

Tom Vandeputte: *Justice at Point Zero: Benjamin's Early Critique of Law*

A year before writing "Toward the Critique of Violence," in the fall of 1919, Benjamin outlines the programme for a profound critique of law in his essay "Fate and Character." The task of such a critique is implied in the diagnosis of a "confusion" (*Verwechslung*), a mistaken identification of the "realm of justice" and what Benjamin calls the "domain" of law. The critical enterprise that is to intervene in this confusion would have to reinstate the distinction between these two spheres, to tear and keep them apart. At the same time, however, it would have to show how the legal domain is entangled with another, "natural" sphere: that of "fate." The laws governing the legal domain are, Benjamin argues, nothing but the "laws of fate" (*die Gesetze des Schicksals*). The claim advanced here is striking: the categories of modern legal theory would be of little use for the critique of law, which instead has to take recourse to a theory of fate and its "constitutive categories," "guilt" (*Schuld*) and "misfortune" (*Unglück*). This talk reconstructs the critique of law that Benjamin develops out of these categories, focusing on his central proposition that law "does not sentence to punishment but condemns to guilt." This critique is linked to Benjamin's evocation of the poor as the figure of the justice subsumed into legal judgement, compressed in a phrase that appears as an accusation directed at the legal order itself: "You let the poor become guilty."

Klaus Mladek: *Gerechtigkeit ist die ethische Seite des Kampfes*

Kampf, Rechtfertigung und Zukunft (das „Kommende,“ „Ankündigung“) bilden die drei Schlüsselbegriffe dieses Vortrags. Sie tauchen nicht zufällig in nahezu allen programmatischen Texten und Zeitschriftenprojekten Benjamins auf. „Gerechtigkeit ist die ethische Seite des Kampfes“ heißt es in den „Notizen zu einer Arbeit über die Kategorie der Gerechtigkeit,“ ein ebenso zentraler wie rätselhafter Satz. Er knüpft an Heraklits Fragment „Krieg ist das Gemeinsame und Gerechtigkeit Streit“ an und unterstreicht Benjamins philosophisch-politische Ambitionen. Denn es geht, damals wie heute, um das Gemeinsame, das der Kampf stiftet, um die Frage der Gemeinschaft, die Form und den Status der Streit- und der Kampfschrift, um den Klassenkampf, um Mitstreiter, um die Lebensform der Kritik und um intellektuelle Gemeinschaften, die aus „wechselseitiger Fremdheit“ entstehen. Besonders „Über das Programm der kommenden Philosophie,“ „Karl Kraus,“ „Ankündigung der Zeitschrift: Angelus Novus“ und das „Memorandum zu der Zeitschrift Krisis und Kritik“ stehen im Blickpunkt meines Beitrags.

1. Kampf (als „Streben,“ „Gewährleistung des Existenten,“ „Macht“ oder Klassenkampf) ist vielleicht jene „neue ethische Kategorie,“ welche die Gerechtigkeit begründet, Güter besitzlos macht und die „verwaltete Gewalt“ vernichtet. Kampf wäre dann die Bedingung der Möglichkeit ethischer Gegenstände, also transzendental, ein apriorischer „Urbegriff,“ sogar noch den Kantischen Kategorien vorgelagert. Ab 1934 ist Kampf „Klassenkampf,“ der den Begriff des „gerechten Krieges“ ablöst und nicht parteipolitisch zu denken ist. Wie das Wort *katēgoriē*, das vor Aristoteles die öffentliche Anklage auf der Agora und das gemeinschaftliche Benennen bedeutete, ist Gerechtigkeit Kampf und Kampf um Gerechtigkeit. Die Kategorie des (kritischen) Kampfes hat drei Ausdrucksformen: anklagend, klagend und jubelnd. Zerstörend ist die Gerechtigkeit in diesem dreifachen Sinne.
2. Rechtfertigung, „Rechenschaft“ oder „das Richtige“ beschreibt in diesen Schriften eine bestimmte Treue zum Gegenstand und zur Form der Darstellung. „Reinste Rechtfertigung“ denkt Benjamin zusammen mit der Lehre und der Kategorie. Rechenschaft abzulegen über die Form schafft die Bedingung der Möglichkeit der Kritik als solche. Ihr eignet laut Benjamin eine Haltung, ein Gestus und ein spezifischer Ort; deshalb ist sie körperlich und auf die Bühne verwiesen wie im undramatischen Theater Platons oder Brechts. Die Bühne ist der Streitraum oder die „Kampfform“ der Gerechtigkeit, der Urteilsunterbrechung, welche die Krise der krisis darstellt, und der „Schulung des Urteils“ zugleich. Die Frage, warum immer wieder nichtmenschliche Figuren Benjamins Texte bis hin zu „Über den Begriff der Geschichte“ bevölkern, erklärt sich aus der inhärenten Intensität

und Kraft der Rechtfertigung. Rechenschaft ablegen über die Form der Darstellung liegt Benjamins Form der Sprachgerechtigkeit zugrunde, die auch Theatergerechtigkeit ist

3. Zukunft, insbesondere ihre Gefahren und Bedrohungen, und Verheißung erscheinen bei Benjamin immer wieder im Andenken, aber auch im „gerechten Weltzustand“ selbst. Gerechtigkeit, im Unterschied zum Recht, schafft allererst das Verhältnis von Prophetie zur Erfüllung und des Kampfes zur Kategorie des Existenten. Gleichermaßen stellt die Kategorie der Gerechtigkeit qua Klassenkampf erst die Beziehung des historischen Geschehens auf das Reich der Ethik her.

Tamara Tagliacozzo: *Messianism and Happiness: A Possible Reference to Kant in Benjamin's Theological-Political Fragment*

On the basis of a citation from the final part of Walter Benjamin's Theological-Political Fragment (1920-21), we shall hypothesize a similarity between Benjamin and Kant, in his Idea of a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Intent (1784). According to Kant, the man who participates in history and in the human race seeks happiness and the means to procure it for himself as a member of «free» humanity, thus seeking to unify external freedom and happiness in institutions of law. During the period 1920-1921 Benjamin was strongly critical of the concept of law, including also that of Kant, which he saw as contradictory to the idea of justice; in opposition, Benjamin held first an anarchist-libertarian view, then a revolutionary one. From a dialectical perspective, however, we find in common in Benjamin and Kant a redemptive pessimism that foresees, in the «twisted wood» of mankind, an ultimate providential and messianic possibility: «The spiritual restitutio in integrum, that leads to immortality, correspond to a worldly restitution that leads to an eternity of downfall, and the rhythm of this eternally transient worldly existence, transient in its totality, in its spatial but also in its temporal totality», the eternal succession of generations and their institutions, which is «the rhythm of messianic nature», is happiness. Nature eternalizes itself in this virtual spatial and temporal totality in the history of humanity moving toward the realization of the idea of law and, spatially, the achievement of global, cosmopolitan politics: «nature is messianic by reason of its eternal and total caducity» (GS, II, 1, 203-204).

Everet Smith: *Concerning the Law in Walter Benjamin's Critique of Violence*

Since its publication there has been much to say regarding Walter Benjamin's essay "Towards a Critique of Violence" (see Abbott 2008; Oyarzún 2019; Fenves & Ng 2021). Perhaps due to the apparently obvious answer, there has been less attention paid to the place of the general idea of law in his work— "Critique of Violence" is, after all, critical of the violence inherent in the laws of the state. In the essay "Walter Benjamin – Out of the Sources of Modern Judaism" the late Hegel scholar Gillian Rose claims that Benjamin's early essays "develop the neo-Kantian metaphysics which unifies religion and philosophy for which Benjamin called, by bypassing the notion of law" (Rose 1993, 184. Emphasis mine.). This is a common assumption in Benjamin's reception; for example Anna Kornbluh (2019) identifies "Benjaminian materialism" as a "spurning of institutions" such as law and is not alone in her presumption that Benjamin equates the idea of law in general with violence (see Agamben 2019; Castro 2021).

Responding to Rose's charge I critically address the place of law in Benjaminian thought. I read Benjamin's essay alongside Hegel's "On the Scientific Ways of Treating Natural Law" (1803), testing the resonances between Hegel's critique of natural law with Benjamin's later criticisms of positive law. Whereas Rose argues that Benjamin determines "the only complete response to ... the violence in law, would be divine, the law in violence, which is only conceivable as God's anarchy" (Rose 1993, 187. Emphasis mine.), given Benjamin's derisive remarks regarding anarchists I argue that we cannot be so swift to assume that Benjamin wishes to reject the concept of law entirely. Arriving at a deeper understanding of Benjamin's thoughts on law can offer clarify his call for a revolutionary, "divine" violence and its material ramifications.

Vinsent Nollet: *"The Critique of Violence is the Philosophy of Its History": History, Theology and Politics in Walter Benjamin's Early Historical-Philosophical Writings*

Benjamin's "Critique of Violence" became a classical work on revolutionary politics, mainly due to influential political-theological expositions of its arguments. The main challenge with this understanding of the essay is that Benjamin seemingly argues against any reconciliation of politics and theology, particularly in the impossibility to decide on the occurrence of pure violence beyond the law. Nonetheless, Benjamin equates the divine with justice. The ambiguity surrounding the relation between revolutionary violence and justice can be resolved through the clarity of Benjamin's historical-philosophical understanding of violence. It is often overlooked that Benjamin establishes the critique of violence, tasked with "the presentation of its relation to law and justice", as "the philosophy of its history." In my paper I will trace the principles of this philosophy of history and clarify how "Critique of Violence" can fully come to fruition in a historical-philosophical reading. Between 1919 and 1923, largely overlapping his work on the "Politics" project, Benjamin developed a clear understanding of such a philosophy of history, which resulted in a metaphysical anarchism directed at the problematic entanglement of myth, fate and guilt in social-political reality. I will examine the place of Benjamin's work on politics in the context of these early ideas on philosophy of history, most notably expressed in "Fate and Character", "Goethe's Elective Affinities" and the "Theological Political Fragment", as well as a number of unpublished fragments. Understanding the role of the violence essay in the context of these works is requisite for an orientation into Benjamin's thought on the category of justice and to come to terms with its "political" finality.

Hannah Franzki: *Foundational Violence and Dialectical Images: Thinking with Walter Benjamin about the Politics of Time in War Crime Trials*

While Benjamin's critique of law was at the margins of Benjamin scholarship for a very long time, over the past thirty years the comments on law across his oeuvre have become central to critical legal scholarship. Most of this scholarship is dedicated to close readings of Benjamin's often fragmentary remarks on law/Law. Rather than adding to this strand of scholarship, this paper explores what it means to think with Benjamin about contemporary manifestations of law and state authority.

More specifically, the paper engages with the fragment Capitalism as Religion (1921), with the Critique of Violence (1921) and Benjamin's later writings on the philosophy of history and brings them to bear on a set of ongoing trials that investigate the responsibility of economic actors for crimes committed during the last dictatorship (1973-1985). In linking Walter Benjamin's comments on the temporality of guilt/debt (Schuld) in Capitalism to his critique of legal violence and the weak promise of historical justice, the paper offers an alternative reading of what is at stake in trials that investigate systematic state crimes (such as crimes against humanity or war crimes). What emerges is a competing politics of time that is at work in these trials. Against the legal writing of history that invokes the past injustices in order to authorise the liberal order of the present, the paper enlists Benjamin for a critical reading of the court documents. Such a reading cites fragments from the past, documented in the trials, into the present context in which the trials take place. Thereby, the past acquires a critical force that destabilises the present juridico-political order, exposing not only the violence of the authoritarian state, but also that of the capitalist rule of law. The paper closes with some reflections on what we gain and what we might lose when we work with Benjamin on contemporary manifestations of law.

Thomas Regehly: *Die Gerechtigkeit und das Rettende*

Die Frage nach der Gerechtigkeit bildet den Hintergrund, der für Benjamin Politik und Literatur verbindet. Der „wahre Politiker“ verschafft sich über die Bedingungen und Möglichkeiten der Gerechtigkeit in der Welt eine illusionslose, metaphysische Klarheit. Dem „wahren Schriftsteller“ steht die Chance „hochpolitischen Stils und Schreibens“ nur dann zur Verfügung, wenn er der Sprache in ihrer höchsten Form Gerechtigkeit widerfahren läßt.

Mit der Einbahnstraße betritt Benjamin das politische Terrain, um der Wahrheit als Gerechtigkeit literarisch und politisch zu dienen. In seinem ersten „politischen“ Buch stehen

spekulative, bis heute von der Forschung nicht entschlüsselte Passagen, die seinem Absagebrief an Buber vom 17. Juli 1916 über die politische Wirkung des Schrifttums entsprechen. Das radikale Ziel sollte es sein, so die dahinterstehende Annahme, Hölderlin mit Marx zu verbinden, wie es bereits Thomas Mann gefordert hatte. Das politisch anzugehende *malum physicum* ist von dem sprachphilosophisch, vor allem aber poetisch zu erfassenden *malum metaphysicum* nicht zu trennen. Nur auf diese Weise liesse sich in einer kritischen Zeit „das Außerordentliche, das allein uns noch retten kann“ (Kaiserpanorama I), in den Blick bekommen.

Diese Konstellation erfordert eine Politisierung der Literatur ebenso wie eine Literarisierung der Politik im Zeichen einer sowohl „hoch“- wie „anti-politischen“ Gerechtigkeit.

Justice in Language and Linguistic Practice

Dennis Johannssen: *Language Justice and the Critique of Linguistic Violence*

“Oppressive language does not represent violence; it is violence.”

Toni Morrison, *The Bird is in Your Hands*

Walter Benjamin’s early writings on language and violence offer the basis for a new approach to the analysis of oppressive language. In this paper, I examine the links between “On Language as Such and on the Language of Man” (1916), “Notes toward a Work on the Category of Justice” (1916), and “Toward the Critique of Violence” (1921), focusing on the tension between the fact of linguistic violence—insults, discrimination, microaggressions—and Benjamin’s claim that language as “the sphere of ‘coming-to-an-understanding [Verständigung]’” is “wholly inaccessible to violence [der Gewalt vollständig unzugänglich]” (Benjamin 2021, 50). A closer look at this tension reveals a distinction in Benjamin’s view between, on the one hand, language a “critical medium” of communication and expression that has been corrupted by property relations and the logic of judgment, and, on the other hand, language as the sphere of justice that allows for a non-instrumental and co-responsive way of sharing experience with others. My exploration of Benjamin’s critique of linguistic violence is embedded in a larger question about the contribution of early twentieth-century exile writers to today’s debates on oppressive speech, linguistic profiling, painful language, and the right of self-designation (Butler 1996; Ferber 2019; Kuch and Herrmann 2020; Matsuda et al. 1993). Benjamin offers a way of connecting subjective forms of linguistic violence such as traumatic naming and mimetic coercion to the legal and institutional normalization of oppressive social relations, finding its counterpoint in what Werner Hamacher (2018) called language justice, or Sprachgerechtigkeit: another understanding of and comportment toward language that radically interrupts and potentially abolishes its instrumentalization. The violence of language makes an unjust world appear largely nonviolent (or “banal,” as Hannah Arendt would say), yet language harbors a kind of justice that allows for its own interruption and correction.

Noboyuki Kakigi: *Translation as Action for Justice of Languages: An Inquiry into the Practical Meaning of Walter Benjamin’s Theory of Translation*

Since the 1920s, Walter Benjamin’s theory of translation developed critical reflection of practice in literary re/production. According to his theoretical thinking, this practice could be an action that corresponds to — if one uses Hannah Arendt’s terminology — the plurality of languages. Revisiting the concept of “literalness” of the translation in “The Task of the Translator,” this presentation will point out the possibility of reading a theory of action of translating from this essay and some related texts. This action would seek justice as a messianic “state of the world” — as Benjamin defines justice in “Notes on a Work toward the Category of Justice” — between languages.

Benjamin says, by rendering each word of the original text as the “primary element,” the “echo of the original” would sound in the translation. For such resonance of languages, the translator “breaks through the decayed barrier of own language.” This action that deconstructs the mythical institute of “language” could be considered as a way of citation discussed in “Karl Kraus.” Suspending the “ambiguities of law,” this citation resounds each word and brings it to its original immediacy, as literal translation does — coinciding with Gayatri C. Spivak’s translation theory — “lovingly.” The translation toward the “pure,” immediate creative language shows the relationship of languages free from any domination and subordination.

Therefore, the destructive act of literal translation, developing the “afterlife” of the original, opens up the possibility of justice between different languages. As Benjamin saw in the unrealized magazine *Angelus Novus*, this action creates a new language of literature. It could also echo suppressed memories through the interruption of the dominating “history.” Examining the afterlife of “The Task of the Translator” in contemporary translation theories and taking literature based on oral or documentary recollections into consideration, this presentation will recognize the decolonizing and “weak messianic power” of translation.

Caroline Sauter: *Translation and Justice: Benjamin and Derrida*

“Doing justice to a text” is a commonplace notion of translation—a conception that is challenged in Walter Benjamin’s seminal “The Task of the Translator” (1923) and Jacques Derrida’s “What Is a ‘Relevant’ Translation?” (1998). Both Benjamin and Derrida argue against the ideas of economy and convertibility in translation (albeit with starkly different metaphors) and emphasize a view of translation that is neither based on content nor on similarity. The category of justice is a major leitmotif in Derrida’s essay: reading one verse of Shakespeare’s *The Merchant of Venice* — “When mercy seasons justice” — and defending his translation of Hegel’s *Aufhebung* as *relève*, Derrida unfolds a theory of forgiveness [pardon] in translation. While Benjamin does not mention the term ‘justice’ in his *Translator Essay* at all, he nevertheless speaks of reconciliation [Versöhnung] three times: For Benjamin, “[translation] points the way to [...] the predestined, hitherto inaccessible realm of reconciliation and fulfilment of languages” (p. 257), and in pure language, languages are “supplemented and reconciled in their way of meaning” (p. 259). My paper will compare Benjamin’s and Derrida’s views on translation and justice in light of their understandings of forgiveness and reconciliation, pointing to possible readings of *yom kippur* in their respective works.

Ludmila Fuks: *Quote without inverted commas. Montage for justice of things*

The importance of montage in Benjamin’s late work is well known, both as the core of his practice and of his theory of knowledge, art and politics. Montage operates as a critical-redemptive epistemology of that which it assembles. Constituted by quotations, Benjamin points out, it allows the quoted to “attain its right”. In turn, as he points out in his *Karl Kraus*, the quotation contains a principle of justice, intimately linked to his theory of language and name. Breaking the context and temporal space of the quoted, and assembling it in a present space, allows things to survive, to save them from their symbolic death. Working with the inanimate as creature, as he points out in *Der Erzähler...*, is also in the realm of the just. It is precisely this point that has not been so extensively dealt with in the specialized literature, which tends to approach montage in artistic or historiographical terms, or if in relation to justice only in epistemic terms. In this study, we propose to interrogate these points in the light of Benjamin’s idea of quoting without inverted commas: are inverted commas the rules of use of the thing, its context, the subject behind the object? In this line, it is vital to take up his *Notizen zu einer Arbeit über die Kategorie der Gerechtigkeit* and to relate them to the reflections on authentic montage. On the one hand, authenticity [Echtheit] refers us to origin [Ursprung] - as a mark on phenomena - the latter idea being so dear to Benjamin’s reading of *Kraus* and the vocation of justice that the just narrator has. On the other hand, in these notes, Benjamin emphasizes the need to think justice outside the relation of possession of goods. In montage, similar to the experience of childhood, objects are neither used nor possessed, but liberated. The exposure of things via montage allows them to raise their own questions and gives them attention [Aufmerksamkeit], which thus generates a justice of things.

Elliott J. Niblock: *Buber and Benjamin*

*In a 1935 letter to Alfred Cohn, Walter Benjamin recalled his earlier enthusiasm for Franz Rosenzweig's *Star of Redemption* and, at the same time, marveled at his own longstanding disdain for Martin Buber: "not the least remarkable thing is that [Rosenzweig's] friendship with Buber was never able to damage my uncommonly deeply rooted aversion to the latter."*

*1 This paper shows that Benjamin's lifelong aversion to Buber was grounded in an ongoing disagreement about how to properly do justice to the magic of language; however, this disagreement stemmed more from an initial moment of anger and wounded pride than from philosophically irreconcilable positions. Benjamin's disdain for Buber's use of language began with Buber's editorial in the inaugural edition of *Der Jude* in 1916, and ran through Buber and Rosenzweig's translation of the Hebrew Bible. I argue that Benjamin's letter to Buber of July, 1916—which contained a rough sketch of ideas that would later appear in his essay "On Language as Such and on Human Language"—was simultaneously a clear condemnation of Buber's political writing in *Der Jude*, yet at the same time also an earnest attempt to elicit a response from Buber on the topic of philosophy of language. This attempt failed, as Buber was angered by the letter, and left it unanswered (Scholem confirms Buber had received and read the letter). From this initial disagreement in 1916, I trace a series of misunderstandings that continued throughout Buber and Benjamin's lives, ultimately arguing that, after Buber's turn away from *Erlebnis* mysticism toward his philosophy of dialogue, Buber and Benjamin actually have far more in common on the themes of instrumentalization and philosophy of language than Benjamin was willing to admit.*

Yu-jin Chang: *Justice is No Myth: An Interpretation of the Antithetical Synonyms in Benjamin's Works*

In his essay on violence, Benjamin lays out how the passage to justice is obstructed by a certain ambiguity of language. In the very names of equality, piation*, and, above all, the law, what is imposed as a general rule (as inescapable as that of "fate") is precisely the opposite of justice, namely subjection, inculcation, and tragic violence (or "misfortune"). Thus the law (*Recht*), even in its modern constitutional configuration, is presented by him as the *de facto* instrument not of justice (*Gerechtigkeit*), as its name suggests, but of unaccountable power (*Macht*) in ancient and permanent conflict with the just state. This early stance remains remarkably unchanged throughout Benjamin's works and is revisited in the late retrospective theses on history, where he posits that in the very name of progress, what continues to impose itself as a general rule is nothing other than historical catastrophe. What renders the ambiguity in these cases particularly pernicious, even "demonic," is the profound confusion and deceptive "clarity" by which precisely the contrary of what appears to be named, or indeed "overnamed," becomes empowered and enacted in the world. The historical injustice Benjamin attributes early on to "mythic violence" is manifestly a bodily, "blood" violence over life and death, but it begins essentially with myth, that is, with a pervasive and persistent problem of language. Benjamin's lifelong commitment to the historical possibility and moment of justice is unmistakable in his sustained critical practices of reading, writing, and translating, which are directed always against the baleful duplicitous effects of myth wherever these manifest themselves. Such anti-mythic interventions leave language neither "demythologized" nor "disambiguated." Indeed, the assumption that human language in its irreducible multiplicity and endless differentiation can become "clarified" or directly translated into a "pure" and univocal word at one with the world constitutes the primal myth itself in which all others partake—to the extent that all myths instrumentalize (reduce to a mere means) language in this way to attain their (unjust) ends. Rather, Benjamin's critical approach to nearly every subject he addresses is to expose the latent violence embedded in language by posing a synonymous counterword or antonym wherever a mythic ambiguity operates. To cite just a few of these antithetical synonyms: *Rechtmässigkeit/Gerechtigkeit*; mythic violence/divine violence; means/medium; *Erlebnis/Erfahrung*; allegory/symbol; representation (*Darstellung*)/performance (*Darbietung*); *Ziel/Ende*; theocracy/kingdom of God. As can be shown, mythic violence demands the complete confusion of each pair of related terms. Justice, however, assumes their antithetical opposition.

Agata Kobylska: *Den Dingen Gerechtigkeit widerfahren lassen. Benjamins Spätstil in der Berliner Kindheit um Neunzehnhundert*

In meinem Beitrag werde ich zeigen, wie Benjamin an der Sprache arbeitet, um den Dingen gerecht zu werden. Im Zentrum werden die „Stücke“ (so der Sprachgebrauch Benjamins) aus der zwischen 1932 und 1938 entstandenen Sammlung *Berliner Kindheit um neunzehnhundert* stehen. Diese relativ späten Texte Benjamins handeln von Dingen und Orten, in denen sich via Erinnerung an die Kindheit Erfahrungen abgelagert haben. Um den Dingen gerecht zu werden, entwickelt Benjamin in diesen Texten einen originellen Stil, dessen Ziel ist es, die Dinge nicht subjektiv darzustellen, d.h. nicht als Widerspiegelungen der Seele des schreibenden Ich, sondern möglichst objektiv zu verfahren. ‚Objektiv‘ ist hier nicht als allgemeingültig zu verstehen, sondern den Dingen dazu verhelfen, selber ‚das Wort zu ergreifen‘. Im Gegensatz zu den allgemein anerkannten Stilauffassungen, die davon ausgehen, dass der Stil die Persönlichkeit oder sogar die Seele des Künstlers widerspiegelt, schafft Benjamin einen eigenen Stil, der sich dieser üblichen literaturtheoretischen Kategorisierung entzieht. Er entwickelt eine Sprache, die den Dingen nahe kommt, ihr Wesen einfängt und sie so ‚zum Sprechen erweckt‘. An konkreten Beispielen werde ich stilanalytisch demonstrieren, wie Benjamin ausgebaute Metaphern einsetzt und etwa verstärkt mit Substantiven arbeitet, um den Effekt eines Rückzugs des Subjekts hinter die Dinge zu erreichen. Den hier von ihm erreichten Stil kann man als in Praxis umgesetzte Ideen aus dem frühen Essay *Über Sprache überhaupt und über die Sprache des Menschen* betrachten: auch die sprachlosen Objekte haben das Recht, ihre Geschichte zu erzählen. Zusammenfassend: die Sprache dient als Mittel, den Dingen gerecht zu werden, denen diese Sprachfähigkeit in der zunehmend durch Erfahrungsschwund dominierten Welt zu Unrecht beraubt wurde. Für den Philosophen ist nämlich die Sprache nicht nur ein Mittel der zwischenmenschlichen Kommunikation, sondern auch ein Mittel der ‚Kommunikation‘ zwischen Ding und Mensch.

Astrid Seeger: *Sprache an der Schwelle zur Gerechtigkeit – Originaltext zwischen Verfremdung und Entfaltung in Walter Benjamins Übersetzungspraxis*

Die Anfänge der Überlegungen Walter Benjamins zu Sprache auf der einen und Gerechtigkeit auf der anderen Seite verlaufen in unübersehbaren Parallelen. Bei den Konzepten der paradiesischen Namenssprache sowie der göttlichen Gerechtigkeit handelt es sich um verlorene Ideale, durch den Sündenfall und das menschliche Verlangen nach unmittelbarer Erkenntnis im Urteil verlustig gegangen und für das Streben der richtenden Kategorien der Menschen von da an unerreichbar. Das künstlich geschaffene Recht, die Zerstreung der einen Sprache in viele sind unzulänglich, um den ehemals göttlichen Zustand wieder herzustellen. Und doch ist ihnen das Sehnen danach eingeschrieben. So manifestiert es sich beispielsweise in der Übersetzung, die ein Werk gemäß seiner Natur fordert, um darin die Sprache an ihre ideale Urform, an einen Zustand göttlicher Gerechtigkeit, zumindest anzunähern. Denn solche Entfaltung ist nur möglich im Rahmen einer Sprachbewegung, in der Begegnung von Original- und Zielsprache in der Übersetzung und ihrer gegenseitigen Ergänzung. Diese Annäherung umzusetzen, ist laut Benjamin die Aufgabe des Übersetzers, wie er sie in seinem gleichnamigen Essay darlegt. Dabei konstituiert sich die Form der Übersetzung als Passage zwischen fremder und eigener Sprache, Sprache bewegt sich in einem Raum zwischen Ziel und Original. Dieser Raum, der sich dabei eröffnet, ist die Schwelle zum verlorenen Ideal von Sprache und Gerechtigkeit, dem sich in der Übersetzung genähert, der aber gleichwohl nie erreicht werden kann. Ziel des Beitrags ist es, diesen Raum der Schwelle, den Benjamin in seiner Übersetzungstheorie auftut, sichtbar zu machen. Die dem Übersetzer-Aufsatz nachgestellten Baudelaire-Übersetzungen verbildlichen, wie sich die Sprache des Übersetzers an dieser Schwelle zur Gerechtigkeit verhält, wie sie sich in der Bewegung verändert und wie sie sich auf die übersetzerische Wiedergabe des Ausgangstextes auswirkt. Schließlich soll gezeigt werden, welche Konsequenzen sich aus der sprachlichen Begegnung für den Ausgangstext ergeben und inwiefern Benjamins Übersetzungspraxis dem Original gerecht wird.

Monika Tokarzewska: *Der Humor als ‚angewandte Gerechtigkeit‘. Humor und Erneuerung des (sprachlichen) Weltbezugs bei Walter Benjamin*

In Benjamins Schriften gibt es erstaunlicherweise eine enge Konnotation zwischen Gerechtigkeit und Humor. Bereits in der frühen kurzen Schrift aus der Zeit des Ersten Weltkriegs lesen wir: „Im Humor läßt man dem Objekt als solchem Gerechtigkeit widerfahren“. Über J. P. Hebels „Schatzkästlein“ heißt es wiederum, „sein Humor [sei] urteilslose Vollstreckung: angewandte Gerechtigkeit“. An diesem auf den ersten Blick für den Durchschnittsleser bzw. -leserin äußerst entfernten Bezug von Humor und Gerechtigkeit hielt Benjamin sein Leben lang mit größter Konsequenz fest. So schreibt er Jahre nach dem frühen Humor-Fragment in einer Rezension zu Alfred Polgar, dass „aller Humor in Gerechtigkeit seinen Ursprung“ hat, und in dem Essay über die Prosawelt Gottfried Kellers nennt er dessen Humor eine „Rechtsordnung“. In Kellers Humor finden wir die Welt „der urteilslosen Vollstreckung, in der Verdikt und Gnade im Gelächter laut wird“. Schaut man von diesen Formulierungen ausgehend nun genauer auf das Werk des wohl berühmtesten Melancholikers der Kulturgeschichte, staunt man, wie oft Benjamin sich gerade für Humor interessierte: er schrieb über humoristische Züge bei Leskow oder insbesondere bei Kafka, über die Satire Karl Kraus‘, über Komödiencharaktere. In meinem Beitrag werde ich der Frage nachgehen, wie Benjamins Bezeichnung von Humor als ‚angewandter Gerechtigkeit‘ zu deuten ist. Ich gehe davon aus, dass der Humor eine Haltung zur Welt ist, die die Sprache erneuert. Im Humor wird der Modus des Urteilens und der Verurteilung aufgehoben, der sonst den sprachlichen Bezug zwischen Mensch und Welt entstellt und mit Gewalt auflädt. Demgegenüber wird dank dem Humor ein Weltbezug gestiftet, der es ermöglicht, sich der Welt gegenüber zu verhalten, ohne die in ihr bereits überall vorhandene Gewalt fortzusetzen. Am Ende werde ich auf die Thesen Über den Begriff der Geschichte eingehen. Dort interpretiert Benjamin den Humor neben Zuversicht, List und Mut als lebendiges Gut, das „immer von neuem jeden Sieg der Herrschenden in Frage“ stellt.

Justice in/of Images and Visual and Performative Arts

Clemens-Carl Härle: *Gerechtigkeit gegenüber der Farbe?*

1. Ist Gerechtigkeit eo ipso Sprachgerechtigkeit? Oder stellt sich das Problem der Gerechtigkeit nicht nur auf der Ebene sprachlicher, sondern auch auf der Ebene sinnlicher Ereignisse? Sind letztere sprachähnlich oder toto caelo von Sprache unterschieden? Die Intervention versucht, diese Fragen, die der Call for Papers zumindest indirekt aufwirft, zu adressieren, und zwar ausgehend von den Fragmenten, Aphorismen, Notizen und dem Dialog Der Regenbogen, die Benjamin zwischen 1915 und dem Beginn der 20er Jahre über das Verhältnis von Farbe und Malerei verfasst hat.
2. Was Farbe genannt wird, ist vieldeutig, umstritten, in vieler Hinsicht rätselhaft. Benjamins Vorgehen zeichnet sich dadurch aus, dass er ihren vielfältigen Erscheinungsformen Rechnung zu tragen sucht und das Wort keinem allgemeinen Begriff unterstellt. Er unterscheidet strikt zwischen der Farbe im Anschauen der Phantasie und ihrer Gestaltung in der Malerei. Die beiden Modi sind unterschieden und doch zugleich ineinander verfranst. Phantasie ist ein Vermögen sui generis, ihr Ort das Leben des Kindes. Sie ist reiner Ausdruck einer reinen Empfänglichkeit, gibt sich als Freude an der Veränderung der Farbe im beweglichen Übergang von Nuancen, ohne Bezug auf Form, Fläche oder Körper. In der malerischen Farbe hingegen ist ihre Reinheit durch die Beziehung zum Raume verfälscht und durch die Interferenz von Licht und Schatten getrübt. Malerei beruht auf einer Doppelung, ist notwendig und korrelativ beides: Phantasie und Abbild. Denn Phantasie, die als Entstaltung in ihr konstitutiv present ist, ist auf ein Gestaltetes außerhalb ihrer selbst angewiesen.
3. Die Intervention beabsichtigt, Benjamins Bemühung herauszuarbeiten, diesen vielleicht nicht unverträglichen, aber gleichwohl ungleichartigen Ansprüchen an das, was Farbe genannt wird, durch einen Vielzahl von Differenzierungen Rechnung zu tragen, ohne dadurch dem wesentlichen Unterschied der Orte und Formen, in denen Farbe erscheint, sich verwirklicht oder verwirklicht wird, Abbruch zu tun. Könnte dies Farb-Gerechtigkeit genannt werden?

Paweł Mościcki: *What Color Is Justice?*

With the concept of justice, Benjamin identifies the figures of indeterminacy; something that is beyond possession (Besitz) or something that – like the pure means pertaining to the utopian “culture of the heart” (Kultur des Herzens) – is supposed to bring the possibility of inter-human reconciliation without recourse to violence. He is not looking for justice understood as a substance, property or structure, but as a kind of mediation. Justice as a medium.

The child’s experience of color – echoes of which he also sees in the space of art and the work of imagination – offers an opportunity to interact with objects which are “not reduced to things but are constituted by an order consisting of an infinite range of nuances; the color is individual, but not as a dead thing fixed in individuality, but as winged, flying from one pattern another”. The culmination of the experience of color thus understood is the rainbow – the ultimate figure of fantasy.

In my presentation, I would like to relate Benjamin's reflections on justice and color to artistic works (including those by Elżbieta Janicka, Alfredo Jaar, Jarosław Kozłowski, Nida Sinokrot) exploring the possibilities of white understood as both one of the colors and a medium for their interrelation. I will be interested in “white rainbows”, a kind of “color without properties” or even a strike among colors, a pure means of communication between different kinds of color. Perhaps it is also a color that, without being a color, defines in a more nuanced way the coloring of justice, promising its sensory experience by making political interventions and historical revisions

Katrin Weleda: *Drei Minuten des Leidens. Gedanken und Gesichte eines Geköpften*

Ein außergewöhnliches Beispiel, das den Zeitraum des fortdauernden Bewusstseins, die Leiden des Guillotinierten sowie den eintretenden Tod in einem Kunstwerk erfahrbar macht, stellt das Triptychon *Pensées et visions d’une tête coupée* [1853] von Antoine Wiertz dar. Als Walter Benjamin mit diesem Werk 1929 in Berührung kommt, urteilt er: „Sein Schaffen geht die große Malerei nicht an. Desto mehr aber den Kenner der Kulturkuriosa und der Physiognomien seines Jahrhunderts.“¹ Von großer Bedeutung für die Interpretation des Werkes ist die mittlerweile nahezu unlesbare Inschrift des Triptychons, die unter gleichlautendem Titel in den Katalogen von 1861 in Brüssel und 1870 in Paris posthum publizierten *Œuvres littéraires* enthalten ist. Obwohl Benjamin in seiner Übersetzung die „großartige Einkleidung“ und „kompositorische Kraft“ der „Beschriftung“ hervorhebt,² modifiziert er das Ende. Im Hinblick auf das Zusammenspiel von Text, Bild und Praxis von Gerechtigkeit soll im Rahmen der Tagung sowohl die Übertragung dieses Textes von Benjamin beleuchtet werden, als auch der medizinische Diskurs, der dem Werk von Wiertz zu Grunde liegt.

Beatriz Sánchez Santidrián: *“Visual justice” in the Artistic Practices of History. Unearthed Libraries and the Recovery of Dissident Memory*

A cross reading of the Benjaminian historian’s model with the artistic practices of history allows us to examine the epistemological problems posed by alternative models of communication with the past that draw a more just visual representation of history (HERNÁNDEZ NAVARRO, 2012). Since the end of the 20th century, a trend of contemporary “historian” artists can be distinguished. They adopt a common position towards history that could be interpreted as a crystallisation of the historian as defended by Walter Benjamin (“Eduard Fuchs: Collector and Historian”, 1937; *On the Concept of History*, 1942; *The arcades project*, 1989). It presents history as an open, synchronic time that can be known visually through a material exhibition of history, through a dialectical image that connects past and present. Thus, these artists undertake a rewriting of history with an aspiration for truth and justice, rescuing little stories that have been forgotten because of their contestation of the authoritarian regimes. Endowed with the political and ethical dimension of Benjamin’s philosophy of history, they undertake an exercise of historical memory that resists the politicisation and patrimonialisation of memory as performed by the official systems. The present paper focuses on *La Biblioteca Roja*, an interdisciplinary artistic project (exhibition, short film, essay, research) on the excavation of a buried library that during the Argentinean dictatorship of the 1970s compromised the lives of its owners (BERTI, HALAC, ALZOGARAY VAN-

ELLA, 2017). Books represent a testimony of political militancy and the violence exercised towards them is constant in dictatorial regimes. The gesture of the exhumation, and its resulting visual materialisation, is an act both of intimate and collective memory that responds to the commitment to the past sought by Benjamin and that fulfills the objectives of documenting the oblivion and redeeming the past. The rescued books are survivors, relics charged with time, history and memory that ensure visual justice.

Tomasz Szerszeń: *Read from the Ashes: to Do Justice*

World War II is a „destructive moment” of shared Jewish-Polish history. Following Eduardo Cadava’s Benjaminian recognition that „history emerges in a moment of disaster”, I would like to look at two archaeological moments in which photography becomes a tool for historiosophical inquiry and an attempt to do justice to the lost/disappeared/invisible/powerless. The first concerns the photographic meditations on the „desert” created after the fall of the uprising and the complete destruction of the Warsaw Ghetto – to „read from the ashes” become a form of divination, making visible the unclear relationship between past and future. The second moment is related to the interest that photographer Jerzy Lewczyński (1924-2014) devoted to the destruction of Polish Jews. Beginning in the mid-1950s, Lewczyński photographed Auschwitz and other sites of extermination. Then, since the 1970s, he has been working on the archive of the murdered Eisenbach family – the Jews of Sanok. He calls his work „the archaeology of photography”. It seems that photography in this case becomes a form of „thinking history”, while the photographer becomes a lay historian who tries to read the irregular shape of history from scattered traces. The whole project of the Lewczyński’s „archaeology of photography” can be seen as a process of searching for a new legibility of history through images. At the same time, one can see in this an attempt to do history „without distinguishing between major and minor events” because “nothing that has ever happened should be regarded as lost for history” – thus working towards a notion of justice.

Katarzyna Bojarska: *History Behind/Before the Image and the Image of History Behind Us*

In my presentation I will be looking at the question of how looking at images of history can become a practice of doing justice to the past and the victims of past violence. Following Benjamin, I will be asking about the conditions of possibility of seeing beyond the dominant regimes of visibility, of exercising one’s „right to look” (Nicholas Mirzoeff). When is the backward looking a form or even a performance of justice, of regaining the losses or repairing the wrongs?

I will be working with the figure of the Angel of History, as well as with other figures who look backwards either recording, producing, or envisioning the image of the past. My examples will be contemporary female artistic practices, including R.H. Quaytman, Marlene Dumas and Miriam Cahn.

Daniel Gönitzer: *Benjamins Gerechtigkeit des Humors, oder: Die Ungerechtigkeit, dass „die Schmetterlinge im Zoo keinen Käfig haben“*

In meinem Vortrag werde ich Walter Benjamins Konzeption einer „Gerechtigkeit des Humors“ vorstellen und diese anhand einiger Beispiele aus der bildenden und darstellenden Kunsterläutern. Gerechtigkeit ist bei Benjamin eng mit seinen Überlegungen zum subversive Potential von Humor verknüpft. Dieses sieht er insbesondere in jenen künstlerischen Arbeiten umgesetzt, bei denen es zu einer ironischen und kritischen Auseinandersetzung mit dem Verhältnis von Mensch, Natur und Technik kommt. In Benjamins Hörstück Radau um Kasperl entsetzt sich der Orang-Utan über die „Ungerechtigkeit, warum denn die Schmetterlinge im Zoo keinen Käfig haben“ (GS IV, 690). In den Texten Paul Scheerbarts, den frühen Mickey-Maus-Cartoons und den Filme Chaplins wird die Technik, die Anfang des 20. Jahrhunderts die Menschen in Angst und Schrecken versetzte, Benjamin zufolge ironisiert, ohne dabei ihre transformativen Momente zu verneinen. Sowohl bei Charles Fourier, dessen Utopien für Benjamin von „unverjährbarem Recht“ sind (GS V, 431), und den er als

Scheerbarts „Zwilling“ bezeichnet (GS II, 632), als auch bei der frühen Mickey Maus, komme es zur „moralische Mobilmachung der Natur“ sowie zum „Aufknacken der Naturteleologie“, welches „nach dem Plan des Humors“ geschehe (GS V, 781). Dieser Liste hinzuzufügen ist der Zeichner und Karikaturist J. J. Grandville, den Benjamin als Vorläufer des Surrealismus und Walt Disneys bestimmt (GS V, 501). In Windrose des Erfolges spricht Benjamin vom „Vorrecht des Komischen, dessen Gerechtigkeit kein Werk des Himmels, sondern das unzähliger Versehen ist, die endlich, infolge eines letzten kleinen Fehlers, doch das genaue Resultat ergeben“ (GS IV, 405). Diese Gerechtigkeit herstellende Fähigkeit des Humors äußert sich am deutlichsten in Benjamins Forderung „die Heiterkeit des Kommunismus dem tierischen Ernst des Faschismus entgegenzusetzen“ (GS I, 1045). Benjamins Gerechtigkeit des Humors beschränkt sich dabei nicht auf die Menschen sowie die gesellschaftlichen Verhältnisse, im Humor lasse man darüber hinaus „dem Objekt als solchem Gerechtigkeit widerfahren“ (GS VI, 130). Umgesetzt sieht Benjamin dies in den Montagearbeiten DADAs, in denen die Dinge des Alltags, der Abfall und die Lumpen in neue Konstellationen versetzt werden.

Katarzyna Murawska-Muthesisu: Caricature as Mass Art and Art History as Social Justice

Discussions around Benjamin's essay Eduard Fuchs: (the) Collector and (the) Historian, 1937, commissioned by Adorno and Horkheimer for Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung, have focused on the understanding of historical materialism, on its relevance to history writing, to cultural history, as well as to art history (McRobbie 1994; Steinberg 1996, Leslie 2002 F. Schwartz 2006, M.L. Jackson 2022). The issue which has been marginalised so far is Benjamin's forceful argument on the power of the peripheral art forms, such as caricature and pornography, forming the core of the Fuchs collection, to 'ruin the clichés in traditional art history'.

This presentation looks closely at the essay, arguing that it constitutes one of the major, still neglected, contributions to the historiography of modern caricature. Benjamin's 'Fuchs piece' was written in parallel to his formulation of the concept of aura versus reproducibility, as well as to the exploration of modernity in his Arcades project. It is the application of dialectical materialism exploding 'the continuum of history', however, that informed Benjamin's thesis on the emancipatory power of caricature as mass art, an art form which expands visibility and literally enforces socio-political contextualisation, pushing aside formal analysis. This contribution examines the 'Fuchs piece' against Benjamin's other writings on art history (Levin 1988), claiming that it posits both Fuchs's collecting strategies and caricature as tools of political activism, as well as means of triggering a radical transformation of the concerns and methods of the discipline. It also traces Benjamin's prophecy of materialist art history in the current strand of art history as activism, which has moved away from the engagement with aesthetics towards social justice.

Christian Ferencz-Flatz: The Most Real Gaze into the Heart of Things: Doing Justice to History via Advertisements

While Benjamin's engagement with advertisements in the Arcades Project has been given some attention (see Pensky 2006 or Moore 2020), a systematic account of his reflection on advertising is still lacking. Indeed, the topic connects several important strings in Benjamin's thinking: commodity fetishism, the contemporary urban environment, new forms of language, the transformations of art etc. In all these regards, Benjamin's stance towards advertising is productively ambivalent. In combining spectacular sentimentality and blunt levelheadedness, utopia and everyday life, advertisements bring about "the most real (...) gaze into the heart of things" (Benjamin 1996: 476). As such, they are for certain highly complex and sensitive historical materials, which Benjamin sets into various constellations throughout the Arcades project. In advertising, the "dream consciousness of the collective," as expressed in the fantastic works of Grandville, finds its awakening; at the same time, it is "the ruse by which dream forces itself on industry". This presentation will try to demonstrate Benjamin's belief in the multifarious historical potential of advertisements by drawing from an ongoing artistic research project that the author currently develops with filmmaker Radu Jude. Working with an encompassing archive of Romanian Advertisements from the Trans-

ition Period (early 1990s to mid 2000s), they assemble the materials by means of montage into various collections that flesh out specific aspects in them: their affect-laden reference to the historic context, their quaint sexual allusiveness, their obsessive reference to authority, their excessive gestures or their linguistic helplessness. By being creatively set up against each other, these materials – ridiculous and flat initially – acquire depth and display a substantial and nuanced meaning. Thus, the work is intended to once more reiterate Benjamin's credo that "there are no periods of decline" by doing full justice to a frequently discredited segment of the recent past.

Rita Velloso: *From Moscow to Berlin: the Urban 'Thought-Images' and the Tasks of Criticism*

Walter Benjamin's concept of criticism moves decisively from immanent criticism to programmatic criticism since his trip to Moscow when the philosopher put cities at the centre of his reflection on experience. Here, I circumscribe the elements of this critical repositioning to examine how Walter Benjamin's concept of criticism is transformed and expanded based on his consideration of the city as an object of a specific experience, described in the form of a 'thought-image' (Denkbild). Although it started in Naples, this exercise of observation of cities - his attention to the minor details and traces of everyday - undergoes a decisive inflexion with Benjamin's Moscow experience and what happens on the philosopher's return to the Berlin in the political context of the Weimar Republic. In his writings during and after the Moscow trip, he developed what were to be the principles of a radical new criticism. Benjamin's thought-images were, by that time, a seek for an appropriate representation of the dynamism of cityscapes, which he tried to discern through immersion in its concrete particularities.

"My presentation will be devoid of all theory. In this fashion, I hope to allow the 'creatural' to speak for itself... I want to write a description of Moscow at the present moment in which 'all factuality is already theory' and which would thereby refrain from any deductive abstraction, from any prognostication, and even with certain limits, from any judgment." (Moscow Diary, p.132)

I address the issue that Denkbilder, Benjamin's attempt to capture the very character of the 1920's urban environment in which "abstraction is to be avoided at all costs", transformed his critical thinking at large, inflecting to a new theoretical framework and conceptual vocabulary for a materialistic critique of culture. Moreover, Benjamin's urban 'thought-image' configures an experimental field to his discussion on activism, revolution and power.

Jeremy Rafuse: *Walter Benjamin and the Visual and Performance Arts*

Walter Benjamin's discussion on images is found principally in two essays: A Short History on Photography and The Word of Art in The age of Mechanical Reproduction. Each of the essays provides furtive ground to better understand Benjamin's concept of Kunstwerk. However, they are not without controversy, given the strong opinions Benjamin holds about, say, photography and cinema.

While Benjamin may be critical about the daguerreotype of photography, and interrelations of reproductive technology, he does however recognize the advantages of this technology at serving science. Moreover, the question of the disappearance of aura in photography may be revisited based on his later discussion in On Some Motifs in Baudelaire. Here he addresses the issue of the disappearance of aura in the context of lyric poetry, and therefore enabling the reader to revisit his discussion about photography and cinema.

The difference between the two earlier essays and Baudelaire shows the overlap and development of Benjamin's thinking. And one might argue, an epistemic logic, enabling a more judicial perspective to emerge, say, in this case, regarding the evolution of the concept of Kunstwerk.

Justice assumes a critical place in Benjamin's writing, particularly given the timeframe in which Benjamin wrote much of his work, namely between the two great wars.

In the essay, Toward the Critique of Violence, Benjamin examines the concept of violence and confronts the philosophical question of whether or not laws can be envisaged beyond judicial intervention. Or else in his essays on Kafka, Benjamin surveys Kafka's most famous

works, like *The Castle* and *The Judgement*, and describes the depths of *The Metamorphosis*, and draws parallels with the Talmudic tradition. In effect, Benjamin's interpretation of Kafka become elucidations of Kafka's sense of judgment.

Or else, in the essay *The Storyteller*, Benjamin discusses the history of storytelling and describing it as an artisanal tool. And that the process of storytelling becomes more meaningful at each moment of its appearance. And that its meaning carries a judicious message, about the world and the context in which the story is told.

And finally, in *The Arcades Project*, the concept of justice appears numerous times. For example, when Benjamin discusses the importance of the dialectical method, he talks about its judicial implications when investigating history. His correspondence with Horkheimer make reference to justice on many occasions, indicating a very important concept to his thinking.

Today, like in Benjamin's time, there is a heightened risk of fascism in the world. The politicisation of the arts, say, the transmission of fascist ideology in social media is at an all-time high. As it happens, these are the kinds of scenarios that Benjamin's philosophy may be of great value to confront and restrict.

In that spirit, as we have seen in Benjamin's writing on Baudelaire, there is an urgency to exhibit experience in its truest form. The pursuit of the aura in *Kunstwerk* is as true today as any other time, as well as its potential disappearance. The visual and performative arts today must assume the same kind of urgency to exist as any other *Kunstwerk*. Indeed, Benjamin's ideas might help to recontextualize the concept of exhibition in the visual and performance arts and offer participants a therapeutic experience.

Vladimir Rizow: *Reading Images: Walter Benjamin and Louis Althusser in Conversation*

In his influential essay on Goethe's *Elective Affinities*, Benjamin sets out his analysis by drawing the distinction between commentary and critique; the former is concerned with the material content of a given work, while the latter seeks to extract the work's truth content. For Benjamin this distinction also expresses itself in terms of visibility and obscurity – the material content is always readily apparent, while the truth content is hidden. Similarly to Benjamin, Louis Althusser argues for a specific type of reading – symptomatic – that likewise engages with a given text through its gaps, omissions and absences. For Althusser, 'symptomatic reading' is deeply intertwined with his understanding of history and the presences of other texts within a given work. Taking this position seriously, I seek to put Benjamin's image of critique in conversation with Althusser's formulation of 'symptomatic reading', as seen in *Reading Capital* and later developed by both Fredric Jameson and Pierre Macherey. This dialogue's emergent theoretical perspectives will be illustrated in this paper with the photographic works of Eugene Atget and Vivian Maier, both photographers that speak to obscurity and the deception of the ostensible in an image.

Bodily and Spatial Practices of Justice

Agata Bielik-Robson: *Nihilism as Material Justice: Benjamin's Theology of Entropy*

In my paper, I will try to demonstrate that there is a consistent project of a political theology in Benjamin's whole *oeuvre* and that it takes the form of 'nihilism as world politics.' This idea originates in Benjamin's "Theological-Political Fragment," written in response to Ernst Bloch's 1918 edition of *Geist der Utopie* (according to Scholem's dating). It is comprised partly of praise and partly of a disguised polemic against Bloch, who gets credited for having proven the impossibility of a utopian theocracy, but also criticised for his investment in the messianic 'principle of hope,' staked on the gradual raising of the material world to the spiritual level. In my analysis of the "Fragment" – which, as I will argue, had a lasting influence on Benjamin's political thinking – I want to point to the theological elaboration of the con-

cept of transience (*Vergängnis*), which may be read as Benjamin's own version of a 'meta-physics of entropy' and the corresponding notion of a *hope in reverse*. Bloch approaches his 'principle of hope' – soon to become the title of his *opus magnum* – in a traditional manner of Jewish messianism, filtered through his appropriation of Hegel and Marx, according to which the world has an objective tendency to press towards the redemptive *telos* when spirit and matter will have found perfect reconciliation. Contrary to this, Benjamin sees the 'messianic intensity' of thinkers like Bloch as a source of misfortune and injustice. Thus, paraphrasing Kafka, if there is hope, it is not for 'us,' if we imagine ourselves as the messianic agents pressing for the redemptive goal of history. It is rather a *hope in reverse*, realizing itself not in the Blochian progress of the world towards the 'humanization of matter' (Bloch, 2009, 232) but in the regressive downward movement of the eternal Fall, in which matter resists and counteracts the messianic agency of the spirit. Unlike Bloch, therefore, Benjamin takes the side of matter against spirit, by putting forward a nihilistic world politics as giving justice to material being pervaded by transience and entropy.

Antoni Zajac: *Innervated Pessimism and the Infrastructure of Justice*

In my presentation, I will focus on the model of emancipatory politics outlined by Walter Benjamin in his essay titled *Surrealism: The Last Snapshot of European Intelligentsia* (1929). I will consider how this model pertains to Benjamin's concept of justice, which involves an ongoing critique of the petrified arrangements of modern life.

Benjamin pinpoints the liberating features of surrealist aesthetics of intoxication. They are associated with "the loosening of the self" which allows for an unexpected and fruitful encounter between the subject and reality. The outcomes of intoxication, Benjamin argues, could be utilized to create a new, revolutionary mode of political participation connecting the individual with the collective, as well as the praxis of the present with a utopian hope for future justice. What brings all these elements together is the animating force of innervation, a psychophysical phenomenon similar to an affect.

Innervation enriches the human sensorium and nourishes political imagination. It also allows the subject to loosen their attachments to the existing narratives of freedom, which often base on conservative moralism and remain too optimistic in their promises. Benjamin aims, therefore, for the "organization of pessimism" and points to mistrust as an attitude that constitutes the politics of justice.

In my presentation, I will juxtapose Benjamin's concepts with the notions of cruel optimism and infrastructure developed by affect theory scholar Lauren Berlant. Cruel optimism stands for an attachment to the objects of desire and the scenarios of a good life that contribute to the attrition of the subject instead of allowing them to flourish. According to Berlant, to unlearn these toxic patterns, the subject needs to develop their own transformative infrastructure: a space for self-loosening, reorganization and extension of the life-world. I argue that the organization and innervation of pessimism creates an infrastructure for alternative proxemics of just life.

Francisco Naishtat: *Redemption Through Immersion: On the Natural History and Justice in Benjamin's Micrological Theology*

The idea of natural history (*Naturgeschichte*) which is crucial in Benjamin's work from the *Trauerspiels* book to the *Arcades Project* appears for Benjamin scholars mostly declined through the notion of transience (*Vergänglichkeit*) which is transposed in Benjamin's work from the context of nature to the context of history. Nevertheless, the idea of *Naturgeschichte*, through a singular dialectisation of nature and history, is in Benjamin's texts not only a reminder of transience and death but has also a redemptive potential in close connection with the practices of justice, criticism and politics. We can capture it in Benjamin through different levels : a) prehistory and the disruptive power of fossil and ruin; b) the dissolution of mythology and historicism in the element of *Ursprung*, archeology, discontinuity and spectrality as the configuration of the experience with a non teleological past; c) otherness and the break of the intentional subject both in language (translation, translatability) and in the dialectical images as new forms of experiences with bodies, the non-human

(Unmensch), and nature through a second technique. However these key connections between natural history and justice which move the idea of Naturgeschichte from the inherited determination of mere factuality and destiny to the practical realm of criticism and politics, are not void of a crucial dissemination of theology in benjaminian thought. It is our aim to show here that the theology at work in the benjaminian idea of natural history is not precisely an “inversed theology” as in Adorno’s interpretation (inasmuch as every inversion conserves as Arendt says the same skeleton of the inverted) but a micrological theology, therefore one which works with materiality and things through immersion (Bolz and Van Reijen) revealing, awakening and reopening a glance inside the transient factuality.

Burak Üzümkesici: *Bodies at a Standstill: The Political Promise of a Gesture and Its Reproducibility*

While the age of revolutions is over, revolutionary dynamics and tensions are omnipresent today. Following Benjamin’s understanding of revolution as the attempt to activate the emergency brake on the train of history, social movements -uprisings, resistances, protests, blockades, etc.- can be considered as moments that embody the instances of standstill and the ‘things just go on’ is brought to a cessation. Through collective action, streets and squares of the cities turn into Schauplatz and people’s bodies into Bildraum. In Iran, for instance, standstill as a political gestural act took place both in the protests of 2017 and the current feminist revolution. Women taking off their headscarves and standing still in the streets played a decisive role for the resistance to spread in waves. In the Gezi uprising of 2013, likewise, an individual’s hours-long standing act in Taksim Square was taken over and repeated by thousands all over the country. Then how can ‘standstill’, which we have witnessed many times being used as a means in the context of collective actions, turn into a political gesture that mobilizes people? How do the signals transmitted by the bodies standing still attain a recognizability/readability between people who don’t know one another? In light of these questions, in this presentation, I will discuss the concept of standstill as a gestural act that embodies the ‘applicability of dialectics’ that Benjamin writes about particularly in his essays on Brecht and epic theater. I will try to explore the political possibilities of these gestures both as a bodily performative act and as images that give impetus to the movement through circulation from hand to hand thanks to their reproducibility.

Brendan Moran: *“Veil”, Justice, and the Body in Benjamin and Luste Boulbina*

With recent protests in Iran, women’s headscarves have anew become a focus in much of the world. It is as though a semblance – the head-covering or the uncovered head – must uphold societal values. Whether with or without the garment, a semblance is treated as though it is somehow fate.

In Goethe’s *Elective Affinities*, Benjamin rarely uses the word “Schleier.” He refers more frequently to “Hülle” and “Enthüllung,” words that his translators respectively render as “veil” and “unveiling.” My paper relates his account of “Hülle” and “Enthüllung” to Seloua Luste Boulbina’s recent reflections on French, Arab, and other debates concerning “the veil” (le voile), especially as worn by some colonized women or their female descendants.

Benjamin discusses “veil” and “unveiling” in the context of beauty. Beautiful semblance and the attraction to it involve questionable closure. Beautiful semblance is broken, in contrast, by placing the semblance, the “veil,” in confrontation with nature that resists being “unveiled.” In light of this confrontation, it is unjust – and philosophically wrong – to confine anyone to a particular semblance, a particular “veil.”

Adapting Frantz Fanon, Luste Boulbina concedes that the wearing of head-covering by some Muslim women is often impelled by patriarchal imperatives. Yet forced unveiling, as is required in certain French public spaces, is a continuation of colonial indignity. Under the latter conditions, wearing the head garment can even become a counter-offensive to that indignity.

Although Luste Boulbina is more sensitive to women’s spatial experiences, she and Benjamin converge in suggesting that justice is concerned with the body, including woman’s body, in its freedom from moralizations about it. Women’s bodies are independent of both

the “modern” (colonial/ postcolonial) fixation on “unveiling” and the patriarchal insistence on the wearing of a specific garment.

Michał Pospiszyl: *Walter Benjamin in the Shtetl*

The Eastern European town, full of hiding places, back alleys and winding narrow streets, was the birthplace of the (mainly Jewish) anarchist movement at the turn of 20th century. Little attention has been paid to the relationship between this urban environment and the radical social movements that emerged within it. Meanwhile, we know from the surviving memoirs of militants of the time that there was a clear awareness of the role that urban chaos played in popular political struggle. As in the Białystok district of Chanajki or in Kryniki, a shtetl where an anarchist republic was in place for a few days during the 1905 revolution. The relationship between a particular urban space and the resulting political model has received much attention from Walter Benjamin. Although the most famous passage deals with the impact of Haussmann's redevelopment of Paris on the class struggle waged in France, my presentation will focus on Benjamin's works about Berlin and Naples. Following his remarks, I will consider how 'chaotic' or 'muddy' space, saturated with rituals and meanings, could act as a non-obvious ally of the subjugated classes.

Łukasz Moll: *Walter Benjamin as the Chiffonier of the Common*

What are the merits of bringing Walter Benjamin's writings into the debate of the future of the commons? At first glance Benjamin does not seem to be the theorist of the commons in a direct way, but many themes in his work bring him closer to this issue, i.e. his focus on the Paris Commune and haussmanization of French capital city understood as dispossession of commoners, the transhistorical vision of justice of the oppressed classes, or the plebeian practices of subsistence and habits. In my speech I would like to re-read Benjamin as the chiffonier/ragpicker/lumpensammler of the common. The act of gleaning the leftovers, composing new constellations from them and invoking messianic justice – so characteristic for the figure of the chiffonier/ragpicker/lumpensammler in Benjamin's writings – will serve me as the key to identify three commonist threads in his oeuvre: 1) Benjamin as the chiffonier of the common in terms of his interest in commoners' reproductive economy of gathering and re-cycling; 2) Benjamin as the chiffonier of the common in the meaning of his own methodological practice as the historical materialist (“historical materialist as a ragpicker” – E. Wohlfarth); 3) finally, Benjamin as the chiffonier of the common with his vision of transhistorical politics of oppressed commoners which reaches for anachronisms, lost causes, old habits and leftovers of progress in order to constitute the new commons. I believe that including Benjamin to recent debates between theorists of the common will let me to intervene into many crucial dilemmas that commoners are facing: between progress and *longue durée* of bottom-up traditions, between the right to work and the right to laziness, or between the tasks to reclaim the old commons and invent the new ones.

Nélio Conceição: *Presence of Mind and its Practices Between Body and History*

In “Madame Ariane: Second Courtyard on the Left” (One-Way Street), Benjamin writes that “To turn the threatening future into a fulfilled ‘now’, the only desirable telepathic miracle, is a work of bodily presence of mind”. And in The Arcades Project [N 7, 2], he asserts that “Still to be established is the connection between presence of mind and the ‘method’ of dialectical materialism”. I aim to shed light on these passages by focusing on the role that the notion of “presence of mind” (*Geistesgegenwart*) plays in Benjamin's thought, deepening lines of interpretation that are connected to other relevant notions such as “attention”, “distraction” and “now-time”. In this regard, I will consider three concomitant senses of presence of mind: 1) a form of thought/practice that should be exercised as a way of dealing with the experience of shock, such as that which is characteristic of urban space; 2) an embodied experience that entails an intensive (*kairological* and redemptive) form of temporality; 3) a relationship between danger and critical gesture that can intertwine individual and collective dimensions. I propose to do a close reading of the more significant texts that deal with these issues and, along the way, take a brief detour to encounter Spinoza's Ethics, which in its own terms also puts forward a relationship between body, presence of mind and danger. By relating presence of mind and dispossession of self (distraction, “letting oneself go”), Benjamin shows how the former political significance exceeds a simple form of vigilance.

Instead, it is part of a bodily rooted intellectual “method” that implies a plastic form of attention. Against this background, Benjamin’s politics of justice suggests a twofold nucleus of meaning and practice: on the one hand, doing justice to oneself; on the other hand, doing justice to the present.

Judith Kasper: Benjamins Lumpensammler und Ruth, die Ährenleserin

In meinem Beitrag geht es um die Allegorisierungen des Lumpensammlers, dieser armen, marginalisierten, elenden Figur, die Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts das Stadtbild von Paris wie kaum eine andere prägte und von Baudelaire in dem Gedicht *Le vin des chiffonniers* prominent poetisch stilisiert wurde.

Benjamin gewinnt aus der Figur des Lumpensammlers und dessen Sammelgeste einen Begriff des Verwendens, der quer zu – gegenwärtig stark unterm Verdacht der kulturellen Apropriation stehenden – Ent- und Aneignungspraktiken steht. Die Sammelgeste des Lumpensammlers, der Begriff des Verwendens, verbunden mit Benjamins Montage-Begriff – diese Reihung wird inzwischen als ein selbstverständlicher Zusammenhang in der Benjamin-Forschung angenommen. Doch lohnt es sich, diese Reihung genauer zu analysieren, die Sprünge und Differenzen, die Auslassungen und Verschiebungen darin hervorzuheben. Hilfreich, gleichsam als Kontrastfolie, ist es, dem Lumpensammler eine andere arme – weiblich konnotierte – Sammlerfigur gegenüber zu stellen: die Ährenleserin, auch Nachleserin genannt, deren ikonographische Geschichte zum biblischen Mythos von Ruth zurückführt. Ruth ist die Fremde, die Waise, die Witwe, die – ihre Schwiegermutter Naomi nach Betlehem begleitend – beschließt, um zu überleben, auf den Feldern Nachlese zu betreiben: also das was bei der Ernte Liegeengebliebene aufzulesen. Die Nachlese ist in vielen Gesellschaften als ein altes Gebrauchsrecht bezeugt. Rechtlich unterbunden und kriminalisiert wurde sie Anfang des 19. Jahrhunderts, unterm Eindruck der Absolutsetzung des bürgerlichen Eigentumsbegriffs. Im neuen urbanen Raum taucht der Lumpensammler auf, für Marx eine politisch höchst suspekta Figur, zumal sie sich letztlich a-politisch in den kapitalistischen Verwertungsprozess einspannen lässt, darin – etwa im Bereich der Papierproduktion – die ärmlichste Stufe der Lieferkette ausmacht. Dass ausgerechnet von dieser letztlich korruptierten Figur für Benjamin eine Figur der Gerechtigkeit abgeleitet wird, bleibt ein produktiver innerer Widerspruch seines Denkens, den der Beitrag entfalten möchte: allerdings nicht nur historisch rekonstruierend, sondern begleitet von der Frage, welche Relevanz sie für die kulturellen und politischen Praktiken der Gegenwart hat, angesichts der Spaltung der Welt in Global North und Global South und im Horizont des Anthropozäns. Der Lumpensammler und die Nachleserin – ein Gespann für die Zukunft?

Jakub Momro: *Embodiment and Justice: Nominalism and Language Utopia in the Work of Walter Benjamin and Theodor. W. Adorno*

In my speech, I would like to reconsider the relationship between two concepts of philosophical thinking about language in the context of radical dialectic positions. While the mutual influence of Benjamin and Adorno is obvious both on a biographical and theoretical level, their approach to language is a dense constriction that, until today, seems unclear. Therefore, the question of language and justice in the cases of both authors seems only seemingly obvious. Certainly, the common feature is the research on the language in the perspective of the utopia of the name, searching in the language for its contact with the non-estranged reality, or – as Adorno puts it, inverting Hegel's speculative rule – "reconciliation in difference". However, the paths of the very dialectic of justice and name are different here. Benjamin has insisted on analysing language in its morphological deformations, which is why the concept of bodily mimesis, and thus of embodied language as a form of mediation of individuality, as well as a reflection on the political nature of language in its various varieties (from pop culture to present to an allegorical past). With Adorno, things are a bit different. The most important is the reflection on the mediation itself, which – as such – combines both the moment of conceptual sublation and the strictly material dimension of language, which reveals the residual or trace dimension of the experience of consciousness. The fundamental difference, then, lies in the two authors' understanding of a possible utopia: Benjamin's thought gravitates towards a apocalyptic but ambiguous messianism, while Adorno, insisting on the extreme ban of images, will seek justice as freedom from the coer-

cion of representation in the dialectical sublimation of language in musical experience and even in sound itself. Therefore one could approach to these two different strategies of understanding contingency – probably the very core of Benjamin’s and Adorno’s philosophies.

Jakub Gorecki: “Idiosyncrasy as the Highest Critical Organ”: Karl Kraus and Bodily Justice

“Karl Kraus” is a fundamental essay for Benjamin’s understanding of the concept of justice. Benjamin developed here the strategy of critique as saving-destructive act of citation, extracting the name from the immanency of journalistic empty phrases. In Benjamin’s essay critique resembles a disease and Karl Kraus is described as a hypochondriac, someone who is trying to recognize and unmask inauthenticity and falseness in his own body, entangled into mythical order of law. In my paper, I would like to treat the act of criticism as a bodily activity and consider how we can understand “idiosyncrasy as the highest critical organ” while avoiding the regression to archaic mimetic behaviors (characteristic for both the fascist masses and the conformist attitudes). By treating critique as a disease I would like to consider where the border between the critical disease and the destructive illness lies. Moreover, I would like to ask how Kraus’s body, infected with critique, becomes an area of unmasking, instead of being broken. I will argue that it is because the “demonic” stage is being overworked by Kraus in the form of “Monster”. This would mean that every act of critique can be considered successful only under the condition that justice becomes its stake. Therefore, justice operates in relation to the body, and critique as a destructive act disorders the critic’s body in an act of idiosyncrasy. At the same time, as an act of salvation, critique is an attempt to save at least “a piece of mutilated flesh”, as a possibility of the materialist, “inhuman” humanism. In my paper I will focus on “Karl Kraus”, however I will also refer to Benjamin’s wider theory of mimetic behavior and to the psychoanalytical theories of incorporation, which I believe enables a better understanding of Benjamin’s intuitions about Kraus’s “theatrical” and “cannibalistic” practices.

Federica Muré: Justice as a “Technique of Nearness”: A Close Reading of Benjamin’s Anecdote-Theory

Taken as a poignant example of the material ability to upset perceptual relations to the plane of experience, the ‘anecdote’, writes Benjamin in one of the first sketches of the *Passagenarbeit*, harbours the potential to bring ‘things near to us spatially’. Capturing a paradigmatic mode of envisioning the world through the grammar of spatial-corporeal displacement, the anecdote illustrates ‘the true method of making things present’, which is ‘to represent them in our space (not to represent ourselves in their space) [...] We don’t displace our being into theirs; they step into our life’ (I^o,1; S1a,3)

This paper will advance the argument that the aforementioned ‘method’, and the material displacement it vouches for, is not only ‘true’ but also ‘just’, inasmuch as it calls for parallels with the state of dispossession that is proper to justice: the spacetime configuration which allows things to ‘step into our life’ entails a shift of agency from subject to object, and therefore points towards a practical reconfiguration of perceptual relations to the plane for which the body-object mythic hierarchy, or the superior posture of the subject mastering the image, is radically undone.

The argument will be pursued by focusing on the *Mummerehlen* vignette (Berlin Childhood) where, by ways of analogy with the anecdote of a Chinese painter disappearing into the picture, Benjamin writes about a mode of self-dispossession and bodily displacement [*Entstehung*] which acts as a catalyst for envisioning new modes of relating to the picture plane - and, more broadly, to the world. Reaching the conclusion, the paper will ponder Benjamin’s insights on spatial-corporeal displacement and dispossession, holding them up to a contemporary light by tracing insightful parallels with Jean-Luc Nancy’s ‘philosophy of confines’ and the complex state of ‘methexis’ arising from the undoing of the body-object, subject-image, hierarchy.

Karolina Jesień: The Adventures of Benjamin’s Body: On the Politics of Leib and Körper from the “Outline of the Psychophysical Problem” to the Arcades Project

Nathan Ross recently noted that, compared to the notion of Leib, the Körper has been undertreated in the hitherto scholarship on Benjamin's conception of the human body, especially in relation to his later writings (Ross 2021, 66). Following Ross, the aim of this paper is to trace the changes to Benjamin's understanding of the human body as Körper from the "Outline of the Psychophysical Problem" (1923) to the Arcades Project (1927-1940).

To this end, I will first focus on Benjamin's early writings. I will draw on Eli Friedlander's framework, in which the fundamental difference between Leib and Körper lies in their relational and nonrelational character, respectively (Friedlander 2012). Differently than Friedlander, however, I argue that to deny Körper relationality overlooks the inherently political meaning behind the differentiation between Leib and Körper. I will point out that Benjamin sees collective subjectivity not only in Leib, which extends towards the collective subject of humanity, but also in the possible dangers of a collective subjectivity based on Körper: a Volk.

Instead of relationality, I propose to see the Leib-Körper division through their different approach to limits of subjectivity and the way this is founded on an organic-inorganic dialectic. I will then show that this dialectic also informs Benjamin's later understanding of the human body. To this end I will argue that not only Leib but also Körper does not disappear from Benjamin's later writings and that the latter undergoes a specific change, visible in the Arcades Project's convolute on fashion. The figure of Körper will reappear in a commodified form, as a corpse.

Szymon Wróbel: *Walter Benjamin's Attempt at Revision of the Order of Kant's Transcendental Cartography*

The status of the work of Walter Benjamin project still raises intellectual disputes. In a famous letter to Benjamin, Theodor W. Adorno, after reading the introduction to the Arcades project, reminded his friend that he was not a "real materialist", but only a "naive empiricist", "positivist" who believed in the "magic" of "directly given reality". For Adorno "immediate materialism" is located at the crossroads of magic and positivism. In my speech, unlike Adorno, I will try to treat Benjamin's philosophy as a kind of revision of Kant's transcendentalism. I assume that the key question for Benjamin is: how with the help of Kant's intellectual cartography, ground and justify the higher concept of experience? Benjamin demands the inclusion of forms of experience that Kant's schematism of reason excluded. It is about the pre-animistic experience, the experience of madmen, sick people, seer, etc. It's also about experiencing God. The Kant's tables of category of reason will need to be completely revised. With this new concept of experience, a new concept of freedom will also be developed. The new transcendental cartography will allow not only to revise the notion of cognition, but also to deepen the notion of experience and freedom. The main hope of such a project is the belief that with the discovery of a new experience would be established a "place" where the difference between the realms of nature and freedom would be abolished. Furthermore, in this new cartography, error can no longer be explained by mistake, just as truth cannot be explained by common sense. I will want to rethink the very possibility of such a project and all its unexpected consequences, also in the ethical and political sphere.

Andreas Köpfer & Robert Schneider-Reisinger: *Raum- und Körperentwürfe bei Walter Benjamin und Siegfried Kracauer und deren Relevanz für die Critical Disability Studies*

In diesem Vortrag werden zwei Versuche unternommen. Zum einen werden die Begriffe und Dimensionen ‚Körper‘ und ‚Raum‘, die sowohl im Werk von Walter Benjamin wie auch von Siegfried Kracauer eine prominente Rolle spielen, theoretisch beleuchtet und hierbei sowohl Verbindungslinien wie auch Differenzen für die kritische Analyse von Praktiken herausgearbeitet. Es wird dabei mit Benjamins "Aura" (z.B. Benjamin 20171; ergänzend: Wizisla & Opitz 2020) eine materialistische Diskussion von Raum und Behinderung unterstützt – wie sie in der Behindertenpädagogik ja schon länger geführt wird (etwa Jantzen 2004; 2017). Dabei wird versucht, über eine Öffnung des äußeren Raums bzw. seiner Wahrnehmung den inneren zu differenzieren. Aura wird hier als Tätigkeitsbegriff diskutiert und vor allem Aspekte wie "Verfallserscheinung" und instrumentelle Deutungen ("als Übung") kritisch diskutiert und danach gefragt, in wie weit Aura den behinderten (und beschädigten) Körper des Anderen geradezu erfordert. Was bedeutet Benjamins Auralosigkeit des Abbilds für eine material-

istische Konzeption² von Behinderung als Isolation und was das Moment der Blickerwiderung angesichts der inklusionspädagogischen Auseinandersetzung um Anerkennung? Als weiterer Referenzpunkte dienen die visuell geprägten Raumentwürfe im Werk „Ornament der Masse“ (1963) von Siegfried Kracauer, in dem das Ziel aufscheint, gesellschaftliche Räume in ihrer ‚Exotik des Alltags‘ zu dechiffrieren und hierin eingelagerte Marginalisierungen und Ausgrenzungen offenzulegen (Stumberger 2010). In einem zweiten Schritt werden am Beispielfeld von Bildung bzw. Bildungsorganisationen (und deren inhärenten Frage nach Bildungsgerechtigkeit, vgl. Stojanov 2011) und unter Bezugnahme auf die critical disability studies (Slee et al. 2019) praxeologische Rekonstruktion von behinderten Körperentwürfen und deren Raumpositionen in Form von empirischen Schlaglichtern auf die Praxis von Körper und Raum vorgestellt. Im Sinne einer kritisch-rekonstruktiven Analyse werden dabei Überformungen des ‚Autistischen‘ herausgearbeitet (Restayn et al. 2022) und ins Verhältnis gesetzt zu Körper- und Raumverständnisse Benjamin und Kracauer. Dabei werden entlang von Leistungserwartungen zugeschriebene Essentialisierungen und Positionen zu Autismus deutlich, die – materialistisch gewendet und gespiegelt an politischen Regimen der Be-Hinderung – ein Leben ‚in der alltäglichen Ungerechtigkeit‘ deutlich machen.

History, Memory, and Justice

Andrzej Gniazdowski: *Phenomenology and Angelology of History: Husserl and Benjamin about “what we call progress”*

The aim of the paper is to compare “materialistic” and “idealistic” concept of history by analyzing divergences and common points of, on the one hand, Walter Benjamin’s and, on the other hand, Edmund Husserl’s approach to the idea of historical progress. The starting point of this comparison is the reconstruction of Husserl’s concept of teleology of history and its both positivist and Neo-Kantian background. While pointing at the theoretical naivety of this concept from the perspective of Benjamin’s, Post-Nietzschean critique of the idea of progress, the author attempts to prove the thesis that the historical facticity of Husserl’s idealistic approach to history does not exhaust the critical potential of phenomenology with this regard. He argues that what this potential consists in is the significance of phenomenological analysis of the internal time consciousness for the critique of the concept of historical time.

Andrzej Leder: *Who is the Angel gazing at? Some Lacanian Remarks*

Walter Benjamin writes: “There is a painting by Klee called Angelus Novus. An angel is depicted there who looks as though he were about to distance himself from something which he is staring at. His eyes are opened wide, his mouth stands open and his wings are outstretched. The Angel of History must look just so.” There is a lot said in this fragment about looking, staring, seeing, gazing...

Framing his rationale with the Lacanian theory, the author in his paper will ask questions about the gaze of the Angel, the subject this signifier represents and the Other, he is staring at, with his eyes “wide open”. Questions will arise about the Hegelian Spirit of History and the Benjaminian Angel. Can we apply Lacanian graph L to elucidate their relation ?

Anna Wąsowicz: *Between Practical Past and Embodied Art: the Case of Walter Benjamin*

Walter Benjamin well-known as an eclectic philosopher get light on “crisis of the arts” which is understood by him as a “crisis of experience”. In this case he observe the approached to the Mystery of Art. Craft Technology. The difference between Art. As Masterpiece and Art. As Technology is overthinking. Benjamin in his article : The Work of Art. In the Age of Mechanical Reproduction make the main tehes that is as follows: the modernism is coming, we life in the era of critical and artisc and politics turns and phenomelological contrubitions of sensibility. This is nor era for craftsman neither for solidars, but in exchanged for it is flan-

ours world. Nevertheless, Benjamin in his essay represents birth of the new era and new man. Everything seems to be wrung out in steel. But this is only the metaphor. As a greedy metaphor is metaphor of art. Use by Oscar Wilde in his *The portrait of Dorian Gray*. But what exactly means to be a heir of Wilderian literary? When the philosophy meets literature? Who I am? If it is possible to be an artist and artificer despite of human condition and steadfast necessity to overcome myself without scary injure? I would like to talk about this during my presentation. I hope, this will be comparative, logic and comprehensive discussion.

Jeon Gyuchan: *Redemption of Justice Through Memory*

Thesis on the Philosophy of History, as we all know, is a deeply reflexive essay written by Walter Benjamin in the very moment of his ontological crisis and political danger. This text is indeed a short but sharp statement on the issue, problematic of (im)possibility of historiography in the time of global Fascism. Can history stand against the upcoming injustice of the power that me? Can philosophy, more specifically philosophy of history, be a critical means or mode of inquiry that will bring the humane history back to our time against the barbarian myth? How can we rethink this essay in terms of history, memory and justice?

This paper tries to reread the Thesis text through a specific lens of justice. It is doubtful if Benjamin has even mentioned that word in the whole text. Regardless of the presence of the notion, however, Benjamin's text includes several points touching the issues of historical justice, politics of antagonism between (counter)history and injustice, relevance of memory to justice, etc. This paper attempts to configure Benjamin's probable ideas, believes, on (historical) just by articulating his notion of "blast(ing) open the continuum of history."

How can we do justice to the past? What does he mean, when Walter Benjamin states that "[t]here is a secret agreement between past generations and the present one? Doesn't this put on us a sort of ethical burden, role for remembering as a practice of justice to the past injustice, against the unforgettable injustice of the past? He insists that "[o]ur coming was expected on earth." Is our endowment with "a weak Messianic power, a power to which the past has a claim" on our mission of doing historical justice delayed, postponed? I, the author, will think over this challenging question.

Johannes Otto Riedner: *Benjamin, Bloch, Kracauer, Scholem*

Both, Theodor Wiesengrund Adorno und Gerhard Gershom Scholem remembered much later their first meeting in the garden of the Frankfurter Bürgerhospital in early September 1923 visiting the ill Siegfried Kracauer. Benjamin brought Scholem, Adorno was probably already with his friend who suffered from a bad ishiatic attack.

Quickly a discussion started which soon turned in a heated controversy: Kracauer accused Benjamin of dogmatic messianism, while Benjamin defendet himself, calling Kracauer an enemy of philosophy. Adorno, the youngest of the friends, was probably not interfering.

How sharp the quarrel was can be seen in the use of the term enemy in the sense of Schmitt as hostility, not just opposition. Kracauer had the year before strongly criticised Ernst Blochs „Thomas Münzer als Theologe der Revolution“ in an article in the Frankfurter Zeitung under the title „Prophetentum“ with the argument, Bloch would abuse theology for political means. The meeting took place in a moment of highest danger as was hyperinflation. But what did Gerhard Scholem, who was on his way to Palestine, say?

And what did Kracauer mean with his accusation? He would maybe miss in Benjamin the concept of actuality, which Bloch had established in his critic of Lucaks „Geschichte und Klassenbewußtsein“. Benjamin would later adopt this concept for his „now of acknowledgeability“.

Just a few months earlier another meeting, the „Marxistische Arbeitswoche“, had founded the first program of what would later get the Frankfurt School. The year of 1923 is getting in the focus of research as a culminationpoint of historical fascination.

This paper tries to further explore the mentioned controversy and to reconstruct the constellation of its arguments concerning the politics of justice and the justice of politics.

Magdalena Gawin: *Benjamin Against Fascism – A Critical Analysis of Memory*

The aim of the paper is to analyze Benjamin's remarks on fascism in the context of contemporary fascist and extreme populist movements. Although the "F" word is often considered too stigmatizing to be used in relation to current political struggles, based on Benjamin's concept, it is possible to show the topicality of research on fascism. To deepen the argument, I will use the reflections of the same thinker on memory. I am interested here in the question of the construction of universality by fascism and what makes this construction so destructive. I will therefore consider the problem of the specificity of fascist memory. A certain general assumption of my research is that fascism is a phenomenon that is permanently inscribed in modern societies, which means that the specificity of fascism includes certain vagueness. This does not mean, however, that it is impossible to show certain markers of this phenomenon, and it is precisely their presentation that is the assumed effect of my analyses.

Matthias Roick: *How to do Justice to the Past? Intellectual History, Non-Linear Narratives, and the Quest for Early Modernity*

One of the classical definitions of justice is to give to each what is due. In my paper, I will discuss what this could mean for the practice of early modern history. Perhaps counter-intuitively, I am interested in how and to which extent Benjamin's theses on history, especially thesis VII on the task of the historical materialist, coincide with trends in early modern intellectual history. As Benjamin turns against history that sides "with the victor", scholars in these fields have grown suspicious of the 'grand narratives' of teleological progress that have informed their respective fields and their public perception for a long time, and they have begun to "brush history against the grain", that is, to treat topics and themes that do not lead straightforwardly into the present, moving from pre-modern to modern, but rather constitute 'Holzwege', that is paths that —from a presentist point of view— do not go anywhere or are abandoned in the course of time. How do we give these topics their due? And how can we give justice to --and justify our interest in-- a past that seems without any connection with the present? How do we rebuild our memories? Will we be able to employ past conceptual tools for a better and more just future?

Santhia Velasco Kittlaus: *Where Do We Stand When We Stand Up for Justice? A Comparison of the Historian's Position in Walter Benjamin and Michel-Rolph Trouillot*

Through Benjamin's theses on history, we face historical events without resort to the comfort of a positively connoted development that could detach us from the past (Benjamin 2015, 701). In order to disrupt this illusion of a linear continuum of history, Benjamin approaches historiography not additively but constructively. His historical materialist positions themselves within the present as a place where time has come to a standstill. Justice has its place in this now, which according to Scholem is not a conceptual limit, but a 'becoming, a substance' that is related to messianic time as the eternal present, even makes it possible (Scholem, 1999, 359). In this pause in time, Benjamin's concept of the past resembles Michel-Rolph Trouillot's understanding of 'pastness [...as] a position' (Trouillot 1995, 15). For both Benjamin and Trouillot, what was is a matter of how the present thinks of it as the past. I read Benjamin's standstill as that 'pause in which memory forms' (Pollock, 2009, 40) and makes possible the encounter with traumatic historical legacies. This temporal situatedness corresponds to the critical modality of remembering as Trouillot describes it, as a recognition of the silence of those unheard voices in the historical narrative who have suffered injustice. How we deal with these injustices is, for both Benjamin and Trouillot, a question of the justice of the present that must be articulated again and again. With my comparison, I situate Benjamin's thought in a more global context and at the same time illuminate those aspects of Benjamin's thought that make an intercultural comparison possible.

Urszula Zbrzeźniak: *Philosophy as a Practice of Justice*

Benjamin's concept of history seems to be the common ground of contemporary thought. Yet its significance is quite particular. While many thinkers directly refer to his legacy, others seem to develop this critical concept of history without mentioning Benjamin. The past is

not only a privileged area of research, but also the most important philosophical problem. The nature of the past, the status of images of the past appears at the centre of philosophical reflection. Moreover, the story becomes a source and stake of ethical reflection. The latter, however, differs profoundly from ethics developed thus far in modern philosophy. Ethical or practical dimension of modern thought assumes very peculiar form of radical ethical engagement devoid of any systematicity. In my paper I would like to address the presence of this model of historical investigation within contemporary philosophy. The question which I find particularly interesting is the relation between the history and ethical task stemming from it.

Evelyn Schuler Zea: *Die Aufgabe der Gerechtigkeit*

Gerechtigkeit war gewiss für Benjamin eine Bemühung nicht nur um die Lebenden, sondern auch um die Toten. Mit verschiedenen Akzentuierungen wird in seinem Werk die Sorge um das vergangene Leiden formuliert. Dabei wird kein erloschenes Geschehen, sondern innere Unruhen der Geschichte beachtet, denn - wie bekannt - werden auch die Toten von ihrem Strom betroffen. Durch Arbeit an Erinnerung und darüber hinaus geht es Benjamin um den Versuch, sich auf die Seite der Toten zu stellen, sie „wecken“ zu können. Wie diese dem historischen Materialisten gestellte Aufgabe durchführbar wäre, ist eventuell im Zusammenhang mit jener anderen Aufgabe zu verstehen, welche der sich hingebende Übersetzer vor sich hat. Verlangen und Gestaltung der Aufgabe scheinen darauf hinzuweisen, dass die in den wegweisenden Notizen zu einer Arbeit über die Kategorie der Gerechtigkeit zentral behandelte Besitzfrage einen transversalen Schlüssel dazu bilden kann. Eine Aufgabe wäre nur erfüllt, wenn der Besitzanspruch aufgegeben wird, d.h., die Auffassung einer Aufgabe würde bereits die anfängliche Gegenbewegung zum „Besitzcharakter“ bilden, und zwar sowohl in Bezug auf das Interesse des Subjekts wie auch auf das Recht der Dinge. Eine späte Gerechtigkeit, welche unvermeidlich und notwendig spät ist in dem Sinn, dass sie sich auf die Toten richtet, wäre dann ebenfalls nur wirksam über eine Auseinandersetzung mit der Besitz- und zudem Eigentumsfrage. Dieser Spannung wird in dem hier vorgeschlagenen Beitrag nachgegangen wie auch ihrer Kreuzungen mit anderen Konstellationen vom Leben mit den Toten aus ethnographischen und literarischen Kontexten.

Karol Sauerland: *Die Rolle des Begriffs der Gerechtigkeit für die Beurteilung von anti-totalitären Bewegungen*

In dem Artikel „Benjamins Revision der bisherigen materialistischen Geschichtsbetrachtung“, der 1982 im ersten Heft der Neuen Rundschau, erschien, schrieb ich, daß das Danziger Denkmal für die umgekommenen Werftarbeiter, das bereits im Dezember 1980 eingeweiht worden war, wahrscheinlich das „erste in der Geschichte der proletarischen Bewegung“ ist, „das spontan errichtet wurde, um eine Solidarität zwischen den Ermordeten und sich Befreienden zu schaffen“. Ich knüpfte an Benjamins Bemerkungen zur russischen Revolution von 1905 an. Der modernen Geschichtsschreibung ist die Idee der historischen Gerechtigkeit, um die immer wieder gerungen wird, recht fremd. Die polnischen historischen Arbeiten haben im allgemeinen für die Solidarność-Zeit 1980/81 nur den Begriff des Karnevals im Kopf. Sie lassen sich nicht von den zukunftsweisenden Ideen, die diese Revolution ausstrahlte, und den Erinnerungen an sie leiten. Von den Historikern geht kaum eine Unterstützung für die Bestrebungen aus, die Danziger Werft in das Weltkulturerbe der UNESCO einzuschreiben, was die russische Seite nota bene zu verhindern sucht. 1982 erklärte ich mit Benjamin: Im Eingedenken üben wir Gerechtigkeit, denn die Vergangenheit ist nicht nur Vergangenheit, sondern führt auch „einen heimlichen Index mit, der auf die Erlösung verweist“; wir sind gleichsam „von den gewesenen Geschlechtern auf der Erde erwartet worden“. Es ist, als wäre damit Solidarność gemeint.

David Galashvili: *Progress and Catastrophe in the Modern World*

In this presentation, I want to contrast the Enlightenment belief in progress with the ninth thesis of the Theses on the Concept of History by the post-Enlightenment and anti-progressive thinker Walter Benjamin, in which he perceives progress as different from the ideals of the Enlightenment. Benjamin and the thinkers of his time saw in the domination of reason

the roots and foundations of Auschwitz and other barbarities. For them, the domestication of nature by Reason, its total domination, leads to the instrumentalisation of the external world and individuals themselves, and the subordination of the individual to the projects of Reason. This is why Adorno and Horkheimer declared the Enlightenment totalitarian in their book *Dialectics of Enlightenment*. However, this is not to say that these authors were generally opposed to human freedom and progress. They sought to discover and expose the regressive or destructive element of progress and to deconstruct the fiction of progress with which the ideologues of the twentieth century manipulated the masses. As Adorno wrote: "The Enlightenment must understand itself if it is to avoid the total betrayal of the people". The Enlightenment must realise precisely what price humanity has paid for progress.

Sarah Ralfs: *Zur Überlieferung der Steine. Benjamins Vision für eine gerechtere Gemeinschaft nach der Hoffnungslosigkeit*

In meinem Beitrag möchte ich Benjamins Vision von Gemeinschaft in den Blick nehmen, die er in den geschichtsphilosophischen Thesen mitführt. Sie kann als letzter Hoffnungsfunken gelesen werden, gegenüber zukünftigen Konstellationen von Gemeinschaft, die aus den Trümmern des Faschismus und des 2. Weltkriegs hervorzugehen imstande wären.

Es wirkt erstaunlich und konsequent zugleich, dass Benjamin dabei seine Hoffnung auf die nicht menschlichen Akteur*innen setzt, denen er die vielleicht entscheidende Widerstandsfähigkeit zuspricht. Auf das in ihnen gespeicherte Wissen, auf die Konsultation ihrer Zeugenschaft komme es an, so Benjamin, in dem politischen Kampf seiner historischen Materialist*in gegen die Oppression. In dieser Allianz aus menschlichen und nicht-menschlichen Akteur*innen und Praktiken visioniert Benjamin, so möchte ich argumentieren, Konstellationen einer zukünftigen Gemeinschaft, die es auf den Ruinen des politischen Schlachtfeldes zu errichten gälte. Die Gemeinschaft zwischen der historischen Materialist*in, ihrer Umwelt und den nicht menschlichen Akteur*innen ist es nach Benjamin, die den Abgrund, in den sie geblickt hätten, nicht verschwiegen und heroisch verkehrten, sondern diese konstitutive Versehrung und Vernichtung wachhielten, die Geschichte in sich mitführten und aktualisierten, ohne sie unter sich zu begraben und ihr Dunkel zu verleugnen. Gerade an diesem Punkt, so möchte ich in meinem Beitrag zeigen, gibt es eine Verbindung zur Lyrik Brechts, die dessen Kritik an Benjamins Geschichtsauffassung zuwiderläuft.

Ulrich Mathias Gerr: *Last der Geschichte – Entstellung und Gerechtigkeit im Kontext des ‘Bucklicht Männlein’*

Der Begriff der Gerechtigkeit wird von Benjamin in einem Spannungsverhältnis von historischem Materialismus und Messianismus in der bildhaften Darstellung des ‘Bucklicht Männlein’ konkretisiert. Der Buckel ist das dialektische Bild der ‘Entstellung’ in einer historischen Situation, in der die Menschen durch die Ansammlung materiellen Reichtums, die „ungeheure Warensammlung“ (Marx) der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft, nicht etwa befreit werden, sondern diesen ihnen als “Last auf dem Rücken” aufliegt. Der Buckel wird zur körperlichen Folge dieser Last, das negativ andere des materiellen Reichtums, ein „Mal“ der „namenlosen Fron“ der Arbeiter (GSII, S. 476).

Gerechtigkeit ist der Prozess der Befreiung von dieser Situation. Den Buckligen, als Personifikation des historischen Leids, zum nicht Buckligen zu machen, ist eine der zentralen Aufgaben des Messias und Hoffnung auf eine Welt, der „die Last vom Rücken genommen“ (GSII, S.438) wäre.

Ist Gerechtigkeit dadurch nur jenseitige Erlösung? Im Erzähleraufsatz wird deutlich, dass der Gerechte eine Gestalt ist, die - sehr wörtlich - “aufrecht” geht, die also jenseits des Buckels des historischen Leids agiert und in Richtung einer Befreiung zu wirken verspricht. Diese Befreiung obliegt der Figur des Erzählers, weil er gegen das Vergessen agiert, also reflexiv erinnert: „Der Erzähler ist die Gestalt, in welcher sich der Gerechte selbst begegnet.“ (GSII, S.465).

Benjamin beschreibt historische Gestalten wie das ‘Bucklicht Männlein’ und den ‘Erzähler, die die Gerechtigkeit auf eine von zwei Weisen zu realisieren versprechen: sie wird optimistisch nicht erst an einen nachgeschichtlichen Punkt verlegt, oder initiiert pessimistisch zumindest einen ‘Aufschub’ der Katastrophe im Sinne der Erzählung der Scheherazade.

Der Vortrag entfaltet dies und diskutiert, ob Benjamin durch die Darstellung des aporetischen Verhältnis zwischen Messianismus und Geschichte auf eine historisch situierte Aufklärung zielt: indem die Entstellung als unerträglich dargestellt wird, wird ihre Bedingung destruiert und damit als zu verändernde bloßgestellt.

Manuela Sampaio de Mattos: Testimonial Clinics in Brazil – a Benjaminian reading

The Testimonial Clinics was a project created in Brazil in 2012, by the Brazilian Amnesty Commission, to oversee reparations for the violence perpetrated by agents of the state during the last Brazilian civil-military dictatorship period (1964-1985). For five years the Clinics stood out as a pioneering initiative, even among the other proposals for reparations advanced by an Amnesty Commission that was highly preoccupied with the questions of social memory and historical truth. It was the first official effort by the state to integrate into its history the psychological marks left by the repressive violations executed during the dictatorship, on both individual and collective levels. The dispositives created during the project culminated in an intense work of memory through testimonies, thus social and individual trauma were faced collectively. Beyond the discussion whether the clinics were reparative in a sense of justice and in Benjaminian terms, clear it was that bringing up memories from our recent past of violence disturbed political status quo and influenced reactionary far right movements that lead Brazil in the last years to a very similar scenario to the dictatorship period. As Benjamin posits, the danger of not dealing with the images of the past that flit by is for humanity to become a tool of the ruling classes. However, not only the matter of class struggle is at stake when we acknowledge the decolonial effects of reading Benjamin oeuvre in contemporaneity – the issues of racism and colonialism operate as the dominant expression of power and danger. An experience such as the Testimonial Clinics features a noteworthy methodology of dealing with flashing images of the past, despite its also evanescent character. In order to approach this historical experience, this presentation analysis is based on Benjaminian notions of unconscious of the collective, memory, reparation, justice and state of exception.

Justice and Crisis

Filip Brzeźniak: “Enslaved Forebears” or “the Emancipated Heirs” – Walter Benjamin’s Politics of Inheritance and (In)transmissibility as Crisis

Revolutionary politics and philosophy seem to have been always dealing in different ways with the issue of inheritance. This becomes especially evident with all the changes taking place in societies and politics of modernity. The examples range from the particular measures of the abolition of the right of inheritance (Bakunin), through the more general topics of transmitted language and circumstances for revolutionary movements (Marx in “18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte”) to the promises of the oppressed inheriting the land and the ruins left by the bourgeois class (Durutti). While Walter Benjamin has directly referenced some of those questions (Adorno, Arendt, Derrida, Richter), I believe that many other parts of his writings are in fact indirectly based on specific conceptions of inheritance understood as the possible responses to the crises seen as the groundless (in)transmissibility (Agamben). This interpretative lens should allow us to look differently at the questions of justice and law, revolution, the succession of sovereignty or the different melancholic (dis)positions we find in his thinking.

Anna Migliorini: A Leap and an Are between Krise (und Kritik) and the Real State of Exception

Already in 1923’s material concerning Einbahnstraße, Benjamin writes, starting from his Gedanken zu einer Analyse des Zustands von Mitteleuropa, about hyperinflation and widespread misery, in other words on the German economic crisis. Such a crisis soon becomes, to Benjamin’s and to several other intellectuals’ eyes, a generalised crisis, that reaches other various fields, like the arts, politics, experience and existence in themselves. Besides common ideas about an intellectual and freedom-of-speech crisis, that even lead to the so-called Innere Emigration, the confirmation of such a generalised crisis also emerges around 1930 from the material of Benjamin’s and Brecht’s (and others) project for the journal “Krise

und Kritik". If in this context the task is to reveal and to cause the crisis – as Brecht's declares "welcoming the crisis" – the textual confrontation with a much more well-known passage from the VIII thesis *Über den Begriff der Geschichte*, identifies the task of 1940 as the one that would cause the "real state of exception", a place for justice.

With this paper we first intend to underline which elements can be used to distinguish crisis and exception. Then to describe the personal, historical, and political context where Benjamin's reflections on the subject emerge. After that, to compare the texts of 1930 and 1940 in order to define if and what continuity can be found in the idea of crisis and exception as tasks, their relation to law and justice, with regards to the changes in the decade, starting from the historico-political one, that moves from a state of crisis to a state of exception, through the changes concerning in the first place the passage from the Weimar Republic to the Third Reich, the evolution and dangers of technique, as well as the limit of conformism.

Mikołaj Ratajczak: *Doing the Crisis Justice: Benjamin's Conceptual Politics in Theorizing Crisis*

Crisis constitutes one of the key theoretical problem of Walter Benjamin's writings; it might even be the problem of what we could call Benjamin's political philosophy. It was the multi-facet approach to the question of crisis that made Benjamin's thought of the crisis unique; from the economic crisis depicted in *Einbahnstrasse* to the crisis of experience in his writings on the poverty to the crisis of modernity represented in constellations in *Das Passagen-Werk*. However, the very term "crisis" was not one of Benjamin's technical concepts; one might even hypothesize that Benjamin was intentionally trying to avoid writing about crisis as such, or about crisis as a philosophical category. This hypothesis seems even more plausible when one puts his writings in the context of other authors writing in the 1920s and 1930s on issues that Benjamin was interested in, including philosophy of art, politics of culture and modernization, who were focused on the category of crisis as a key concept to describe the situation in Europe after the Great War. In my presentation I would like to sketch out this Benjaminian "conceptual politics" in finding terms and notions to express, represent and analyze crisis as the proper form of modern experience and of modern politics. My aim is to reconstruct the constellation of concepts that Benjamin used to formulate the problem of the crisis of experience in modern condition and reconstruct the way Benjamin used these concepts to break from the conservative paradigm of diagnosing cultural and political crises that was prevalent in the interwar period.

Caroline Adler: *"...ehemals gesicherte Begriffe von Gerechtigkeit". "Drei Bücher [des Heute]" und die Krisis der europäischen Intelligenz*

Der vorgeschlagene Beitrag widmet sich Benjamins Überlegungen zu einem gerechten Schreiben und seinem Verhältnis zur Krise der europäischen Intelligenz. Im Zentrum steht Walter Benjamins 1928 erschienene Besprechung „Drei Bücher [des Heute]“. In dieser kurzen Sammelrezension entwirft Benjamin die Umriss eines gerechten Schreibens, das „den Menschen nicht wichtig nimmt, sondern die Sachen“, und damit weniger Handlungs- oder Gesinnungsanweisung, als vielmehr Entwurf einer „geglückten Verfassung der Welt“ ist. Darüber hinaus charakterisiert Benjamin in der Auseinandersetzung mit den drei Autoren Schklowski, Polgar und Benda „Abbilder des heutigen Europa“, von dessen Kultur „nicht viel mehr heut abzusehen oder wirklich ist als ihre namenlose Gefährdung.“ Innerhalb dieser Krise Europas und ihrer Intellektuellen sieht Benjamin in den drei Büchern drei Perspektiven auf, europäische Dinge, die mehr Darstellung ihres Verhältnisses zur Politik sind, als begriffliche Rede von ihnen. Mein Beitrag möchte zentrale Momente einer Idee von Gerechtigkeit aus Benjamins Kritik herausarbeiten: Gerechtigkeit erscheint in der Buchbesprechung einerseits als Gesinnung und Parole einer überkommenen Intelligenz; andererseits als Form einer Repräsentationskritik, deren „beherrschtere, gemäßere Formen“ ein gerechtes Schreiben jenseits von Protektionismus erprobt. Deutlich werden soll, dass Benjamins Konzept der Gerechtigkeit – mehr Idee als Begriff – keine ‚gesicherte‘ Formel ist, sondern vielmehr als „ewiger“ humanistischer Wert gerade in der Diskussion um die zentralen Werte der europäischen Intelligenz problematisiert wird. Mein Beitrag soll dabei auch zeigen, dass Benjamins Auseinandersetzung mit ‚Gerechtigkeit‘ nicht systematisch, sondern praxisbezogen – als Antwort auf die rechtsextreme und nationalsozialistische Politisierung der

europäischen Intelligenz – in der vergleichsweise ‚kleinen Form‘ der Buchkritik Anwendung findet.

Brian Britt: *Crisis, Critique, and the Righteous Storyteller*

The impact of Karl Barth's *The Epistle to the Romans* (1918) went far beyond theologians to a wide intellectual audience, including Walter Benjamin. While scholars continue to dispute how closely Benjamin engaged with the Swiss theologian, the "theology of crisis" describes a cultural context with which Benjamin was certainly aware. Beginning with an account of how Benjamin's writings intersected the concerns of Barth's theology of crisis, this paper articulates a conception of "crisis" common to both thinkers. Far from a lament over contemporary political culture, Barth and Benjamin share an idea of crisis that, as its Greek root denotes, indicates points of radical distinction and the practice of discerning them. For both thinkers, contemporary political programs and legal institutions provided no meaningful path out of the dangers of the times, but both cultivated critical practices designed to identify righteous lives.

It is thus no accident that Benjamin's friendship with Barth's student Fritz Lieb centered on their shared political and literary convictions. Benjamin's correspondence with Lieb and his publication of "The Storyteller" in Lieb's journal *Orient and Occident* represent, I argue, critical practices that align with Barth's theology of crisis. Legal and political institutions could not achieve justice (*Gerechtigkeit*), but the cultivation practices like storytelling could provide a form for the self-recognition of the "righteous man" (*der Gerechte*). The storyteller's elusive, nearly forgotten art, which Benjamin himself practiced in his radio plays, taps into the forces of life and death themselves. The practice of storytelling responds to Barth's theology of crisis and belongs to the critique of fascism about which Benjamin wrote to Lieb in 1937.

Julia Dybczyńska: *The Myth of the Atom*

Just as, in Benjamin's view, the decomposition of the world becomes a condition for its salvation, contemporary nuclear energy can be seen as simultaneously a source of destruction and security. Drawing on precisely this ambiguity, this work is an interpretation in Benjamin's spirit of the qualitative research conducted in France, in the Ardèche region, in the period 2022-24, on people working for or living near nuclear power plants. Based on the conducted interviews and the participant observation, the author seeks to characterise the processes of subjectivation that nuclear infrastructure provokes. She considers the various factors that shape the subjectivity of those who find themselves in daily interaction with the power plant. These include, in particular, technocratic and paramilitary management, the partial coverage of workers by professional secrecy, the invisible and irreversible threat of radiation, and the material dimension of the hermetic infrastructure and organisation of its space. The author then explores the relationship between these conditions and the politicisation of her interviewees. Furthermore, her interviews raise issues of a sense of political autonomy and alienation, and problematise visions of the future and perceptions of time, particularly relevant to the problem of radioactive waste. In the vein of Timothy Mitchell, the author also reflects on the potential opportunities for political emancipation, or systemic sabotage, that nuclear infrastructure may present. Her sociological research is aimed at capturing the representations and interpretive framing that enable her interviewees to explore, comprehend and normalise the power plant-dominated environment. However, in this paper it becomes a pretext for addressing Benjamin's concept of myth, as well as for considering Foucault's theses on governmentality, Rancière's theory of the distribution of the sensible and Latour's concept of political ecology.

Justice and Visions of Community

Carolin Duttlinger: *Beyond Individual Authorship: Benjamin's Journalism as Intervention and Engagement*

Benjamin's essays of the Weimar years and beyond are acutely aware of the role of communities as agents of change on the journey towards a just society, as is illustrated by essays such as 'The Author as Producer' and 'The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility'. What is often overlooked is the formative role played by his journalistic writing of the period, which is centrally engaged with notions of collective experience on a conceptual as well as a practical, strategic level. Benjamin's journalism remains a curiously overlooked part of his work, even though it reached by far the largest and most diverse audience in his lifetime. As a journalist, he does not work in isolation but is part of a network of people, which includes co-contributors, editors and the many others involved in the production of the newspapers and magazines in question. This collective effort is visible on the page, where different voices and genres coexist, often in a state of tension. Weimar journalism reflects and shapes an increasingly polyvocal, but also increasingly divided, society. In my paper, I focus on several exhibition reviews which Benjamin wrote for *Die Literarische Welt* and the *Frankfurter Zeitung*. I assess how these texts describe the (however transient) communities which emerge out of these particular spaces and their potential to act as agents of justice and change. In writing these reviews, Benjamin in turn drew on his own networks of family members, friends and colleagues, who were practically engaged in the projects he reviews. These and other journalistic pieces thus incorporate the thought and action of others, whom they in turn inspire. As I conclude, Benjamin's journalistic writing challenges the very notion of individual authorship; it in turn requires a fundamentally different analytical approach to grasp the underlying interpersonal networks and their productive and sometimes radical potential.

Jaime Cuenca: *An Address with Three Audiences, and with None*

'The Author as Producer' has come down to us in a typescript with a subheading specifying that it was delivered as an address at the Institute for the Study of Fascism (INFA), in Paris, on 27 April 1934. Even if it is most plausible that the address never happened, Walter Benjamin was convinced that it was going to take place. As can be shown, the text was shaped in decisive ways by what Benjamin expected from the attendees at INFA. But they were not the only recipients the text was meant to have. Benjamin dictated 'The Author as Producer' with the clear intention of pursuing its publication at the journal *Die Sammlung*, whose collaborators and readers were mostly German exiles. The mix of expectations around its recipients grows even more complex when it is acknowledged that the text is deeply indebted to the project of a previous talk that Benjamin unsuccessfully planned to deliver in French in April 1934. Hence, by shedding some light on the three different audiences that Benjamin had in mind during the writing process of 'The Author as Producer', this paper will try to gain a better understanding of the textual layers and structure of ideas of the final text.

Sabine Schiller-Lerg: *Zensur – zwischen Kontrolle und Unterdrückung: Walter Benjamins Deutung eines Machtinstruments*

Schriftsteller, Autoren, Kritiker verstanden sich als Gemeinschaft, wenn es darum ging, sich gegen Übergriffe der Rundfunkkontrollgremien zu positionieren, die sie kategorisch als Zensur bezeichneten. Ernst Schoen als Programmverantwortlicher des Frankfurter Rundfunks, fühlte sich ihnen vor allem politisch verpflichtet. 1930 versuchte er für einen großen rundfunkkritischen Artikel, der neben vielen anderen Punkten auch die Zensur anprangern sollte, den Freund Walter Benjamin zu gewinnen, der sich darauf einließ. Den Punkt Zensur allerdings wollte er nicht behandeln, obwohl Schoen ihn an den „Chorgeist“ dem „eigenen Stand“ gegenüber gemahnte, ihm einige Beispiele für Zensur lieferte und betonte, wie wichtig dieser Punkt sei. Warum weigerte sich Benjamin dennoch die Zensur in den kritischen Kanon aufzunehmen? Wollte er mit einer Form von Selbstzensur seine eigenen Veröffentlichungsmöglichkeiten in Zeitung und Rundfunk nicht gefährden? Er selbst hatte Erfahrungen mit der Zensur unter den Bedingungen des Ersten Weltkriegs gemacht und erst später - ab 1933 - mit ihrer härtesten Form, dem endgültigen Veröffentlichungsverbot. Dazwischen erlebte er auf seiner Reise nach Moskau alltägliche parteipolitische Zensurmaßnahmen gegen alle Medien.

Für den Rundfunk in der Weimarer Republik wurde von Anfang an eine Struktur geschaffen, mit der durch politische und kulturelle Überwachungsausschüsse Eingriffe in die Program-

mgestaltung möglich waren. Das interne Kontrollsystem diene der Aufrechterhaltung staatlicher Interessen und sollte vor „Missbrauch“ schützen. Damit wurde ein Machtinstrument installiert, das sich das Recht nahm, die inhaltliche Ausrichtung des neuen Mediums zu bestimmen. Allerdings war diese strukturelle Zensur in ihren Entscheidungsprozessen schwer zu durchschauen.

In welchem Kontext thematisiert Benjamin Zensur? Erscheint sie ihm als ein Instrument der Unterdrückung, mit dem das Recht auf freie Meinungsäußerung gebrochen wird oder duldet er gar Kontrolle innerhalb einer politischen Gemeinschaft als nachvollziehbare Stabilisierungsmaßnahme? Wann und wie bezieht er eine klare Gegenposition und wo fügt er sich in bestehende Strukturen? Wie ist die Benjamin'sche Deutung von Zensur?

Markus Hennig: *Die Gemeinschaft zwischen Mythos und Gerechtigkeit*

In seiner 1921 veröffentlichten Kritik der Gewalt unterscheidet Walter Benjamin bekanntlich zwischen Recht und Gerechtigkeit, um sich vor allem einer Kritik der mythischen Rechtsformen zu widmen. Die darin aufscheinende Möglichkeit einer Entsetzung des Rechts wurde bisweilen als Hinweis auf eine nicht-legale Gemeinschaft gedeutet. In diesem Sinne wäre die Gemeinschaft das, was Gerechtigkeit verspricht, weil sie soziale Beziehungen nicht mittels des abstrakten Rechts erfasst, sondern den Anderen in ihren je eigenen Ansprüchen gerecht wird.

Insbesondere in seinen jugendlichen Schriften rückt Benjamin die Gemeinschaft ins Zentrum seines Denkens. Allerdings ist es jene aus der Jugendbewegung stammende Begeisterung für die Gemeinschaft, welche verdächtigt wird, den Weg zur faschistischen Volksgemeinschaft geebnet zu haben. Die Aufhebung des Rechts ist darin keine Befreiung, sondern die Fortsetzung der mythischen Gewalt. Im Bezug auf die Gemeinschaft verbergen sich damit zwei konträre Möglichkeiten: entweder wird in ihr eine dem Anderen gerecht werdende Beziehung vermutet oder in ihr liegt die Fortsetzung der mythischen Herrschaft ohne jegliche rechtliche Regelung.

Der Beitrag möchte dieser Ambivalenz in Benjamins frühem Werk nachgehen. Dafür will er zuerst im Kontrast zu Gustav Wyneken aufzeigen, dass Benjamins Vorstellung von Gemeinschaft sich bereits während seiner Zeit in der Jugendbewegung von autoritären Konzepten unterschied. Anders als Wyneken versteht Benjamin die Gemeinschaft nicht als homogenen Zusammenhang, sondern als „Freundschaft der fremden Freunde“ ermöglicht sie die Verschiedenartigkeit ihrer Mitglieder. Allerdings betonte er in seiner Zeit in der Jugendbewegung noch die Bedeutung der Idee als verbindende Kraft. Wie der Beitrag deshalb im nächsten Schritt in Auseinandersetzung mit Benjamins Essay zu Goethes Wahlverwandtschaften zeigt, unterzieht Benjamin die Idee als verbindende Kraft selbst der Kritik. Dieser dem Mythos verfallende Verbindung stellt Benjamin im Essay die Perspektive einer auf Erfahrung begründeten Entscheidung füreinander entgegen. Diese Perspektive will der Beitrag als Ethik einer Gemeinschaft präsentieren, in der die Mitglieder sich nichts vom Anderen erhoffen, sondern alles für ihn hoffen. Erst in dieser nicht-instrumentellen Gemeinschaft erscheint die Hoffnung auf Gerechtigkeit.

Thomas Lindenberg: *Ästhetische Erziehung zur Bildung einer gerechten Gemeinschaft*

Bereits in seinen studentischen Aufsätzen äußert Benjamin Überlegungen zur Empfindung von Ungerechtigkeit, dem Begehren nach kollektiver Veränderung und der Bildung einer befreiten Gemeinschaft. Diese sind verbunden nicht bloß mit Ästhetik, sondern genauer: mit dem Anliegen einer ästhetischen Erziehung. Explizit wird ein solches Anliegen im Programm eines proletarischen Kindertheaters. In diesem Text liegt die Betonung auf der revolutionären Kraft von freiem Spiel und Wahrnehmung sowie auf dem Kollektiv, nämlich dem des Publikums, der Arbeiterklasse, der Kinder. Neben weiteren Überlegungen zu Spiel, Kinderbüchern und Kindheit, sind Gedanken zur ästhetischen Erziehung auch in Benjamins medien- und kulturpolitischen Aufsätzen, den literarischen Kritiken und den Texten zu Brecht und seinem epischen Theater zu finden. Darin zeigt sich, dass für Benjamin ästhetische Erziehung im Hinblick auf gesellschaftliche Veränderung nicht nur Kinder zu adressieren hat. Damit meint Benjamin aber nicht eine Infantilisierung, Bevormundung oder Indoktrinierung

„der Massen“. Diese erkennt er als Attribute der bürgerlichen Pädagogik und Intelligenz, von der eine revolutionäre und gerechte sich zu unterscheiden hat. Im Gegenteil scheint Benjamins ästhetische Erziehung eine derartige epistemologische wie ethische Veränderung zu bezwecken, welche im Gramscischen Sinne das Verhältnis zwischen Intellektuellen und Subalternen (sowie zwischen Kunstwerk und Publikum, Kapital und Proletariat, Erziehung und Kind) auf den Kopf stellt und im Sinne einer erlösten Gemeinschaft überwindet.

Der Vortrag zeigt den Zusammenhang von ästhetischer Erziehung und Gerechtigkeit in Benjamins Schriften auf und hebt jene Aspekte hervor, die die Arbeit einer solchen ästhetischen Erziehung an der Vorstellung und Bildung einer gerechten Gemeinschaft ausmachen: Anerkennung von historischer und gesellschaftlicher Ungleichheit; Hinterfragung der eigenen gesellschaftlichen Stellung; Kritik der undialektischen Beschwörung von Gemeinschaft; Brauchbarkeit im Hinblick auf kollektive Veränderung. Des Weiteren werden Parallelen zu den Überlegungen anderer Denker:innen zur ästhetischen Erziehung und Gerechtigkeit gezogen, insbesondere zu Gayatri Chakravorty Spivaks Projekt einer ästhetischen Erziehung als „training of the imagination for epistemological performance“.

Sophia Buck: *Walter Benjamin's 'Outsiders': Against 'Optische Täuschungen' of National communities and their literary histories*

While Benjamin does indeed invoke the term community positively on different occasions, he also takes decisive issue with certain connotations, specifically instances of 'Volks-gemeinschaft' across his journalistic writings. For example, in "Kaiserpanorama" from Einbahnstraße (1928), he debunks the notion of "Völkergemeinschaften Mitteleuropas" as a xenophobic chronotopos resulting from a specifically German crisis and thus an unjust "optische Täuschung", "Trugbild" or "Luftspiegelung". On the contrary, the topos indicates for Benjamin "Gemeinschaftskräfte" at work on German ground itself. What they commonly perpetuate are "isolierte Standpunkte" (WuN 8, 24f) which lack a counter perspective from the outside or abroad. In turn, this paper seeks to explore not one of Benjamin's alternative visions of community but an alternative frame for reflecting or countering such modes of phantasmagorical essentialising.

When Benjamin observes seemingly national intelligentsias or literary scenes in the second half of discusses the 1920s, he rather refrains from the framework of national communities. Instead, he mentions remarkably often "Outsiders" of communities, scenes, circles, groups or collectives in the USSR, France or the Weimar Republic. For example, he familiarizes his German readers with notable "Outsider" in his survey report "Neue Dichtung in Russland" (1927) that aims to question traditional practices of a "wissenschaftliche Literaturgeschichte" (WuN 14.1, 146) – one genre or site for institutionalizing imaginary possessions of a national community. For Benrubi's survey Philosophische Strömungen der Gegenwart in Frankreich (1928), he highlights the „markanten Outsider, von denen wir mit viel Interesse erfahren, in welcher Gesellschaft sie vor Jahren einmal ausmarschierten“ (WuN 13.1, 156). He also comments on Siegfried Krakauer's publications and the epistemic and methodological merit of his "konsequentes Außenseitertum" (WuN 13.1, 238). And finally, he engages with Andre Gidé's outsider position or "Ausnahmefall" and yet being the most "representative Erscheinung" (WuN 14.1, 176) for France.

What characterizes those outsider positions differs structurally from the mode of isolation or "optische Täuschung eines isolierten Standpunktes". It points towards the function and possibility of (self)reflection or a heightened reflexivity, thus allowing to ponder to what degree Benjamin experimented here conceptually with moments of epistemic justice against xenophobic figurations of community.

Ori Rotlevy: *Educative Violence and Just Communities?*

The tie between community and justice is somewhat implicit in Benjamin. In "Towards a Critique of Violence" he criticizes revolutionary attempts to constitute a community that will bring justice on earth. Justice, for him, interrupts the legal order, or, (as his earlier notes imply) the order of possession. Benjamin does not provide an alternative image of a just community. But can we learn something concerning the tie between the two concepts from the images of community that are implied in his "Critique"? Rather than addressing revolution-

ary communities, my lecture examines two other examples: a theological one and a pedagogical one.

Benjamin's renowned example of divine violence – Korah's horde – implies a unique image of community: the annihilation of boundaries and laws is the annihilation of privileges. As Benjamin emphasizes, Korah's horde were Levites, privileged ones. Divine violence thus congregates a community in which privileged status is never fixed, and can never justify the determination of the community and its leader.

But how might this inform our own world? The second example suggests that "educative violence", "the manifestation [of divine violence] in present-day life" provides a similar constitution of community without fixed social status. Benjamin's provocative concept of violence refers back to "The Life of Students" and to his correspondence with Scholem. The violence of education concerns the undoing of the fixed status of teacher and student, and the destabilizing of the subject. It resists relations of dependence that conserve the possession and acquisition of knowledge. It enables a community based on the immersion in a shared medium, in which individuals transform themselves and the medium. These kinds of communities, which undo orders of possession and the fixed hierarchical status which laws maintain, are not necessarily just, but at least they do not undermine the very possibility of justice.

Ewa Majewska: *Procedures of Justice – Towards Historical Dimensions of Weak Solidarity*

In the recent theatre piece "Sprawiedliwość" (Justice) Michał Zadara asks several pertinent questions concerning the work of trauma, transgressing its historical actuality and permeating the "now" of the community. His main focus is the "Polish 1968", which took place in March, not in May, and led to the forced migration of some 25 000 Polish Jews. Yes, only thirteen years after the end of WWII. My own work consists in reconstructing the inconsistent and scattered archives of the "Hiacynt" actions, conducted by the Polish police in late 1980s with the aim of infiltrating, surveilling and controlling the gay ("male homosexuals", as the documents say) milieus and their international contacts. In the early stages of my research I noticed the relief and gratitude of gay men interviewed in the course of my reconstructive work, and I realized, that perhaps some version of "weak messianism" was taking place in this process of the oppressed group appreciating and supporting the meticulous efforts to reconstruct the otherwise dispersed memory of the "Hiacynt" events. The procedures of justice can take a variety of forms, and in the course of this project (Public against their will) the work the state should have done many years ago, is being conducted beyond its apparatus. While institutions leave the whole community, not just the sexual minorities, in a perplexing and intimidating state of trauma by not investigating their own actions, the inter-generational solidarity, connecting the past, present and future generations, as Walter Benjamin suggested in Theses on Philosophy of History, can perhaps contribute to the justice being done beyond the punitive regimes. In my presentation I will discuss research activism as a procedure of community justice organized by the principles of solidarity of the weak, following Benjamin's Theses..., but also the work of James Scott, Vaclav Havel, Sara Ahmed and Jack Halberstam.

Turkuaz Benlioglu: *Towards an Improperly Human Community? Walter Benjamin on Solitude and Community*

In a correspondence from the early 1910s, we find the outlines of a theory Walter Benjamin never thoroughly developed: a theory of community. As he reflects on the concept of community, Benjamin is repeatedly drawn to its relationship to the question of solitude or loneliness, and argues that while a "true" community necessitates "destroy[ing] solitude, eliminat[ing] it", "the conditions for solitude among people" nevertheless "have yet to be created." He therefore rejects one type of solitude while embracing another one, and begins to re-think the meaning of community dialectically with specific regards to a type of solitude whose "conditions" remain to be realised. In this sense, Benjamin's theory of community—if there is one—is inseparable from a theory of solitude, and a closer examination of this half-visible thread that runs across his writings reveals that Benjamin understands community to be based on an irreducible yet "common", "unelevated" solitude which describes the condi-

tion not only of the singular human being, but also of each creature. In this paper, I will investigate the idea of what I will call an “improperly human community” which we catch a glimpse of in a number of Benjamin’s writings concerning politics, melancholia, and creatureliness. The paper will show that Benjamin’s idiosyncratic approach to the question of community and that of solitude speaks to some contemporary debates in the environmental humanities regarding the relations between humans and nonhumans, and the question of responsibility in its literal sense of “ability to respond” in the context of ecological catastrophe.