

The Testament of Time – The Apocalypse of John and the recapitulation of Time according to Giorgio Agamben

Abstract

Giorgio Agamben is one of the most widely received and most important philosophers of our time. His philosophy can be understood as a continuation of Foucault's archaeology of knowledge. Accordingly, Agamben analyses the genesis of the essential occidental concepts, categories and constellations in the context of their political and noetic significance for the present age. Similar to Foucault, this endeavour includes an impetus that is critical of knowledge and society. Beyond Foucault Agamben systematically deals with the influence of religious categories on the constitution of occidental power, but also its subversive potential. Among Agamben's writings especially his *Homo-sacer*-project, which has mostly been translated into English by now, and his book *The Time that Remains (Il tempo che resta)*¹ have to be mentioned. In *Il tempo che resta* Agamben particularly investigates apocalyptic thought and the correspondent concepts of time on the basis of an interpretation of Paul's Epistle to the Romans. Both aspects are a key to a critique of systems of power and their structures of representation. This text also focusses on these questions. The first part of this essay provides a definition of the position of current concepts of time, the second part traces key categories of Agamben who responds to today's virtualisations with the concept of messianity. The third part will attempt to confront Agamben's change of perspective with observations from the Bible in which the problem of a critical vision of historical superpowers and their representation systems becomes the decisive criterion for an apocalypticism of history.

Keywords

Apocalypse, Agamben, Homo-sacer-project, Paulinian Theology, Philosophy of Religion, Theory of Time, Political Theology

¹ Giorgio Agamben, *The Time that Remains: A Commentary on the Letter to the Romans*. Translated by Patricia Dailey. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005 [*Il tempo che resta. Un commento alla «Lettera ai romani»*. Torino: Bollati Boringhieri, 2000].