

PREFACE

The year 2025 seems like an opportune time to reflect on the impact that the idea of the Anthropocene has made on philosophical enquiries about humanity's place in the Earth's biosphere and the possibilities of more sustainable co-existence. The Anthropocene proposal is facing a crisis in the Earth sciences: although the Anthropocene Working Group was established in 2009 to seek official recognition of the Anthropocene within the Geological Time Scale, in 2024, the Subcommittee on Quaternary Stratigraphy voted against officially recognising the Anthropocene as the geological epoch. Yet the global climate crisis with which the idea of the Anthropocene is mostly associated has only accelerated further and reached a new threshold: in 2025, the World Meteorological Organisation announced that the average global temperature in 2024 was 1.55 degrees above pre-industrial levels, overshooting the 1.5 °C target set in the Paris Climate agreement for the first time.

While scientists debate the future of the Anthropocene proposal and the United Nations continues to call for global action against the accelerating climate crisis, *Athena: Philosophical Studies* No. 20 invites a philosophical reflection on the idea of the Anthropocene. The articles collected in this volume interrogate the Anthropocene from a dual perspective: on the one hand, appreciating how the idea of the Anthropocene has influenced the debates on "the human condition", pushing towards more-than-human and planetary perspectives and forcing philosophy to face the long timescales of various Earth systems; on the other, reflecting on how these philosophical engagements have in turn questioned the idea of the Anthropocene itself. The Anthropocene has often been criticised for implicating humanity in the abstract (*Anthropos*) and ignoring how the environmental crisis of the Anthropocene is embedded in the histories of capitalism, colonialism, racism and patriarchy. Over the years, these debates have caused a proliferation of alternative terms (the (x)scenes, as Alice Iacobone discusses in this volume) that highlight various aspects of the new environmental condition, attesting to both the vitality and the multidimensionality of discussions around the Anthropocene.

This, the 20th volume of *Athena: Philosophical Studies*, also marks a new step in the development of the Anthropocene studies in Lithuania. The Anthropocene was first debated in the pages of *Athena* in 2019, in the special issue (No. 14, “Philosophical Responses to the Anthropocene”) that arose from the conference organised by the Lithuanian Culture Research Institute. In the years that followed, philosophical enquiries about the Anthropocene have developed further, branched and deepened, attracting more researchers. On November 7-8, 2024, an international conference “Human Condition in the Anthropocene” was held at Vilnius University, jointly organised by Vilnius University and Lithuanian Culture Research Institute. Some articles of this volume arose from the papers presented at the conference. And at the end of 2025, a three-year research project “Critique of the Anthropocene Reason” was launched (funded by the Research Council of Lithuania, project leader Audronė Žukauskaitė). The lively, multidisciplinary and often critical debate, initiated by the Anthropocene thesis, only grows in importance, as this volume also testifies.

The first section offers a critical interdisciplinary engagement with dominant discourses on the Anthropocene. Andrej Spiridonov asks how the Anthropocene will be remembered in the far future and argues that the most recognisable mark in the future fossil record will be left by the changes to the global biota due to human activity. The rapid transformation of the global biota following human extinction would mark the end of the Anthropocene. Anda Pleniceanu approaches the issue of extinction by employing Heidegger’s and Deleuze’s ontologies of difference to interpret two dominant scientific framings of the Anthropocene – stratigraphy and Earth System Science. Pleniceanu argues that ultimately both ontological frameworks face the same limit: extinction, the end of being. Mintautas Gutauskas gives an in-depth discussion of four Anthropocene narratives – naturalistic, critical, post-naturalistic and eco-phenomenological – and offers a perspectivist approach to address the multidimensionality and complexity of the Anthropocene.

The second section focuses on the planetary as a new condition of thought brought by the Anthropocene. This section starts with the Lithuanian translation of Dipesh Chakrabarty’s 2015 Tanner lectures that bear the same name as this volume: “The Human Condition in the Anthropocene.” In the two lectures, Chakrabarty focuses on some irreducible divisions that mark our new condition: between the lived world of human experience and the planet as seen with the external gaze, between the human timescales and the large timescales of the planet, and between *homo*, as always-already divided humanity, and *anthropos*, humans as a species. Chakrabarty’s work is the thread that runs through two other contributions in this section. Aistis Žekevičius brings Chakrabarty’s planetary thinking into dialogue with Kathryn Yusoff’s critique of racialised geology and offers an original geo-

planetary approach as an ethically grounded perspective to address the climate crisis. Audronė Žukauskaitė brings philosophy down to earth, examining the works of Chakrabarty, Bruno Latour and Anna Tsing. She also discusses the heterogeneous, non-scalable nature of the planetary and suggests the need for a new geophilosophy.

Section Three discusses the new agents of the Anthropocene. João Ribeiro Mendes's contribution shifts our attention to the air and its worsening condition. Mendes shows how access to clean air is marked by inequalities and conflicts and invites us to seek a more equitable access to our atmospheric commons. Alice Iacobone focuses on our plasticised planet and offers an original development of the Plasticene concept, revealing the temporally complex material plasticity of plastic geobodies as well as the plasticity of the concept itself. Vaiva Daraškevičiūtė discusses the issue of “artificiality” in the Anthropocene, when the natural objects and created artefacts overlap, producing various affects, from nostalgia to uncanniness.

The fourth section brings three contributions that seek to challenge in different ways the planetary political, economic and epistemological structures of the Anthropocene. Denis Petrina thinks at the intersection of various disciplines to challenge the “narcissism” of the anthropic principle, which the author sees as embedded in the hegemonic cosmotechnics of the Anthropocene. Ajeesh A. K. and Pranesh Kumar develop the concept of the Extractocene to criticise the extractivist logic of global capitalism as well as market-based technological solutions to the climate crisis and instead advocate for Glenn Albrecht's vision of the Symbiocene, as an imperative for a more ethical relation of multispecies coexistence. Egidijus Mardosas engages with the contemporary revival of utopian thought and discusses how a specific form of utopianism – “the new utopian spirit” of Miguel Abensour – could inspire diverse struggles towards multispecies flourishing on an already damaged planet. The volume ends with two reviews: Audronė Žukauskaitė reviews Justyna Stepień's *Posthuman and Nonhuman Entanglements in Contemporary Art and the Body* (Routledge, 2022), while Anda Pleniceanu discusses Darya Tsymbalyuk's *Ecocide in Ukraine* (Polity Books, 2025), which reveals the devastating environmental damage of Russia's war. We hope that this volume will leave some stratigraphic traces in philosophical thought and contribute towards making the Earth a more habitable place.

Egidijus Mardosas and Audronė Žukauskaitė