

CHAPTER THREE

Paul of the Gaps: Agamben, Benjamin and the Puppet Player

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In an almost hallucinogenic few pages at the close of *The Time That Remains*, Giorgio Agamben¹ argues that one may trace the deep, if somewhat hidden, effect of the Apostle Paul on Benjamin's texts, texts that never mention Paul explicitly. I propose to offer a close reading of these carefully perverse pages, unpicking Agamben's arguments to see whether a very messianic Paul does indeed emerge from an equally messianic Benjamin, or whether it is an elaborate puppet play. Or, to shift the metaphor, I shall ask whether Agamben has discovered a window into the hidden world of Benjamin's thought, a window that opens up onto Paul himself, or whether the window is frosted, stained glass or perhaps a complex series of mirrors.

Before proceeding, let me recap the basic argument that sets up these final few pages in Agamben's book, an argument with two dimensions: the crucial role of what he calls "pre-law" and the pervasive concern with messianism. For Agamben, the solution to the tension in Paul between faith and law, πίστις and νόμος, may be found in the realm of pre-law, an amorphous moment before the differentiation of law, politics and religion that can be discovered only through linguistic analysis inspired by Émile Benveniste. Further, the messianic is the name for a dual tension, one in terms of time and the other in terms of act. If the first is a suspended moment (καίρως) between an instant of chronological time and its fulfillment, the "time that remains" of the title to the book, then deactivation is the mechanism by which the law is deactivated in order to pump up its potentiality so that it may be fulfilled. To my mind, this resort to the pre-law in order to understand Paul is the major argument of the book, so much so that Agamben sees everything in the Pauline letters through the lens of the law.²

¹ Giorgio. *The Time That Remains: A Commentary on the Letter to the Romans*, trans. P. Dailey (Stanford, CA.: Stanford University Press, 2005).

² Since I have offered a sustained critique of this argument in *Criticism of Religion: On Marxism and Theology II*, Historical Materialism Book Series (Leiden: Brill, 2009), I will not revisit that critique here.

On this basis, what does Agamben argue in the final pages of *The Time That Remains*? Hidden in the labyrinthine, if not occult, final text of Benjamin – *Theses on the Philosophy of History*³ – may be identified four citations of Paul: one from 2 Cor 12:9-10 concerning messianic weakness; another from Rom 5:14 on the image; a third, the term *Jetztzeit*, that captures Paul’s sense of the “now-time,” ὁ νῦν καιρός (even though he does not use the phrase himself); finally, the theme of recapitulation or bringing together (ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι), especially in the pseudo-Pauline Eph 1:10, “all things are recapitulated in the Messiah,” which is evoked whenever Benjamin uses *zusammenfassen*. For Agamben, “this should be enough to prove a textual correspondence, and not mere conceptual correspondence, between the theses and the letters.” Indeed, he goes on, “the entire vocabulary of the theses appears to be truly stamped Pauline.”⁴ A rather breathtaking conclusion from the slimmest of evidence, is it not? But Agamben is not averse to hanging vast arguments on the thin threads of linguistic analysis.⁵

Surreptitious Quotation

So let us return to the beginning and consider his argument more closely. The opening lines invoke the famous hunchback dwarf in the first of Benjamin’s theses, a dwarf who hides inside a chess-playing puppet wearing Turkish attire and who ensures that this puppet wins any game it may be called upon to play. The key is the analogy to philosophy, in which historical materialism becomes the puppet, which can win only if it “enlists the services of theology,

³ Cf. Walter Benjamin, *Selected Writings. Volume 4: 1938–1940*. H. Eiland and M. W. Jennings, ed. (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003), 389-400 .

⁴ *Time that Remains*, 144.

⁵ Even though the critical literature on Agamben is now voluminous, and even though engagements with the book on Paul increase at a slower pace, specific attention to this last section of the book are noticeably lacking – as may be seen in Mika Ojakangas, “Apostle Paul and the Profanation of the Law,” in *Distinktion* 18 (2009), 47-68; David Fiorovanti, “Language, Exception, Messianism: The Thematics of Agamben on Derrida,” in *Bible and Critical Theory* 6 (2010), 1-18; Paul J. Griffiths, “The Cross as the Fulcrum of Politics: Expropriating Agamben on Paul,” in *Paul, Philosophy, and the Theopolitical Vision* (Harink, ed.), 179-97; Ryan L. Hansen, “Messianic or Apocalyptic? Engaging Agamben on Paul and Politics,” in *Paul, Philosophy, and the Theopolitical Vision* (Harink, ed), 198-223; Grigor Taxacher, “Messianische Geschichte: Kairos und Chronos: Giorgio Agambens Paulus-Auslegung weiter gedacht,” in *Evangelische Theologie* 7 (2010), 217-33; Colby Dickinson, “Canon as an Act of Creation: Giorgio Agamben and the Extended Logic of the Messianic,” in *Bijdragen* 71 (2010), 132-58; Matthew Sharpe, “Only Agamben Can Save Us? Against the Messianic Turn Recently Adopted in Critical Theory,” in *Bible and Critical Theory* 5 (2009), 1-26; Job De Meyere, “The Care for the Present: Giorgio Agamben’s Actualisation of the Pauline Messianic Experience,” in *Bijdragen* 70 (2009), 168-84 and Denis Müller, “Le Christ, relive de la Loi (Romains 10, 4): la possibilité d’une éthique messianique à la suite de Giorgio Agamben,” in *Studies in Religion/Sciences religieuses* 30 (2001), 51-63.

which today, as we know, is small and ugly and has to keep out of sight.”⁶ Not one to spend too much time in the complex tradition of encounters between theology and Marxism,⁷ Agamben deftly interprets “theology” in this sentence as a “hidden theologian,” who is now “concealed between the lines of the text.”⁸ Which text? Benjamin’s own text, of course. As is his wont, Agamben now claims that he has stumbled upon a secret hidden to all until now, that the “hunchback theologian,” who has been carefully hidden by Benjamin, has been flushed out of hiding by the sleuthing of Agamben himself. No prizes for guessing who that hunchback theologian might be.

The problem for Agamben is that Benjamin nowhere mentions the Apostle Paul in his entire and somewhat jumbled opus, let alone the *Theses*. So Agamben must find a key to the secret passage, a key that comes from Benjamin’s complex practices of citation – *The Arcades Project*, for instance, is a work of devilishly complex and ultimately uncontrolled citation.⁹ But Agamben focuses on a few texts in which Benjamin reflects on his own practice of citation: not only must citations be incognito, drawing together past and present, but they are also done by spacing. How does Agamben know? He cites a brief comment in Benjamin’s essay, “What Is the Epic Theatre?”¹⁰ In the midst of a discussion of Brecht’s theatrical practice, particularly the gesture which interrupts, Benjamin uses the example of quotation, or rather the “quotable gesture:” not only are plays necessarily interrupted, but interruption is one “of the fundamental devices of all structuring.”¹¹ So also with quotation, for “interruption is the basis of quotation,” so much so – and here we pick up Agamben’s own quotations of Benjamin – that “quoting a text entails interrupting its context.” In Brecht’s plays, this may take the form of an actor quoting his own gestures on stage, gestures that themselves are the specifically quotable features of the play. Then we stumble across a passing comment upon which Agamben seizes: “an actor must be able to space his gestures the way a typesetter spaces type.”¹²

⁶ Benjamin, *Selected Writings. Volume 4: 1938–1940*, 389.

⁷ To which is devoted my five-volume series: *Criticism of Heaven: On Marxism and Theology*, Historical Materialism Book Series (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2007); *Criticism of Religion: On Marxism and Theology II*, Historical Materialism Book Series (Leiden: Brill, 2009); *Criticism of Earth: On Marx, Engels and Theology*, Historical Materialism Book Series (Leiden: Brill, 2011); *Criticism of Theology: On Marxism and Theology III* (Leiden: Brill, 2011) and *In The Vale of Tears: On Marxism and Theology V*, Historical Materialism Book Series (Leiden: Brill, 2012).

⁸ *Time that Remains*, 138.

⁹ Cf. *The Arcades Project*. Translated by H. Eiland and K. McLaughlin (Cambridge, MA.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999).

¹⁰ *Selected Writings. Volume 4: 1938–1940*, 302-9.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 305.

¹² *Ibid.*; *Time that Remains*, 139.

Sperren, spacing, is the word upon which Agamben leaps, except that now he engages in one of his many interpretive sleights of hand. He begins by noting that in older styles of typography, spacing was an alternative mode of providing emphasis for type-setting that was unable to use italics. But now in a brief comment he makes two deft slips: firstly, such spacing entails a double-reading, a reading twice; secondly, this double-reading “may be the palimpsest of citation.”¹³ The first may be justified by Benjamin’s text, where he gives the example in which an actor quotes later in the same play his own earlier gesture, but the second is a stretch. Benjamin’s point is that the actor must space out such gestures, such quotations of his own acts, in a fashion analogous to the way words are sometimes spaced within quotations – well-paced, timed so that they do not rush upon one another. That is not the same as saying that the spacing of words is itself a sign of citation, or indeed that Benjamin is leaving occult traces in his texts for private eyes such as Agamben to find. And lest we think that all Benjamin’s citations operate incognito, a brief glance at *The Arcades Project* will soon indicate that Benjamin’s primary practice was to list his sources openly.

Spaced-Out Paul

Nonetheless, in the spirit of creative misreading, let us grant Agamben his point: when Benjamin uses a typewriter and when he spaces out words, he is quoting an unacknowledged text. The next step of the argument is even more daring, so much so that in the published text of his book, Agamben needs to bolster his argument with a facsimile of Benjamin’s type-written and corrected text. Here we find: “*Dann ist uns wie jedem Geschlecht, das vor uns war, eine s c h w a c h e messianische Kraft mitgegeben,*” that is, “Then, like every generation that preceded us, we have been endowed with a *w e a k* messianic power.”¹⁴ With that spaced “*s c h w a c h e*” the hunchbacked theologian shows his hand at last; the Turkish puppet with a long pipe (full of hashish) is now Benjamin and the dwarf is none other than Paul. Two further assumptions back up this even larger assumption: one is that Benjamin had the text of Luther’s Bible in front of him as he wrote his theses, and the other is that only in Paul do we find such a conjunction of weakness and messiah. The first assumption begins as a “most likely” and soon becomes – in typical scholarly fashion – a certainty. The second relies on a rather creative misreading of Paul in 2 Corinthians 12:9-10, where we find the response from none other than God to Paul’s request to be relieved of his famous thorn in the flesh:

¹³ *Time that Remains*, 139.

¹⁴ *Selected Writings. Volume 4: 1938–1940*, 390; *Time that Remains*, 139-40.

But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient to you, for my power is made perfect in weakness [ἐν ἰσθενείᾳ].” I will all the more gladly boast of my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities; for when I am weak, then I am strong.

Fundamental to the dialectic of strength in weakness of the Christian tradition, perpetually sought after in monastic returns to simplicity and self-flagellation, the justification for martyrs eager to leap into the flames, pilloried by Nietzsche as the basis of the slave mentality of Christianity, Agamben throws in his own interpretation earlier in the book in the discussion of the deactivation, preservation and fulfillment of the law.¹⁵ In this “messianic inversion,” the weakness of the law means its power.

Even if we grant Agamben’s juridical interpretation, which is highly problematic (as I have argued elsewhere), what relation does all this have to Benjamin’s “weak messianic power,” specifically the conjunction of weakness and the messiah? Let us begin by looking again at the quotation from Paul (above), which soon reveals no messiah in that text. Indeed, I have deliberately quoted the RSV here, where the word “Christ” appears twice. However, in Agamben’s quotation from Paul we read, “for the sake of the Messiah.” In this switch lies a distinct problem for Agamben’s search for that hunchback theologian, Paul, in the gaps of Benjamin’s texts. Earlier in the book, Agamben argues at some length that Χριστός in Paul’s letters should bear one of its other meanings as Messiah, for Χριστός is but the Greek translation of the Hebrew *messiach*, both of them meaning “anointed.” All of which leads to the rather uncomfortable conclusion that with “weak messianic power” Benjamin also invokes, or even actually means, “weak Christological power” – at least if we follow Agamben’s internal logic. And here he cannot rely on the spurious assumption that Benjamin was poring over Luther’s translation, for there too Christ is present.

It is of course possible that Benjamin was quoting Paul and even that he really meant “weak Christological power,” so much so that the fundamental direction of the *Theses* deals with redemption through Christ. However, I am not sure Agamben would want that conclusion, even though his argument pushes very strongly in this direction. As far as Agamben’s interpretation of Paul itself is concerned, the trap is that in his very effort to efface Christ from Paul’s texts by translating Χριστός as “Messiah,” he enables Christ to be more present than ever. Indeed, Agamben is simply unable to produce a theory of the messianic from Paul’s texts without the weight of Christianity behind him. It appears in his notion of “the time that remains” (that is, between Jesus’ life-

¹⁵ *Time that Remains*, 95-99.

death-resurrection and his coming again), in the argument concerning the deactivation of the law, in the designation of “apostle” as “emissary of the Messiah,” and above all in his translation of “Jesus Messiah.” And if Paul’s messianic thought is inescapably Christological, then the Pauline tone of the “entire vocabulary of the theses”¹⁶ must also be Christological. That would entail a personality cult tremely at odds with Benjamin’s concerns.¹⁷

Each step of this argument creaks with both the heart-stopping leap of potential insight and the dangers of the thinnest of ropes on which to rely should the leap fail. We need to grant Agamben much leeway to achieve his aim: that Benjamin is quoting when typing in a spaced-out fashion, that *s c h w a c h e* does indeed refer to Paul in 2 Cor 12, that Benjamin has Luther’s Bible open before him as he writes the *Theses*, that Christ just means Messiah, and that Benjamin somehow escapes the inescapable Christological nature of Paul’s arguments.

Image, Now-Time and Recapitulation

Three other purported moments of Pauline quotation also appear in Benjamin’s *Theses* – at least in Agamben’s eyes. I will spend less time on these, since he uses largely the same approach in each case, albeit with an occasional twist.

1. Image: Bild

a. Benjamin: “The true image [*das wahre Bild*] of the past *f l i t s* y. The past can be seized only as an image that flashes at the moment of its recognisability, and is never seen again ... For it is an irretrievable image of the past which threatens to disappear in any present that does not recognize itself as intended in that image.”¹⁸

b. Paul: “Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sins were not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come [τύπος τοῦ μέλλοντος]” (Rom 5:14).

c. Luther: “*welcher ist ein Bilde des der zukunfftig war*” (Agamben’s rendition), which translates as “he who was an image of the one who was to come” (Rom 5:14).

¹⁶ *Time that Remains*, 144.

¹⁷ On the crucial role of Christology in the personality cult, see Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*. Translated by E. Jephcott (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 206-9 and Roland Boer, *Criticism of Heaven: On Marxism and Theology*, 433-5.

¹⁸ *Selected Writings. Volume 4: 1938–1940*, 390-1.

Typos in Paul becomes *Bild* in a text oddly quoted from Luther,¹⁹ from where it then makes its way into Benjamin's text as a mode of relating past and present, indeed of defining messianic time itself. Quite some air has opened up between the Paul-Luther connection and Benjamin's evocation of the (photographic) image, for the connection is by no means obvious.²⁰ But does Benjamin's hypothetical mode of quotation assist Agamben in this case? No, for the word that is now spaced-out is not "image" but "flit," or "flee" in Agamben's translation of *h u s c h t*. In reply, all Agamben can do is weakly offer - with a couple of tentative "mays" - an allusion to 1 Corinthians 7:31, "For the form of this world is passing away."

2. Now-Time: *Jetztzeit*

a. Benjamin: "History is the subject of a construction whose site is not homogenous, empty time, but time filled full by now-time [*Jetztzeit*]." ²¹

b. Paul: ὁ νῦν καιρός; no text of Paul is quoted here, although this phrase is for Agamben a constellation of both Pauline and pseudo-Pauline texts, such as 1 Cor 7:1, Gal 6:10, Eph 5:16 and Col 4:5.²²

Luther does not assist us now, nor does a printed text, so Agamben must rely on one hand-written manuscript, in which *Jetztzeit* is encased on its first appearance in quotation marks. Is that enough to secure its derivation from Paul? For Agamben it is, but now a curious twist emerges in his argument: the phrase ὁ νῦν καιρός, "the now-time," does not actually appear anywhere in Paul's texts. Instead, it is a back-translation of *Jetztzeit* into Greek. A very Benjamin-looking Paul, perpetual cigarette in hand, with disheveled hair and crumpled clothes and that slightly vacant stare of the regular dope-head, now appears unheralded in Agamben's text. Or to change the image, the relation between puppet and dwarf has been exchanged, for now Paul is the puppet and Benjamin the hunchback theologian. Agamben would have *liked* Paul to have written ὁ νῦν καιρός, but Paul did not.

¹⁹ The 1545 and 1912 Luther Bibles read 'welcher ist ein Bild des, der zukünftig war.' I am not entirely sure which "Luther Bible" Benjamin is supposed to have in front of him as he writes the *Theses*. Agamben may be citing the German Luther himself wrote, before standardized spelling, but this is nowhere spelled out by Agamben.

²⁰ Agamben feels called on to assert that Benjamin's fascination with flash photography actually encompasses all art, texts, records and documents. Further, conscious of the large leap to Paul, he suggests that Benjamin's meaning is better conveyed by this text from *The Arcades Project*: "It is not that what is past is casts its light on what is present, or what is present its light on what is past; rather, image is that wherein what has been comes together in a flash with the now to form a constellation. For while the relation of the present to the past is purely temporal (continuous) the relation of what-has-been to the now is dialectical, in leaps and bounds" (Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 463).

²¹ *Selected Writings. Volume 4: 1938–1940*, 395.

²² Cf. *Time that Remains*, 68-70.

3. Recapitulation: Zusammenfassen

a. Benjamin: "Now-time, which, as a model of messianic time, comprises the entire history of mankind in a tremendous abbreviation, coincides exactly with the figure which the history of mankind describes in the universe."²³

b. Pseudo-Paul: "A span for the fullness of time [καίρος], to unite [ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι] all things in Christ, things in heaven and on earth in him" (Eph 1:10).

c. Luther: "*alle ding zusammen verfasst würde in Christo*," that is, "all things are gathered together in Christ."

d. Agamben: "All things are recapitulated in the Messiah."²⁴

The less "evidence" Agamben has, the more certain he seems to become. Here we have no signal of surreptitious quotation, the text comes from a recognized pseudo-Pauline letter, and the citation of the German is again somewhat curious.²⁵ A word on pseudo-Paul: almost all Pauline criticism operates with two unquestioned assumptions: at least some of the letters are the *ipsissima verba* of Paul himself, and this slight collection of writings provides an insight into the whole of Paul's thought, much like a drop of water can reflect the sun. Agamben's usage of pseudo-Pauline letters, assuming that they give us an insight into Paul himself, may on the hand be criticized for being an uncritical slip, thereby speaking of the "church's Paul" or perhaps the "conservative Paul" of all the letters attributed to the man. On the other hand, it may also be read as an unwittingly highlighting of the assumptions of authenticity and universality that afflict Pauline scholarship.

To resume: Agamben claims that all of the above "proves" a deep dependency of Benjamin on Paul's letters, that the *Theses* are saturated with a Pauline conceptual framework. So certain is this conclusion from the preceding solid argumentation that Agamben can simply state that Paul's ἀπολύτρωσις, redemption, is thoroughly central – via Luther of course – to *Erlösung* in Benjamin's notion of historical knowledge.

Whiffs of External Evidence

But we need not take Agamben word for these connections, for no less than Jacob Taubes and Gershom Scholem support such readings. Or do they? First, Taubes suggests that Rom 8:19-23 may have influenced Benjamin's brief "Theological-Political Fragment."²⁶ Not quite the *Theses* and nothing more

²³ *Selected Writings. Volume 4: 1938–1940*, 396.

²⁴ *Time that Remains*, 143.

²⁵ Once again, the 1545 and 1912 Luther Bibles read '*alle Dinge zusammengefaßt würden in Christo*'. My copy of the 1984 version has '*daß alles zusammengefaßt würde in Christo*'.

²⁶ Walter Benjamin, *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings*. Translated by E. Jephcott (New York: Schocken, 1978), 312-3 and Jacob Taubes, *The Political Theology of Paul*, translated by D. Hollander (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 70.

than a suggested correspondence, so much so that Agamben stresses the differences between the texts of Paul and Benjamin. Yet Taubes' "intuition is certainly on the mark,"²⁷ even if his actual example misses that mark.

Perhaps Scholem is more helpful ... but only if one accepts the most secret of handshakes in the darkest of alleys. As though to clinch his argument, Agamben suggests Scholem gives an occult signal of his troubled knowledge of Benjamin's dependence on Paul. It comes in a long essay interpreting the role of the angel in Walter Benjamin's thought, in which Scholem argues that the fragment "Agesilaus Santander"²⁸ is actually autobiographical,²⁹ and that the title is an anagram – with a superfluous "i" – of *der Angelus Satanas*.³⁰ Having produced an argument that would have made Agamben jealous for its occult nature, Scholem goes on to suggest possible biblical allusions: Midrash Rabba for Exodus 20 and 2 Cor 12: 7 with its *angelos santanas* (Scholem adds the "s"). Agamben swoops: noting the singularity and fleeting nature of the reference, he nevertheless concludes both that the *angelos santana* is also the "thorn in the flesh" (acquired on Paul's journey into the heavens a few verses before perhaps) of the same verse and that Scholem is "implying an identification with Paul on the part of Benjamin."³¹ Scholem is doing no such thing; even if we grant all of Scholem's extraordinary argument, he merely suggests a possible biblical connection that may be more Scholem than Benjamin – not a dependence or identification.

Conclusion

Agamben closes his argument by deploying a Benjaminian hermeneutic to justify the reading he has undertaken: instead of the assumption that works are infinitely interpretable at any given moment, he suggests each work has a historical index that locates it within a particular time and place, but then that same index also fires it off on a trajectory that will only land and come to fulfillment at another, very specific moment. This is *das Jetzt der Lesbarkeit*, the "now of legibility." Has Paul's prophetic text then realized itself in Benjamin's text, or have they both come to such a messianic moment in Agamben's own text? He claims that they may well have done so: "Whatever the case may be, there is no reason to doubt that these two fundamental messianic texts of our tradition, separated by almost two thousand years, both

²⁷ *Time that Remains*, 141.

²⁸ Walter Benjamin, *Selected Writings. Volume 2: 1927–1934*. Translated by R. Livingstone. Edited by M. Jennings, H. Eiland and G. Smith (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999), 712-6.

²⁹ There are actually two such fragments.

³⁰ Gershom Scholem, *On Walter Benjamin: Critical Essays and Reflections*. Edited by G. Smith (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 1991), 51-89, here 68.

³¹ *Time that Remains*, 145.

written in a situation of radical crisis, form a constellation whose time of legibility has finally come today.”³² And I had always assumed that messiah would be marked by the vehement denial of being such.

Nonetheless, that claim raises one final question: do these hints in Benjamin’s *Theses* provide a threshold into the world of Paul? Or do both Paul and Benjamin freely pass back and forth through the threshold, sharing ideas, assumptions, textual references? Threshold is of course the title of this section (as also “*Tornada*,” a final stanza that wraps up and disperses in a rhyming poem), alluding to Benjamin’s love of thresholds in *The Arcades Project* – whether entrances to arcade, skating rink, pub or tennis court,³³ or the various entries into the “underworld” of the Metro, where we find sewer gods, catacomb fairies, labyrinthine passages with “a dozen blind raging bulls.”³⁴ Bewildering, labyrinthine and occult the argument indeed is in these closing pages.

But I would like to shift the metaphor back to two that have appeared earlier in this discussion: the window and puppet. In the gaps of the spaced-out words do we really find Paul? Are Benjamin’s texts a window to Paul, a window that provides new light on Benjamin’s confused arguments? Or is that window frosted, diffracting and spreading light so that we can see only a dim silhouette? Or perhaps stained and colored, so that Paul becomes both iconic and strangely hued? Or it is really a mirror, in which Benjamin merely sees himself? Or perhaps it is both, a window-cum-mirror: Agamben looks through a window in which he sees Benjamin peering through a second window to Paul, but to Agamben’s dismay, Benjamin is merely peering into a mirror. Little may Agamben realize, but the window into which he looks is also a mirror.

Finally, the much-abused hunchback dwarf and puppet: in my critique of the suggestion that *Jetztzeit* is drawn from the non-existent Pauline phrase *ho nyn kairos*, I pointed out that that we no longer have Benjamin as the puppet and Paul as the miniature theologian, for now the roles have been reversed: Benjamin has become the dwarf and Paul the puppet. True enough, but with one caveat: Agamben is the one pulling the strings for both.

Or is he merely having us on?

³² Ibid.

³³ *The Arcades Project*, 88-9.

³⁴ *The Arcades Project*, 85.