

Peter Wagner:

The Anthropocene and the direction of history

24 March 2026, 18:00

Meeting room of the Institute of Philosophy CAS

Jilská 1, Prague 1

The notion of the Anthropocene (broadly understood) suggests that humanity has entered into a new historical epoch. This epoch, though, is not the one of realization of freedom, as earlier philosophies of history had postulated, but one of a humanmade global ecological emergency. From this angle, the presentation will reflect on the question of the direction of history: What does it mean to situate our present time in historical perspective? If there has been a direction to history, what have been the driving forces? More specifically, have prevailing visions of history, such as the expectation of steady progress, contributed to giving history a direction? Is there a connection between the realization of freedom and the ecological emergency? And maybe most urgently, in what sense do we have to consider the current predicament as irreversible?

Peter Wagner is Research Professor of Social Sciences at the Catalan Institute for Research and Advanced Studies (ICREA) and at the University of Barcelona. His research is based in comparative historical and political sociology as well as social and political philosophy and focuses on the historical trajectories and transformations of modern societies. Analyzing the persisting tensions between struggles for autonomy and forms of domination, it explores in the light of historical experiences in different world-regions the current possibilities of progress, not least in the face of human action reaching and exceeding planetary boundaries. Recent book publications include *Carbon Societies. The Social Logic of Fossil Fuels* (Cambridge 2024), *Progress. A Reconstruction* (Cambridge 2016) and *Collective Action and Political Transformations: The Entangled Experiences in Brazil, South Africa and Europe* (with Aurea Mota, Edinburgh 2019).