Western Apocalyptic Time and Personal Authentic Time

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The concept of time is culturally determined. At different times in the history of Western culture, differing conceptions of times competed with one another, at times contradicting and at times complementing each other. Westerners, I will claim, currently live in two streams of time- the linear, historical, cultural timeline directed to the “end of days” and a personal, authentic timeline.

The Bible is a central cultural source of the linear conception of time: in the Judeo-Christian Western thinking which has taken hold, time has a beginning, “In the beginning[[1]](#footnote-1),” and an end “in the end of days[[2]](#footnote-2).” Time is wholly directed to the final event, to God’s kingdom. The biblical timeline depends on the actions of people in history. Augustine identifies the past with historical memory, and the future with anticipation[[3]](#footnote-3). This linear conception of history and its division into segments which combine and progress to the end, became dominant in all cultural venues whose worldview was based on a Biblical foundation, and is still the basis of cultural, historical and ideological narratives[[4]](#footnote-4).

With the strengthening of the processes of secularization in Europe, the connection to mystic, eternal time was weakened, and people became more grounded in earthly time. The process of secularization allowed for the development of individualism in its modern iteration[[5]](#footnote-5). In the new consumer society, which is wholly concerned with personal time, collective time lost its purposed and its reason for being maintained. The relationship to time started to gradually chance from the general conceptions of linear, collective time which is external to us, to a more subjective, personal conception of time. In the consumerism of capitalism, time became a personal, authentic resource.

1. Genesis 1:1. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Isaiah 2:2. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Augustine (2001) *Confessions*, Book Eleven, 21: p. 302. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Joseph, Dan.  *Apocalypse, Then and* *Now*. Yediot Aharonot and Sifrei Chemed, 2000: pp. 265-308. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Daniel Shanahan, *Toward a Genealogy of Individualism*, University of Massachusetts, 1992: 56 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)