

Ludger Kühnhardt · Tilman Mayer
Editors

The Bonn Handbook of Globality

Volume 1

 Springer

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Introduction: The Bonn Handbook of Globality



Ludger Kühnhardt and Tilman Mayer

1 Objective

With *The Bonn Handbook of Globality*, 110 professors from the University of Bonn offer contributions for the further development of humanities and cultural studies under conditions of the global turn. Their goal is to interpret our era from the perspective of globality. The contributions to this handbook exemplify the breadth and depth of research and teaching at one of Germany's leading universities. Clarifying key words, conceptual notions, and symbolizations that are constitutive for our existence and for the cultural classification that frames it is part of the process of human self-understanding. It is an important task of the leading academic fields related to this process, too. We can find orientation in concepts that are significant for the empirical dimensions of human existence, as well as for the abstract categories of our social existence in the world. Concept interpretation is epoch interpretation.

Our epoch is a global age. It is an age in which connections and relationships around the globe have intensified to an unparalleled extent. Technological progress and the mechanisms of the market have created a degree of globalization that has never been seen before, even though there were globalization phenomena in earlier epochs as well. However, from the perspective of the sciences that study human beings and their cultural existence, the objective of scholarship goes beyond the description of the phenomena of this age. The goal is to understand the dominant

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phenomena, to interpret them, and to shape them wherever possible. Only then can the humanities and cultural studies come together to diagnose and treat the defining phenomena of our age for the benefit of humanity. Wherever this intellectual activity succeeds, it helps promote human dignity and a humane order.

In the global age, human dignity must always be conceived of in a global sense. Human order is still, and will remain, the order in places where the people of our era live. At the same time, the perspective from which human beings can be observed, understood, and explained in terms of their existence and the order of things within this existence is more global than ever before. It is planetary, spanning the globe. The editors of this handbook have proposed the concept of globality as a guiding category for measuring these findings. Globality does not mean the empirical completion of globalization as a process, one that ultimately reaches all peoples and nations on our planet and shapes their day-to-day lives. First and foremost, globality is a way of thinking. It looks at our globe the same way as the first astronauts who orbited the earth did: in amazement at the unity and smallness of our planet in the endless universe. Whatever divisions and contradictions exist on earth—lifestyles and worldviews, social relationships and economic conditions, political systems and geopolitical conflict lines, cultural spaces and symbolizations of existence—they cannot negate the unity of the globe, a worldly (*mondial*) dimension. Globality does not mean that all people and societies are on their way to becoming part of a connected and interdependent world order that sees itself as a world society or desires a world government. Globality as a figure of thought and a way of looking at the globe teaches us to see the world pragmatically rather than theoretically. Globality merely defines the boundary—the globe itself—within which diversity and contradiction are the norms. Globality is always pluralistic.

One of the main tasks of humanities and cultural studies is to interpret and define concepts and symbolizations in our day-to-day life. This handbook hopes to contribute to this process in terms of the manifold human-centered perspectives associated with globality. It accounts for a diversity of methods, thematic approaches, and academic perspectives. The handbook is committed to the principle of pluralism. Its authors are not bound to an individual theory or a binding worldview. They represent the individual nature of their personal research; as scholars of humanities and cultural studies, however, they are also part of the effort to make a shared, binding contribution to our interpretation of the global age. Technical and economic dimensions are the central focus of many globalization discourses. This work has different emphases than perspectives from economics and the finance spheres. We ask about the consequences of globality in forming concepts and in symbolization processes, which are important in the humanities and cultural studies. In doing so, we have used the potential, and have benefitted from the enormous diversity, offered by the University of Bonn.

Since its founding in 1818, the University of Bonn has seen itself as a reform university with a strong research profile. Influential researchers and university instructors have worked at the university during its two centuries of existence. Important fields in the canon of humanities and cultural studies are anchored at the University of Bonn. Members of Bonn's Faculty of Philosophy work in many different areas together with members of the Faculty of Law and State Sciences,

the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences, and the Faculties of Catholic and Protestant Theology. Students from all around the world benefit from the contact points between these faculties and contribute to the reputation of Bonn's research within worldwide networks.

The Bonn Handbook of Globality is a kaleidoscope of the canon of fields found in humanities and cultural studies and of their thematic and conceptual breadth. Such a wide-ranging spectrum of scholars working together at a single university cannot be held together by a claim to methodological or theoretical homogeneity. On the contrary, this handbook stands for a plurality of approaches and is an exemplary view of the phenomenon of globality that affects all of the authors. At the same time, it represents the traditional university culture that is cultivated in Bonn. *The Bonn Handbook of Globality* aims to build on the traditions that have developed since the founding of the University of Bonn. Above all, that means supporting autonomy through independent thinking and extrapolation. The editors and all of the authors welcome agreement and disagreement but, above all, further discussion. In contributing to the 200th anniversary of the University of Bonn in 2018, the 110 Bonn professors authoring this *The Bonn Handbook of Globality* (with eight essays that include work by research assistants) have mined the diversity of competences that are assembled in humanities and cultural studies and their affiliated faculties at the University of Bonn—with the goal of better understanding what globality means in and for humanities and cultural studies.

From 1949 to 1999, Bonn was the seat of government for the Federal Republic of Germany. During this time, the University of Bonn helped shape the development of Germany's political culture in many different ways. Thanks to the work done in Bonn, Germany was perceived by the entire world as a modern, consolidated democracy. Bonn created the framework for the German economic miracle. From Bonn, the Federal Republic addressed the darkest aspects of German history, the National Socialist dictatorship and World War II, in which the Holocaust demonstrated the great barbarities that people are capable of perpetrating on one another. From Bonn, Germany began to take part in the epochal process of European unification.

Many generations of university professors and students contributed to the renewal of German political culture post-1945. One academic stands out among many: Karl Dietrich Bracher, the master scholar and founding professor of the University of Bonn's Department of Political Science, taught generations of students—many of whom embarked on careers in public service—that it is possible to learn from history: With courage, perspective and the readiness to accept responsibility academic and societal boundaries can be transcended. Karl Dietrich Bracher passed away in 2016 at the age of 94. This handbook owes a great deal of its initial inspiration to the many impulses Bracher left among generations of students and his fellow colleagues, among them the authors of this introduction.

When the German government moved to Berlin in 1999, Bonn was established as one of the three European seats of the United Nations. Significant questions about human security and sustainable development have been addressed in Bonn since the start of the twenty-first century, as part of the new UN profile of the city. Bonn is a world-oriented city. From Bonn, German and European experiences are shared with the global community.

It is not just Bonn's public institutions that participate in this process. The scholars from the University of Bonn who have contributed to *The Bonn Handbook of Globality* offer useful information and interpretation beyond technological and economic solutions when it comes to questions raised by the global age. The world after the global turn impacts human existence and human interactions, including in an anthropological and ethical-normative sense; it impacts understanding, interpretation, and application of global concepts, ideas, and norms. This starting point guides the conceptual interpretations studied in this handbook based on a wide array of examples of key concepts in the cultural, social, and political order. The essays in *The Bonn Handbook of Globality* build on a wide range of traditions in Bonn's humanities and cultural studies.

From the perspective of globality, the authors look at very different methods and specialized views that can traditionally be found in the canonical fields of Bonn's humanities and cultural studies and their affiliated faculties. The scholars participating in this work aim to help interpret the world from an ethical-religious, linguistic-literary, and historical-political angle. Since this can be done by using concepts with universal categories, systematic theories, as well as regional comparisons, the basic introductory essays of the handbook explain the methodological considerations and the selection criteria which define the approach and structure *The Bonn Handbook of Globality*. An anthropological and simultaneously pragmatic view of the most important contexts for human life binds the essays collected together in this volume. The idea of globality and the concept of the global turn provide a basis for the methodological focus of all of the essays. The key words, notions, and symbolizations presented and discussed in this work—concepts of relevance for human existence which radiate across social orders—were chosen because of their particular relevance for a better understanding of the requirements and consequences of globality. The concepts in this work do not form a conclusive list, nor are the ideas presented in these texts considered the final word in each case. Instead, this work and each of its essays are meant as food for thought.

2 Structure

The Bonn Handbook of Globality includes 5 introductory essays, followed by 120 essays that follow a uniform structure to provide interpretations of importance as well as exemplary key words, notions, and symbolizations of relevance in humanities and cultural studies. The final six essays offer further consideration and reflection.

In his essay *Globality: Concept and Impact*, Ludger Kühnhardt describes globality as a figure of thought. This offers a way to reflect on the conditions in which the circumstances and concepts of contemporary human day-to-day life are rooted as a result of our shared existence on the globe. A globalistic perspective takes as its starting point the state of shared human existence on the globe—with its defined boundaries but also its constantly shifting forms of expression—in order to

question the formal unity of our globe in terms of its circumstances and consequences. The use of the term globality helps us think reflexively about diversity, contradictions, and oppositions but also about new emphases, learning processes, and relativizations of traditional perspectives in those areas of human day-to-day life that are particularly affected by the consequences of today's global interactions. In this sense, the reflexive use of the term "globality" helps us to better understand the many-layered processes of globalization.

In contrast to this interpretation of the concept of globality, Kühnhardt sees globalization as an incomplete (and presumably impossible-to-complete) process, not free from contradiction, supported by technology and economics, and ongoing across most regions and societies on earth. Globalization is primarily seen as an expression of the market principle and is especially associated with the effects of communication technology on the development of financial services and production chains. The worldwide effects of market mechanisms have become possible through technical innovations and by giving more and more people access to the tools that make communication and interaction possible across any distance, at previously unimagined speeds. From this perspective, globalization has become a broadly used but extremely ambiguous development concept for our era.

Finally, Kühnhardt discusses other concepts relating to globality: "Modernity" is widely used to characterize socially sophisticated, collaborative, and culturally pluralistic societies with a lifestyle that is based on rational and enlightened principles. "Modernization" describes the development and interaction of the structures and processes that make up modern Western society: urbanization, collaboration and industrialization, the use of sophisticated technologies, and at the same time rationality, abstraction, replacing premodern loyalties with functional interactions, and replacing community with society. "Americanization" is sometimes used synonymously with "modernization," since the socioeconomic and cultural-societal patterns practiced in the United States—including the political concept of the rule of law-based constitution—were seen for a long time as an expression of the most modernized society on earth. However, the essay argues universal—in other words unchanging—ideas, concepts, and norms are not necessarily globally present or accepted. Various motives can keep universal ideas, concepts, and norms from being realized. "Universalization" describes strategies and processes that are intended to help make ideas, concepts, and norms universally binding, at least gradually. These strategies—as well as the gradual intermediate steps on the path to fully implementing the principle of universality—are rarely consistent. They contrast with relativistic cultural assumptions as well as with empirical, factual impedimentary circumstances.

Volker Ladenthin, in his essay *Methods of Intellectual Concept Formation*, explains the organizational criteria for the handbook based on a more or less "discipline-neutral" anthropology that is used to define the areas of action for everyday human life. The constitutive ideas of these areas of action can be broken down into concepts and key words on the one hand; on the other, the organizational structure can be applied to concepts or key words that are intuitively discovered,

generated by specialists or in contemporary use (for instance, in the media and politics), thus providing a meaningful systematic context for them.

In this way, explains Ladenthin, the necessary concepts are generated. In order for this conceptual field to be not just necessary but also adequately supported, Ladenthin applies another criterion: the question of whether the necessary concepts are constitutive for the systematic understanding, historical creation, and actual or planned implications of globality or whether they are affected by current globalization processes (factually or hypothetically, but in any case in a way that shifts paradigms). This double process ensures that the handbook is neither a collection of randomly discovered concepts nor a dogmatic model or absolute process for interpreting the world, using the overarching concept to systematically derive sub-concepts.

Following these preliminary decisions, Ladenthin asks whether the human sense of action can be broken down into partial actions, in a way that is comprehensible and acceptable for all of the potentially participating disciplines, without allowing anthropology (or a specialized aspect of it) to become the leading science. The individual life *praxes* explained by Ladenthin cannot be derived from an overarching discourse, nor can they be derived from one another. They have a relational autonomy; in other words, they develop their discourse from themselves but can also be connected to other discourses. All discourses assume the existence of other discourses in light of overall human praxis; they determine the scope of their statements in dialogue with one another and do not make any claims to hegemony or totality. The individual *praxes* feature constitutive principles with a discriminating function; they also have regulatory principles that respond historically to challenges. They have a sophisticated methodology and specific forms of discourse. All of the *praxes* relate to an overall sense: the *conditio humana*.

The chosen organizational frameworks and individual concepts analyze the important dimensions of human life praxis under the conditions of globality and/or the changes in this life praxis as a result of globality. In the process, there is a consistent assumption of the existence of the individual person, the “self,” not in the sense of the Hegelian idea but as a practical organizational principle, in order to identify the common thread that runs throughout the structure. In keeping with these considerations, the concepts discussed in this handbook are broken down into six conceptual groups: development of the human being, how human beings communicate with others, the technical-instrumental appropriation of the world, the aesthetic-practical appropriation of the world, the organization of public order, and the moral order and the problem of the finite nature of human beings.

Markus Gabriel, in his essay *The World of Worlds*, develops the concept of a pluralistic world that is also committed to diversity in its interpretation of the phenomena that shape it. The reflection on globality takes place worldwide, but there are also nationally specific forms of expression. Gabriel points out the dual meaning of the term “reflection,” which does not simply mean thinking about something but also involves a doubling of the object being reflected upon. This view of philosophy has consequences for the diagnosis of the era in light of globalization. Diagnosing the era also always means interpreting modernity and

often involves a criticism of modernity. Gabriel points out various strands in philosophical world interpretation, some of which are more critical of globalization than others. He also asks whether and to what extent China has really understood and responded to its relationship with the globalized world.

First and foremost, however, Gabriel aims to define the basic concepts of earth, globe, and world in relation to one another. While the term “earth” refers to the habitat of our planet, the term “globe” expands its horizon to include the cultural characteristics of this planet—something that is already included in the Latin meaning of the word. The globe is the driving force for development in our world. The world itself, he says, fundamentally only exists as a plural: the world of worlds. Globalization and globality, according to Gabriel, strongly depend on the way in which they are described and the terms used to describe them. The analysis of globality simultaneously helps to shape these. Fundamentally, according to his central thesis, we do not live in the world, but in a world of worlds. What is special about the age of globality is that humanity is moving toward global diversity. The French term *mondialisation* refers to the Latin *mundus* and thus the Greek *kosmos* and therefore to the search for a description of the harmonious whole on earth. Since this order is always created by human beings, it can only be as diverse as human beings themselves. The awareness of the diversity of worlds in which we live, concludes Gabriel, has a binding impact on our interpretation of globality.

Dividing the world into this wide range of organizational concepts, says Gabriel, provides the insight that the human habitat is diverse. The globalistic view of the world expresses a perspective from which the whole is to be understood. The overall context of the one world is constituted by the diversity of perspectives and products that humanity has achieved thus far. However, this does not establish the unity of the world, but a world of the world. Humanity means being human in diversity. The world only exists in plural form, in other words as a world of worlds. This philosophical view of the earth and its globality necessarily leads to the conclusion that the world does not occur within the world—that the one homogenized world is subsumed by the diversity of worlds. The constitutive feature of today’s world, concludes Gabriel, is that humanity is conscious of the diversity of worlds. Thus, he says, there cannot be a uniform, single overall context that merges the world of worlds together, not even conceptually.

Wolfram Högrefe’s essay *Nomos Earth* describes European philosophy since antiquity as the bearer and driver of the idea of globality. Plato’s ideal conceptions of the state were the expression of a practical awareness of the unity of life. The ideal was the global, even the cosmic. Since the days of ancient historians—Herodotus, Thucydides, and Polybius—the interpretation of world history has increasingly seen the earth as a unity. History became world history and thus the expression of a genuine European globality. This approach to world events only persisted because world history was understood as legal history. The concept of the *nomos* of the earth became the signature of European globality.

Högrefe draws a line to contemporary universal historians and thinkers—Rosenzweig, Schmitt, and Ritter—to support the thesis that Europe’s modernization and self-interpretation was the process of an ongoing awareness of globality. The

enormous changes in the world over the last two centuries, he says, were the expression of a gradual Europeanization that was not free from contradictions. The tension between origin and future also remains constitutive outside Europe, and education as a path out of this conflict is the only possible perspective worldwide. In contrast to many scholars of crisis, Hoguebe claims that it is not the differences between religions, but the differences between legal concepts that create the decisive conflicts of our era.

In the wake of fashionable postmodernism discourses, large-scale theories should reorient themselves toward the conditions of globality. Hoguebe criticizes attempts by American intellectuals to use their genuine American identity and way of life as the only standard for universality. He is also interested in European self-assertion, based on the same intellectual substance that produced America's freedom. Rather than any ambition toward intellectual world dominance, the goal is to cultivate the specific characteristics of each world interpretation and to promote the unity of the earth through diversity. What Hoguebe considers problematic is the fact that sovereignty, the protective mantle of international law that was historically placed around nation states, which constitute today's world order, has long been subject to its own process of depletion. The only way out, given all the particularities between the continents, regions, and cultures, is thus to discover a perspective of globality that binds all of them together—which in the sense of European philosophy is a return to its own roots.

Günther Schulz, with his *Globality: Models for Interpreting History*, addresses issues of world and universal history. He argues that there is currently no consensus in historical studies regarding the concept of globality, but that a monumental research field opens up if one can understand the questions that globality raises for historical studies. In fact, historical studies have focused on the central interests and expressions of reciprocal perceptions and influences since antiquity. For one thing, since the works of Herodotus, the goal has always been to “find and recognize the other” but at the same time to determine the conditions for interpreting and understanding historical processes and structures. The intercultural historical perspective has a long tradition, says Schulz, and will remain a field of inspiration and scholarly activity for the remainder of the twenty-first century.

At the same time, Schulz identifies three phases of globalization in the modern era that lead to historical classifications and interpretations. From the fifteenth to the nineteenth century, a geographic globalization took place, or “proto-globalization,” followed by the imperialist globalization movement with its unusual combination of a sense of mission, Christian evangelism, and exploitation of resources. The second phase, from the mid-nineteenth century to the end of World War II, was marked by commercial globalization, in other words the global spread of driving forces that constituted the expansion of the global economy. This phase could also be described as a global implementation of the principle of economic liberalization. The third phase, since the end of the Second World War—which accelerated after the end of the East-West conflict and possibly leads into a fourth phase—is dominated by the age of faster, technologically influenced information and communication paths, combined with the spread of a global turbo-capitalism.

Even if it is too soon to conclusively judge the latest developments from the perspective of historical studies, Schulz addresses some basic questions that arise from this perspective for further research on globality. What he considers important is finding a good balance between real economic and value-oriented factors, in order to account for the developments produced by globality. What remains unresolved here is whether and to what extent there is actually such a thing as a shared global history and under what conditions a global convergence of historical processes—or the opposite—could come about.

All of the subsequent 120 essays—each one of about the same length and addressing a fundamental or exemplary key word, conceptual notion, or symbolization central in humanities and cultural studies—are written according to a standardized structure developed by all 110 of the participating professors from the University of Bonn:

- (I) Terminology
- (II) Global Turn
- (III) Implications

The Bonn Handbook of Globality concludes with six essays that offer suggestions for further thought from the perspective of different academic disciplines.

In his essay *Is globality shapeable?*, Xuewu Gu focuses on controversies in interpreting globality, which he sees as the expression of an international, interregional, and intercultural battle for the interpretative authority of globality. The goal of this battle seems to be securing one's own ability to act despite globalized limitations and thereby to protect or even expand one's own sovereignty in shaping globality. In particular, interpretative controversies take place wherever traditional concepts—or common concepts that have previously been interpreted as globalistic, which are used to describe categories of thought and circumstances of existence—are expanded to include territorial or cultural spaces that were not originally within their normative range. As a result, these interpretations of the world and battles over their validity in shaping human coexistence are often seen as a conflict between the form and content of cultural self-reflection.

Interpretative controversies, says Gu, are equally intense in places where concepts only take effect upon being introduced and then are expanded and changed and become subject to new definitions as a result of the global turn, including through new actors and interpreters of the concept around the world. Interpretative concepts are usually normatively charged and are often subject to controversial discussion. In light of the globality paradigm, extra-occidental concepts often appear that do not have an identical equivalent concept in Western intellectual traditions. The places for the interpretation of key concepts of globality can be staged in the media or can take place as part of concretely organized negotiation processes. Interpretative controversies take place in scholarly discourse, in conflicting claims to dominance in the interpretation of the era, in diplomatic and political negotiation processes, and also in the media and in a wide range of symbolic uses (for instance in advertising). Examples are used to show how the interpretative controversies surrounding globalistic concepts are played out, where these controversies are interpreted in the