Amid the many discussions of how environmentalism and democratic politics might intersect, perhaps the greatest challenge for historians has come from the simultaneously emergent and epochal shift into the Anthropocene. This is because the Anthropocene signals a world ‘after nature’, but that means at least two things. First, that human beings have become geological agents, and that we have become conscious of our being geological agents, through an increasingly historical awareness of how our species has transformed planetary conditions of habitability. Secondly, and related to the first point, the once seemingly accepted divisions between a humanly-curated, and thus artificial, world of politics and a natural world or environment somehow separate from it, and indicative of a certain type of Western ‘modernity’, no longer seems tenable, if it ever was. However, as we shift, or rather stumble into the complex worlds of the Anthropocene, there is no clear point of origin around which to orient its political implications. In fact, its temporalities weave in and out of deep geological time, modern democratic time, the accelerated time of the post-1945 global order, and now into a sort of Anthropocene time of revision since 2000, the moment of its formal conceptual coining.

Yet the pre-eminent theorist of history writing today, François Hartog, suggests that what he has elsewhere seductively termed a regime of historicity, that is, a sense of the complex connections between different sedimentary time-scapes of past, present, and future, is going to be difficult, if not impossible, to conceptualize in the Anthropocene. Why? ‘We have some experience of the world’s time’, Hartog writes, ‘but no experience of Anthropocene temporality is possible’ for human beings. Consequently, the construction of an Anthropocene ‘regime of historicity’ must be informed by ‘chronos time’ or the time of the world of globe – those temporalities that human experience can grasp – but still try to register the time of the planet (such as those temporalities of geological and thermal processes), which we cannot directly experience.

1. B. Latour, We Have Never been Modern, transl. by C. Porter, London 1991.
2. D. Kelly, Politics and the Anthropocene, Cambridge 2019, ch. 1.
3. F. Hartog, ‘Chronos, Kairos, Krisis’, in: History and Theory 60 (2021) 3, 425–439, 435.
Dipesh Chakrabarty has done the most to date to suggest how the attempt to construct such an Anthropocene ‘regime of historicity’ might be a productive intellectual challenge for historians. He does so by taking seriously the arguments of Earth Systems Science (ESS), which understand the Anthropocene as a series of planetary processes (tracking changes to the atmosphere and biosphere, as well the technosphere and climate). According to Chakrabarty, ‘What we see in the history of ESS, however, is not an end to the project of capitalist globalization but the arrival of a point in history where the global discloses to humans the domain of the planetary’. In doing so, it offers us the possibility of seeing the world, earth or globe, differently – such as the ‘poetic’ form of Gaia. However, more pointedly, it challenges narratives of ‘global’ history by forcing those histories to confront a dissonant relationship with the planetary. Pulled by the human forces of sustainability and development on one side, and the planetary dynamics of habitability on the other, challenging the foundations of global history with reference to questions of planetary scale presents the Anthropocene as something both uncanny and deeply real, as well as consequential. For Chakrabarty, it will require a new philosophical anthropology to interpret human attempts to experience these new-old times of the planetary, and a reconsidering of the various ways in which processes of productivist globalization have thrust an awareness of this planetary perspective upon our species.

Of course, the temporalities of planetary habitability or the Anthropocene have their own complex cycles and timeframes, whether understood as a unit of abstract time (geochronology) or through the material units of chronostratigraphic time, through which different material deposits (radioactive residue, pollutants, polymers) are measured. These timeframes nonetheless seek out a singular golden spike point that could constitute a distinctive claim to the original moment of the Anthropocene’s emergence. Moreover, they locate that spike within the entire geological history of the planet, which is to say, one that is completely independent of human history. In this way, planetary perspectives and planetary limits offer tools and perspectives for historians to reimagine the world and its variously global histories, tracing in turn the ‘slow’ history of environmental violence visited upon the planet by those who live upon it and the defiant response of the planetary to human activities.

In this way, as Hartog suggests, a direct human experience of Anthropocene or planetary time is literally impossible, for the scale and the extent are just too vast, and too indifferent to the fate of human beings in any case. Because of this, the Anthropocene might throw human beings back upon pre-modern and (or) apocalyptic eschatological senses of time, to make sense of the strangeness of the moment and give it an experiential reality, whether as terror or something akin to the sublime. Still, others worry that in making the ‘shock’ of the Anthropocene into either a purely scientific calibration, or something so apocalyptic that it is effectively beyond the terrain of conventional politics, control is ceded to forms of authority that are technocratic, and anti-democratic. Indeed, the very origins of the Anthropocene within the field of ESS suggested a presumptive commitment, rather than a challenge, to those underlying models of economic growth that have structured and supported the evolution of its constitutive sub-disciplines in the modern academy. Helping to

4. D. Chakrabarty, ‘The Planet – An Emergent Humanist Category’, in: Critical Inquiry 46 (2019) 1, 1–31, esp. 17–19; more broadly, J. Zalasiewicz et al., ‘The Anthropocene: Comparing its Meaning in Geology (Chronostratigraphy) with Conceptual Approaches Arising in other Disciplines’, in: Earth’s Future 9 (2021): https://doi.org/10.1029/2020EF001896.
5. B. Latour, Facing Gaia, transl. by C. Porter, Cambridge 2019.
6. R. Nixon, Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor, Cambridge, MA 2013; see also C. Hamilton, Defiant Earth: The Fate of Humans in the Anthropocene, Cambridge 2017.
7. C. Bonnueil / J. Fressoz, The Shock of the Anthropocene, transl. by D. Fernbach, London 2017.
challenge those presumptions, however, is precisely what Chakrabarty’s call for a new philosophical anthropology sets out to do.8

**Connecting histories of climate, human evolution and industrial civilization**

How, then, might historians and political theorists conceptualize the temporalities of the Anthropocene in a ‘world’ after nature, where the planetary reveals itself as an increasingly imposing presence though one that is outside the practical realm of human experience? One major challenge is finding ways to connect the intertwined histories of climate, human evolution and industrial civilization or capitalism together. That there are multiple ways in which those histories can be written and alternatively framed with reference to the temporalities of climate change as much as the Anthropocene, has become clear.9 Similarly, many different and competing monikers now exist alongside the Anthropocene and vie for intellectual and political primacy. Marxist critics want to tie the planetary scale of the climate crisis squarely to histories of capitalism and exploitation, and they have thus pursued different ways of seeing this through concepts like the Capitalocene and Plantationocene. Other models suggest a holistic form of kin-making between human beings and other life on earth, which is embodied in what Donna Haraway has called the Chthulucene. Still others talk about a Pyrocene, to signal both a world on fire and the genealogy of human causation in terms of the transformation wrought when human beings first learned to harness fire for themselves.10 Writing and alternatively reframing these histories, and the multiple ways in which this can be done, requires a kind of ‘Anthropocening’ of modern politics, as it were.

This might best be thought of as a series of strategies for dealing with modern politics as a predicament, rather than seeing it as a single structure or complex whose overlapping features, then, have more to do with the history and legacies of energy, exclusion and expropriation, than they do with the velleities of democracy and economic growth as the unquestionable presumptions of contemporary politics.11 As Kathryn Yusoff observes, we might in fact question the idea that the Anthropocene itself is a necessarily progressive category if it is committed to some singular perspective as to both what it is and what its politics must be.12

Being aware of some of the conceptual and political tensions involved here, political theorists have worked to reorient their focus towards moments and processes of decolonization as critical for understanding global inequalities and their connections to democracy and climate change. At the same time, the challenges of ecological economics and degrowth, of a continued reliance upon carbon democracy, and in the knowledge that any putatively green transition will still mean resource conflict, political theory must remain responsive to geo-economic and strategic considerations, as much as it will need new configurations of political agency, if it wants to maintain its relevance.13 Merely becoming environmental will not suffice. Indeed, some of the exclusionary

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8. E. Benson, *Surroundings*, Chicago, IL 2020, ch. 6.
9. See D. Chakrabarty, ‘Anthropocene Time’, in: *History and Theory* 57 (2018) 1, 5–32; J. Nordblad, ‘On the Difference between Anthropocene and Climate Change Temporalities’, in: *Critical Inquiry* 47 (2021) 2, 328–348.
10. D. Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, Durham, NC 2019; S.J. Pyne, *The Pyrocene*, Oakland, CA 2021. For Marxist critiques of such narratives, see A. Malm / A. Hornborg, ‘The Geology of Mankind? A Critique of the Anthropocene Narrative’, in: *Anthropocene Review* 1 (2014) 1, 62–69; A. Malm, ‘Who Lit this Fire?’, in: *Critical Historical Studies* 3 (2016) 2, 215–248.
11. M. Schmelzer, *The Hegemony of Growth*, Cambridge 2016.
12. K. Yusoff, *A Billion Black Anthropocenes, or None*, Minneapolis, MI 2018.
13. G. Kallis et al., *The Case for Degrowth*, Cambridge 2021.
logics of environmentalism and environmental history have also been conceptualized anew for political theory in a world after nature. Jedediah Purdy has reminded theorists of the need to see the appropriations and racialized contours of American environmentalism.\textsuperscript{14} Simultaneously, historians of early-modern political thought and the environment remind us that the attempt to segregate the worlds of nature from the worlds of politics might actually be foundational to the sphere of the political itself, and that this could signal considerable difficulties for contemporary attempts to wrestle the category into a more ecologically holistic perspective.\textsuperscript{15} Environmental histories of political thought, which are newly emerging, are aware of this tension, even if they cannot easily (if at all) navigate around it.\textsuperscript{16} So, how has the planetary resonated and been incorporated into historically-informed accounts of political theory or the political predicament thus far?

First, what is the planetary in this scholarship? William Connolly locates the planetary as a challenge to what he calls ‘sociocentrism’ – the attempt to analyse structures by discerning humanly legible patterns from other humanly legible and constructed patterns, and thus presuming a human exceptionalism. The political challenge of the planetary becomes a question of how to re-connect active human freedom with the impersonal scale of the planetary and in the form of what Connolly calls ‘entangled humanism’. This suggests that ‘generic responsibility [for climate change amid the Anthropocene] must be replaced by regionally distributed responsibilities and vulnerabilities’, but exactly who constitutes the ‘we’ of these entangled assemblages and their ‘temporal force fields’ is not clear.\textsuperscript{17} Again, this has led some writers to suggest that the political motivations of climate change might just remain more compelling and tractable across human scales, than any move into the planetary scales of the Anthropocene.

Secondly, when did the planetary emerge into political thinking? Not in an obvious way. As well as stumbling towards a new recognition with the planetary as a product of globalization, as Chakrabarty has suggested, in an older idiom, and particularly for Marxist-inspired writers, confronting the planetary as a permanent form of capitalist inspired catastrophism takes us back to the aftermath of World War I. Then, through such figures as Walter Benjamin, the epic scale of the struggle for human liberation from capitalist globalization suggested only forms of radical hope, libertarian revolution, or messianic redemption, were appropriate to the task. Reverting to the same moment, Latour has suggested that new forms of diplomacy, rather than moralized conceptions of politics, are required. This leads him (as did Benjamin) to engage directly with Carl Schmitt’s critique of moral universalisms or cosmopolitan projections as forms of hypocrisy and ultimately tyranny, views that emerged from his experience of the Versailles peace conference and the occupation of Germany. Rather than Schmittian agonism or imperialist hyperbole, Latour seeks new ‘diplomatic encounters’ between actors in a shared network, not configured around the nation-state and economic growth, but around ‘technodiversity’ in the increasingly extensive technosphere that structures human existence.\textsuperscript{18} However, as Adam Tooze has countered,

\textsuperscript{14} J Purdy, After Nature, Cambridge, MA 2015.
\textsuperscript{15} P. Warde, The Invention of Sustainability, Cambridge 2018; A. Brett, ‘Is there any Place for Environmental Thinking in Early Modern European Political Thought?’, in: K. Forrester / S. Smith (eds.), Nature, Action, and the Future, Cambridge 2018, 23–42.
\textsuperscript{16} P. Charbonnier, Affluence and Freedom, transl. by A. Brown, Cambridge 2021.
\textsuperscript{17} W. Connolly, Facing the Planetary: Entangled Humanism and the Politics of Swarming, Durham, NC, 2017, 16, 18, 20, 33–34.
\textsuperscript{18} Y. Hui, ‘For a Planetary Thinking’, in: E-Flux 114 (2020): https://www.e-flux.com/journal/114/366703/for-a-planetary-thinking/; see also P.K. Haff, ‘Technology and Human Purpose: The Problem of Solids Transport on the Earth’s Surface’, in: Earth System Dynamics 3 (2012), 149–156; and ‘The Unbearable Burden of the Technosphere’, The UNESCO Courier 2 (2018): https://en.unesco.org/courier/2018-2/unbearable-burden-technosphere.
perhaps diplomatic encounters as a model only serve to smooth over intractable political disagreements about how to conceive of the planetary challenge facing life on earth in the first place.\textsuperscript{19}

Thirdly, where in fact do we locate the planetary? Here, one answer has been that the location of the planetary into the predicament of politics occurs wherever the ‘war’ for what constitutes the earthbound, or ‘geo-’, takes place. More prosaically, this means that the planetary is found in the ‘critical zone’ of earthly habitation. Latour and others argue that because the prefix geo- has no stable meaning, the battle to control this language is analogous with a war for the planet, or for planetary survival (the two can be separate or interconnected). The power or authority to describe is crucial, because multiple, incommensurable worldviews about where the tensions between local and global and planetary reside, exist in states of deep conflict. This leads to variously implied (or threatened) trajectories, from deepening processes of globalization to austere conceptions of planetary security; from those that seek some sort of escape from the planet to a radical new politics for the terrestrials, those whom Latour calls the earthbound, that remain.\textsuperscript{20}

Faced with a conflict over politics and resources in these critical zones, the kinds of scenarios (climate Leviathan, climate Behemoth, climate Mao, or the radical democratic assemblage, climate ‘X’) sketched out by Geoff Mann and Joel Wainwright in \textit{Climate Leviathan}, continue to look grimly compelling.\textsuperscript{21} Yet things here can change rapidly. The dynamics of ecological \textit{Realpolitik}, for instance, suggested by Xi Jinping’s proclamation for China to be carbon neutral by 2060, certainly undercuts the sense of there being some moral high ground to the ecological critique of China by Western powers. The current war in Ukraine across various axes (whether seen as a defensive war against NATO expansion, an imperial form of aggressive territorial reconstruction, or an illustration of just how far energy capacity still determines the power to act with relative impunity) suggests that global disorder remains the normal state of affairs, and thereby trumps any sort of worries about environmental calamity or the Anthropocene.\textsuperscript{22} Within this disorder, the challenges posed by a constrained and chastened Europe, whose historical successes were made possible through myriad forms of empire, expropriation and war, but whose contemporary stagnation and relative political weakness are now made manifest in often fervently anti-liberal forms of politics, suggests another hope for Latour. Namely that an older ‘idea’ of Europe might re-emerge from the wreckage to fulfil some sort of egalitarian or democratic promise in this climatically uncertain future.\textsuperscript{23}

But who could determine such a course of action – experts, scientists, politicians, activists – or will such actions be thrust upon unwilling participants, forced to adapt and mitigate experimentally, in the face of an uninhabitable earth? Could a more open determination of ‘diplomacy’ really emerge to find agreement out of division, or will the new forms of Anthropocened politics still be governed by established forms of exclusionary politics? Older conceptual tools of critique derived from Marx continue to inspire those that hope to radically reconfigure some of those technologies, such as money, upon which modern market societies rest, as the prerequisite for then transforming its politics.\textsuperscript{24} Resonant wartime analogues also function in other ways, from mobilizing Keynesian economics

\textsuperscript{19} A. Tooze, ‘After Escape: The New Climate Power Politics’, in: \textit{E-Flux} 114 (2020), https://www.e-flux.com/journal/114/367062/after-escape-the-new-climate-power-politics/.
\textsuperscript{20} B. Latour / P. Weibel (eds.), \textit{Critical Zones – The Science and Politics of Landing on Earth}, Cambridge, MA 2020.
\textsuperscript{21} G. Mann / J. Wainwright, \textit{Climate Leviathan: A Political Theory of our Planetary Future}, London 2018.
\textsuperscript{22} H. Thompson, \textit{Disorder – Hard Times for the World in the Twenty-First Century}, Oxford 2022; P. Charbonnier, ‘For an Ecological \textit{Realpolitik}’, in: \textit{E-Flux} 114 (2020): https://www.e-flux.com/journal/114/365035/for-an-ecological-realpolitik/.
\textsuperscript{23} B. Latour, \textit{Down to Earth: Politics in the New Climactic Regime}, transl. by C. Porter, Cambridge 2018.
\textsuperscript{24} A. Hornborg, \textit{Nature, Society, and Justice in the Anthropocene}, Cambridge 2020; M.E. Mann, \textit{The New Climate War}, London 2021.
for a putative Green New Deal, to rallying calls to take up arms in a ‘new’ climate war.\textsuperscript{25} Still, other forms of political accountings that reckon with the temporal challenges of the Anthropocene, route alternative ways of seeing and doing politics with regard to religion and the apocalyptic, or to more ecologically holistic forms of agency and kin-making.\textsuperscript{26} This could suggest various ways in which the modernity of the Anthropocene sees the future through the past in a rejection of ‘modernity’ itself.\textsuperscript{27} However, any return to eschatological or stewardship modes of engagement amid the permanent catastrophism of ecological crisis can run alongside hyper-modern hopes in the salvific capacities of technology (including geo-engineering) and various forms of post-humanism. That such tensions have, and do, lead to various forms of distributional as well as military conflicts, is hardly a surprising conclusion. Yet it does suggest an alternative foundation for thinking about what it might mean to incorporate the planetary time of the Anthropocene into the global history of political thinking moving forward – namely, that the current conjuncture connecting Anthropocene and earthly time, is akin to a sort of ‘wartime’ for the planet, both literally and metaphorically.

**Anthropocene as deep war-time**

At the level of metaphor, the search for a language that could temporarily fix the shape of politics amid this tense historical dissonance is constitutive of a belligerent conceptual struggle that will, of course, never fully capture all the complexities of reality.\textsuperscript{28} Indeed, because political and social concepts do not have singular origin stories but rather exist only as terms in an argument at one time or another, conceptual history is the site of a permanent conflict over meaning and interpretation. Therefore, any Anthropocening of the temporal landscapes of modern politics requires a recognition of this sort of intellectual cum political battlefield, where words remain weapons, where texts are polemical interventions in discrete contexts, and political theory is a form of war by other means, made in historical contexts not of one’s own choosing. Writers who have fixed upon this image of their quarry, from Karl Marx and Friedrich Nietzsche to Ludwig Wittgenstein, Michel Foucault and Quentin Skinner, might allow us to see how intellectual history and the history of political thought can still be of political relevance today.

The mirror image of such an approach might be found in the writings of such scholar activists as Andreas Malm, whose justifications of forms of eco-terrorism in the face of entrenched structural failures to respond to the climate emergency, requires making war on particular kinds of enemies, in the name of planetary survival. In Malm’s case, the fact that we live in a wartime of continued fossil capitalism that destroys habitable land for profit, suggests some direct call-backs to the war communism of the period immediately following World War One, as a way perhaps of shaking off the weight of carbon history. He does so to signal alternative resources for a Leninist critique of contemporary politics, as well as to provide a backdrop to the idea that the right approach to climate emergency is practical mobilization for conflict, not diplomacy. Furthermore, he continues to sharpen the intellectual critique of Anthropocene narratives that threaten to downplay the centrality of capitalism and exploitation in favour of making kin with other forms of life.\textsuperscript{29} Equally, though,

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\textsuperscript{25} K. Aronoff et al., *A Planet to Win*, London 2019.
\textsuperscript{26} A. Ghosh, *The Great Derangement*, Chicago, IL 2016.
\textsuperscript{27} L. Hölscher, ‘Eschatological Presentism’, in: R. Wright / A. Fryxell (eds.) *Time on a Human Scale – Experiencing the Present in Europe, 1860–1930*, Oxford 2021, 299–312, 300–302. More broadly, see R. Koselleck, *Futures Past*, transl. by K. Tribe, Columbia, NY 1995.
\textsuperscript{28} H. Blumenberg, *Shipwreck with Spectator*, transl. by S. Rendall, Cambridge, MA 1996.
\textsuperscript{29} A. Malm, *Corona, Climate, Chronic Emergency*, London 2020; *How to Blow Up a Pipeline*, London 2021; see A. Tooze, ‘Ecological Leninism’, in: *London Review of Books* 43 (2021) 22: https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v43/n22/adam-tooze/ecological-leninism.
the sort of making kin that has been suggested by writers such as Donna Haraway, is also bound up with a commitment (one that I think is shared by radical Marxist critics) to seeing the Anthropocene more as a ‘boundary’ position that intersects with histories of capitalism, empire and the evolution of human life on earth, rather than a clearly distinct new epoch. This allows more room for experimentation with the various processes of re-orientation that might be required of politics within, rather than beyond, these boundary lines, by not pre-determining one singular course of action as unambiguously correct.

In recasting the epoch as boundary process, it also reflects another connection back to World War I, when analogous ideas of revolution as processual events, instead of one-time incidents, became part of the mainstream. Indeed, the concept of wartime itself suggests a processual and extendable temporality, rather than a straightforward binary.30 This is the case since the division between wartime and peacetime is never as clear cut as any formal cessation of hostilities or signing of a treaty would suggest. World War I clearly did not end with the Armistice, and neither did it cease with the signing of the Versailles Treaty. For some, the World War has never really ended at all given that its promises of meaningful forms of (particularly racial and gender) equality as recompense for serving one’s country have still failed to materialize.31 The war had an enormous impact both upon the fabric of the earth and natural resources, while its legacy for the ways such categories as state, democracy, representation and capitalism, have become fixed parts of Euro-American political thinking, has been equally profound. It might therefore be productive to think about the Anthropocene as a form of ‘deep-war time’, both practically and intellectually. This means considering the Anthropocene as an ongoing battle over what it means to think across both planetary and global perspectives, and across the arc spanning World War I and into the present.32 There could hardly be a more formidable challenge for historians working today.

**Funding**

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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30. M. Dudziak, *War Time: An Idea, its History, its Consequences*, Oxford 2012.
31. See R. Gerwarth, *The Vanquished*, Oxford, 2016; W.E.B. Du Bois, ‘An Essay Toward a History of the Black Man in the Great War’, in: *The Crisis* 18 (June 1919) 2, 63–87; see more broadly C. Williams, ‘W. E. B. Du Bois, World War I, and the Question of Failure’, in: *Black Perspectives* (2018): https://www.aaihs.org/w-e-b-du-bois-world-war-i-and-the-question-of-failure/.
32. P.K. Saint-Amour, ‘Afterword: Deep-War Time’, in: *Modernity/Modernism* 5 (2020) 2: https://modernismmodernity.org/forums/posts/stamour-deep-war-time; see also R. Tucker et al., (eds.) *Environmental Histories of the First World War*, Cambridge 2019.