FACING THE PLANETARY ENTANGLED HUMANISM AND THE POLITICS OF SWARMING WILLIAM E. CONNOLLY

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ENTANGLED HUMANISM

AND THE POLITICS OF SWARMING

WILLIAM E. CONNOLLY

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For James, Katherine, Cameron, William, Jesse, Charles, and Julian

CONTENTS

Prelude: Myth and the Planetary 1

- Sociocentrism, the Anthropocene, and the Planetary 15
- 2 Species Evolution and Cultural Creativity 37
- 3 Creativity and the Scars of Being 63
- 4 Distributed Agencies and Bumpy Temporalities 89
- 5 The Politics of Swarming and the General Strike 121
- 6 Postcolonial Ecologies, Extinction Events, and Entangled Humanism 151

Postlude: Capitalism and the Planetary 175

Acknowledgments 199

Notes 201

Bibliography 217

Index 225

PRELUDE: MYTH AND THE PLANETARY

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Does the mythic today express that which circulates below the threshold of official expression? Do we tend to treat myth as a wild dream when things are going well and as a portent when official stories lose the aura of credibility? Perhaps such a switch in status is under way today, as some old myths now feel revelatory and several official narratives lurch closer to nightmares. The turn to myth is a turn toward an insurrection of voices straining to be heard beneath the clamor of dominant stories.

To test these suggestions, let us turn briefly to the Book of Job. Some scholars suggest that it was once a pagan story, crossing into Judaism and later into Christianity, crossings fueled by the singular power of its poetry. I consult a translation by Stephen Mitchell, in part because of its poetic power, in part because it resists being encapsulated too quickly or completely into any of the three traditions it traversed, in part because students respond to it intensely when I teach it every now and then at Hopkins.¹

Job, apparently, is a noble gentile in a land in which he belongs to a minority. He is respected as decent. But he then suffers immensely: he loses his sheep, his sons and daughters are killed, and boils sprout all over his body. Some friends arrive to comfort him, but this comforting also involves judging him according to the system of judgment in play. Suffering, consolation, judgment: Job is neither the first nor the last to encounter that fraught combination.

Job had shared the cosmic view of the friends. Now he contests it, to make them see and feel its effects upon him. He says he is innocent and does not deserve what has happened to him. God is supposed to punish only those who are guilty. Eliphaz, the Temanite, will have none of that. He says, "You are lucky that God has scolded you; so take his lesson to heart. For he wounds, but then binds up; he injures but then he heals. When disaster strikes, he will rescue you and never let evil touch you."

Eliphaz's reduction of Job's suffering to a "scolding" by God adds insult to his injuries. Job is called upon to admit his infractions. But he cannot identify any rule he has flouted. He hasn't stolen anything, slept with another man's wife, nor exploited those who work for him. He is even "kind" to his slaves, an institution of the day. The friends suggest that he is lying about his innocence. But they too are unable to identify a norm he has broken. He must have disobeyed nonetheless; otherwise he would not suffer. The give-and-take between Job and his interlocutors becomes increasingly intense and filled with accusations. In fact, however, the friends subsist as *minor voices* within Job, and his cries tap strains of *doubt* in them about the equivalence between human suffering and divine punishment. He senses how the growing intensity of their accusations reflects tremors of existential fear in them. Otherwise they could just walk away, leaving him to stew in his own juices. He roars:

You have turned against me; my wretchedness fills you with fear.

Have I ever asked you to help me or begged you to pay my ransom . . . Look me straight in the eye: Is this how a liar would face you?

Can't I tell right from wrong? If I sinned wouldn't I know it?³

"My wretchedness fills you with fear." A strange statement at first hearing, perhaps. But Job sees that if they were to admit that he does not deserve to be wretched they would also jeopardize the comforting equivalence of their own well-being and the desert for it they project onto the cosmos. Their comfort would no longer be a reliable sign of their virtue. His suffering thus hurts him *and* assaults their sense of existential security. Do they fear that they might suffer a similar fate if they relinquish their judgment of Job during this trial? Job's threat to their image of the cosmos is too much to take, existentially.

So the stakes of the debate keep ratcheting upward. The accusers must continue to accuse, even if the accusations render Job's suffering more acute. Indeed this trauma—and the existential uncertainties it opens—presses them to intensify commitment to a story of human uniqueness in the eyes of God to suppress doubts about whether such a story detracts from the grandeur of both God and the world. This is a familiar response to crisis, when

live alternatives to the system in which it occurs are in short supply. It was discernible in the intensification of support for neoliberal ideology after it produced the economic meltdown of 2008. Or consider the intensity of climate denialism today in the face of the massive evidence supporting climate change.

Job rebels against this logic of intensification, albeit with ambivalence. But his rebellion takes the form of contesting the accusations by ratcheting up his own intensity. Job and his friends have forged a chiasmic relation in which a minor voice in Job whispers things they assert with shows of confidence, and minor voices in them pose doubts against their own views. The stage is set for a showdown.

A thoughtful party among the accusers tries to resolve the impasse. We cannot know how God orders the world morally, he says; we only know that he does do so and that human suffering serves a higher purpose that is mysterious to us. The hope is that this theological subtlety will settle Job down and also reassure the accusers—er, friends. Such an existential orientation—call it the "complex image of a morally ordered universe"—saves the benevolence to humans of an all-powerful God by counseling those who suffer to confess faith in a higher purpose they cannot fathom. That faith bears a close resemblance to one of the two stories about evil Augustine tells later. Variants of it have also been advanced in capitalist and communist states to justify the suffering of minorities and classes that do not deserve the ugly historical fate bestowed upon them. Show trials and the slow, often hidden violence accompanying the pursuit of progress: the myth of progress itself must not be called into question. At any rate the complex moral story has provided a dominant reading of the Book of Job. That reading is perhaps reinforced by the narrative epilogue appended to the poem.4

I wonder, though, whether Job himself actually accepts such a story after his encounter with the Nameless One, the One he so boldly and desperately called upon to explain himself. Is it possible that the demand for existential reassurance many readers impose on the story makes them miss the conversion Job actually undergoes? I wonder too whether the theme of a complex moral order is the wisest story to embrace during an era when hegemonic nature/ culture bifurcations, secular/sacred divisions, life/nonlife dichotomies, center/ periphery relations, and science/faith struggles historically inscribed in Euro-American life are rattled by the advent of the Anthropocene.

By "the planetary" I mean a series of temporal force fields, such as climate patterns, drought zones, the ocean conveyor system, species evolution, glacier flows, and hurricanes that exhibit self-organizing capacities to varying degrees and that impinge upon each other and human life in numerous ways. The Anthropocene is a period of two hundred to four hundred years (depending on who is counting) during which a series of capitalist, communist, technological, militarist, scientific, and Christian practices became major geological forces that helped to reshape some of these nonhuman forces. Minor currents in these cultural traditions struggled against those tendencies. The key point to emphasize is that geologists, evolutionists, and others, after mostly denying the point until as late as the 1980s, now concur that several of these planetary forces have been marked by gradual change periodically punctuated themselves by rather rapid changes. To face the planetary today is to encounter these processes in their multiple intersections and periods of volatility. To encounter the Anthropocene is to keep in mind that there were rather rapid changes in several of these force fields even before capitalism and the others became geological forces. The combination of capitalist processes and the amplifiers in nonhuman geological forces must be encountered together. Such a combination poses existential issues today of the sort that plagued Job and his "friends" in their day.

The two forces together make the contemporary condition more volatile and dangerous than it would be if only the first were involved. That is why I attend in this study to critiques of the doctrine of gradualism, a doctrine advanced until recently in scientific theories of species evolution, geological change, ocean current shifts, and climate change. Dissonant conjunctions between capital as a geological force and self-organized amplifiers point to irreversible changes that will continue to accelerate after a certain juncture, even if capitalist states do reshape the energy grids and infrastructures of consumption. The real question is: At what juncture?

Capitalist and communist states blindly rushed into this new world while their attentions were focused on a cold war, religious struggles, colonial exploitation, world wars, economic growth, revolutions, available sites for coal and oil extraction, technological advances, a nuclear stalemate, media scandals, electoral competition, space exploration, new frontiers of investment, automobile production, and paving the world. Until recently the dominant regimes did not know quite what they were doing, even though they did know something about class, race, and regional exploitations covered over by competing assumptions about the progression of abundance. Several regions

outside the old capitalist centers that have made the least contribution to this new planetary condition now suffer the most from it.

Perhaps we can now hear the "questions" the Nameless One bellows to Job in a distinctive way. In a way that seems to flout later Jewish tradition, it does eventually accept Job's demand that it speak. Is this a divine voice above Job or a subdued voice in him that was clamoring for attention? Either way it demands to know where Job was when it invented the world. The Nameless One does not wait for an answer to that question. It continues, as if the answer is obvious. Here are a few other "questions":

Where were you when I wrapped the oceans in clouds and swaddled the sea in shadows?

Have you seen to the edge of the universe? Speak up if you have such knowledge.

Who cuts a path for the thunderstorms and carves a road for the rain—to water the desolate wasteland, the land where no man lives?

Do you know all the patterns of heaven and how they affect the earth?

Do you deck the ostrich with wings . . . with elegant plumes and feathers?

Do you show the hawk how to fly, stretching his wings on the wind?

Do you teach the vulture to soar . . . ? He sits and scans for prey, from far off his eyes can spot it.5

Job becomes spellbound as the questions accumulate. You might too, as you wonder how so many diverse beings, forces, and energies could coexist in the same world and how they could possibly either mesh neatly with us or be predisposed to our deployment. It is a grand, volatile world of multiple forces, perhaps worthy of our admiration even if we now construe ourselves as minor agents in it.

Capitalist, science, and techno forces today jeopardize the existence of ostriches, hawks, and vultures, as well as the lions, antelopes, and buffalo also included in the litany by the Nameless One. They even affect the "patterns of the heavens," though not in ways that vindicate a will to human mastery. Some contemporaries in late capitalist states think, as Job's friends did, that God will provide them with abundance if they obey him; many evangelicals in the United States now insist that God embraces neoliberal capitalism.⁶ Those who reject that view used to assume that they could master the world with or without the blessing of a God. In early Euro-American modernity these two stories competed against each other. Today both are dubious.

Job is rattled by the interrogation. But the Voice has merely been warming up:

Look now: the Beast that I made: he eats grass like a bull. Look: the power in his thighs, the pulsing sinews in his belly. His penis stiffens like a pine; his testicles bulge with vigor. His ribs are bars of bronze, his bones iron beams. He is the first of the works of God, created to be my plaything. He lies under the lotus, hidden by reeds and shadows. He is calm though the river rages, though the torrent beats against his mouth. Who then will take him by the eyes or pierce his nose with a peg \dots ?

The Voice adopts a tone that soars above the debate between Job and the friends. It speaks of a rich, variegated world filled with multifarious life, each mode pursuing distinctive vectors and powers. Even more, these multifarious forces and beings are not designed to serve humanity in the first or last instance. The human estate is entangled with diverse beings and forces following trajectories of their own. No pristine harmony here was spoiled by an original sin. Rather multiple *forces* on the way both enable and exceed a stability of *forms*. This volcano God indeed is closer to a lava flow bubbling along implacably with intense heat and energy than to the unique pattern of granite that eventually becomes consolidated out of it. That slab of granite could melt down again too.

IV

The primacy of forces over forms. This myth does not focus on a primeval human agent who breaks a divine command. Nor does it concentrate on a

primordial incest taboo, in the senses played out by Sophocles and Freud. Strange alliances, impersonal collisions, and asymmetrical interdependencies are as important to this world as divine commands, kinship ties, and rulers: the hawk draws drafts of wind to soar above the earth and sight its prey; the nomad draws sustenance from an oasis formed by other forces; the clouds protect the oceans from drying. This world is neither our oyster nor our servant. Rather we inhabit it, and we are inhabited by its multiple stabilities and volatilities.

Is it hubristic to act as if humanity is or could form the pinnacle of things? The hippopotamus "is the *first* of the works of God, created to be my *plaything*." What about us? Are we cosmic playthings? Well, we have now become playthings of planetary forces, forces that a few regimes have agitated but none controls. The Jobian story I hear contests in advance both a high-tech regime of human mastery and its most popular counterpoint: the image of a world obeying providential patterns of regularity when the human footprint is light. The world is not, in the last analysis, the plaything of investment capital and military regimes, nor is it underneath those forces a pristine wilderness waiting for ecotourists. It is wise to tend and cultivate the oases we encounter, but there is no cosmic guarantee that they will persist.

Indeed the Anthropocene has become the Whirlwind of today, with its implacable flooding of low-lying zones, glacier melts, temperature increases, intense storms, expanding zones of drought, proliferating species extinctions, ocean acidification, threat to monsoons, refugee crises, and potential shifts in the planetary ocean conveyor belt.

The repetitions and intensifications bellowed by the Nameless One continue until Job relents. He says, "I know you can do all things, and nothing you wish is impossible. . . . I had heard of you with my ears but now my eyes have seen you. Therefore I will be quiet, comforted that I am dust."8 The poetic utterances of the Nameless One have captivated him.

"Nothing you wish is impossible." Patriarchy is assumed and enforced by this Voice and by the poem that precedes it. Little doubt about that. But does the patriarchal Voice—bellowed from a tornado, with its deafening winds and massive powers of destruction—really say that the species to which Job belongs is its favorite? Or that obedience to it is the one and only virtue? Why bellow from such an impersonal force field, then, a force that seems to strike targets randomly? Does it really say that if you accept the mystery of an

unfathomable moral world order, it will protect you and your progeny in the last instance? Where in the *poem* is such a message delivered? Does the fact that the epilogue assumes a narrative form suggest that it is a later appendage designed to tame the wonder of the poem? Perhaps the poem, and the diverse energies bursting through it, points to human entanglements in a dissonant world of multiple forces that do not carry special entitlements or guarantees for any beings. We inhabit a majestic world with implacable powers that exceed ours. Its energies solicit our embrace in part because we and it are made of the same stuff. Perhaps the freedom of Job consists in his creative rebellion against the punitive stories of his friends, an appreciation of implacable forces, and an emerging *attachment* to a multiplicitous world that exceeds the stories he and his friends shared and contested.

The world is not our special preserve. Richard Alley, a distinguished glaciologist, conveys a Jobian image of the world when he says, "For most of the last 100,000 years a crazily jumping climate has been the rule, not the exception. Slow cooling has been followed by abrupt cooling, centuries of cold, and then abrupt warming, with the abrupt warmings generally about 1500 years apart, although with much variability. At the abrupt jumps, the climate often flickered between warm and cold for a few years before settling down." Glacier flows, oceans, and climate are intercalated, bumpy time machines.

Is Job now comforted because he both embraces a diversity of being and participates in a world without cosmic guarantees? He may embrace this newly minted God, or—though this may be a stretch for the time in which he lives—he may doubt the credibility of any such belief. Either way he seems to me to contest any image that places humans at the top of a ladder of moral desert. There *is* no such ladder in a world of multifarious forces.

Perhaps Job is comforted by a larger, unruly world in which life can be sweet, death sets a condition of life, struggles against suffering must often be renewed, hubris is dangerous, and experimentation is nonetheless essential. I pose such a possibility *as one way to receive Job today*, a way that may allow some who have heretofore been self-identified "secularists" both to work critically upon the Jobian message and to pursue spiritual ties across creedal differences with others moved by different creeds whose passions are also activated by the power of planetary forces. The reading of Job I embrace is a minority report to put into active conversation with other faiths, as several constituencies pursue affinities of *spirituality* across differences in *creed* during a dangerous time.

Job was comforted. The challenges of today solicit both an embrace of this unruly world and pursuit of new political assemblages to counter its dangers. Today the urgency of time calls for a new pluralist assemblage organized by multiple minorities drawn from different regions, classes, creeds, age cohorts, sexualities, and states. This is so in part because the effects of the Anthropocene often hit the racialized urban poor, indigenous peoples, and low-lying areas hard, while its historical sources emanate from privileged places that must be challenged from inside and outside simultaneously. Militant citizen alliances across regions are needed to challenge the priorities of investment capital, state hegemony, local cronyisms, international organizations, and frontier mentalities. Some adventurers I will consult already record and pursue such countermovements.

What follows is a series of attempts to face the planetary. Not only to face down denialism about climate change but also to define and counter the "passive nihilism" that readily falls into place after people reject denialism. By passive nihilism I mean, roughly, formal acceptance of the fact of rapid climate change accompanied by a residual, nagging sense that the world ought not to be organized so that capitalism is a destructive geologic force. The "ought not to be" represents the lingering effects of theological and secular doctrines against the idea of culture shaping nature in such a massive way. These doctrines may have been expunged on the refined registers of thought, but their remainders persist in ways that make a difference. Passive nihilism folds into other encumbrances already in place when people are laden with pressures to make ends meet, pay a mortgage, send kids to school, pay off debts, struggle with racism and gender inequality, and take care of elderly relatives. Or, similarly, they may eke out a living in the forest and try to figure how to respond when a logging company rumbles into it. Or, on another register, they may teach students who both want to believe in the future they are preparing to enter and worry whether that lure has itself become a fantasy. The sources of passive nihilism are multiple. Under its sway, as we shall see, many refute climate denialism but slide away from stronger action. That is the contemporary dilemma. Few of us surmount it completely. But perhaps it is both necessary and possible to negotiate its balances better.

VII

Perhaps a brief preview of how the chapters fold into one another will be helpful. Chapter 1 engages diverse tendencies toward "sociocentrism" and

the notions of belonging and human exceptionalism that are often associated with them. To be sociocentric in the strongest sense is to act as if cultural interpretation and social explanation can proceed without consulting deeply nonhuman, planetary forces with degrees of autonomy of their own. A second-order tendency is to acknowledge capitalism as a geological force but to minimize the temporal bumpiness of planetary processes before that era and thus to miss some of the synergies in play today. Many scholars are moving away from such dispositions, but these still convey lingering effects, as we shall see again in the last chapter. So I have selected a few classical exemplars of the tendency who disagree with each other radically in other respects. They are Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Isaiah Berlin, Friedrich Hayek, and Karl Marx. The idea is to chart briefly the specific version this tendency finds in each and to delineate the notion of belonging and exceptionalism attached to it. Where pertinent, I note recent breaks in the traditions under review; these breaks engage more robustly the bumpiness of planetary processes. Sociocentrism, traditions of cultural belonging, and human exceptionalism must be considered together because sometimes a transfiguration along one dimension is dragged down by residual attachment to the other two.

Chapter 2 engages a dynamic intersection between a recent turn in theories of species evolution and thinking now available to cultural theorists about the character and import of human creativity. A first step beyond sociocentrism. The idea is that the new biological theories supported by figures such as Lynn Margulis and Terrence Deacon bolster and inform a deeper grasp of creativity in human life rather than, as the older theories of evolution did, compromise those very experiences. This rough congruence, then, provides independent evidence in support of the new theories, since any good theory of evolution must be able to encompass emergence of the human species. This chapter inaugurates a theme that will be underlined in later chapters: the need to foster intersections between the work of the new earth scientists and work in the social sciences and humanities. The mutual allergies between these traditions can no longer be afforded. As the chapter proceeds we see how the proposed confluence between evolutionists and humanists can issue in a theory of human drives as simultaneously purposive, limiting, unconscious, and essential to moments of creativity in cultural life. I introduce the need for such intersections by addressing the admirable recent work of Stuart Nagel on the matter, and then pursue it in a somewhat different way than he proposes. As these issues are defined it also becomes clear how and why "arts of the self" and "micropolitics" are needed to work on purposive dispositions to action (drives) below the reach of reflexive reconfiguration. I also address a now familiar criticism advanced by some radicals against the new biology: that it inevitably binds its practitioners to neoliberal capture of the processes under study.

The relation between culturally incorporated drives and creativity is explored further in chapter 3. There I put the neuroscientist Giacomo Rizzolatti into conversation with Alfred North Whitehead, Herbert Marcuse, and Gilles Deleuze on the subliminal dimensions of human habit, sociality, and creativity. The discussion of drives is now pursued in relation to the question of engendering a critical politics. That chapter closes with a discussion of how some classical modes of belonging reviewed in chapter 1 need to be transfigured into multiple sites of attachment in a world that confounds previous notions of individual autonomy, communal closure, national belonging, and market and state modes of mastery over nature. The idea is that a deeper appreciation of the sources and functions of creativity can help to support multisited practices of attachment that are needed to replace notions of organic belonging today.

With these preliminary explorations under our belt the text now pivots. Chapter 4 reviews several significant, sometimes rapid changes in glaciers, climate, and ocean currents that occurred either prior to the Anthropocene or well before it attained full steam. The point is to review how such temporal bumps proceeded, what cyclical forcings and noncyclical amplifiers were in play, and how civilizations in various times and places were affected. To review such a history of planetary forcings and amplifiers better prepares us to grasp how the capitalist triggers of today interact with climate, ocean, species, microbe, and glacial systems. Along the way I address a philosophical debate that has resurfaced between those who contend that all processes exhibit some degree of feeling and experience (pan-experientialism) and those who say that some temporal bumps were so large that, say, new capacities emerged from couplings that did not previously exhibit them (emergentism). Engaging Whitehead, Arthur Eddington, Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, and others I support the idea that some modes of experience reach far deeper into the biosphere than exceptionalists had imagined, but I hesitate to embrace entirely the theme of panexperientialism. The chapter closes with a critical engagement with the work of the philosopher Colin McGinn, a "mysterian" who insists that we must assume both that nature is composed of blind laws and that humans, magically, are capable of complex practices of agency, freedom, and responsibility. This combination poses, he says, an unsolvable mystery that we

must embrace, and it also gives us tremendous power and entitlement over nature. I dissent from McGinn's view and the spirituality attached to it. To project modes of agency and feeling more deeply into being is a first, though insufficient, step on the way to deepening attachment to the earth, accepting a more robust conception of entangled humanism, and exercising greater modesty in relation to nonhuman beings and forces. That discussion looks back to the engagement with the issue of attachment in the previous chapter and forward to engagements that follow. It may be, for instance, that as we tap loose strands of subliminal attachment to the earth already there, even with its volatilities, we can draw upon arts reviewed in earlier chapters to extend those threads.

I turn in chapter 5 to the issue of political action in a world of rapid climate change and dominant political systems resistant to addressing it with the urgency needed. Such a combination means that most of the worst casualties are suffered by people and other species in regions outside the old capitalist centers as well as in depressed urban areas inside them; this is so even though neither constituency has made a major contribution to these effects. Drawing selective sustenance from a series of eco-activists in several regions—including Wangari Maathai, Mahatma Gandhi, Bruno Latour, Eugene Holland, Pope Francis, and Naomi Klein—I explore a politics of swarming across registers of politics that could issue eventually in cross-regional general strikes. I address familiar objections against such actions, supporting a cross-regional pluralist assemblage that presses states, corporations, churches, universities, and the like from inside and outside simultaneously. Along the way I explore the value of enacting a variety of eco-role experiments as part of the swarming strategy; such experiments work precisely on the visceral register of habits and reluctances in need of being moved. It is agreed in advance that such a flurry of cross-regional general strikes is improbable. So realists can put that gun back into their holster. But such actions have become an improbable necessity today, given the urgency of time.

The last chapter begins with Rob Nixon's lament, in *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*, that until recently postcolonial thought and Euro-American environmentalism had tended to pass each other in the night. I then turn to the work of Anna Tsing, whose creative engagements with eco-movements in Indonesia provide exemplary corrections. Through an appreciative engagement with a key essay by Dipesh Chakrabarty I then make the case that today three-way conversations must be intensified between postcolonial ecology, eco-movements in old capitalist centers, and new practitioners of the earth sciences. The ghosts still haunting the old separation be-

tween the humanities and earth sciences must be exorcised. I further support that case by discussing how recent geological explorations of two extinction events, events occurring well before the Anthropocene, can inform and infuse eco-thinking and action today. Two more engagements with bumpy temporality. As the chapter proceeds I reformat Nietzsche's nineteenth-century account of passive nihilism to fit the contemporary condition. It is necessary to rework the visceral register of cultural life on which passive nihilism is set. That discussion is designed to render timely the exploration of drives, arts of the self, role experiments, and macropolitics launched in previous chapters.

I close with a pitch in favor of entangled humanism. That idea is not presented as a creed everybody everywhere should embrace. No cross-regional pluralist assemblage could or should be anchored in such a universal. But it is perhaps an idea that many in the old capitalist centers—still haunted by the ghosts of mastery, sociocentrism, and human exceptionalism—might internalize to better open lines of exchange and agonistic respect with other traditions, some of which are touched upon in the previous three chapters.

The postlude consists of a conversation between Bradley Macdonald and me on the longer trajectory of my work in political theory and ecology. It takes us through the activism promoted by the Caucus for a New Political Science, to early work on environmentalism Michael Best and I did in The Politicized Economy, to the idea of capitalism as an "axiomatic," and other things yet. One finding is that Best and I were carriers of one brand of sociocentrism in the approach to environmentalism adopted in *The Politicized Economy*. Another is how the recent work of Maurizio Lazzarato on the disciplinary role of debt in old capitalist states both increases our grasp of how impersonal controls inhabit capitalist societies and secretes a sociocentrism that diverts our critical gaze from the planetary. Another, perhaps, is the need to stretch political theory—the home discipline of both Macdonald and me—into new intellectual domains today, doing so to render more of us worthy of the events we encounter. One compelling event is the intensification of capitalist and planetary imbrications, with what all these intersections mean to our intellectual work and political encounters. It is easy to become distracted from these implacable imbrications as TV scandals, terrorism, action films, economic meltdowns, electoral circuses, and ugly imperial wars draw attention away. I thank Brad for initiating this conversation.

Each chapter in this book starts in the middle of things; none advances to the edge of the universe. I think and hope that they draw sustenance from the spirit of Job.

NOTES

Prelude: Myth and the Planetary

- Mitchell, The Book of Job. I explored this story earlier in Connolly, The Augustinian Imperative, chapter 1. The two engagements doubtless overlap, but there and then the point was to pose a contrast between the conceptions of divinity, sin, morality, and grace of Augustine and corollary images in Job.
- 2. Mitchell, The Book of Job, 19.
- 3. Mitchell, The Book of Job, 22.
- 4. For a reflective presentation of the vision of a complex moral order see Gordis, *The Book of God and Man*. In *Job: The Victim of His People*, Rene Girard argues that Job's suffering is necessary to promote the artificial unity of the community; Job is a scapegoat. Perhaps he is, in part, but Girard reads all myths, except the sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross, through the lens of the scapegoat. He seems to believe that a definitive resolution of this struggle is available only within Christianity. And he does not ask whether the cosmic commitments—including our relation to nature—Job embraces may in fact be worthy of endorsement by others.
- 5. Mitchell, The Book of Job, 79, 80, 81, 83, 84.
- 6. For an account of the "evangelical/capitalist resonance machine" in the United States, see Connolly, Capitalism and Christianity, American Style. That study attempts to grasp how so many remain positively bonded to neoliberalism, even with its volatility. The book came out several months before the 2008 meltdown. I continue to think that it helps us to understand how the subjective grip of neoliberalism can intensify after it spawns a crisis. It also may help to explain one contemporary feature of American exceptionalism: why, in a world with several neoliberal regimes, and other modes of political economy too, the United States is the place where climate denialism is the most intense and most extensive.
- 7. Mitchell, The Book of Job, 85.

- 8. Mitchell, The Book of Job, 88.
- 9. Alley, The Two-Mile Time Machine, 120.

Chapter 1: Sociocentrism, the Anthropocene, and the Planetary

- 1. Foucault, Discipline and Punish; Foucault, Security, Territory, Population.
- 2. See Connolly, Political Theory and Modernity, especially chapter 3.
- 3. Connolly, *Political Theory and Modernity*; Johnston, *Encountering Tragedy*; Honig, *Democracy and the Foreigner*.
- 4. See Feit, Democratic Anxieties.
- 5. Flathman, Freedom and Its Conditions.
- See Foucault, History of Sexuality, vol. 3; Connolly, A World of Becoming, especially chapter 2.
- 7. For a superb, brief review of the relation between Machiavelli and republicanism see Skinner, *Machiavelli*.
- Berlin, "Two Concepts of Liberty," 158, 164–65, my emphasis. See also Dumm, Michel Foucault and the Politics of Freedom, where an excellent reading of Berlin on normality is offered as part of Dumm's critique of negative liberty. I am greatly indebted to his reading of Berlin.
- 9. Note, for example, how the Rawlsian ideas of neutrality with respect to the good and the difference principle are both operationally close to the Berlin position. He continues this line much later. For a thoughtful ecocritique of Rawls see Read, "Why the Ecological Crisis Spells the End of Liberalism."
- 10. Hayek, Individualism and Economic Order, 28.
- 11. Hayek, *Individualism and Economic Order*, 23, 24, my emphasis; Hayek, *Road to Serfdom*, 223–24.
- 12. See my critique of that assumption in Connolly, The Fragility of Things, chapter 2.
- 13. See Klein, This Changes Everything, chapter 8.
- See Best and Connolly, The Politicized Economy; Connolly, The Fragility of Things.
- 15. See Connolly, "A Note on Freedom under Socialism," 461–68. The problem governing that early essay was that corporate capitalism quells the freedom of workers and consumers as it weakens the powers of the poor and unemployed it generates, while democratic socialism must come to terms with institutional ways to protect dissent and enable democratic modes of agitation. These issues remain. Here are the closing sentences of that piece: "While both advanced capitalist and socialist societies today mobilize their populations around the goal of economic growth, this increasingly irrational objective . . . seems to be an internally generated imperative of capitalism. It might not be so necessary to a socialist society. If this is so, it constitutes another consideration in favor of further exploration of a conception of socialism consonant with freedom" (471).
- 16. Marx, "The Critique of the Gotha Programme," 615, 616.
- 17. See "Amazon's Bruising, Thrilling Workplace," New York Times, August 16, 2015.
- 18. I want to emphasize that the classical ideal of communism is undergoing radical rethinking in some quarters in relation to the acceleration of climate change.