

Text: Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History"

Present: Andrea Brady, Charlie Miller, Chris Sykes, Daniel Wilson, Frederik Willemarck, Ingrid Segal, Kate Nichols, Loukas Balaneros, Matt ffytche, Naomi Goulder, Noam, Lauren, Alexis.

Daniel This text offers a fruitful intersection between the schools of History and Philosophy here at Birkbeck and in particular raises questions for we Historians.

Charlie Particularly interested in exploring WB's concept of the 'flash' in history.

Loukas WB already very influential in forging the tradition of Cultural History.

Matt Historical/Dialectical Materialism (HM/DM) by the end of the 19th c. has become a science as much as a political movement. WB seeking to reject the determinism implicit in its Leninist incarnation.

Lauren WB's project is indeed political

Alexis WB doesn't conform to any Historical school nor the academic system in general.

Ingrid WB very alone - a flâneur outside of the 'system' who aimed to supercede HM.

Naomi WB appears to be attempting to defend the 'individual' in the face of wider forces.

Matt We should be careful, but still need to think about defining "Messianic Time" in opposition to "Historical Time". What is theological time and what are the implications for agency? These meanings hard to pin down.

Daniel WB appears almost Messianic in his claims for HM

Matt WB being ironic in §1?

Noam There is still room for agency in Messianism

Loukas      There is no room for agency in Messianism

Lauren      Gathering in all of the past in a flash - reminiscent of the compressed time described by Bergson, in which the past exists as an accumulation and the present does not exist.

Naomi      How are flashes selected by a particular Historian? Is there a subjective element?

Daniel      The idea of danger is subjective, which has significance for Historical method.

Loukas      The notion of a State of Emergency is taken on by Carl Schmitt and, today, by Agamben.

Matt        The notion of an anarchic resistance to Social Democracy which WB advocates is politically naive and insufficient.

Noam        But this anarchy can be powerful: we must preserve WB as an activist.

Naomi      Is the *Angelus Novus* something for us to aspire to?

Charlie     Where is paradise?

Matt        The angel seems to connect the present with the beginning of historical time, by looking back to its origins.

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Reading for next time: Nietzsche, "Of the use and abuse of History"