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Discussion

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PRESENTISM

Thinking about technological changes or 'revolutions' is often marked by a presentist, ahistorical mode of thinking and debate. The tropes mobilized in contemporary discussion about 'digitalization' and its technologies are usually technicist, innovation- or even disruption-oriented, both in their affirmative and in their critical guises. Little attention is given to historical precursors of technologically driven social change and almost none to concepts and theories from other historical periods that might help investigate and understand the current predicament.

Is the presentism of 'digital cultures' in itself a media-technological effect? To what extent are these cultures characterized by a fundamental restructuring of modern semantics and experiences of time? In particular, do they eliminate the 'surplus and surprise potential', that is, the eminent reference to an open future Koselleck found to be essential for modern historical thought? The aim is to discuss what this entails for the humanities as a fundamentally historical cluster of disciplines in terms of epistemology and science policy.