

sea levels is accelerating, and with the proliferation of nuclear weapons the threat of humans ending all life on the planet is a constant possibility. This leads the authors to see the Anthropocene as necessarily being a temporary era. The first five chapters give an account of how we have arrived at a point where envisioning our future is a depressing endeavor. This is done largely through a critical review of the works of four scholars: Günther Anders, an Austrian philosopher and early critic of the role of technology in modern life; Dipesh Chakrabarty, a University of Chicago historian focusing on post-colonial and subaltern studies; Isabelle Stengers, a Belgian philosopher of science noted for her ideas on cosmopolitics; and Bruno Latour, a French philosopher and anthropologist known for questioning the superiority of modern (Western) thoughts and values. During the past 400 years, Enlightenment progress has allowed humans to exert ever-greater control over nature, and industrial capitalism has spread over much of the globe. These two trends are identified as prime causes of the present perilous relationship between humanity and the planet. Although heavy going in places, this discussion is enlivened by references to relevant fiction and films. For example, a parallel is drawn between the situation depicted in the film *Melancholia*, where a large asteroid is on a collision course with earth, and the current situation where human actions threaten our existence. With this view of the present, what possible futures do the authors envision? One is a human-free world, much like the one that existed before the arrival of *Homo sapiens*, that re-emerges after the passing of our species. Another is a world much less hospitable to life, only capable of supporting a human population greatly reduced in numbers and living conditions. A third is one in which human technological innovation manages to restore the environment to a pristine condition and to provide everyone with a bountiful life. The last, the authors judge, is the most unlikely. The final three chapters look to Amerindian groups living at the periphery of the modern world for a way of dealing with the present. Their creation myths allow for a world without endless progress, and during the last 400 years they have persevered after their worlds had ended with the devastation of their populations and cultures. The authors find in the Amerindian “subvival” a blueprint for our future: to live democratically with “comparatively modest populations” and “relatively simple technologies” while making the best of the “world we have left them.”—D.H.

HANS GROTH AND JOHN F. MAY (EDS.)

Africa's Population: In Search of a Demographic Dividend

Springer International Publishing, 2017. 526 p. \$139.00.

The introduction of the concept of a demographic dividend (DD) in the 1990s invigorated the policy discussion on population and development at the national and international levels. The DD refers to a two-stage boost in the growth rate of a country's income per capita that follows a decline in the ratio of the number of dependents to workers. The first dividend is a purely demographic one and is largely brought about by a decline in fertility that reduces the growth rate of the population of children. The more rapid the decline in fertility, the larger the dividend. This change in the population age structure often leads to a rise in investments in education and health of children as increased savings provide the resources to

allow parents and societies to make such investments. The second dividend is reaped when these children enter the labor force as more productive workers.

This edited volume analyzes the potential for sub-Saharan Africa to benefit from the DD. The thirty contributions are written by international scholars, more than a third of whom are from sub-Saharan Africa. The volume is organized in four sections: the demographic landscape (mainly country and regional case studies), the drivers of the DD (fertility, education, mortality, jobs), developmental challenges (economic growth, governance, natural resources, food security, and climate change), and concluding essays (on the feasibility of rapid fertility decline, DD models, and conflicts). This collection represents the most comprehensive available overview of the causes and consequences of the DD and of the policies that need to be pursued to benefit from it. While the development community has enthusiastically embraced the DD, the messages of most of these contributions is one of caution about the critical challenges ahead for sub-Saharan Africa. For example, the key driver of the DD is fertility decline, but fertility remains high in much of the continent. Governments in sub-Saharan Africa have generally shown little interest in family planning programs, despite the recent successes in a few countries in the continent (Rwanda, Ethiopia, and Malawi) where large increases in contraceptive use occurred following the start of programs. A lack of political will is partly to blame. Furthermore, while enrollment in schools has risen everywhere, dropout rates are high and the quality of schooling is poor. Once students graduate, jobs are few and low paying. Governance remains weak in much of the continent. This volume makes clear what needs to be done. The key question is whether governments can follow the sound advice and implement the much-needed reforms.—J.B.

DAVID HENLEY

Asia-Africa Development Divergence: A Question of Intent

London: Zed Books, 2015. xiii + 248 p. \$32.95 (pbk.).

This is an insightful book comparing the development trajectories of Indonesia and Nigeria, Malaysia and Kenya, and Vietnam and Tanzania. It grew out of a Netherlands-funded development research project. The author, an Indonesianist and geographer, teaches at the University of Leiden.

Two of the greatest (and perhaps least-anticipated) economic events of the last two generations have been the rise of Southeast Asia and the failure of sub-Saharan Africa. The first region now sits at the global table as a player while the second sits in the back rows, an object of concern due to its continued poverty and the associated security concerns. The first is now a donor in what is called “triangular” (it used to be called “South-South”) cooperation while the second, at least until recently, was a long-term aid addict. Sub-Saharan GDP per capita is today barely higher than in 1960, while Southeast Asian income has grown some eight-fold. Yet, both regions have suffered from corruption and poor governance by Western standards; nor has either been a star performer in human rights. Why has one succeeded and the other failed?

The author’s analysis identifies the following features of divergence. First, sound macroeconomic policies and, in particular, attention to inflation. Propping up the