

# The Transformation of Historical Time: Processual and Evental Temporalities

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## The Question of Historical Time Today

Philosophy of history is dead, so we are told. It died multiple deaths in the early postwar period, at the hands of both philosophers and historians. In a certain sense, it is hardly surprising that proclaiming the end, the death, the unfeasibility, the illegitimacy, the impossibility and even the practical perils of the enterprise had simply been one of the intellectual priorities of the era. After the horrors of the first half of the last century, being skeptical about the idea of a historical process leading to a better future seemed the most honest and reasonable thing to do.

This of course does not mean that philosophy of history ruled the intellectual landscape without any criticism up until postwar times. Since its late Enlightenment invention, the practice of philosophizing about the course of human affairs gathered quite a few adversaries from Friedrich Nietzsche to nineteenth-century historians seeking to professionalize and institutionalize their

discipline against the backdrop of the way philosophers approached the question of history. Yet, postwar criticism of the entire enterprise is not just one wave in the long history of voicing concerns, but a moment of spectacular change. Whereas in the nineteenth century there were only a few scattered voices raising serious objections against a common standard of philosophizing about history, the postwar years have turned the tides and criticism of the former standard has become the new standard.

But what exactly is this entire enterprise that postwar intellectuals so eagerly proclaimed dead? And why do I refer to history as a modern invention? Intellectual historians could point out that there was something like a philosophy of history already during Classical Antiquity and the medieval period, not to mention Chinese philosophy of history, or the work of Ibn Khaldun. But the target of postwar criticism was not Christian eschatology, Ibn Khaldun, Orosius, or any Ancient concept of "history." Its target was the specifically modern idea of a historical process in which human and societal betterment plays out, and the newly emerging intellectual practice responsible for the invention of such an idea: philosophy of history.

Referring to (philosophy of) history as a modern Western phenomenon aligns with the scholarship of Koselleck (2004) about the birth of the temporalized notion of history in the period between 1750 and 1850, but goes against the secularization thesis of Löwith (1949). By claiming that philosophy of history is nothing other than secularized eschatology (a newer version of something old, essentially), Löwith underemphasizes the significance of the modern notion of history. For even if future-orientation or the expected fulfillment of the ultimate purpose of human affairs are patterns present in modern philosophy of history and eschatology, the latter does not postulate anything like a *course* of human affairs. In eschatology there is nothing like a *process* that leads to such fulfillment. Change is granted by the Final Judgement, meaning an entry to another world. Contrary to this, the great invention of philosophy of history is precisely a processual notion of "history," a conceptualization of the possibility of change *within* the mundane world of human affairs as running a *course*.

In this chapter, I argue that contrary to all rumors, the enterprise of philosophy of history is very much alive today, even indispensable. This is of course not to say that postwar criticism can be completely disregarded. The question is not that of how to return to a discredited philosophy of history which invented a processual concept of history with attributes of directionality, teleology, inherent meaning and substance in the course of human affairs. The question is whether the possibility of change over time in human affairs can be conceptualized as “history” without invoking the aforementioned attributes. This is no easy question. In fact, it even consists of two distinct but heavily interrelated questions: first, whether it is possible to conceive of historical time in other than processual-developmental terms; and second, whether such other-than-processual temporality can still be “historical” in the sense of retaining the possibility of change over time in human affairs.

The challenge, I believe, lies in answering both questions affirmatively. Consider today’s conceptual alternatives to the processual temporality of the modern notion of history. They are able to provide answers to the first question only at the cost of leaving the second unanswered. Theorizing how the past survives, haunts, and has a “presence” in the present most certainly advocates novel ways to think about the relationship between the past and the present (Runia 2006; Lorenz 2010; Bevernage 2012; Tamm 2015: 1–23; Kleinberg 2017). In that, such theories offer alternative temporalities to the modern idea of the historical process. Yet, inasmuch as they leave the question of the future out of the equation, inasmuch as they focus only a relation to the past in which the past either permeates or suddenly erupts into the present, these alternative temporalities cannot be conceptual alternatives to modern historical time as an overall configuration of past, present, *and* future.

Cultural diagnoses of presentism seem to have the adequately broad scope to tackle the issue of historical time. François Hartog (2015), Aleida Assmann (2013), and Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht (2015) try to understand a new disposition of past, present, and future in Western societies, emerging in the last decades and replacing the modern time regime. As to the question of how to call the successor,

Gumbrecht (2014: xii, 55, 73) repeatedly invokes a yet nameless chronotope, which he nevertheless consistently refers to as the “broad present.” What Gumbrecht means by this is very close to what Hartog (2015) calls the reign of presentism and a presentist “regime of historicity” that has already replaced the future-oriented modern one, while Assmann (2013: 245–280) prefers to talk about a time out of joint.

Naming and different vocabularies aside, the diagnoses accord in their basic understanding of the new situation. They are even congruent with theories of the present past when they concur on mapping current societal relations to the past by investigating the ways in which the past pervades the present and how the past cannot let go of. But for cultural diagnoses this is only one side of the coin; the other being the relationship to the future. For Hartog, the shift from a future-oriented regime to a presentist one – in which the sole viewpoint is that of the present’s – did not make the future disappear, only made it seem “opaque and threatening” (Hartog 2015: 196). The future came to be seen in terms of risks, precaution, and responsibility at the same time when the past came to be seen “through notions of heritage and debts.” In the view of Hartog (2015: 201), this means nothing other than the present has “extended both into the future and into the past.” Gumbrecht (2014: 20) echoes these sentiments by saying that “today we increasingly feel that our present has broadened, as it is now surrounded by a future we can no longer see, access, or choose and a past that we are not able to leave behind.” Finally, Assmann (2013: 322) interprets the extension of the present as a new concept of the future which revolves around the idea of sustainability as the prolonged existence of the already known and familiarized.

Altogether, there is something deeply bewildering in all the above approaches to historical time. Both theories of the present past and cultural diagnoses seem to imply that historical time today is, in one way or another, anything but historical. For inasmuch as the past does not go away and takes hold of the present, and inasmuch as the future is only the extension of the present, these conceptualizations convey a sense of changelessness. But without the possibility of further change, without a future different from the past and the present, there

is no *historical* time; there is only an end to historical time in the present. What the above theories indicate is that the current condition of Western societies which is no longer supposed to change over time is, actually, *ahistorical*.

Now, I do not wish to claim that this is what cultural diagnoses explicitly and willfully assert. But this is what I think they entail, and I have three objections to such entailed ahistoricity as changelessness. The first objection concerns the *lack of an actual engagement with future prospects in their own rights*; not in terms of how such prospects are received, but in terms of being mere prospects. Although diagnoses even note that the catastrophism of postwar visions of the future has to do with recent ecological and technological prospects, their discussion is limited to occasional mentions of biotechnology and global warming. They are interested in the future inasmuch as it appears threatening, but do not examine the question of why and how the future appears as catastrophic and what is the novelty in that. Had they asked such questions, they might have found that artificial intelligence research, biotechnology, and climate change are perceived today as *anthropogenic existential risks* (Bostrom 2013), that is, risks arising out of human activity and threatening with premature human extinction.

In discussing *responses* to anthropogenic threats without exploring the threats themselves, cultural diagnoses remain inattentive to a handful of critical elements: that the prolongation of existence concerns the prolongation of *human existence* as such; that the *prospects* themselves are prospects of *changes*; and that the changes envisioned lately in the ecological and technological domains are of a completely other character than changes promised by the modern time regime. Later I will come back to the novel characteristics of prospective changes. What I wish to point out here is only that Western societies are most certainly not presentist concerning *expectations* of the future. Quite the contrary: the societal expectation of the future involves today previously unimaginable changes and transformations in the human condition.

My second objection is closely related to the first: *existential risk prevention concerning worst-case scenarios of human extinction does not mean that nothing changes*. Calling for preventive measures to avoid the most dystopian visions does not

exclude the possibility of other kinds of changes which do not threaten to eradicate human life, even as associated with the very same prospects. This leads straight to my third point: *spectacular changes are, in fact, very prominently envisioned today* – especially in the technological domain. For instance, transhumanism and technologies of human enhancement are often understood today as updated versions of familiar Enlightenment ideals of processual human betterment (Alleby and Sarewitz 2011: 1-13; Hauskeller 2014; Cabrera 2015; Jasanoff 2016). Whether rightly or not, is another question.

In any event, catastrophism is not the only vision of the future there is. Much of today's technological prospects is anything but cataclysmic and dystopian in their self-perception. They can be optimistic and utopian not only when they evoke the modern time regime in connection with a retained hope of human betterment, but also when they claim to escape its confines. Sometimes even transhumanists are not aware of the difference between improving on already existing human capacities and aiming at better-than-human capacities ([Simon 2018c](#)). They tend to claim compatibility with Enlightenment ideals of progress *in* the human condition and simultaneously announce much stronger programs “to overcome limits imposed by our biological and genetic heritage” (More 2013: 4). Either way, for advocates all this is highly desirable, while a large variety of bioconservative criticism (reviewed by Giubilini and Sanyal 2016) finds the very same prospects deeply disturbing and dystopian because of the inherent possibility of leaving behind a condition that can still reasonably be called human.

Again, all this poses the question of the new perception of change over time in human affairs as entailed by technological and ecological prospects, and, more importantly, the question of how they configure the relationship between past, present, and future. To answer this question, what needs to be understood first is not that technological-scientific and ecological future prospects are catastrophic and dystopian. Nor it is that most prospects of technology and science are bright in their *self-perception*, promising to continue the betterment of the human condition over a historical process. What needs to be understood is the simultaneity of highly optimistic and extremely pessimistic perceptions,

oftentimen even concerning the very same future prospects. What needs to be understood is the inherent dystopianism even of the shiniest prospects of postwar times and the type of perceived change such prospects harbor.

On the coming pages, I will argue that nothing is better suited for providing a conceptual understanding of the current transformation of historical time and an emerging sense of historicity of Western societies than a rebranded philosophy of history. The first step makes the case for the necessity of such a reinterpreted intellectual endeavor. The second step returns to and elaborates on the question of the novel type of perceived change in recent ecological and technological prospects. Finally, the third step brings the two previous ones together by conceptualizing the transformation of historical time as an increasing societal invocation of an eventual temporality of change against the backdrop of a decreasing belief in a processual one.

### **On the Necessity of the Philosophy of History**

The necessity of the philosophy of history is best indicated by two antithetical movements in the broadly understood post-World War II period (stretching until today). On the one hand, there is a growing skepticism about philosophy of history, mostly due to a disbelief about the future as the promise of human and social betterment; on the other, there is the survival of philosophy of history in disguise.

To begin with former, inasmuch as the modern concept of history is the promise of a better future seen together with the present and the past (history as the way leading to the promised future), and inasmuch as this future collapses, it simply follows that the concept of history itself, together with philosophy of history as the exercise that invents and elaborates that concept, must collapse as well. Pointing at the postwar collapse of a promise, however, is not to say that Enlightenment thinkers and consecutive philosophies of history were naïve believers. Consider the following remark of Kant (1991: 42) from his essay on universal history: “despite the apparent wisdom of individual actions here and

there, everything as a whole is made up of folly and childish vanity, and often of childish malice and destructiveness." Like Kant, Enlightenment thinkers and subsequent philosophers of history were perfectly aware of the horrors in human affairs. They invented the possibility of a better future and the idea of history precisely to eliminate these horrors by conceptualizing the possibility of change over time in human affairs as history.

What postwar Western societies renounced was then not a naïve belief, but *the will to conceptualize change* for the better in human affairs *in spite of* the primary experience of horrors. It happened multiple ways. The first thing to point out is to remember that the criticism of philosophy of history is not exclusively postwar. Although it became the standard attitude only after World War II, Raymond Aron, already in 1938 (the date of the first French edition) opened his book on philosophy of history by a warning that he does not mean "the great systems of the beginning of the nineteenth century, so discredited today" (Aron, 1961: 9). The postwar period, however, discredited not merely the "great systems of the nineteenth century," but a large set of interrelated general ideas. The example Horkheimer and Adorno's *The Dialectic of Enlightenment* (2002) can be wonderfully instructive to understand what this means. Their story about the way Enlightenment ideals has led to the most gruesome consequences instead of delivering their promise might appear as a critique of philosophy of history. But, in fact, it simply reverses the assumed directionality of human affairs. If Hannah Arendt (1973: vii) is right in claiming that "Progress and Doom are two sides of the same medal," then a comprehensive critique of the entire enterprise of philosophy of history is that which aims at abandoning the medal itself, instead of holding up one of its sides against the other. In other words, such a comprehensive critique wishes to abandon the general idea of directionality, regardless of the specific directions assumed by particular approaches.

Postwar skepticism about the entire enterprise of philosophy of history meant skepticism about these most general ideas. Without the intention to provide a full overview, I would like to mention a few more, such as the idea of a supposed knowledge of the future (regardless of the particular imaginations about how the



future may look like); the idea of the self-identical substance of the postulated historical process (regardless of the particular shape this substance may take); the idea that this historical process follows a discernable pattern inevitably governed by an impersonal “force” of history (whatever that force may be); or the idea that history has an ultimate and inherent purpose or meaning (whatever that meaning may be). To bring these down to concrete examples, sharing with Lyotard (1979: xxiv) the postmodern condition as “an incredulity towards metanarratives” amounts to sharing a general suspicion about metanarratives of any kind, including Horkheimer and Adorno’s. Agreeing with Popper (2002) on the impossibility of predicting the future of human affairs based on the past, or agreeing with Danto (1985) that configuring a course of history based on an illegitimate knowledge of the future results in the illegitimacy of knowledge-claims on the past, is a general agreement on the illegitimacy knowledge-claims about the future. In a similar vein, being convinced by the criticism of historical inevitability of Berlin (2002: 94-165) entails a distrust in the general idea of a determined historical process on the move.

Postmodern “end of history” theories, announcing the end of the modern idea of history in the sense of movement and directionality (Vattimo 1987; Baudrillard 2000: 31-57; Jenkins 1997; many of them analyzed by Butler 1993), are of a special kind. One the one hand, they attest to the tendency of outright skepticism toward philosophy of history; on the other, they testify its survival by tacitly exercise it. For announcing the “end of history” necessarily invokes an epochal change as the basic tenet of historical thinking, even if the announced new era is that which is supposed to be void of history. Postmodern “end of history” theories may nevertheless be very well aware of the ambivalence in their position. Vattimo (1987) is at least reflexive enough not only to associate postmodernity with the idea of the “end of history,” but also to point out that an “incredulity towards metanarratives” itself tells a metanarrative.

Abandoning philosophy of history and the idea of a historical process is so hard that even attempts of abandonment are caught *in flagranti* of exercising philosophy of history. No wonder that survival stories are just as manifold as

stories of death. According to Louis Mink, the idea of a Universal History survives in historical writing as the presupposition of a past actuality as an untold story. There is even a lack of self-awareness about the survival itself in the practice of historical studies, inasmuch as the transformed idea of Universal History as an untold past actuality “is implicitly presupposed as widely as it would be explicitly rejected” (Mink 1987: 188). This psychological edge is also present in Hayden White’s story about the necessary presence of a philosophy of history in each piece of historical writing. As part of the conclusion of his seminal *Metahistory*, White (1973: 428) claims that “every philosophy of history contains within it the elements of a proper history, just as every proper history contains within it the elements of a full-blown philosophy of history.” What this means is that regardless of whether knowing it or not, no one can write history without relying on a philosophy of history (understood as the course of human affairs). It simply lurks in the background and tacitly informs the work of historians.

What is implied by every piece of written history is not an altered version of a once celebrated idea as in Mink’s story, but a tacit and necessary appeal to the enterprise of philosophy of history. This arguably is a strong claim. I nevertheless think that White is right, and not only about the survival of the philosophy of history in professional historical studies, but also in various other disciplines. In fact, such implied philosophy of history looks the most apparent in theories of sociology or political science which intend to make sense of the constitution of the world on a longer time scale. These theories of modernization, globalization, democratization or secularization – and, for that matter, all “-ization” theories – rely on a processual temporality and sketch a historical development over time. Such “-ization” theories of course appear as authored by historians as well, although they are usually called long-term interpretations instead of being labelled as theories.

This brings me to the last version of survival stories I would like to introduce: the sheer continuation of the enterprise of philosophy of history. Popular scientists and public intellectuals – who otherwise are experts in fields of cognitive science, physiology or geography – retained the idea of developmental historical process

with humankind as its central subject all the while (Diamond 1997; Pinker 2011). Lately even popular historians give in to the urge of telling universal histories of humanity (Harari 2015), while the big history project – launched by historian David Christian (1991) – aims at telling a history of practically everything since the Big Bang in a single unfolding story. A more detailed enumeration could include deep history, world history, the rise of global history, or the recent fascination with telling large-scale Anthropocene stories. All this, I believe, indicates clearly enough that the Western world has serious difficulties with effectively abandoning both the idea of change over time in human affairs as history and philosophy of history as the enterprise conceptualizing such “history.”

The challenge posed by this situation is just as tough as the situation itself. For what needs to be explained and accounted for is both the skepticism towards the enterprise of philosophy of history *and* the actual unwillingness to abandon history. Failing to take seriously the skepticism part and merely noting the unwillingness to abandon history very likely ends up in promoting a return to classical philosophies of history, as if nothing had happened in the last seventy years or so. Failing to take seriously the apparent unwillingness to actually abandon history disregards the possibility of identifying a socio-cultural endeavor that craves for satisfaction, and very likely ends up in advocating the demolition of an enterprise that is designed to satisfy that very endeavor.

Unlike these options, taking seriously both sides the equation would simultaneously recognize the indispensability of philosophy of history and the implausibility of the way it has been exercised throughout Western modernity. What this means is that the indispensability of the philosophy of history is not unconditional or naturally given. It is most certainly a *conditional indispensability* that concerns a context-bound and purpose-dependent human endeavor. Philosophy of history may vanish and the idea of history could be reckoned with one day. But this day comes only as soon as the very purposes and socio-cultural needs satisfied by philosophy of history are vanished. For now, this does not seem the case. Instead, the enterprise of philosophy of history is still *indispensable as the best effort of Western societies to conceptualize, thereby understand, account for, and*

*enable change in human affairs; and, consequently, it is indispensable inasmuch as Western societies are concerned about change over time.*

In this conditional indispensability, the defining general ideas of modern philosophy of history can indeed be abandoned. Conceptualizing historical change and historical time does not necessarily have to take the shape of conceiving of history as a force or master plan being out there. Instead of postulating a historical process with inherent meaning and purpose concerning humankind, a rebranded philosophy of history can be fully aware of the fact that “history” is its own conceptual invention. But this awareness should not simply mean the postulation of the same historical process without determinism and inherent purpose in the course of human affairs. It rather has to mean the conceptualization of a novel notion of history, arising out of present-day concerns about change and perceptions of time as “historical.” Thus the central question of such a rebranded philosophy of history is: *how to understand historical time when even what seem to be utopian remainders of human and societal betterment in technological and ecological prospects come out as inherently dystopian?*

### **A Novel Sense of Historicity**

In my previous research (Simon [2015](#); [2018a](#); [2018b](#)), I have already ventured into answering some aspects of these questions. Here I would like to briefly recapitulate two of my earlier points and to elaborate on a more general third point, which will lead, in the concluding section, to a brief sketch about the transformation of historical time.

The first point is that *the type of the perception of change underlying today's prospects is what I came to call unprecedented change*. Both optimistic and pessimistic expectations of the future in the technological-scientific domain typically concern changes which do not merely conceived of as unfolding from past conditions. What makes utopian visions of technology inherently dystopian is precisely that they are not about the prospective development of already known and familiar potentials and yet-underdeveloped capacities. Instead, as indicated in the earlier

discussion, technological prospects of artificial intelligence, bioengineering, transhumanism, genome editing, and human enhancement entail the possibility of the creation of other-than-human beings with greater-than-human capacities. In the case of ecological prospects, there is of course nothing like an intentional act to bring about anything like this. Nevertheless, the type of change implicit in the prospect and the potentiality of humanity engineering its own demise is *categorically* the same in the technological and ecological domains. The challenge of the ultimate vision of an inhabitable planet and human extinction as the result of anthropogenic climate change is that it defies the continuity of human experience (Chakrabarty 2009: 197–198). Defying this continuity, defying the possibility of having recourse to a familiar configuration of change, defying the possibility of making sense of the future by connecting it to past experiences (on a human time-scale) or past occurrences (on a larger-than-human time-scale) along a deep processual temporality, is what I call unprecedented.

The second point follows from the first: *conceiving of change over time as unprecedented means conceiving of it as an eventual transformation*. That which is conceived of as unprecedented is expected to be brought about in an instance, in the shape of a sudden game-changer event. This of course does not mean that prior to the expected event nothing can happen and nothing can change in any way whatsoever. This means only that the expected momentous transformation is supposed to be brought into effect by such an occurrence identified as a disruptive event. My favorite example is that of a technological singularity (Vinge 2013), referring to the anticipated creation of greater-than-human intelligence, with consequences inaccessible to human cognition (which is the primary source of unease and dystopianism in prospects of eventual transformations).

These two points tend toward a third one I would like draw attention to: *the scope of a rebranded philosophy of history is not limited to human affairs, meaning that it is not limited to affairs which are exclusively human*. This may be surprising and unsurprising at the same time. It is surprising as measured against the focus of classical philosophies of history on the human and humanity, while unsurprising as measured against the current cacophony of discourses questioning the human

in one way or another. Without the intention to introduce all the oftentimes radically conflicting views, I would like to mention only a few.

The manifold discourses on posthumanity/posthumanism are, I believe, the best indicators that Western societies envision unforeseen changes today instead of being presentist. The most trenchant of all is a technological-scientific prospect of posthumanity. It marks a new era by the already mentioned prospect of the creation of beings that may be posthuman in the most literal sense. The creation of greater-than-human intelligence (Vinge 2013; Bostrom 2014) and the aforementioned radical enhancement scenarios advocated by transhumanism are the most prominent versions of this technological posthumanity. Then, there is a critical posthumanism focused on dismantling humanism as a long-standing pattern of thought, questioning its anthropocentrism and human exceptionalism, fighting the liberal subject at its center, and trying to renegotiate the human-animal divide (Braidotti 2013a; Wolfe 2010; Haraway 2008). Ewa Domanska (2010; 2017) already tried to raise awareness of the importance of critical posthumanism for historical theory. Then, often oscillating between critical and technological-scientific versions, there is also the most sophisticated posthumanism of Hayles (1999), which nevertheless has more sympathy for the former in arguing that the posthuman does not necessarily entail biological alteration.

None of this is to say that the human is no longer important or that the human is no longer a central concern. Despite all claims of anti-anthropocentrism in critical posthumanism, it must be clear that the sheer existence of most of these discourses is due to the extent to which human beings became a threat to themselves in the shape of the anthropogenic risks discussed earlier. Critical posthumanists would not call for humility and would not challenge what they call human exceptionalism if the human was not appearing more powerful – both in creation and destruction – than ever before. Nowhere is this clearer than in debates about the Anthropocene, regarding which even Chakrabarty (2017) gives in to the otherwise much criticized tendency to talk about the “age of humans.” At the same time, Chakrabarty (2015) argues that the *anthropos* of the Anthropocene debate is not a mere reiteration of old conceptions of humanity, but a redefinition of the

human within a *zoocentric* worldview focused on life. Similarly, Domanska (2014) situates the Anthropocene with concerns for the wider category of Terrans instead of the narrower category Humans, while Latour (2010) has his own wider category called Earthlings.

Again, the list could be continued with far more examples. But the tendency is hopefully already displayed: with or without much conceptual innovations, both within a narrowly defined historical studies (Chaplin 2017) and an emerging transdisciplinary setting (Braidotti 2013b; Domanska 2015; Robin 2018), the scope of today's historicity extends over a world of entangled human/nonhuman affairs.

### **The Transformation of Historical Time: Processual and Evental Temporalities**

To avoid any misunderstandings, I am not advocating any of the above views. My intention is rather to provide a conceptual understanding of their shared thematizations, concerns, and most profound assumptions as our emerging historical sensibility. I think that the redefinition of the human/nonhuman world as an object of knowledge, the perception of change over time as unprecedented, and the expectation of a singular disruptive event to bring about such unprecedented change, are integral features of an ongoing transformation of historical time.

Running the (not really existential) risk of schematization, it seems useful to distinguish between a processual and an evental understanding of historical time. Changes conceived of along a processual temporality concern changes in the condition of a subject in the human world, unfolding against the backdrop of a deep temporal continuity. This is historical time as we know it in Western modernity. Changes conceived of along an evental temporality concern changes in the entangled human/nonhuman world which bring about a previously inexistent subject in a non-continuous manner, through unprecedented changes. This is historical time as it is emerging in post-World War II societies. The transformation of historical time is best understood as the increasing perception

of change over time in Western societies along an evental temporality, accompanied by simultaneous decrease of expecting change to take place in a processual scenario.

However useful such schematic contrast may be in gaining a conceptual understanding of what is at stake in the transformation of historical time, it must be clear that actual views are typically less comprehensive and coherent. Just as it is not necessary for a processual historical sensibility to exhibit in its particular instances all the attributes of an interrelated conceptual toolkit (directionality, self-identical substance, telos, and so forth), the above individual examples of an evental conception of historical time do not necessarily hold or imply all the aforementioned three features associated with evental temporality on the conceptual level. Not to mention that the two temporalities are often conflated in certain discourses. For instance, critical posthumanism implies a processual temporality in extending emancipatory concerns of the human world to the entangled world of human/nonhuman affairs, although the tectonic rearrangement of knowledge it advocates qualifies as unprecedented change that does not merely unfold from past conditions as an accumulation of knowledge.

Given such blending of concerns and temporalities in discourses and views of today, the main question is that of how processual and evental dispositions of historical time relate to each other today. To begin to answer this question from a bit afar, the first thing to note is that both processual and evental temporalities can be labeled as “historical” inasmuch as they configure large-scale change over time in the world without the assumption of otherworldly intervention, either divine or supernatural. It is nevertheless equally tempting to consider evental temporality as the one that brings about other-than-historical change. It would also be possible to propose a new and at first perhaps oddly sounding concept for that which is other-than-history, and then to contrast it to history and its processual time. But there is a way in which the result would be the same: insofar as the evental temporality harbored by postwar prospects is not conceived of *exclusively* as a new version of the old historical time, insofar as the occurrence of a novel type of perceived change is conceived of as that which threatens to shatter whatever we



have previously thought about historical change, it makes no difference if we stick with the *word* history. The sheer fact of referring to “historical” time in the case of both a processual and an evental temporality can nevertheless be confusing. But we know, to a large extent due to the work of Reinhart Koselleck, that concepts tend to shift meanings, even to an extent that meanings associated with a certain words and concepts completely dissipate with the emergence of new meanings associated with the very same words and concepts.

At the present moment, this is not (although perhaps only not yet) the case with “history.” It rather seems to me that, since sometime around the end of World War II, we are living in a period like the one between 1750 and 1850, to which Koselleck (2004) referred to as *Sattelzeit*. By this, Koselleck meant a saddle period in which a cluster of interrelated concepts (from the concept of history itself to those of revolution or utopia) gained a temporal dimension and thereby new meanings, all this resulting in the overall conceptual design of the processual historicity of Western modernity. If, as I think, we are in another saddle period of substantial changes, it means that old and new understandings of history and conceptions of historical time exist alongside each other, and sometimes even mingle in particular instances, such as in the case of critical posthumanism. This is also why it is better, for now, to consider both processual and evental temporalities as being “historical.”

Until we recognize or affirm the transformation as finished and one that irrevocably took place, we cannot even determine its character and settle the question of whether the transformation of historical time itself is processual or evental. Accordingly, the claim I wish to advance asserts only that a processual and an evental historical time can be analytically distinguished in the post-World War II Western world. A stronger version of this claim, that I also wish to hold, asserts that the evental conception of historical time is gaining prominence at the expense of the former ubiquity of the processual conception of historical time. If there is an ongoing *transformation* of historical time, nothing more about its character can be said with any certainty precisely because what an *ongoing*

transformation of *historical time* transforms in very way in which we can talk about transformations in time.

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