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Dipesh Chakrabarty, *The Climate of History in a Planetary Age*

Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2021. Pp. 296. ISBN 978-0-2267-3286-2. $25.00 (paperback).

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As a researcher who has gone down the rabbit hole of the Anthropocene with a thematic focus on India, I congratulate each thinker who attempts to make sense of this new stage in the history of the world. *The Climate of History in a Planetary Age* captures one among the growing number of intellectual endeavours aimed at outlining what the new epoch means for the present and future of humanity. It is a Herculean task with undeniably overwhelming dimensions.

Chakrabarty's approach to the Anthropocene is a rich collage of intellectual influences primarily from India, Europe, Australia and North America. The book is an exemplary illustration that the magnitude and scope of the Anthropocene is not only challenging. For many academics, it is an inviting opportunity to take stock of one's lessons learnt through research and personal experience. At this stage of the academic debate, the Anthropocene offers plenty of room for thematic manoeuvres. Chakrabarty displays a version of such intellectual playfulness in an overall sense-making attempt. He juggles with various academic classics and references to the sixth great extinction, tipping points, the Brundtland report, nine planetary boundaries, geoengineering and some other well-known terminology of climate change and environmental research. Therefore I praise the book as the attempt of an academic virtuoso.

I cannot escape saying a few words about the context in which I read *The Climate of History in a Planetary Age* and the way recent academic encounters seep through my reflections on Chakrabarty's work. The breadth and scope of topics, authors, publications and

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time periods that Chakrabarty touches upon resemble the formidable ambition of the medieval computistic miscellanies discussed during the (hybrid) autumn school Scales of Knowledge: From Cosmos to Book hosted in October 2021 by the Henri Pirenne Institute for Medieval Studies (Ghent) in close collaboration with the Centre for Medieval Studies (Fordham), the Centre for Medieval Literature (Odense and York) and the Centre for Medieval Studies (York). The autumn school coincided with the nine-hundredth-anniversary celebrations of Liber Floridus. While reading *The Climate of History in a Planetary Age*, I drew parallels with some of the remarks expressed about the structure, contents and preparatory and dissemination stages of Liber Floridus and its author, Lambert of Saint-Omer.

Just as Lambert, Chakrabarty, in his (far from) humble capacity as a 'historian of human affairs', aims at noteworthy comprehensiveness in the book. Lambert and Chakrabarty share a preference for discussing events and various phenomena in a non-linear manner. Both authors avidly compile some well-known intellectual outputs of their time in a manner that entertains, due to the chosen structure, selected excerpts and elements. However, neither of these two books should be considered the most informative ones about the exact state of the science. They do not capture the specific condition of research accomplishments (and limitations) of the years highlighted as noteworthy for a study and general understanding of the history. Likewise, neither book represents the state of the science of those years or decades in which each of them was finalized and published. What I have learnt from my quick dive into Liber Floridus and Chakrabarty's take on the Anthropocene is to appreciate the attempt of the author to grasp a very broad topic. I have learnt to pay attention to the way each of them tries to set an agenda for attributing a certain meaning to specific phenomena, events and thought leaders.

To build on what I have just mentioned, I would not suggest *The Climate of History in a Planetary Age* as an easy and concise read for anyone interested in finding out the basics of the Anthropocene debate. This book is not a concise manual. Chakrabarty is good at suggesting new avenues and intellectual vignettes for potential turns in the debate revolving around the Anthropocene. Nevertheless, he does not seem too preoccupied with explaining in plain and chronological terms the foundations of the intellectual encounters concerning the most recent period of Earth's history.

The main contribution made by Chakrabarty to the study of the Anthropocene is his distinction between the global and planetary dimensions of humanity as a driving force. Chakrabarty's attempt to understand the present state of 'the global' and its planetary dimensions captures a distinct Indian perspective, especially in terms of how modernization is characterized and portrayed throughout the chapters of this book. It is an attempt to grasp the Anthropocene through Indian socio-economic and political developments that are inextricably linked and influenced by Western notions of technological progress.

There is one typical question of climate change and environmental debate that was left unanswered. Does Chakrabarty lean more towards conservation or towards mitigation and adaptation? He expresses deep concerns about 'a shared catastrophe'. However, the sense of alarm does not result in any specific suggestions for the way forward in terms of how to go about this unsettling situation. He is an author overwhelmed by contemporary developments. The reader is left on their own to figure out how to go about addressing this perplexing state of affairs of (as the concluding sentence of the main part of the book states), being positioned 'on the cusp of the global and the planetary' (p. 85).

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