



Minutes to Midnight

History and the Anthropocene Era from 1763

Paul Dukes

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Description

Examines the evolution of the predicament symbolised by the setting of the Doomsday Clock at a few minutes to midnight in the context of the Anthropocene Era from 1763, making special reference to the study of history.

'At last, a historian with the courage and vision to shake us out of our postmodernist torpor. Dukes' grand tour – from the tentative experiments of James Watt to nuclear twilight and climate catastrophe – starkly reminds us how quickly we have come to the edge of our own anthropogenic abyss.' —Dr Mark Levene, University of Southampton

'Paul Dukes has written a significant book, arguing that we live in a new geological age, one that was and continues to be shaped in the most profound way by humankind. The world is "ours" in a way that it has never been before, and we can thank Paul Dukes for telling us so, and suggesting what new responsibilities this "ownership" entails.' —Professor Marshall Poe, University of Iowa

The Doomsday Clock was created in 1947 by a group of atomic scientists to symbolise the perils facing humanity from nuclear weapons. In 2007 it was set at five minutes before the final bell, including for the first time the threat of climate change as well as new developments in the life sciences and nanotechnology. **Minutes to Midnight: History and the Anthropocene Era from 1763** examines the evolution of our present predicament throughout the Anthropocene Era, making special reference to the history of the period, the study of the subject and major advances in the natural sciences.

Adam Smith and Adam Ferguson set out the basis for a scientific approach to the pre-industrial stages of historical development in the Enlightenment of the late eighteenth century, when the American and French Revolutions created a vocabulary of modernity. Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, as the industrial revolution unfolded in several stages, nationalism, imperialism and totalitarianism were among the phenomena impeding the update of the Enlightenment programme as well as the fulfilment of the aspirations of 1776 and 1789. Our present predicament demands a rigorous examination of its origins and an assertion of a scientific pan-disciplinary approach involving history and other academic specialisations including the humanities and the social and natural sciences.

Readership: Students, scholars and the general reader interested in the nuclear threat, the ecological crisis and history. This book is also suitable as a companion text in courses on Western Civilization, particularly from the Enlightenment to the present day.

Contents

Preface; 1. Introduction: Times and Approaches; 2. Enlightenment and Revolutions, 1763-1815; 3. Nations and -isms, 1815-1871; 4. Natural Selection, 1871-1921; 5. From Relativity to Totalitarianism, 1921-1945; 6. Superpower, 1945-1968; 7. Planet Earth, 1968-1991; 8. Minutes to Midnight, 1991-; Notes; Index

About the Author

Born in Wallington, Surrey in 1934, Paul Dukes has history degrees from Cambridge, 1954, Washington, 1956 and London, 1964. He has been associated with Aberdeen University since 1964, with visiting appointments at Auckland and Cornell. He is the author of a wide range of publications on Russian, European and world history.

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