believe that the root of all evil rests within white, heterosexual men. In my mind, no single race, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation holds a monopoly over good or evil, intelligence or stupidity.

I began contemplating what we, as a species, share in common. I transformed my course from being a class about human diversity to being a class about human commonality, developing units on our Cosmic Commons, our Terrestrial Commons, our Genetic Commons, and our Cultural Commons. In essence, I was doing my version of Big History before knowing that Big History even existed.

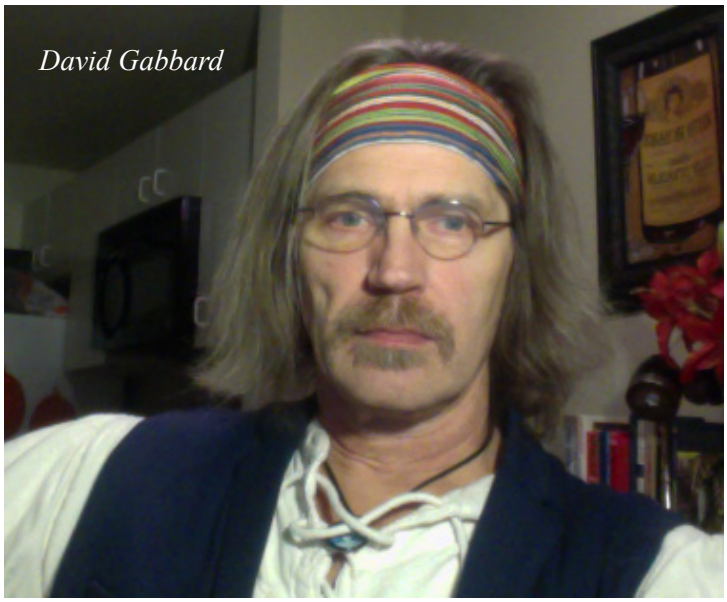
How can we possibly expect any approach focusing on differences and disparities to unite us in a common cause for a more equitable and just social reality, particularly when that vision of social justice is blind to its own internal contradictions? On the one hand, liberal multiculturalists want to celebrate cultural diversity. On the other hand, they envision social justice in terms of more political and social equality *within* and a more equitable distribution of rewards *from* the same set of dominant institutions that simultaneously derive and manifest their dominance from their ability to impose their own cultural norms. In fact, we can tie the destruction of indigenous cultures around the world to the historic globalization of those institutions. And while multiculturalists do acknowledge the devastation wrought by the forces of globalization upon the indigenous cultures of the Americas, Asia, Africa, and Australia, they typically define those forces in terms of Westernization or European imperialism. What Kipling egregiously cast as "white man's burden" becomes "white man's guilt." They fail to recognize, however, those forces for what they were; namely, global marketization. They further fail to recognize the fact that before those forces unleashed themselves upon the rest of the world, marketization first had to establish

dominion over Europe, destroying what remained of the indigenous cultures of Europe in the process.

Through this process of questioning and, ultimately, rejecting the sentimentalization of diversity, I began contemplating what we, as a species, share in common. It began with the recognition that, for better or worse, most of us on the planet now share the same set of dominant institutional structures (the market) and the dominant beliefs and values supporting them. We also, of course, share the same set of problems created by the market – problems that David Christian has identified with our status as a Stage II Civilization. From this recognition, I transformed my course from being a class about human diversity to being a class about human commonality, developing units on our Cosmic Commons, our Terrestrial Commons, our Genetic Commons, and our Cultural Commons. In essence, I was doing my version of Big History before knowing that Big History even existed.

At around the same time, I had begun reading the works of fellow anti-theists, Christopher Hitchens and Richard Dawkins. Anti-theists differ from atheists in that not only do we not believe in God, but we view as abhorrent the entire idea of an omnipotent, omniscient being who monitors and judges our every thought and action. Religion, it seemed to me, was the product of the evolution of human consciousness. At some point in time we developed the capacity to ask certain types of questions. In my own terms, I know that I was born at a specific point in time, POINT A. I also know that at some future point in time, POINT B, I will die. Where was my consciousness before POINT A? What happens to my consciousness after POINT B? Ultimately, of course, we developed the ability to question the existence of everything. Though we may have had the capacity to pose such questions, our means for answering them was limited. So, we made stuff up. While our means for answering some of those questions have radically increased since the Axial Age, they remain limited. Intellectually, there is only one honest answer we give to the questions of "where was my consciousness before POINT A?" and "what happens to my consciousness after POINT B?" Not only does this answer demand intellectual honesty, it also demands humility. In English, that answer consists of four little words that our egos make us loath to utter: "I do not know."

What I do know is that all I have, all I may ever have is the time between POINT A and POINT B. As Big History teaches us, it's a minute flash of time when set against the timeframe of 13.82 billion years since the Big Bang. But knowing this much provides me with the foundation for an ethic of humility to carry into my day-to-day activities. On the one hand, knowing that we all, as life forms, share this finitude in common conditions me to follow a simple dictum: Take joy from bringing joy. On the other hand, this ethic of humility helps me recognize the tragi-comic character of the current human condition. It allows me to laugh at our hubris and self-importance to prevent myself from crying. In my view, the survival of our species and many other species, as well, also depends on learning to move forward toward becoming a Stage III Civilization with such an ethic of humility. Our only option would be to be taught humility the hard way, if our stupidity and pride drive us to extinction.


David Gabbard

Last

CALL FOR PAPERS

INTERNATIONAL BIG HISTORY ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE

AUGUST 6 - 10, 2014
DOMINICAN UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
SAN RAFAEL (SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA), CALIFORNIA

TEACHING AND RESEARCHING BIG HISTORY: BIG PICTURE, BIG QUESTIONS

DEADLINE FOR ***PAPER*** / ***PANEL*** SUBMISSIONS IS APRIL 10, 2014

The International Big History Association (IBHA) defines its purpose as "to promote, support and sponsor the diffusion and improvement of the academic and scholarly knowledge of the scientific field of endeavor commonly known as "Big History" by means of teaching and research and to engage in activities related thereto."

Article 2 of the IBHA Articles of Incorporation.

The theme for the 2014 conference is "Teaching and Researching Big History: Big Picture, Big Questions." The conference seeks to continue the dialog begun at the first IBHA conference in 2012. In addition IBHA seeks to create a forum for the articulation, discussion, and distillation of questions central to Big History. Among the topics that are to be addressed at the conference through a series of panels, roundtables, and discussions are:

- *Big History and energy*
- *Big History in education*
- *Big History pedagogy*
- *Big History scholarship*
- *Big History research agenda*
- *Evolution of complexity*
- *Identification and analysis of thresholds*
- *Continuity and Contingency in our Universe*
- *Big History: interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, or trans-disciplinary?*
- *Big History and the future*
- *Big History and meaning*
- *Big History outcomes and assessment*
- *Politics and Big History*
- *Little Big Histories*

International Big History Association

Along with regular panels and roundtables, presentations might consist of:

- Question and answer sessions – where Big Historians will be able to answer questions and discuss research questions that are worth pursuing
- Brainstorming sessions – with very short, provocative papers
- General discussion panels – where different points of view about Big History can be addressed in 5 minute increments, specifically addressing the different cultural perceptions of Big History
- Workshops – where participants will view short film fragments and other art forms chosen by Big Historians, and presentations on Big History from the artistic point of view from artists, musicians, and storytellers
- Conference roundup – with a keynote address that summarizes the most important things outcomes of the conference

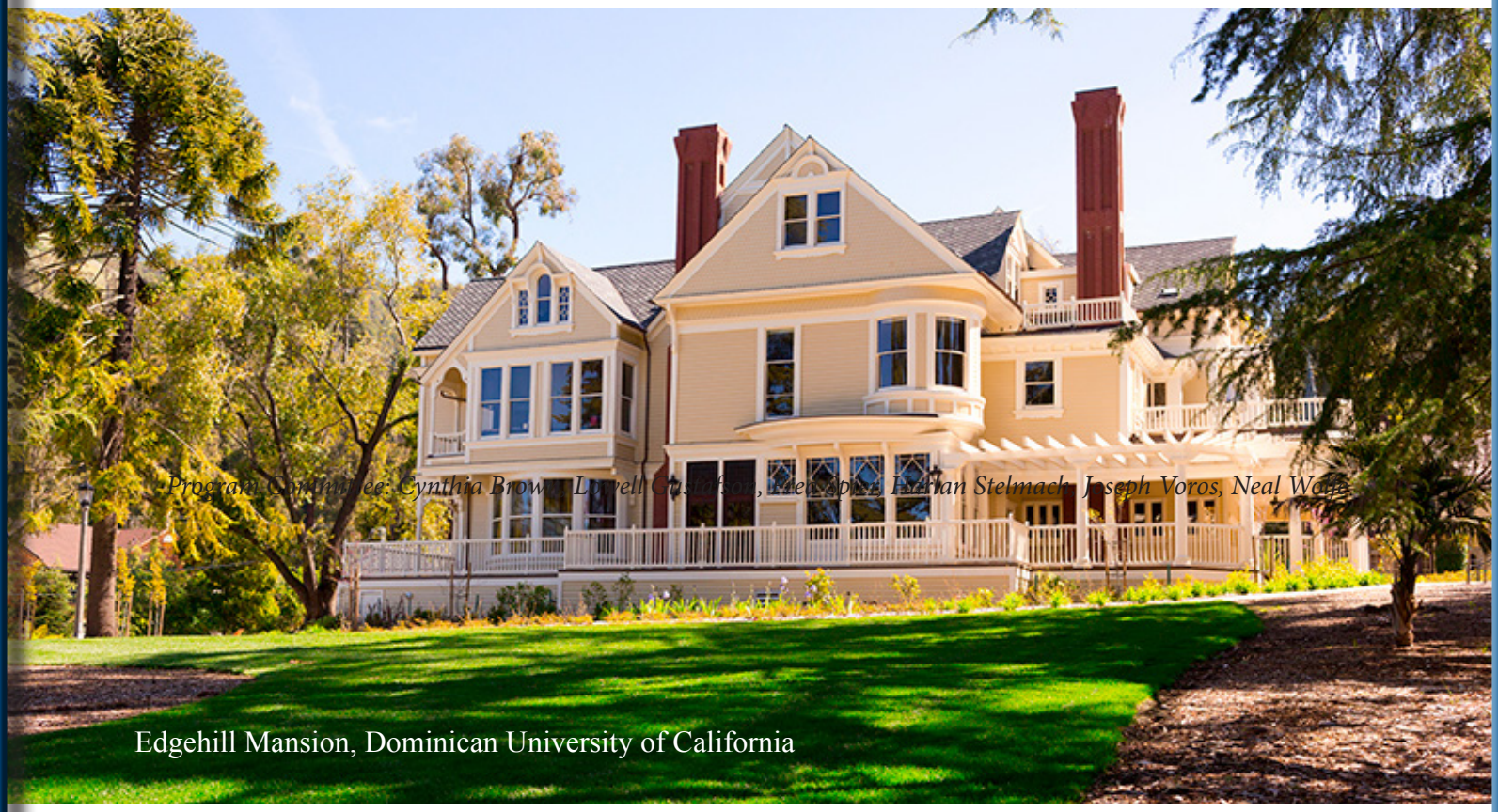
We encourage proposals on any topic related to Big History. A select group of papers will be included in a compilation of Big History Research that will be published after the 2014 conference.

The time limit for presenting papers will be 20 minutes, and the deadline for submitting papers to the session moderator is three weeks in advance of the conference. Individual paper proposals must include a 250 word abstract with the title of the paper, name, institutional affiliation, e-mail address, phone and fax numbers, and brief curriculum vitae, all integrated into a single file, preferably in MS-Word. Proposals for complete sessions or panels must contain the same information for each participant, as well as contact information and a brief C.V. for the moderator if you suggest one. (The program committee can help find moderators, if necessary.) Please submit your ***paper*** or ***panel*** proposal by clicking on one of these links, which allow for submission information. The deadline for paper and panel submissions is April 10, 2014.

All presenters at the conference must be members of IBHA. Presenters may become members at www.ibhanet.org and will need to do so prior to registration for the conference.

The IBHA Conference will convene on the campus of Dominican University of California in San Rafael, which is located twelve miles north of the Golden Gate Bridge. Attendees will have the option of selecting from one of several hotels in San Rafael and the surrounding area or staying in on-campus accommodation.
San Rafael is a wonderful destination in Marin County surround by woods and beaches. For all things San Rafael go to http://www.sanrafael.com. For a complete guide to San Francisco and its many attractions, visit http://www.sanfrancisco.com/. And if you have more time to explore the larger Bay Area, see http://www.visitcalifornia.com/Explore/Bay-Area/.

Please find more details on the conference at www.ibhanet.org. We hope you can join us for this fantastic second IBHA conference!



Edgehill Mansion, Dominican University of California

Transportation to/from San Rafael

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We suggest taking the Marin Airporter from SFO to Marin and disembarking at the Central San Rafael Transit Center. Approximate travel time is 1.5 hours. Buses pick up passengers at SFO every 30 minutes, on the hour and half-hour, beginning at 5:00 AM. The last bus of the night departs from SFO at midnight. Fare is currently $20. http://www.marinairporter.com/schedules_sfo_to_marin.html
From the Transit Center in San Rafael, there are taxis available to take you to your hotel. If you are staying at the Four Points by Sheraton in San Rafael, it is approximately 3.3 miles from the Transit Center to the hotel.

Flying into OAK
We suggest taking the Sonoma County Airport Express to Marin and disembarking at the Central San Rafael Transit Center. Fare is currently $26. Please refer to the Airport Express website for travel times and pick-up times. http://airportexpressinc.com/schedules.php
From the Transit Center in San Rafael, there are taxis available to take you to your hotel. If you are staying at the Four Points by Sheraton in San Rafael, it is approximately 3.3 miles from the Transit Center to the hotel.

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Hotel Reservations 1-415-479-8800

Callers should identify themselves members of "DU-IBHA" arriving on Wednesday, August 6th and departing Sunday, August 10th, 2014 to secure the special rate and receive their confirmation number. Callers should have a credit card ready to guarantee reservation.

Discounted Rate: $114 (by 5pm local time, June 13th, 2014)
Group Rate: $139 (by 5pm local time, July 11th, 2014)

Reservations may be cancelled without penalty up to 24 hours prior to arrival.

MAIL-IN REGISTRATION FORM | INTERNATIONAL BIG HISTORY ASSOCIATION Conference
TEACHING AND RESEARCHING BIG HISTORY: BIG PICTURE, BIG QUESTIONS
Dominican University of California, San Rafael, California | August 6-10, 2014

Name: _____ **Affiliation:**_____

Address:_____

City: _____**State:** _____**Postal Code:**_____**Country:**_____

Phone Number: _____**Email Address:**_____

CONFERENCE BADGE INFORMATION (Please state name and affiliation exactly as you want it to appear on the badge):

NAME:	
AFFILIATION:	

2014 REGISTRATION DATES: Early: **April 1 – May 31** | Regular: **June 1 – July 19** | Late: **begins after July 20**

QTY.	RATE	Subtotal	Total
	IBHA Members: Early $295 | Regular $325 | Late $355		
	Non-Members: Early $395 | Regular $425 | Late $455		
	IBHA Full-Time Student Members: Early $150 | Regular $180 | Late $210		
	Guest Pass: (Evening Social Events only): Early $150 | Regular $180 | Late $210		

Membership: *Consider taking advantage of the discounted registration rate if you are not currently a member by joining the IBHA. See membership rates below and enter rate that applies here:*

	Membership Type:		

Note: The last day for Conference Fee refund (less $30 handling fee) is **JULY 19, 2014**
TOTAL ENCLOSED: $

Please make checks payable to: International Big History Association
Payment must be made in US$ and payable through a U.S. bank.
Please note: returned checks will incur a $25 fee.

Please mail registration form to:
International Big History Association
Grand Valley State University
1 Campus Drive, LOH-181
Allendale, MI 49401 USA

****Daily bus transportation, meals and evening events are all included with registration.*

****Guest registration includes evening events only.*

MEMBERSHIP RATES	1 year	2 year	3 year
Student			$20
Annual Gross Income:			
30,000-39,999	$30	$50	$65
40,000-49,000	$40	$70	$95
50,000-64,9999	$50	$60	$125
65,000-79,999	$60	$110	$155
80,000-94,999	$70	$130	$185
95,000 – over	$80	$150	$215
Contributing			$300
Sustaining			$500
Lifetime			$2,000

Note re Membership: Although non-presenters do not have to be members of the IBHA to register for the conference, if you are not currently a member and would like to take advantage of the discounted member registration fees, please consider joining the IBHA before completing your conference registration. Please note that all presenters, panel chairs, and commentators **WILL** need to be members of the IBHA before we can confirm their participation.

Or please click here to register on-line,
or go to http://www.ibhanet.org/ and click on "Conferences".

Nominations for IBHA Board of Directors

There will soon be four open seats on the IBHA Board of Directors.

Any IBHA member may use the form that is available here to nominate an IBHA member to serve on the Board of Directors for a term of three years. Nominees will be contacted for their approval to be placed on the ballot and for a brief statement.

Names of those who have approved their nomination will be placed on the "Forum" page that is linked from the "Members'" tab on the IBHA website. (You will need to log into the website for the "Members" tab to appear above.) When a name is posted, 10% of the IBHA membership must endorse the nominee by May 1 in order for that person to become a candidate. To endorse a candidate, once a name is posted, please "reply" to that name and record your own as an endorser.

An electronic election for the new IBHA Board of Directors members that will be open to all IBHA members will be held on July 1 and last for a week. The ballot will include any member nominated candidates who each have been endorsed by 10% of the IBHA members, as well as candidates nominated by the current Board of Directors.

BHA members, in order to endorse a nominee, please log into the IBHA website at http://www.ibhanet.org, go to "Forums," click on "Nominations for IBHA Board of Directors," and reply to the nomination with your endorsement. To become a candidate for the IBHA Board in this way requires support from 10% of the IBHA membership.

The current IBHA Board will also be making additional nominations.

International Big History Association

International Big History Association
Brooks College of Interdisciplinary Studies
Grand Valley State University
1 Campus Drive
Allendale MI 49401-9403

http://ibhanet.org/