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# The Reception of Captain Cook's Voyages in Eighteenth-Century Germany: Georg Forster and Georg Christoph Lichtenberg

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The knowledge of Captain Cook's important voyages of discovery (1768-1771; 1772-1775; 1776-1779) was disseminated in Germany by Georg Forster and Georg Christoph Lichtenberg. The physicist Lichtenberg assesses Cook as the man and the explorer from a continental point of view, without falling into the trap of narrow-mindedness. Georg Forster, a substantial natural philosopher, who together with his father Reinhold accompanied Cook on his second voyage, tried to assess Cook's achievements from the perspectives of his contributions to anthropology, geography, and natural history. It becomes evident in Forster that Cook's voyages can raise important questions about problems of the relationship between nature and culture, philosophy of history, progress and perfectibility as well as concerning the relativity of beliefs, systems of attitudes, and morals.

## 1. "Rule, *Britannia*, rule the waves"

In the early modern period, England needed a long phase of hard work and development until it became a powerful and efficient seafaring nation. The complete story of the maritime success was laid down in Richard Hakluyt's *Principal Navigations*. During the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, the political insight had grown that England's future was not any longer bound primarily to European territorial politics (Klein, *Elisabeth* 69-74, 128-32), England's keeping the balance of power in Europe gave free hand to her leadership in international trade and the concomitant construction of an Empire. Hakluyt's work is the first document of the English endeavours, discoveries, and overseas trade in the early modern period (Hakluyt; Klein, "Eastward Ho" 400-23; see also Froude; Kelsey; Bawlf).

After the English had counteracted the treaty of Tordesillas, they knew that they were not the only nation contending for the oceans. The other competitors, the Spanish, the Dutch, and the French, were also very active in maritime matters and thus it was not inevitable that *Britannia* should "rule the waves". The internationalisation of trade and politics later – in the eighteenth century – already widened the European outlook and horizon towards world-wide operations. The Age of Enlightenment already saw trade links between Asia and Europe (Schmidt-Glitzner 140-41; Osterhammel 300-01; 325-26). England intensified her interest in India after the decline of Mogul power (1707) and cherished contacts with China under the Manchus and Qing, whereas there rose a contest with France

for supremacy in the west. Parallel settlements in the two Americas were established and it came to war between the two nations concerning the domination of North American territories. Exploration concentrated on the empty spaces on the world map, which were being closed by using scientific instruments in navigation, such as the sextant or Harrison's chronometer, which nourished some hope that the problem of longitude would be solved (see Sobel).<sup>1</sup>

The unknown areas on the map encouraged voyages of discovery either to the Pacific, to eastern Siberia, or to the Bering Straits. French and English explorations of the Pacific took place after 1763, like for example the journeys of the famous mathematician and naval officer Louis Antoine de Bougainville (1729-1811) and of the naval officer and explorer Jean François Marie de Surville (1717-1770) (Plischke 97-98; Samhaber 342-43). Marc-Joseph Marion du Fresne sailed from Mauritius to the southern Indian Ocean and then via Tasmania towards New Zealand. In addition, the journey under Ambroise Bernard Marie Du Clesmeur to the Philippines took place from 1771 to 1773 to search for the South Continent (Popp 251; Lichtenberg, "Lebensumstände" 243-96; Forster, "Cook" 1-232; Forster, "Fragmente" 387-429.) It is very likely that these French voyages stimulated the English to intensify their discovery projects in the Pacific. James Cook's three voyages round the world began in 1768, 1772, and in 1776, respectively.

## **2. James Cook: Competences, Endeavours, Humanity, and Enlightenment**

James Cook (1728-1779) (see Cook; Beyer) was an outsider, to which Dr Samuel Johnson's remark strikingly attests: "This mournful Truth is ev'ry where confest, SLOW RISES WORTH BY POVERTY DEPREST" (Johnson 16). The son of a day-labourer became the most famous English seaman of the eighteenth century. He rose from a common seaman on a coal freighter to a Master, then lieutenant, and finally captain in the Royal Navy and a fellow of the Royal Society (F.R.S.) (Watson 17; Beaglehole 438-40). Cook only attended the village school in his native Marton, but after that he studied with a private teacher and then autodidactically taught himself geometry, astronomy, navigation, and cartography, subjects in which he reached a well-rounded understanding and genial use of all this knowledge in nautical practice. Cook was the leading nautical expert in the eighteenth century, having acquired an excellent scientific training but also outstanding competence as a sea captain.

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<sup>1</sup> "Captain Cook hat auf seinen letzten Reisen sich wieder der Harrisonschen Uhr bedient und nennt sie seinen treuen Gefährten" (Lichtenberg, *Schriften* 679).

His voyages of exploration, planned and financed by the British Admiralty, were not restricted to making sure scientific progress and the advancement of learning but had also political aims:

Cook was a pathfinder for British commerce. He was also the representative of British seapower. It was essential if Britain was to remain paramount on *all* the world's oceans that the Admiralty possessed accurate maps of the Pacific, its islands and their anchorages. Furthermore, the appearance in the area of the French navigator Louis-Antoine de Bougainville in 1766 made it an urgent matter that the British flag was seen there and that the Pacific islanders were apprised of the existence and power of Britain. It was also vital, as international interest in the ocean increased, for Britain to find out more about the mysterious southern continents and possibly lay claim to them. (James 148)

### 3. Cook's Three Voyages

The Admiralty commissioned Cook to command HMS *Endeavour* as lieutenant in order to sail to the Pacific. Two tasks were given to him: (1) to determine the earth's distance from the sun and (2) to continue the geographical discoveries of Admiral John Byron (Beaglehole 439). Cook started in 1768 and sailed towards Tahiti. It was his first circumnavigation of the globe, during which he charted the coasts of New Zealand, East Australia, and a part of New Guinea. He had the famous botanist Joseph Banks and the Swedish researcher Dr Daniel Solander on board, who studied the flora of the newly discovered territories. But since he also had an astronomer accompanying him, the task which had been given to the voyage by the Royal Society, namely to observe and measure from a mountain in Tahiti the passage of Venus before the sun, could be fulfilled as well.

Cook started for his second journey in July 1772 from Portsmouth, sailed round the Cape of Good Hope for New Zealand traversing the southern part of the Indian Ocean. He advanced to 48° south latitude, reached the Society Islands and Tahiti, from where he continued his voyage towards the South Pole up to 71° 10' south latitude. The ice fields made him return to Tahiti and to the Friendship Islands. He discovered the New Hebrides and New Caledonia, sailed round Cape Hoorn and tried again to approach Antarctica, but he came across icebergs at 60° south latitude, so that after his discovery of the Sandwich Islands he returned to England at the end of June 1775.

During his second voyage and like in the first, Cook was able and balanced in order to keep good relations with the 'discovered people'. At least, this was Georg Forster's impression of Cook, while his father Reinhold Forster held the opinion that Cook was kept from acting cruelly by the moral example of the scholars on board (Emersleben 108-09).

The third journey presented "another Cook", since this endeavour proved to be not so much a voyage of discovery as Cook gave priority to fulfil the orders of the

Admiralty. He had possibly become tired after so many years of unending crossings of the oceans. In contrast to the reports of the first two voyages, especially concerning Forster's assessment, it is said that Cook showed signs of cruelty (Emersleben, 107-08) towards his crew and the Indigenous peoples. But there remain doubts, whether this change in Cook's perspective can be validated. After all, the fundamental question of understanding other people, which he handled better in earlier days, came back to him. Even the debate on the state of nature with the extreme positions of Hobbes and Rousseau was revived (Cranston and Peters).

On his third voyage Cook wanted to find the North-West passage (Ogg 74-84), but he had to face failure. It is important, however, to note that Cook sailed along the Pacific coast of North America up to the Bering Strait and to Asia. On his way back to the Hawaii group of islands he lost his life.

When it comes to Cook's factual achievements and fame, one should not forget that the sea proved to be the realm of freedom for him but also the element of trial, the space of failure or success. Two important aspects of his achievements must be distinguished: (1) his contribution to the exact sciences as well as to natural history and then (2) his first steps into the fields of empirical anthropology (Mühlmann 53-58), ethnology, sociology, and comparative politics.

The first field presupposes methodical discovery of "other worlds", for which physical geography including biology (flora, fauna) is absolutely indispensable. But the same is true for the mathematical sciences (astronomy, navigation based on geometry and trigonometry). But Cook's eye is no camera eye but the subjective-objective organ of human observation, rational judgement, comparison, assessment. Cook uses his intellectual and methodical means to establish a meaningful order for the newly experienced or stated items/phenomena with an outlook towards a future encyclopaedia.

Recently, Judith Schalansky chose Cook's meeting with Indigenous people in his South Sea explorations as a theme for a chapter in her book *Verzeichnis einiger Verluste* (Schalansky 29-44). It is a literary digestion of the problem called *Other Minds* (Ayer 176-222), which can be referred to Wittgenstein's sentence: "*The limits of my language mean the limits of my world*" (Wittgenstein 5.6). While reading Cook's *Journals*, the descriptions of his adventures on the oceans and on the new found territories in far off lands leave an impression of immediacy but at the same time remind the reader of entering an archive, whereas Schalansky connects the emotion of our imagined presence on Cook's ship with the "old reality" of Tu-anaki. Of course, Schalansky mentions her research, her working with globes and maps, but her poetic imagination of Cook's third voyage captures the readers' fancy. We see the Indigenous people together with her and we are drawn into the imagined scenes of Schalansky's meeting the Indigenous people. Additionally,

we discover Schalansky's remark that Cook sailed exactly past Tuanaki. Then our attention is called to the distance in time between Cook's expedition and our presence and we see Schalansky thinking about the South Sea in the State Library of Berlin.

Anthropology and ethnology are closely related to the philosophy of man and the philosophy of history. In Cook's times the conviction of the equality of all human beings was discussed among philosophers like Rousseau, Herder (Herder 169-71, 177-96), Kant and Forster. But it was no common principle for anthropologists to claim that our customs and morals and that of any tribe in New Guinea were two possible social systems which deal with the solution of one and the same task (Benedict 7). This idea was propagated *in nuce* by Jean-Jacques Rousseau (Rousseau 61-269), who suggested an exceptional approach, but also by Denis Diderot (Diderot; Gay, vol. 2, 196-99). Diderot spoke up for a relativity of norms and codes in different societies and thus he castigated Eurocentric and at the same time Christian normative absolutism, for licentiousness in social behaviour was a strict taboo. Diderot instead started an anthropological debate on nature and civilisation. He doubted that the Edenic myth of Paradise could be applied to Tahiti. Even Tahiti was no society without norms and codes. But it offered an alternative form of life, so that in different regions of the earth free and repressive societies were simultaneously discovered.

In Cook's *Journals* the reader finds many examples of his application of methodically exact and empirically oriented sciences. But his studies in natural history, anthropology, and ethnology are also truly astonishing:

Wie viele Völker, die wir zuvor auch nicht dem Namen nach kannten, sind nicht durch die unvergeßlichen Bemühungen dieses großen Mannes bis auf die kleinsten Züge geschildert worden! Ihre körperliche Verschiedenheit, ihre Gemütsart, ihre Sitten, ihre Lebensart und Kleidung, ihre Regierungsform, ihre Religion, ihre wissenschaftlichen Begriffe und Kunstarbeiten, kurz, alles sammelte Cook für die Zeitgenossen und die Nachwelt mit Treue und unermüdetem Fleiß. (Forster qtd. in Popp 26)

Though the diaries do not allow systematic treatment, the entries show that Cook looked at behaviour and factual situations as well as on living conditions with a highly discriminating eye and a thoughtful mind. He grasped the *system of attitudes* and the material and social structures to a far-reaching depth. Anticipations of social reflection can be found or even an insight into the many different political systems, which he encountered in the different archipelagos of the Pacific. Notwithstanding of his observations on agriculture, economy, the arts and aesthetics, Cook did not see life and culture in the Pacific as a revival of Paradise. True, some islands like Tahiti are described by him in such beautiful colours that his descriptions emphasise his susceptibility for the charms and pleasures of a world so different from Europe.

Cook understood that life in the Pacific was genuine and self-sufficient. But he saw at the same time that European discoveries had two negative or even dialectic aspects: (1) From the European point of view, discovery was connected with exploitation, colonisation, and the building of an Empire. (2) Discovery and trade in the South Sea implied a “dialectic of Enlightenment”.<sup>2</sup> When the investigations into life of the Pacific archipelagos began, the “object” of research was transformed, changed, and disturbed. It was prophetic when Cook – before he left the Society Islands in November 1777 – wrote that it would be cruel to leave those people to themselves in the future after they had come into contact with the Europeans. This refers to the destructive effects of European influence. But the eighteenth-century discoverer claimed the obligation to supplement the Indigenous peoples for their deficiencies. These deficiencies are contrasted to European scientific, technological, and pragmatic superiority. To tell the truth: Indigenous peoples are no *Mängelwesen* (Arnold Gehlen) like the Europeans. Thus the British discoverers put forward a rather untrustworthy argument: the Europeans have to bear with their responsibility to return at least every fourth year in order to replenish the useful items they had introduced. If this does not happen a famine could break out since the people had learned to despise their old methods, which they had already forgotten. If their axes and their knives go blunt and their nails all used, they will lack the necessary tools (Beyer 332). The American *Declaration of Independence* and the ensuing war made it impossible for the English to send their convicts to the former colony. Cook's discoveries of Australia and his good maps made it possible instead to use Botany Bay from 1788 onwards as a substitute for North America (Plumb 132).

#### **4. Forster and Lichtenberg – Two Great German Outsiders of the Enlightenment on James Cook**

From the second half of the eighteenth century onwards, the English system already provided many impulses for a collective identity. “English system” means the successful interaction of institutions like administration/politics, science, technology, foreign policy/colonialism, trade, and military power. This was due to the advanced interrelation and functioning of these national sub-systems and to England's rise in cultural, scholarly, political, and economic matters, all of which were closely connected with the elaborate structure of the centralised, however civil government. England's infrastructure with Metropolitan London as the political and economic centre had no equivalent in Germany. The Germans lacked national identity, split up into hundreds of principalities and some free cities. No reasonable and functioning general political framework was in sight

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<sup>2</sup> In the sense of Horkheimer and Adorno.

under the reign of German absolute princes. Germany existed – as Goethe remarked – in a “zero epoch”:<sup>3</sup> without a civil society, without a national parliament and without freedom of the press (Habermas).

Georg Forster (Hettner 546-60), born in 1754 in Nassenhuben near Danzig, where his father Reinhold Forster (1729-1798) served as a protestant clergyman, was the son of an independent and restless mind. Since he was not the man to be buried in a village, Reinhold Forster carried out research work in Russia as a versatile biologist and natural philosopher. His son Georg went with him and quickly became so proficient in the Russian language that he translated a text by Lomonossov<sup>4</sup> into English. The Forsters then settled in England, where Reinhold Forster in 1772 got the chance to accompany James Cook as a botanist on his second journey and again his son Georg went with him as a helpmate and draughtsman. Both Forsters strove to produce a theoretical-anthropological digestion and summary of their travel experiences. On this voyage with Cook they had the chance to learn about enormous cultural differences among Indigenous tribes (Mühlmann 53 and *passim*), an experience which was still relevant in Claude Lévi-Strauss' *Tristes Tropiques*, published in 1955, but based on research in the 1930s.

After their return in 1775, difficulties with the Admiralty arose concerning the right to print a report of Cook's second voyage. Reinhold Forster was forbidden to publish the report and so twenty-two-year-old Georg fulfilled the task producing his brilliant *Johann Reinhold Forsters und Georg Forsters Reise um die Welt in den Jahres 1772 bis 1775* in two volumes. The book was first published in English in 1777 and then in German in 1779. George made a career for himself in no time: in 1778 he was installed as professor for natural history at the Collegium Carolinum in Kassel, simultaneously with his father's appointment to the professorship of botany at Halle.

Influenced by the *Sturm und Drang* movement and by the Weimar poets, Georg Forster made friends with Johann Heinrich Jacobi and he reflected on the Spinozism and pantheism *en vogue* in those days. During the later eighteenth century, a national identity was constructed in Germany through the rise of literature. It was Gotthold Ephraim Lessing who paved the way for a cultural and intellectual German self-consciousness and he found followers in the young poets of the period, for example in the Göttingen *Hainbund*, and later, of course, in Weimar Classicism. Overall, it is notable that utopian tendencies arose among the young German writers. Members of the *Hainbund* wanted to establish a utopian state

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<sup>3</sup> Goethe called the early Enlightenment in Germany “nulle Epoche” (zero epoch) and pleaded for the inauguration of a literary and intellectual revival in his country (Goethe 269, 279-80).

<sup>4</sup> Michael Wassiljewitsch Lomonossov was the most important Russian universal scholar in the eighteenth century. He studied under Christian Wolff at the university of Marburg and later on at the famous mining college at Freiberg/Saxonia. The university of Moscow is named after Lomonossov.

on a South Sea island and therefore they planned to apply to Captain Cook to take them with him on his next journey (Krahé 65). In 1784, Georg Forster was appointed professor in Vilnius and he taught there until 1787.<sup>5</sup> He left that remote place on account of plans to start a new voyage to the South Sea, California, Japan, and China under the auspices of the Russian government. When that came to nothing, Forster in 1788 grasped the opportunity to take up the post of university librarian in Mainz, just when the turmoil of the French Revolution began. In the long run, the French Revolution ended the *Anciens Régimes* in Europe, starting a new epoch. Germany was directly affected (Alt, vol. 2, 112-18) because Mainz was conquered by the French revolutionary army. England was only indirectly influenced by what happened in France when the Friendly Societies were forbidden but not Godwin's *Inquiry Concerning Political Justice* (Klein, *Der Gotische Roman* 301-60) because it was too expensive.

In 1790, Forster undertook a journey to England to claim the money from the British government that was owed to him and to his father for their work on Cook's second voyage. Forster was accompanied by young Alexander von Humboldt (Forster, *Ansichten*, vol. 1, 5-14). Though Forster sympathised with the French Revolution, he had reservations against the Reign of Terror. Finally, he represented Mainz as a revolutionary deputy in Paris, where he died in 1794. When the German authorities regained power, they declared Forster a traitor.

In his substantial treatise *Cook der Entdecker* (1780), Forster supported an evolutionary view of natural development, which – similar to Herder – he also applied to the development of mankind. He shows in his writings an enthusiastic, but also a decidedly humanist tendency striving for a balance in society and following harmony in nature. Forster connected the problems of anthropology and philosophy with the question of the moral value of discoveries by disclaiming the call *back to nature*<sup>6</sup> because he esteemed perfectibility as the basic principle of human cultivation. According to Forster, the interplay of freedom and necessity connects self-preservation and the forming of a society via the abstract consciousness of the self, language, and a balancing of the passions. Inventions and discoveries for him are achievements of understanding, relevant for the sciences, for Enlightenment, and the perfection of mankind. He sees, however, the dangers of European trade as a form of capitalism or the hunger for expansion and economic greed. For Forster, Cook is nevertheless the genius of discovery, since he comprises the competence of an exact scientist measuring the heavens, the earth, and the sea as a mathematician, astronomer, and cartographer. Examples of Cook's competence as a scientist are his observation of the passage of Venus on his first voyage and

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<sup>5</sup> Forster had entered the eventually unhappy marriage with Therese Heyne, daughter of the famous Göttingen classical philologist Christian Gottlob Heyne (1729-1812).

<sup>6</sup> "Back to nature" cannot be deduced from Rousseau's writings, but a demand like that is implied in his treatise from 1755: *Treatise on the Origin and the Basis of Inequality among Men*.

the approaches towards Antarctica on his second, thus ruling out the assumption of the existence of a southern continent.

On the other hand, Forster praises Cook as an anthropologist covering detailed ethnological studies, concerning the mentality, bodily structure, customs, clothes, government, arts, and warfare of the inhabitants in the South Sea Islands. Cook was a planning and rational mind for Forster, who overcame the dangers of scurvy for his crews by imposing healthy diet and hygiene rules, an excellent captain, who had all the practices of manoeuvring and sailing at his fingertips. Forster emphasises Cook's wise providing for his crews, his insight into the necessity to balance work time and recreation time based on fundamental principles of humanity and friendliness.

Georg Christoph Lichtenberg (1742-1799) was a sceptical mind, a man of wit and satire, as well as a distinguished mathematician and then a famous physicist at the University of Göttingen. He worked on questions of astronomy and of electricity and discovered the Lichtenberg figures. Time and again he criticised German life; the universities and their professors, but also the nobility, the gentry, and the citizens. He stood up against Teutonic stiffness and inflexibility in life, manners, thought, and attitudes with all his literary brilliance. Though he welcomed the *Sturm und Drang* movement, he criticised its irrational tendencies. He appreciated the idea of genius and opposed feudal absolutism. Lichtenberg spoke up for the introduction of publicity in the English sense – a *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit* –, but like Lessing (Nisbet 712-13, 725-42)<sup>7</sup> he sharply repudiated reactionary Lutheran theologians like Hamburg's *pastor primarius* Melchior Goeze or the over-enthusiastic Christian pseudo-scholar Johann Caspar Lavater (Lichtenberg, *Schriften*, vol. 3, 205-36). It is no great wonder that Lichtenberg was one of the great Anglophiles of the age. He travelled to England in 1740 and in 1774/75 became a Fellow of the Royal Society (F.R.S.) and was gracefully received by George III (Sautermeister 59-82).

In his writings, Lichtenberg very often comes back to reflections on the idea of alternative worlds. The reader finds many thoughts on the necessity to humanise society in all of his prose works, especially in his notebooks, the famous *Sudelbücher*, but also in his essays and his *English Journals*.

Lichtenberg was so flexible towards, curious about, and receptive to new inventions and discoveries that Cook's journeys fascinated him. Thus, he was happy to meet the two Forsters and the Tahitian Omai in London in 1775 and when he shook hands with Omai he said, "It was not unpleasant to see my right hand in another, which just came from the opposite end of the earth". And then Lichtenberg asked Reinhold Forster, "Whether he believed that I could stand a journey

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<sup>7</sup> On Lessing's controversy with the orthodox theologians see Nisbet.

round the world? Then he [Forster] looked at me, asked me some questions, and said: O like nothing! I loved this man only for that [remark]" (Promies 52).<sup>8</sup>

Lichtenberg's acquaintance with Georg Forster was the impulse for their collaboration as editors of the journal *Göttingisches Magazin der Wissenschaft und Literatur*, which they kept up from 1780 to 1785 (Böttcher 661). In London Lichtenberg also met Sir Joseph Banks and Dr Solander, who both belonged to the group of scientists who accompanied James Cook on his journey. In his essay "Einige Lebensumstände von Captain Cook" from 1781, Lichtenberg concentrates on Cook's achievements, whereas he criticises some darker aspects of his character and personality, which he, however, also explains from a psychological point of view. That does not mean that Lichtenberg calls Cook's great project into doubt. Lichtenberg gives an objective and fair account of Cook's life, career, and death,<sup>9</sup> and he writes in the essay on Cook:

So starb einer der größten Weltumsegler, wo nicht der größte unter allen, und einer der berühmtesten Männer der neuern Zeit, mitten unter den Bemühungen, seinem Ruhm noch zuzusetzen, was ihm fast nur allein noch zugesetzt werden konnte – nämlich da er die Durchfahrt aus dem stillen Meer in das Atlantische suchte. . . . er [war] der erste, der die Welt von Westen nach Osten umschiffte, und dieses sogar einmal in einer südlichen Breite, die man für fast unbeschiffbar gehalten; daß er die südlichsten Länder der Welt zuerst gesehen, und überhaupt die allgemeine Geographie mit einer Menge von Entdeckungen bereichert hat, die gewiß für unser Zeitalter, da weitläufige feste Länder nicht mehr zu entdecken stehen, groß sind. (Lichtenberg qtd. in Popp 166)

In his essay Lichtenberg highly appreciates the mode of public life in England, but also the elegance and wit in polite society. Cook could not be his man in this respect. Nevertheless, Lichtenberg's general judgement is positive, since for him Cook was the man who possessed the English virtues he himself cherished in full scope: freedom of research, independent judgement, fundamental empiricism, and practical sense. Lichtenberg sees the necessity to make Cook known in Germany (141). In his biographical sketch, in which he criticises Cook's parsimony and greed (he left 70,000 pounds to his widow), he emphasises his mathematical and scientific competence as well as his achievements as a cartographer in Newfoundland, where Cook used the best methods and mathematical and astronomical instruments for his tasks. Lichtenberg appreciates that Cook – who always used his common sense and his practical genius as well as his scientific knowledge – criticised mere scholars.

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<sup>8</sup> "Es war mir nicht Unangenehm, meine rechte Hand in einer andern zu sehen, die gerade vom entgegen-Gesetzten Ende der Welt kam"; "ob er wohl glaubte, daß ich eine Reise um die Welt aushalten könnte? Darauf sah er mich an, tat einige Fragen an mich, und dann sagte er: O, w i e n i c h t s! Ich habe den Mann schon lieb bloß deswegen". Lichtenberg had breakfast with Omai in London on 25 March 1775 (Promies 52).

<sup>9</sup> Cook and four of his crew were murdered by people from the island O-Why-He on 14 February 1779.

He also admired his boldness, his victory over the scourge of scurvy and his investigations of Antarctica. As indicated, Lichtenberg's general assessment of Cook is positive (Lichtenberg qtd. in Popp 166-74): for Lichtenberg, Cook is the greatest circumnavigator in the history of seafaring. Cook widened the view of the German "Landratte" (landlubber) Lichtenberg to a universal horizon. Cook was the first man who saw the southern countries. He was able to reach these areas, since he was a strong-willed, sinister, and despotic man – with an absolute command over his crew. His Puritanism went together with his analytical and empirical stance. It remains true for Lichtenberg that Cook was an exceptional personality not only as a commander of his crews but also as a discoverer, who was able to communicate with the discovered people. In both aspects he far surpassed his predecessors and his successors.

Both Forster and Lichtenberg believed in the perfectibility of man (Baum; Neumeister 238-41), Forster more in an evolutionary vein, Lichtenberg from the perspective of education and Enlightenment. From the Enlightenment point of view, Lichtenberg criticised the Jacobins, although he generally accepted the historical movement as such.<sup>10</sup> It is very likely that Captain Cook, though he could be very straightforward and rough in his actions, had a more intensive presentiment concerning the problems arising from the dialectics of Enlightenment in the sense of his German contemporaries.

It seems necessary to ponder over all the consequences, which crop up by looking at the interrelation between Cook's voyages, Lichtenberg's and Forster's outlooks. In one way or the other these three men are representatives of Enlightenment. Western science and technology combined with colonial endeavours changed the world. Western supremacy discovered political and economic power by "conquering" colonies. The self-consciousness of the "conquerors", however, did not consider the dignity, human intelligence and the natural rights of Indigenous peoples. When Hegel in his *Phenomenology of Spirit* deals with the topic of the master and slave relationship, this does not only hold for European societies, but much more so for the colonies. What we see even in Cook is that the *disenchantment of the world* (Max Weber) by rationality, discovery, international trade, in short, by the Enlightenment implies the extinction of Indigenous frames of explanation, namely myth. Knowledge is substituted for *Le pensée sauvage* (Lévi-Strauss), but moreover the internal problems of progress and positivism are not too far hence. When Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno spoke of the loss of meaningfulness as one of the consequences of the dialectics of Enlightenment, we should

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10 "Eine Republik zu bauen aus den Materialien einer niedergerissenen Monarchie ist freilich ein schweres Problem. Es geht nicht, ohne bis erst jeder Stein anders gehauen ist, und dazu gehört Zeit. Ich kann freilich nicht sagen, ob es besser wird, wenn es anders wird. Aber soviel kann ich sagen: Es muß anders werden, wenn es gut werden soll" (Lichtenberg, *Schriften*, vol. 2, 429).

not overlook the importance of their statement (Horkheimer and Adorno 12-14 and passim). Our contemporary dependence on science and technology has a long history. It goes back to the eighteenth century, but it reaches even further back than that. If we have to cope with a devastating materialist and functionalist transformation of the globe, we at least have to reflect on the constellation, where this highly problematic story started.

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