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Dipesh Chakrabarty, *The Climate of History in a Planetary Age* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2021), 296 pp.

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When a single work by a scholar becomes field-definingly canonical, that scholar's legacy can become tied inextricably to that work to the extent that their previous contributions become secondary in the reception of their scholarship. One need only think of Fredric Jameson, whose nearly mythical *Postmodernism: Or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (1990) has in effect demoted his earlier works such as *The Political Unconscious* (1981) and *The Prison-House of Language* (1972). Likewise, Chakrabarty's 2009 essay "The Climate of History: Four Theses" has become an unmissable in the environmental humanities, and Chakrabarty's latest book is no less (and no more) than a conscious attempt to lean into its influence by expanding its ideas into a postcolonial theory of climate change. While Chakrabarty has continued to explore the implications of the 2009 essay in fora such as his 2015 Tanner Lectures, *Planetary Age* (2021) is the true crowning achievement of Chakrabarty's work in this area—perhaps to the extent that his earlier books such as *Provincializing Europe* (2000) risk the same fate as *The Political Unconscious*. However, the caveat that *Planetary Age* might introduce to Chakrabarty's previous work is only a testament to its significance; even more than "Four Theses," it has the potential to become a keystone reference in the environmental humanities for many years to come.

Chakrabarty's argument about what postcolonial studies has to offer the environmental humanities goes well beyond the established appeals to inequality that constitute climate justice discourse. Postcolonial thought has contributed to the discipline of history by expanding the timescales in which modernity develops to include a half-century of colonial history whose effects echo and indeed are even compressed into the present. Postcolonial thought can also repeat this broadening of temporal horizons in the environmental humanities, enabling us to see, analyze, and operate on mutually overlapping but incommensurable timescales. The original "Four Theses" essay (reprinted with some elaboration in the first chapter of *Planetary Age*) argued for the end of the distinction between the timescale of natural history and the timescale of human history. In *Planetary Age*, Chakrabarty urges us to think through additional variations on natural and human historical time.

Chakrabarty accomplishes this project by developing a distinction between the global and the planetary, based on the understanding that "The word *globe* as it has

appeared in the literature on globalization is not the same as the word *globe* in the expression *global warming*" (71). Different historical timescales implicate different spatial conceptions of the Earth, and the book develops formidable analytical tools that become available whenever we ask whether planetary or global consciousness underlies any given statement or ideological position. The global is a discourse that sees the earth as the teleological horizon of human expansion from local origins (globalization), focuses on human systems, treats history as the study of narratives of the human past, is fundamentally concerned with values and governance, and handles ecological issues from the perspective of sustainability. The planetary takes the earth as one planet among many (planetary science), focuses on ecological systems, creates historical narratives of which human beings are never the primary subject, concerns itself with empirical reality without jumping to normative conclusions, and handles ecological issues from the perspective of habitability.

The manner in which Chakrabarty develops the global-planetary distinction can unfortunately be difficult to follow at times, especially in the third chapter. This is because Chakrabarty starts by defining two separate senses of globe, only to then retroactively christen one of them "planet" instead. One is left wishing he had simply assigned two different words to these two different points of view instead of muddling them by focusing on their divergence from a historical common ground. Chakrabarty also touches on the term "earth," but for unclear reasons declines to use it as a name for the common category to which the global and the planetary belong.

Once grasped, however, the planet-globe distinction has substantial progressive implications for the environmental humanities. Namely, it obviates the need to speak of decentering humanity in historical narrative, as to call for decentering is to begin from an anthropocentric viewpoint. The planetary provides an alternative starting point by shifting the emphasis from the subject who speaks to the spatial scope that bounds narrative. Humanists may appreciate the particularly aesthetic quality of this solution: instead of focusing on identitarian questions of who speaks, Chakrabarty encourages a critique of unmentioned assumptions that traverse multiple positionalities. Viewed in the history of postcolonial scholarship, which has developed in the tradition of Gayatri Spivak's needling question, "Can the Subaltern Speak?", this is quite a remarkable development.

Chakrabarty has developed a manner of engaging with environmental issues that can be productive in numerous disciplines. Methodologically, there is something for everyone here: his examples blend textual analysis of diverse historical sources (speeches by Jawaharlal Nehru; one man's social media posts and suicide note; the philosophy of Immanuel Kant, and so on) with more concrete analysis of changing social trends (e.g., the popularity of air conditioning). Chakrabarty advances the environmentalist conversation holistically by dialoguing with thinkers such as Ursula Heise, Bruno Latour, and Slavoj Žižek, responding to criticisms of his own work (mostly "Four Theses") while firing back a few barbs at targets such as Amartya Sen's Capabilities Approach and climate justice viewpoints that treat environmental degradation as primarily a problem of interpersonal

justice. As such, this book comes highly recommended for anyone working in the environmental humanities.

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