

## History 4°: Postcolonial Method and Anthropocene Time

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*The essay opens by situating Dipesh Chakrabarty's recent work on climate change and the anthropocene (the new geological period of time in which humans have become a planet-reshaping "force of nature") together with a broader contemporary discourse on the human/nonhuman in relation to Claude Lévi-Strauss and Jean Paul Sartre's 1960s debate on the nature of history and the dialectic. Although not explicitly advanced under the sign of that debate, these recent discourses, I suggest, share and extend some of its crucial features, taking something from both sides. From Sartre: the call for a search for critical method adequate to addressing Marx's observation that we make our own history, but not under circumstances of our own choosing. From Lévi-Strauss: the argument that "history" is inadequately addressed by the "historian's code," that the situation of our time encompasses multiple scales and orders of time: most significantly, an array of "extra-historical," "infra-historical," and "supra-historical" registers of human/nonhuman time. From there, I return to Chakrabarty, to discuss the ways in which his work takes up those twin challenges. I pursue this reading by considering the relation between his earlier conceptualization (in Provincializing Europe) of History 1 and History 2 and the new theory of history emerging from his work on climate change, which I call History 3. I conclude by suggesting that despite its enormously rich considerations of the multiscaled temporality of the anthropocene, Chakrabarty's recent work also sometimes bends the time of climate linear in the progress toward catastrophe, thereby bypassing the full possibility of a multitemporal ontology of the present that would include the persistence into the anthropocene of History 1 and 2. I suggest, therefore, that while drawing on his recent work, we need to continue in a search for a method adequate to the situation of our time; a time that knots together (minimally) Histories 1, 2, and 3; a time that I am provisionally calling History 4°.*

**Keywords:** anthropocene, historian's code, climate change, methodology, post-colonial theory

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While I was gathering notes for this essay, the *New York Times* published a front-page story under a bleak headline: “Heat-Trapping Gas Passes Milestone, Raising Fears.” In the dire news it communicated, the efficiency with which it shared that news, and the hybrid mathematics of time it drew on for that communiqué, that story provides an unfortunately perfect place with which if not quite to begin then at least to preface what I hope to discuss. “The level of the most important heat-trapping gas in the atmosphere, carbon dioxide,” the *Times* account opens, “has passed a long-feared milestone, scientists reported on Friday, reaching a concentration not seen on the earth for millions of years. Scientific monitors reported that the gas had reached an average daily level that surpassed 400 parts per million ... a sobering reminder that decades of efforts to bring human-produced emissions under control are faltering.”<sup>1</sup> From those opening sentences on, the news gets worse, and worse in a distinctive way, not only tending toward a catastrophic result, but moving in that ruinous future direction through a distinctive marshaling of moments, periods, and timescales that have made climate reporting one of the outer frontiers of a new theory of historical time.

As the story continues:

The best available evidence suggests the amount of the gas in the air has not been this high for at least three million years. Carbon dioxide above 400 parts per million was first seen in the Arctic last year ... [but] the average reading for an entire day surpassed that level ... for the first time in the 24 hours that ended at 8 P.M. Eastern Daylight Time [on May 9, 2013.] .... From studying air bubbles trapped in Antarctic ice, scientists know that going back 800,000 years, the carbon dioxide level oscillated in a tight band, from about 180 parts per million in the depths of ice ages, to about 280 during the warm periods between.... For the entire period of human civilization, roughly 8,000 years, the carbon dioxide level was relatively stable near that upper bound. But the burning of fossil fuels has caused a 41 percent increase in the heat-trapping gas since the Industrial Revolution. Indirect measurements suggest that the last time the carbon dioxide level was this high was at least three million years ago, during an epoch called the Pliocene. Geological research shows that the climate then was far warmer than today, the world’s ice caps were smaller, and the sea level might have been as much as 60 or 80 feet higher. Experts fear that humanity may be precipitating a return to such conditions—except this time, billions of people are in harm’s way.<sup>2</sup>

These are not the sorts of dilemmas that as a literary scholar I was trained to address. Not only because as I completed my graduate training and began my career in the mid-1990s, the looming planetary crisis of climate change had not yet become a matter of broad common recognition and concern, but because, even within the deeply historically minded field of postcolonial studies I was then entering, the modes of conceiving of historical time that these two recent stories treat as virtual

1 Justin Gillis, “Heat-Trapping Gas Passes Milestone, Raising Fears,” *New York Times*, May 10, 2013, accessed October 14, 2013, at <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/11/science/earth/carbon-dioxide-level-passes-long-feared-milestone.html>.

2 Gillis, “Heat-Trapping Gas.”

commonplace were largely inconceivable—not only in their dizzying jumps between temporal scales (from a particular hour on a particular day; to the approximately sixty years in which we have been keeping accurate measurements of carbon dioxide emissions; to the segment of time since the industrial revolution; to “the entire [8,000 year] period of human civilization”; to the 800,000-year history of Antarctic ice; to the three million years since the epoch of the Pliocene), but in the theory of historical *periodization* enabling those scale-shifting moves. Although I have for some time accepted the force of Frederic Jameson’s dictum that “we cannot, not periodize,” until very recently it would not have occurred to me that postcolonial study, critical theory, or the humanities disciplines in general needed to periodize in relation not only to capital but to carbon, not only in modernities and post-modernities but in parts-per-million, not only in dates but in degrees Celsius.<sup>3</sup>

Like multiple scholars in the humanities, as the crisis of climate change has become as starkly apparent as these news accounts reveal, I have, however, begun to wrestle with precisely such questions. Like many colleagues in postcolonial studies, I have been doing so in relation to the pioneering work of Rob Nixon, Ramchandra Guha, Elizabeth Povenilli, and, more centrally still, with one particularly influential publication in mind: Dipesh Chakrabarty’s 2009 *Critical Inquiry* essay, “The Climate of History: Four Theses,” the text in which Chakrabarty frankly indicates that “all my readings in theories of globalization, Marxist analysis of capital, subaltern studies, and postcolonial criticism over the last twenty-five years, while enormously useful in studying globalization, had not really prepared me for making sense of this planetary conjuncture within which humanity finds itself today.”<sup>4</sup> In consequence of this admission, Chakrabarty counsels at least two key things: first, that we reapprehend the fundamental period of time we inhabit as that of the Anthropocene, the new geological era (christened by the atmospheric chemist Paul Crutzen) in which humanity has become a devastating, planet-reshaping force of nature; and, second, that within such a moment, the function of engaged critique must pivot from one focused on infra-human concerns for the struggle of freedom to one focused on the trans-human category of species.

I have addressed that turn in Chakrabarty’s thought in an earlier essay, and I want to extend that investigation here, now by asking where his work, and a surrounding critical discourse on climate and the Anthropocene, fit within a yet-more-extensive set of contemporary theoretical debates on the human and the nonhuman, the natural and the postnatural, the historical and the extra-historical.<sup>5</sup> In doing so, I further want to consider the deep methodological challenges these exploded conceptions of history, nature, and the human put to a body of critical theory (and a tradition of critique) that has long understood its vocation as simultaneously descriptive and transformative; as oriented to mapping the situation in which we find ourselves and to making something emancipatory of that situation; as committed, in the terms of Marx’s “Theses on Feuerbach,” not only to “interpret[ing] the world” but

3 Frederic Jameson, *A Singular Modernity: Essay on the Ontology of the Present* (New York: Verso, 2002), 29.

4 Dipesh Chakrabarty, “The Climate of History: Four Theses,” in *Critical Inquiry* 35 (Winter 2009), 199.

5 See Ian Baucom, “The Human Shore: Postcolonial Studies in an Age of Natural Science,” in *History of the Present*, 2:1 (Spring, 2012), 1–23.

“to chang[ing] it.”<sup>6</sup> To do that, however, I first need to go back a little way, fifty years to be precise, to an earlier moment of critical debate structured by a surprisingly consonant set of theoretical reformulations and methodological dilemmas; a moment that does not in any simple sense produce our theoretical contemporaneity (as Foucault has taught us, genealogy is a far less stable thing) but which does, nevertheless, stretch our understanding of that contemporaneity’s “periodicity”; a moment, by sheer happenstance, almost exactly coincident with the advent of what has come to be called “the great acceleration”—the post-1950s speed-up in carbon accumulations and global warming on whose ever-faster upward-climbing “Keeling Curve” the *New York Times* story was reporting.

In “History and Dialectic,” the concluding chapter of his 1962 volume, *The Savage Mind*, Claude Lévi-Strauss famously outlined the operations of what he called the “historian’s code,” the ordering principle by which the historical discipline seeks to bring human experience into a dialectical and potentially total relation with its fields of circumstance (or, as I will be stressing, its “situation”). The innocuous key to the historian’s code, Lévi-Strauss argues, is chronology, and the fundamental materials of chronology are dates. This apparently simple “chronological coding,” he indicates, however, “conceals a much more complex nature than one supposes when one thinks of historical dates as a simple linear series.”<sup>7</sup> That is so for several reasons. Partially because not all dates are alike, either in their concentration of distribution along the “linear” axis of time or in the *type* of time they variously denote. In the first instance, “we use a large number of dates to code some periods of history; and fewer for others.... [T]here are “hot” chronologies which are those periods where in the eyes of the historian numerous events appear as differential elements; others on the contrary, where for him [sic] ... very little or nothing took place.”<sup>8</sup> In the second instance, not only are dates thus unevenly distributed across “hot” and cold chronologies, each date stands within its particular chronological domain not merely as an abstract, declarative, ordinal number, but as a performatively inflected “*member* of a class”: “[thus] the date 1685 belongs to a class of which 1610, 1648 and 1715 are likewise members; but it means nothing in relation to the class composed of the dates: 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4<sup>th</sup> millennium, nor does it mean anything in relation to the class of dates: 23 January, 17 August, 30 September, etc.”<sup>9</sup> That is so not simply because one class of dates denotes years, one millennia, and one days, but because each of these classes corresponds, in turn, to a “lower-” or “higher-powered” “scale” of history, with “biographical and anecdotal” history (measured, like diaries, in days) at the “bottom” of the scale and other “times” such as “the middle ages, antiquity, the present day” (measured variably in decades, centuries, and millennia) unevenly distributed across “different [scales of] power” above the diurnal zone of biographical time.<sup>10</sup>

6 Karl Marx, “Theses on Feuerbach,” in *Marx/Engels Selected Works*, Vol. 1 (Progress Publishers, Moscow, USSR, 1969), 13–15.

7 Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), 258–259.

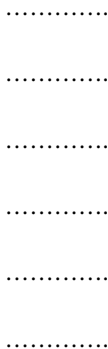
8 Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind*, 259.

9 Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind*, 259.

10 Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind*, 261.

Consequently, what at first appears as a straightforward “general [historical] code” consisting in the sequencing of “dates” “ordered as a linear series,” in fact articulates a highly complex procedure for managing, coordinating, and synthesizing a heteronymous array of “classes,” domains, powers, and scales, “each furnishing an autonomous system of reference.”<sup>11</sup> From this as-fully-disciplinary as dialectical operation of the historian’s code, Lévi-Strauss observes, the simultaneously:

discontinuous and classificatory nature of historical knowledge emerges clearly. It operates by means of a rectangular matrix:



where each line represents classes of dates, which may be called hourly, daily, annual, secular, millennial for the purposes of schematization and which together make up a discontinuous set. In a system of this type, alleged historical continuity is secured only by dint of fraudulent outlines.<sup>12</sup>

Lévi-Strauss’s fundamental purpose in mounting this critique was of course less a denunciation of historical method per se than a rejection of what he took to be the false equivalence Jean Paul Sartre had established between the “historian’s code” and the “human order” in *The Critique of Dialectical Reason*, particularly in the long introductory chapter (“Search for a Method”) in which Sartre had sketched his “progressive-regressive” method. In its elaborate reworking of Marx’s famous dictum from *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (“men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please, they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly found, given, and transmitted by the past”), *Search for a Method* had sought to effect a certain reconciliation between existentialism and Marxism by pledging fidelity to the proposition that the task of any properly dialectical philosophy of freedom (like any properly dialectical philosophy of history) lay in articulating the relationship between the domain of human action and the domain of historical necessity, the realms of making and of circumstance, of the actor and the “situation.”<sup>13</sup> The error of Marx’s inheritors, Sartre suggested (the error

11 Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind*, 260.

12 Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind*, 260.

13 Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte: Cambridge Texts in The History of Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

existentialism was uniquely equipped to correct), was to have abandoned the original complexity of this “difficult synthesis” in favor of a reductive privileging of the objective over the subjective element within history, of the “situation” over “man’s” capacity for “going beyond a situation”—thus abandoning the knowledge of “what [man] succeeds in making of what he has been made.”<sup>14</sup> To correct the errors of this “superficial,” “dishonest,” and “lazy” Marxism, Sartre proposed his progressive-regressive method whose “first moment” as David Sherman notes, “is really the regressive element, [which] works backward to analyze the particular historical factors that have gone into the construction of subjectivity, while the second moment, the progressive element, involves the way in which subjectivity synthesizes and transcends these factors in pursuit of its future projects.”<sup>15</sup> Through the consequent “‘internalization of the external’ and the externalization of the internal ... the subject, through its actions, freely makes the history that has made him [sic]” and so, as Sherman summarizes, allows Sartre to claim that he has found a way to “discard neither freedom nor history.”<sup>16</sup>

For Lévi-Strauss, the problem with this lay not in Sartre’s turn to Marx but in the internal flaws of the progressive-regressive method and, more vitally, in the false and total equivalence it established between the human order and the historian’s code. Far from resolving the relation between the human and the situation, freedom and necessity, Sartre’s method, Lévi-Strauss maintained, had fundamentally misconstrued the nature of humanity’s dialectical entanglements. Minimally, this flowed from Sartre’s misunderstanding of the true nature of historical time, which, Lévi-Strauss indicates, Sartre continued to treat as a linear arrangement of equivalent dates rather than as that matrix of scales of “power” (each with its own “autonomous system of reference”) he had outlined. Moving ever further “backward to analyze the particular historical factors that have gone into the construction” of a singular subjective position, Sartre’s method promised to place the human actor first in the day of his or her making, then in the year, then in the decade, then in the century—until the operation had been completed, and an entire historical “situation” had been established as that zone of necessity from which a human actor, having been made, might then find the conditions for a progressive (re)making of what has been made.

To promise this, however, Lévi-Strauss argues, is simply to obscure that biography is neither periodicity nor epochality, that coming to the end of the line of any single subject-situating “class” of dates, the regressive method finds itself obliged to leap levels from one domain of power to another while, nevertheless, obscuring the fact that any leap has been made or that in making that leap it has found itself obliged to mix or elide the distinctive modes of intelligibility giving each scale of history its marked character. The biographical subject of days and years, to put things another way, is not simply, *next* and evenly, the subject of a period-milieu measured in decades, *then* (and equally) the subject of a modernity, or a Renaissance, or an antiquity measured in centuries, thereafter, and finally, the subject of an enframing

14 Jean Paul Sartre, *Search for A Method*, Hazel E. Barnes, trans. (New York: Vintage Books, 1968), 45, 91.

15 Sartre, *Search for A Method*, 48, 53. David Sherman, *Sartre and Adorno: The Dialectics of Subjectivity* (New York: SUNY Press, 2008), 261.

16 Sherman, *Sartre and Adorno*, 261.

epoch of human “historical time” measured in millennia and set off (from the dawn of the invention of agriculture) from “prehistory.”<sup>17</sup>

Biography, period, era, and epoch (to name but four of the historical code’s “classes” of power) may be (indeed must be) related, but they are not the same, and the progressive-regressive method entirely fails to account for their difference.

This, though, does not yet touch Lévi-Strauss’s central argument and critique. For even if Sartre had produced an account of the diversified logics and orders of power of the multiple scales of historical time and a theory of their relation to one another, he still would have erred, the anthropologist suggests, by assuming that the problem of the human is exhausted by an examination of the relation of singular existence[s] to the grid of intelligibility the historian’s code makes available. I say “exhausted” advisedly, and it is worth pausing over that point. For Lévi-Strauss’s critique, to reiterate, is not a critique of history *tout court*. It is not a critique of Sartre’s desire to put the human in a dialectical relationship with material structures, processes, or events (Lévi-Strauss accepts the need to do so, provided one can simultaneously mark the internal heterogeneity of history’s scales of power, intelligibility, and order). Rather, he wished to insist, Sartre’s mistake was to treat the historical matrix as if it were the *unique* and *total* matrix of human “circumstance” and, therefore, to reduce the challenge of dialectical reason’s accounting of human being to a matter, first, of emplotting the “human” as one or other point within the grid of history:

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 .....  
 .....

and then of tracing the multiple vectors of relation between the human and the orders of historical time to which it could be observed to belong.

In contrast to that history-exclusive-model, Lévi-Strauss maintains, a fully dialectical account of humanity must both attend to “history” and address what the historical code fails to hold within its grid. And to do so, he insists, philosophy must find an epistemology for simultaneously working through the historical and for “getting outside history.”<sup>18</sup>

Not once, but twice.

First, he says, we must find a route for exiting history “to the bottom ... that is to say to an infra-historical domain in the realms of psychology and physiology.”<sup>19</sup> And secondly, we must get outside history to “the top ... into the general evolution of organized beings, which is itself explicable only in terms of biology, geology and finally cosmology.”<sup>20</sup> Lévi-Strauss in this way, as I parse it, proposes adding to the historian’s

17 Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind*, 260.

18 Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind*, 262.

19 Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind*, 262.

20 Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind*, 262.

code an infra-historical and a supra-historical domain that collectively (and in their mutual exchanges *with* the historical domain) realize a dialectic of human existence that could be schematized thus:

*Infra-Historical Domain*

Psychology

Physiology

*Historical Domain*

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

*Supra-Historical Domain*

Biology

Geology

Cosmology

It is only by accounting, simultaneously and continuously, for the relation between the scales of circumstance proper to “historical” time, and the infra-and supra-historical domains of psychology, physiology, biology, geology, and cosmology, Lévi-Strauss thus argues, that one can truly provide an adequate account of the human dialectic of freedom and necessity, of the actor and the situation, of that full range of “properties” from which the human situation is composed.<sup>21</sup> To accomplish this, one must add to the historian’s code a heteronymous order of knowledge; an order of thinking and knowing capable of blending psychology, cosmology, biology, physiology, and geology; the order that Lévi-Strauss identifies as “savage.” And for that, he insists, philosophy requires as a supplement to the science of history the science of anthropology, a science not only descriptive but imitative of the savage mind’s “intransigent refusal ... to allow anything human (or even living) to remain alien to it”; a science that discovers in that openness, in that willingness to “undertake the resolution of the human into the nonhuman,” in that capacity to effect “the reintegration of culture in

21 Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind*, 248.



nature and finally of life within the whole of its physico-chemical conditions,” the “real principle of dialectical reason.”<sup>22</sup>

I have started with “History and Dialectic” for several reasons. If the first, and most obvious, is that almost exactly fifty years after Lévi-Strauss set the terms of his debate with Sartre in this way, he seems to be on the point of a conclusive victory, then I do not mean by that that we are on the verge of a return to structural anthropology (though there are, certainly, signs of the emergence of a range of structural *biologies* across numerous spaces of contemporary intellectual life) or that we have been living unaware, in all the years since 1961, in a long Sartrean moment that is finally coming to an end (though, as James Chandler has noted, in his brilliant analysis of the Sartre-Lévi-Strauss debate, in the line from Marx, to Sartre, to Fred Jameson, there has been perhaps a greater Sartrean influence on postexistentialist, materialist epistemologies than we sometimes recognize).<sup>23</sup> Rather I wish to call attention to the uncanny precision with which, in staging his quarrel with Sartre, Lévi-Strauss anticipated not only the emergence of the “geological” as a figure of contemporary critical theory but a far broader major current of critical discourse predicated on the imperative of getting thought materially “outside history.” And although it is absolutely the case that that contemporary discourse has been shaped by the transition from structuralism to post-structuralism in the intervening years, it is nevertheless remarkable (perhaps in a way analogous to the remarkable persistence of categories of Saussurian structural linguistics into the problematics of deconstruction) that this contemporary turn outside history has been directed in exactly the two directions Lévi-Strauss counseled: “beneath” history and “above it.”

On the recent materialist turn “beneath” history—the turn toward what Lévi-Strauss identified as the conjoined infra-historical domain of “psychology and physiology”—I have in mind, to take just one example, the explosive recent turn toward the neuronal (to neuro-politics, neuro-economics, neuro-philosophy, neuro-humanities); the turn toward the borderlands of brain and mind, of affects and emotions, of synapses and desires; the turn toward that zone of “plasticity” that in its capacity, as Catherine Malabou has it to “give shape to,” “take shape from,” and “explode the shape of” human consciousness has come to demarcate a newly visible psycho-physiognomic terrain of the modern dialectic of freedom and necessity: a turn that in that sense (and this is a point to which I will return) does not so much obviate Sartre’s motivating Marxian problematic of the subject and the situation, of making and being made, as extend that problematic in materially new and previously unrecognized directions.<sup>24</sup> To revise Marx’s dictum: here the brain *is* history; or, as

22 Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind*, 245–247.

23 See James Chandler, *England in 1819: The Politics of Literary Culture and the Case of Romantic Historicism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), particularly the Introduction and Chapter One.

24 Catherine Malabou, *What Should We Do with Our Brain?* trans. Sebastian Rand (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 5 and throughout. For additional influential recent work in the neuro-humanities see also: Catherine Malabou, *The Ontology of the Accident: An Essay on Destructive Plasticity*, trans. Carolyn Shread (Boston: Polity Press, 2012); Catherine Malabou and Adrian Johnston, eds, *Self and Emotional Life: Philosophy, Psychoanalysis, and Neuroscience* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013); Daniel Lord Smail, *On Deep History and the Brain* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007); Nikolas Rose and Joelle M. Abi-Rached, *Neuro: The New Brain Sciences and the Management of Mind*

Daniel Lord Smail has it, the evolutionary history of the brain is the deep history that is our circumstance, the history we must confront if, in Malabou's suggestive formulation, we wish to "do" something with our brain, if we wish to make something of what it has made us.<sup>25</sup>

On the corresponding and simultaneous material turn "above" history—the contemporary supra-historical turn toward Levi-Stauss's "general evolution of beings ... explicable only in terms of biology, geology, and cosmology"—the field of recent debate is as crowded and brightly lit as the skies of the cosmos. To list but a very few of the more prominent names: Donna Haraway, Jane Bennett, Bruno Latour, Tim Morton, and Quentin Meillassoux have all, of late, in overlapping and discrete ways, sketched a series of companionate, vibrant, thing-political, enmeshed, and ancestral zones of strangely-strange, biotic, non-human, geological, and cosmological "actants" without whose consideration any future raising of the question of the human and its fields of circumstance (its "situation") will prove inadequate.<sup>26</sup> The constellation of projects these scholars' works have outlined, to repeat, does not converge on a single new line of materio-epistemological insight—and Meillassoux in particular, together with the more general speculative-realist, non-correlationist, object-oriented philosophy he alternately articulates and is made to stand in for certainly occupies a registrably disjunct place relative to these other scholars' pursuit of a post-Kantian but, still, co-relational account of the "human" as one form of speciated-being, among others, *within* the evolutionary, ecological, geological, and cosmological order of things.

Despite these differences we can discern within this bundle of critical thought (both in its infra-historical and supra-historical domains) the collective working out of something like what Foucault called a *dispositive*: the coming into operation of "a thoroughly heterogeneous ensemble" nevertheless characterized by "a system of relations" giving rise to an internally driven and singular "formation which has as its major function at a given historical moment that of responding to an *urgent need*."<sup>27</sup> That need, in Latour's terms, is the need of finally having done with the "bicameral parliament" of modern thought; the need to finally move beyond the false conception that there is a domain of nature on one hand and a domain of politics (and culture and history) on the other; the need to frame an understanding of the non-oppositionality of nature and culture; to articulate, as Haraway has it, a theory of nature-cultures; or, indeed, as Lévi-Strauss had it in "History and Dialectic" (in a

(Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013); Lisa Zunshine, *Why We Read Fiction: Theory of Mind and the Novel* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2006); Lisa Zunshine, ed. *Introduction to Cognitive Cultural Studies* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010); William Connolly, *Neuropolitics: Thinking, Culture, Speed* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2002); and Antonio Damasio, *Looking for Spinoza: Joy, Sorrow, and the Feeling Brain* (New York: Harcourt Books: 2003).

25 See Daniel Lord Smail, *On Deep History and the Brain*.

26 See Bruno Latour, *Politics of Nature: How to Bring the Sciences into Democracy*, Catherine Porter, trans. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004); Donna Haraway, *The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People, and Significant Otherness* (Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press, 2003); Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010); Timothy Morton, *The Ecological Thought* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010); Quentin Meillassoux, *After Finitude: An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency*, trans. Ray Brassier (London: Continuum Books, 2008).

27 See Michel Foucault, "The Confession of the Flesh" (1977) interview. In *Power/Knowledge Selected Interviews and Other Writings* (ed. Colin Gordon), 1980: 194–228.

significant turn from his earlier work) to finally “undertake the resolution of the human into the nonhuman” and “the reintegration of culture in nature”—and, thereby, to supersede the critical and philosophical dominance of the historian’s code as sole arbiter of the human condition.<sup>28</sup>

If one mildly paradoxical reason to return to the Sartre/Lévi-Strauss debate is, therefore, to discern the ways in which it can be seen to throw into visibility an at least five-decade-old period of critical time (spanning the transition from late-stage structuralism to late-stage post-structuralism) predicated on the shared urge of getting thought *outside history*—and so (to begin to close the circle to my prefatory point of beginning) to observe the ways in which a discourse on the anthropocene (dateable, in one sense, from Crutzen’s initial published use of the term in a 2000 newsletter of the International Geosphere-Biosphere program [no. 41]) belongs, coincidentally, to that more extensive, if increasingly “hot,” chronology of critical time running, minimally, from the 1960s to the present—then the other and more fully paradoxical reason for beginning here is that even as the discourses on and of the anthropocene, the neurological, and the ecological finally begin to shift us into a time after the dominance of the “historian’s code,” that shift, as I have already intimated, does not so much dissolve the problem Sartre’s neo-Marxian project was designed to address as massively expand it.

If Sartre’s dilemma, in other words, was to find a mid-twentieth-century existentialist response to the nineteenth-century Marxist question of whether a human project of freedom could survive the “difficult synthesis” of the subject and the situation, then this extra-historical turn (across its multiple domains) has again found itself obliged to pose the question of the human, and of freedom, though now at a yet higher order of philosophical complexity. It has found itself again wrestling with the question of what shape freedom (or as Mallabou has it, the “alter-global”; or as Morton and Latour prefer it, “democracy”; or as one might yet more generally state it, the fashioning of the future) might take when we consider the problem of future-fashioning as arising not only from the foundational Marxian dialectic of the subject and the (historical) situation but from within a second dialectic of the “situation” as, itself, multi-dimensionally “infra-historical,” “historical,” and “supra-historical.”<sup>29</sup>

Supplementing the cultural, economic, sociological, and political conception of “circumstance” that the historian’s code makes available, this second-order dialectic finds the situation of the human both collapsing inward and exploding outward, veering simultaneously synaptic and planetary. Ramified into the force-field of those spaces, the question of how to go “beyond” the “situation” (the question of how to “succeed in making [something] of what has been made”) does not, thus, so much leave behind the Sartrean question (or, really, the Marxian/historical materialist question) as multiply and disperse its urgency across the neurological, nomological, geological, and cosmological fields. Recurring, multiplying, expanding in this way, that question thereby highlights the need not merely for an answer (or a set of answers) but for a method of coming to answer, a method for thinking the relation of the “human order” to all these domains (individually and in common). To Sartre’s search for a

28 Latour, *Politics of Nature*, 49 and throughout; Haraway, *Companion Species Manifesto*, 1 and throughout; Lévi-Strauss, *Savage Mind*, 246, 247.

29 Malabou, *What Should We Do with Our Brain?*, 5.

method, I am thus suggesting, the compound of discourses forming the extra-historical dispositive I have been tracing in its five-decade development from *Pensee Sauvage* implies the need for another: a new search for a method that will take as its starting point an investigation of the multi-scaled, ontologically plural, simultaneously historical, infra-historical, and supra-historical “situation” in which we find ourselves—and from which we might take the cues toward the task of our own project of freedom and democracy.

It is because Chakrabarty’s “Climate of History” (like Sartre’s *Search for a Method*, and Marx’s “Eighteenth Brumaire of Napoleon Bonaparte”) directly foregrounds the dialectic of freedom and the situation, because he directly stakes a claim to have outlined a new method of history for this expanded historical “situation” and because he has offered a provisional mode of responding (through the “negative universal” of our species-being) to what that situation is making of us, that I want to concentrate on his recent work.<sup>30</sup> I want to do so with a particular set of questions in mind. To the extent that Chakrabarty does advance this new historiographic method (one that, with a nod to his earlier work, I will call the method of “History 3”), is that method simultaneously adequate to the particular circumstance it understands itself to address (the “circumstance” of climate change) and to that larger post-humanist situation of which I am suggesting it is a part? And if it is not alone adequate, what does this History 3 have to learn from its companion others? What might it gain by looking to these companion species of thought engaging like and unlike dilemmas of the extra-historical, like and unlike collapses of the binary of human and natural history?

Before turning to those questions, let me pause, however, to survey in some slightly greater detail the particular critical situation to which Chakrabarty’s new method seeks to respond; the determinate “planetary conjuncture” against which it immediately invites itself to be measured; the coming situation, as a November 2012 World Bank report warns, of a 4°C world.<sup>31</sup>

The full title of the report is “4°—Turn Down the Heat: Why a 4°C Warmer World Must Be Avoided.”<sup>32</sup> It is one of many similar documents that have been produced between *Climate Change 2007*, the Fourth Assessment Report of the United Nations’ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), and the 2013/14 “Fifth Assessment Report” whose first working group document was released this September. Like virtually all of the documents produced within this truly “hot” period of climate discourse, it makes for chastening reading, if only for the simple clarity of the danger-threshold it identifies: the 4°C world (that is, the world whose average mean temperature is 4°C higher than average preindustrial temperature levels) it desperately warns us we must not allow to come into being, but which, if current “emission trends” continue, may become our world “within this century.”<sup>33</sup>

30 Chakrabarty, “The Climate of History,” 222.

31 Chakrabarty, “The Climate of History,” 199.

32 “4°—Turn Down the Heat: Why a 4°C Warmer World Must Be Avoided,” A Report for the World Bank by the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research and Climate Analytics, November 2012, [http://climatechange.worldbank.org/sites/default/files/Turn\\_Down\\_the\\_heat\\_Why\\_a\\_4\\_degree\\_centrigrade\\_warmer\\_world\\_must\\_be\\_avoided.pdf](http://climatechange.worldbank.org/sites/default/files/Turn_Down_the_heat_Why_a_4_degree_centrigrade_warmer_world_must_be_avoided.pdf), accessed October 14, 2013.

33 “Turn Down the Heat,” 1.

What does it look like, that 4°C world that the future and present are already beginning to inherit from our carbon-era “past”?

Whatever else it will be, the World Bank report indicates, if it is to come into being it will be a world changed comprehensively and disastrously across almost every sector of analysis. It will be a world in which “extreme weather events” will intensify both in frequency and in scale, with “heat waves such as [the one] in Russia in 2010 [which killed an estimated 55,000 people] likely to become the new normal summer.”<sup>34</sup> A world in which, for “regions such as the Mediterranean, North Africa, the Middle East, and the Tibetan Plateau, almost all summer months are likely to be warmer than the most extreme heat waves currently experienced.”<sup>35</sup> A world in which, as warming “strengthens the [planetary] hydrologic cycle ... [and] dry regions ... become drier and wet regions ... wetter,” there will be increased mass flooding in some regions of the globe (much of the Northern Hemisphere, East Africa, and South and Southeast Asia), and the simultaneous sprawl of aridity and desertification in other zones, leading to “dramatic reductions in global agricultural production,” with “35 percent of [all sub-Saharan African] cropland ... expected to become unsuitable for cultivation.”<sup>36</sup>

It will be a world in which melting Greenland, Antarctic, and Arctic Sea Ice “will likely lead to a sea-level rise of 0.5 to 1 meter, and possibly more, by 2100, with several meters [and possibly significantly] more to be realized in the coming centuries.”<sup>37</sup> A world in which coastal communities around the world, and a “highly vulnerable” archipelago of cities in Mozambique, Madagascar, Mexico, Venezuela, India, Bangladesh, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Vietnam will, in consequence, find themselves exposed to extreme floods” and “coastal inundation.”<sup>38</sup> A world in which such “large scale extreme” flooding “events” will drown people, collapse buildings, “induce nutritional deficits” due to the loss of arable land, and increase “diarrheal and respiratory diseases” by introducing “contaminants and diseases into healthy water supplies.”<sup>39</sup> It will be a world in which, even as such coastal flooding exerts massive impacts on human health, compound chronic “changes in temperature, precipitation rates, and humidity [will further] influence vector-borne diseases (... malaria and dengue fever) as well as hantaviruses, leishmaniasis, Lyme disease, and schistosomiasis” and exacerbate respiratory disorders and heart and blood vessel diseases due to “heat-amplified levels of smog.”<sup>40</sup>

Farther out to sea, the oceans will intensify their rate of acidification, leading to a significant loss in biodiversity in the Atlantic, Pacific, and Indian Ocean marine ecosystems; correspondingly dramatic reductions of fishery yields; and the widespread dissolving of coral reefs: with “profound consequence for [the reefs’] dependent species and for the people who depend on them for food, income, tourism, and shoreline protection.”<sup>41</sup>

34 “Turn Down the Heat,” xv.

35 “Turn Down the Heat,” xv.

36 “Turn Down the Heat,” 15, 26, 62.

37 “Turn Down the Heat,” xv.

38 “Turn Down the Heat,” xvi, xv.

39 “Turn Down the Heat,” xvii.

40 “Turn Down the Heat,” xvii.

41 “Turn Down the Heat,” xv.

And these, the World Bank report indicates, are just some of the likely *linear* effects of warming. If the temperature mean climbs from 2°C, to 3°C, to 4°C, it more ominously warns, “lurking in the tails of the probability distributions are likely to be many unpleasant surprises ... [as] extremes, including heat waves, droughts, flooding events, and tropical cyclone intensity, are expected to respond *nonlinearly* ... [leading to an] evolving cascade of risks,” including “large-scale displacements of populations, with manifold consequences for human security, health, and economic and trade systems”; “the risk of crossing activation thresholds for nonlinear tipping elements in the Earth System”; and, as the report notes in a concluding gesture toward just how much the damage might exceed its probability calculations and risk scenarios, “the likelihood of transitions to unprecedented climate regimes ....”<sup>42</sup>

What will a 4°C world look like? In the language of the eschatological and apocalyptic tradition on which Slavoj Žižek has recently drawn, it looks like a world of “the end times”: a world possessed of a “new heaven and a new earth.”<sup>43</sup> Or almost so, and not at all. If the image of a 4°C world that the cascading series of post-IPCC-Fourth-Assessment Reports has made increasingly, stunningly, visible is an image of a post-catastrophic, post-apocalyptic world, that world is decidedly not (as the prophetic vision of the new heaven and the new earth promises) one that finds itself on the point of entry into a redressed polity and order of life. Rather this is a world of the long catastrophe; a world, in Giorgio Agamben’s terms, that finds itself at best entering the moment of “ultra-history”; a world in the long interregnum between the accumulating certainty of the devastated and the uncertainty of the new.<sup>44</sup> To regard the 4°C world is, thus, not so much to regard a “new earth” as, in Bill McKibben’s evocative neologism, to encounter a new “eearth”: a world radically different from what we have heretofore understood the planet to be.<sup>45</sup>

How, then, are we to make sense of this world, this eearth? What is the method for the difficult synthesis of subject and circumstance, of the actor and the situation, when humanity’s co-actants, strange strangers, and companion species now include heatwaves, cyclones, ocean deserts, Antarctic ice, activation thresholds, nonlinear tipping elements, Keeling curves, carbon parts-per-million—all those “hyper-objects” as Tim Morton has named them; all that “vibrant matter” as Jane Bennett has so resonantly put it.<sup>46</sup> What is the method sufficient not only to plotting the co-relationship between these human and non-human forces of nature but to finding, in that method, in that new outline of critique, both the fashion of the future and a key to its democratic refashioning? What indeed, if anything, does critical method, does critique, have to say to the looming sovereignty over the planet, of carbon, of the hydrologic system, of melting Antarctic ice?

Chakrabarty’s response, as I have indicated, is, if not quite to address the dilemma of philosophy’s adequacy to these new “regimes” of climate sovereignty, then at least to

42 “Turn Down the Heat,” 60.

43 Slavoj Žižek, *Living in the End Times* (New York: Verso, 2011).

44 Giorgio Agamben, *The Open: Man and Animal* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004).

45 Bill McKibben, *Eearth: Making a Life on a Tough New Planet* (New York: Times Books, 2010).

46 See Tim Morton, *Hyperobjects: Philosophy and Ecology after the End of the World* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013).

begin to respond to these questions of method by proposing for this coming 4°C world what I am calling History 3. The first step toward this new method, he argues (in similar spirit, if different effect, to the line of thought stretching from “History and Dialectic” to *The Companion Species Manifesto*, *The Politics of Nature*, *Vibrant Matter*, and *The Ecological Thought*), is to collapse “the age-old humanist distinction between natural history and human history,” to take as a starting postulate that we have entered an era in which human and natural forces have merged and human action has taken on the qualities of a “force of nature” in shaping the long-term geological future of the planet.<sup>47</sup> His immediate corollary to that point is that postcolonial studies require a fundamental rethinking of many of the key values underlying prior methodological commitments, key among them its anti-universalism, inadequate now, he suggests, to a universal challenge of planetary existence, and so, at least provisionally worth replacing with a new “negative universal,” flashing up in that moment of danger that is climate change: the new universal of “species” being.

This is well known and already widely commented on.<sup>48</sup> What might be less recognized is that even as the new historical thought of the anthropocene requires setting on hold long-standing critiques of the universal, its full methodological implications also seem to demand leaving behind, as an outmoded relic of self-enclosed “human history,” an equally foundational investment in and critique of post-Enlightenment projects of human freedom running through much postcolonial and allied bodies of critical theory; a counterplay of Enlightenment and subaltern conceptions of freedom, justice, and democracy that, indeed, lay at the core of Chakrabarty’s celebrated study of the complex inter-animation of what he previously called History 1 and History 2.

By History 1, as he details in *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, we should have in mind an Enlightenment-inspired, progressive theory of history (classically associated with a post-eighteenth-century “historicism”) and an attendant politics of rights-based citizenship and democracy; a theory and a politics, he takes pains to indicate, that postcolonial theory cannot simply reject but must, instead, mark as simultaneously “indispensable and inadequate.”<sup>49</sup> It is “indispensable,” he argues, for at least two reasons. First, because the project of securing full and equal rights of participatory citizenship and the protection of the individual against the power of the state, has been and must remain one of the key elements of any vibrant anti-imperial and postcolonial politics. Second, because the analytic procedures through which Marx derived those categories of his thought, such as “abstract labor,” from which he was able to derive not only a descriptive account but a critique of capital, depend on the universalizing conceptual legacy of History 1. If we are to have universal critiques of capital and its role in the modern projects of empire—which we must, Chakrabarty argues, if for no other reason than that

47 Chakrabarty, “Climate of History,” 201.

48 See in particular Ato Quayson, “The Sighs of History: Postcolonial Debris and the Question of (Literary) History,” in *New Literary History*, 43:2 (Spring 2012) and the other essays in this special edition responding to Chakrabarty’s “Climate of History” and Robert Young’s “Postcolonial Remains” (published in the previous edition of the journal, *New Literary History*, 43:1 [Winter 2012] 19–42).

49 Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 6.

“Grasping the category ‘capital’ entails grasping its universal constitution”—then on this ground also we cannot do without History 1.<sup>50</sup>

Thus indispensable, History 1 is also, he insists, “inadequate.” For at least three reasons. First, because the teleological code underpinning History 1’s “historicism” has repeatedly posited “historical time as a measure of the cultural distance ... assumed to exist between the West and the non-West” and has, so, furnished endless alibis for the imperial civilizing mission.<sup>51</sup> Second, because although History 1 equates modernity with a narrative of unilinear global progress, with an abstract, analytic, and entirely *secular* epistemology, subaltern politics (even as it assumes the indispensability of rights-based democratic norms) “has no *necessary* secularism about it.” “It refuses to ‘take the idea [of a] single, homogeneous, and secular historical time for granted’; ‘continually brings gods and spirits into the domain of the political.’”<sup>52</sup> And third, because in addition to the “analytic” critique enabled by the universal protocols of History 1, postcolonial politics thus require a “hermeneutic” critique arising from these subaltern “life-forms” and their insistent acts of interrupting the secular politics of History 1 and interweaving with its Enlightenment ideals alternate “imaginings of socially just futures for [the] human.”

In addition to History 1, Chakrabarty therefore concludes, we require an additional concept of history: one that recognizes that “historical time ... is out of joint with itself”; that the human is not “ontologically singular”; that “gods and spirits [are] existentially coeval with the human”; that to an abstraction-driven critique of capital (and empire) we require this coincident, affectively rich, and anthropologically differentiated order of critique.<sup>53</sup> His name for that concept is History 2, a form of history that, crucially, is *not* the binary “other” of History 1, or its archaic antecedent, but is “better thought of as a category charged with the function of constantly interrupting the totalizing thrusts of History 1.”<sup>54</sup> In their relation with one another, History 1 and History 2 do not, therefore, express an antinomy. Rather, Chakrabarty argues, they reveal that the time of democracy (the time of the struggle for “socially just futures”), far from expressing a single, universal, and unidirectional chronology, exists as a set of “time-knots” in which “we live”—time knots braiding together the secular and the nonsecular, the universal and the particular, the analytic and the hermeneutic, Enlightenment and subalternity in intertwining and separating projects of emancipation and justice.

The question I am now asking is what becomes of this complex interplay of History 1 and History 2 in the turn to the crisis of climate? What becomes of their undecidable complementarity in History 3’s new theoretical accounting of the advent of the anthropocene? [It is, perhaps, again worth stressing that “History 3” is my term for Chakrabarty’s new approach and not his own.]

At first glance, History 1 and History 2 seem to survive the transition to this urgent new methodological regime, particularly as Chakrabarty’s new historical method acknowledges the continuing relevance of attempts to address the role of

50 Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, 70.

51 Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, 7.

52 Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, 14–15.

53 Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, 16.

54 Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, 66.



capital in precipitating the catastrophic rise of carbon emissions. As he indicates in his third thesis: “Analytic frameworks engaging questions of freedom by way of critiques of capitalist globalization have *not* in any way become obsolete in the age of climate change. If anything, as [Mike] Davis shows, climate change may well end up accentuating all the inequities of the capital world order if the interests of the poor and vulnerable are neglected.”<sup>55</sup> Between the continued relevance of a global/universal critique of capital and the need to account for the differential exposure of the vulnerable and poor to the devastating effects of climate change, there then seems to be room within History 3 for both Histories 1 and 2.

That is not what Chakrabarty, as I understand him, seems finally to be arguing, however. History 1 and History 2 may not be “obsolete,” but they are also not fully incorporated within his new method. Like the “theories of globalization, Marxist analysis of capital, subaltern studies, and postcolonial criticism,” which, he indicates, have ultimately proved inadequate to “making sense of this planetary conjuncture within which humanity finds itself today,” they are instead more hauntologically prior to this new approach: reappearing in his argument as the residue (or, in an ironic twist of Robert Young’s terms, as the “remains”) of a “[still]-present historiography of globalization” that gives every appearance of being on the way to becoming obsolete as the walls of “human history” are “breached”; a historiography that exists in a condition of fundamental “difference” with (and quasi-historicist anteriority to) “the historiography demanded by anthropogenic theories of climate change.”<sup>56</sup> The grounds of that difference are, for Chakrabarty, multiple. Key among them, however, is that although both History 1 and History 2 can be experienced, the new geophysical form of “human collectivity” brought about by the anthropocene escapes our capacity to “experience.”<sup>57</sup> By which, as he makes clear, it escapes our capacity as humans to experience what it means to breach the boundaries of human ontology, to traffic with (and as) the non-human, to have become humanly non-human and non-humanly human.

This is a remarkably complex argument, all the more remarkable because, in advancing it, Chakrabarty seems not only to be moving from the older Marxist materialism with which his work has long been in conversation to the “new materialism” articulated by Bennett and others, but because, in doing so, he seems to bypass some of the vital insights of his prior analysis of the inter-animation of History 1 and History 2—particularly the insight that human history has never been ontologically singular; that it has always involved the traffic between the human and the nonhuman. Perhaps another way of phrasing things might have been that the crisis of the anthropocene does not so much demand that we brace ourselves for looking beyond the undecidable interplay of History 1 and History 2 but, instead, that we expand our sense of the ontological plurality of the human; that to those supernatural actors and agents with whom Chakrabarty had earlier seen the human to be coeval, we must now also recognize the post-natural actors, agents, and actants of cyclones, heatwaves, and melting ice; that perhaps we do not so much need a History 3 as an expanded History 2, yet more extensively interrupting and modifying History 1.

55 Chakrabarty, “Climate of History,” 212.

56 Chakrabarty, “Climate of History,” 216, 221.

57 Chakrabarty, “Climate of History,” 220.

That, however, is not the direction he takes. Rather, as he turns his attention to the challenges that the transformation of *human being* into *species being* puts to the question of freedom, he suggests that the time has come for a fundamental reconsideration of the linkage between philosophical critique and the grand modern project of freedom. And, entirely consistently, he does so not because he wishes to return to or intensify his earlier investigation of the mutually modifying exchanges of Enlightenment and subaltern conceptions of freedom but for a devastatingly empirical set of reasons. Because, as he puts it: “The Mansion of modern freedom stands on an ever-expanding base of fossil fuel use. [Because] most of our freedoms so far have been energy-intensive.”<sup>58</sup> Because “whatever our socioeconomic and technological choices, whatever the rights we wish to celebrate as our freedom, we cannot afford to destabilize conditions (such as the temperature zone in which the planet exists) that work like boundary parameters of human existence.”<sup>59</sup>

Despite their parsimony, the consequences of these statements are far-reaching. At the very least, they lead to a series of assumption-troubling questions. “[H]as the period from 1750 to now been one of freedom or that of the anthropocene?” “Is the anthropocene a critique of the narratives of freedom? Is the geological agency of humans the price we pay for the pursuit of freedom?” To all these queries, he responds, “In some ways, yes. As Edward O. Wilson said in his *The Future of Life*: ‘Humanity has so far played the role of planetary killer, concerned only with its own short-term survival. We have cut much of the heart out of biodiversity .... If Emi, the Sumatran Rhino could speak, she might tell us that the twenty-first century is thus far no exception.’”<sup>60</sup> Central to all these questions, and to Chakrabarty’s response, is the mournful but resolute understanding that although History 1 and History 2’s projects of freedom (Enlightenment, subaltern, or some co-modifying hybrid of the two) may have posited freedom as the endpoint of history, such freedom has instead proven to be the portal to something else, something catastrophic. Indeed, the tragic secret knowledge of what I am calling Chakrabarty’s History 3 (the reason this historiographic method may feel obliged to keep History 1 and History 2 outside itself) may well be that modernity and postmodernity’s great projects of freedom (Enlightenment and counter-Enlightenment) *are* the catastrophe leading into one of Agamben’s periods of “ultra-history”; the catastrophe leading to another end of history; to an image of the end metonymically figured not only by the image of a single vanishing species, but by virtually all the tipping-point, threshold-crossing, cascading images of the 4°C world: the image of death, the image of extinction.

This, finally, to my mind, is the key to the code of this new method: that even as it foregrounds the question of freedom, it does so no longer in order to orient us toward a future measured against the promise of freedom but, instead, to direct us to (and desperately against) a future marked by the threat of extinction. In doing so, it no longer tries to derive “socially just visions of the future” from the promise of coming democracy but from a collective, planetary, being-toward-death. That does not mean giving up on justice, but it does mean that for this manner of conceiving history,

58 Chakrabarty, “Climate of History,” 208.

59 Chakrabarty, “Climate of History,” 218.

60 Chakrabarty, “Climate of History,” 210.

justice must be construed in an entirely different mode. How so? In at least this way: whereas for the enlightened and subaltern political projects of History 1 and History 2 (projects for which the subject appears under the alternating/overlapping guise of the “citizen” and the “peasant”), justice comes to occupy the contested and undecidable zone between what the law mandates and what “forms of life” create; for a historical method oriented toward extinction and emerging under the sign of a subject appearing in the guise of “species,” justice leaves behind law and anthropology and now occupies itself with questions of ontological transformation and survival (questions of how, justly, to survive a transformed ontology of being).

From freedom to extinction; from the citizen and the peasant to the species; from law and forms of life to ontology—these, I am suggesting, are the deep code of the transition from History 1 and History 2 to History 3.

Let me be clear. I believe there is significant value in this transition, significant value in attempting to imagine an ontological politics for the deep future of the planet under the sign of species. In my first effort to consider the anthropocene as the new situation of postcolonial studies, that is very much what I tried to do. What I now want to ask is whether the power of that insight is such that this is the sole choice now available to us. Whether an orientation to extinction is unitary or whether it might contain within itself other orientations: if not toward freedom as it has been construed in major currents of occidental political theory from the Enlightenment onward, then perhaps, as Chakrabarty’s mildly open formulation glancingly hints toward “some” other “ways” of conceiving freedom; or perhaps, as Latour and Morton, in their different fashions have it, toward a radicalized concept of democracy as the mesh of “strange strangers” or the “parliament of things”; or perhaps, as Jane Bennett has expressed it in a brilliant recent essay on the anthropocene, toward a renovated conception of the Spinozan “conatus,” toward a reimagined “endeavor to persist in being”—now not through the will to security but through “the will to belong,” “as one species on the planet among numerous others.”<sup>61</sup>

If there is space for such multiplicity within the political being of the anthropocene, space for more than the “negative” universality of species being, room for the possibility that extinction is not the sole copula between the subject and this situation (room, as Bennett has it, for alternate “projections of a fittingness between humanity and the future”), then, to take another vital point from Chakrabarty’s work, that will be because our conception of politics is bound up with our conception of the nature of historical time; because, recognizing this, we have warrant to extend his foundational insight that neither human ontology nor the ontology of time is singular but plural; warrant to maintain that time (including the time of the anthropocene) continues to be out of joint; that the time of time-knots is not over.<sup>62</sup>

Or—to move backward from Chakrabarty to the text by Lévi-Strauss with which I began—let me put it this way. If there is reason to believe that both the history and

61 Chakrabarty, “Climate of History,” 210; Morton, *The Ecological Thought*, 59–97; Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 142 and ff.; Jane Bennett, “Earthling, Now and Forever?” in *Making the Geologic Now: Responses to Material Conditions of Contemporary Life*, Elizabeth Ellsworth and Jamie Kruse, eds. (New York: Punctum Books, 2013), 245–246.

62 Bennett, “Earthling,” 246.

the politics of the anthropocene are not unidirectionally oriented but pluridirectional, that will be because, once again, the historian's code remains inadequate to an accounting of our "situation"; because the anthropocene is more than a name for a new chronology, more than a new set of historical dates, now measured long-hand in millennia rather than in mere decades or centuries, but, still, like the chronologies of old, moving inevitably, teleologically, in a single direction; because this new supra-, ultra-, or extra-historical moment we inhabit is one that is again composed of multiple scales, orders, and classes of time (abstract, hermeneutic, ontic) and multiple corresponding orientations to the possibility of the (just) future fashioning of those times. To revise my earlier suggestion: perhaps it is not a matter of returning, in expanded form, to the weave of History 1 and History 2, but of slip-knotting them together, with History 3, into one more braided order of time: an order perhaps adequate to the temporal and ontological multiplicity of the 4°C world; a fourth order of history, measured both in dates and in degrees, in times and temperatures; an historical, infra-historical, and supra-historical order that I am provisionally calling History 4°.