

BOOK REVIEW

Dipesh Chakrabarty.

The Climate of History in a Planetary Age.

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In January 2020 the Interuniversity Center for the History of Science and Technology (CIUHCT) organised an *Anthropocene Campus* in Lisbon. During this important event, Dipesh Chakrabarty gave a talk entitled *The climate of History - 10 years later*. These were the days of the fires in Australia and the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in China. In his lecture Chakrabarty mentioned the ongoing fires and proposed a reflection on the planetary condition stating that “we must learn to think according to the time of mountains.” This suggestive sentence could be a good introduction to *The Climate of History in a Planetary Age* that is dedicated precisely “to the memory of those humans and other living beings who perished in the Australian fires of 2019-2020 and in the Amphan cyclone in the Bay of Bengal in 2020.” The book moves from the urgency of giving a place to non-human temporalities in the fields of history, philosophy, social sciences and takes the reader on an intellectual path towards the notion of “Planet.” To this end, the author collects several previously published articles, some

of which provoked animated debates, and by putting them side by side, outlines the history of a thought in evolution after the shift that had led him into the field of Anthropocene studies.

The book consists of three parts, preceded by an introduction, and followed by a postscript containing a conversation with Bruno Latour. The first part, by republishing Chakrabarty's *Four Theses* (2009), explains the crisis of the modern distinction between natural history and human history, introducing the notion of Anthropocene (chapter 1), it highlights the overlap between history of the Earth-System, history of life on Earth and of human species, and history of industrialisation (chapter 2), and defines the category of "Planet" in opposition to the globe (chapter 3). In the second part, Chakrabarty comes back to a postcolonial approach questioning the links between anti-colonial history, planetary thinking and fascination caused by modernity. He provides historical examples such as access to air conditioning in India or the Nehru's speeches on glaciers (chapter 4), carries on a moving analysis, in the sense of a planetary aspiration, of the suicide of Rohith Vemula, a Dalit student in India (chapter 5), and offers a reading of Kant concerning morality, animality and modernity (chapter 6). The third part directly faces Anthropocene's temporalities, showing the difficulty of being caught between several temporal scales, and the necessity to consider the horizon of geological time (chapter 7), and also proposes a study of "mutuality" by re-reading it in the light of planetary issues, while proposing a contemporary interpretation of Jaspers' notion of "epochal consciousness" (chapter 8).

This brief overview of the book's structure can not show the full plurality of issues raised by the author. His capacity of producing a wide-ranging thought constitutes the strength of a book that not only requires to situate ourselves in the deep time of geological temporalities, but also invites us to look for the "rifts" opened in modern tradition under the pressure of global issues. We can highlight some of the cross-cutting issues that run through the text.

First, the problem that "the concept of globe in the word *globalization* was not the same as the concept of *globe* in the expression *global warming*" (p. 18, p. 71) pushes Chakrabarty to move towards a planetary conception after the criticisms he received when *Four Theses* (Dipesh Chakrabarty, "The Climate of History: Four Theses," *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 25, n. 2, Winter 2009, pp. 197-222) was first published (concerning mainly the notions of "human species" and "universal negative history"). Chakrabarty does not really provide a solution to these criticisms but the study of historical and moral implications of Earth System Sciences allows him to move to another level of discourse. We are implicated and "imbricated" (p. 47) with our human affects in non-human temporalities, that are not separated from "our" history. There is *no outside* (p. 178), no distinction between nature and society, and the political challenge of our time is precisely to cope with a planetary co-participation, where affects linked to different temporalities are mixed. We therefore must learn to think according to geological temporal categories that are now inexorably part of our lives. Thus, there is also a deep moral reflection

that runs transversally throughout the book, showing how a commixture between human history and geological history brings moral underpinnings on both sides.

Another thread showing throughout the text, and made explicit in the postscript, is a dialogue with Bruno Latour. In chapter 4, Chakrabarty shows his agreement with the French philosopher's approach in breaking down the division between nature and culture. He even expresses the intention to radicalise this position: the debate on modernity must consider postcolonial issues, which are closely linked to ecological issues, also considering the fascination produced by modernity. The dialogue with Latour also affords a reflection on the conditions of politics at the planetary level: in addition to the problem of fascination there is also the *difficulty* of being modern, living in a time that is both global and planetary (p. 130), "How do we (re)imagine the human as a form of life connected to other forms of life, and how do we then base our politics on that knowledge?" (p. 126).

To conclude, I propose to reconsider the suicide of Rohith Vemula to underline a problematic point in Chakrabarty's argument, without changing, however, the resulting conclusions. Quoting Fanon, Chakrabarty asserts that "The 'black man' has no corporal schema" (p. 123), even if in Fanon, to the contrary, the corporal schema does exist in the colonised although it is transformed into a "historical-racial schema," where imaginary and corporeality are parasitized by colonial dynamics. Fanon's psychiatric practice operated on the body schema of colonised people, taking into account the colonial environment in which he had to operate. In this sense, the fallen body schema is an inextricable entanglement of several histories and stories, personal history, colonial history, imperialism, history of the war of liberation, all of which are woven and intertwined. So, we might assume that the Dalit body perhaps also shows something of this kind: a historical-racial-planetary schema that is set up, as a parasitized body schema, in which it is necessary to look for forms of poetic, and why not philosophical, psychological and then political, existential openings, stories, strategies, actions.