**Spectres, Ruins and Chimeras:**

**Management and Organizational History’s Encounter with Benjamin**

“The historical materialist leaves it to others to be drained by the whore called ‘Once upon a time’ in historicism’s bordello. He remains in control of his powers, man enough to blast open the continuum of history”.  (Benjamin, 1999: 254 - thesis XVI)

The genesis for this special issue lies in our simple observation that the history of management and organization (both as an object of study and as a discipline) contains a multitude of subjects and objects that are discarded, unremarked, forgotten, and cast adrift – things and people no longer considered worthy or interesting enough to bring into the genres and regimes of knowledge with which we are (perhaps unwittingly) pre-occupied. Indeed, as Shove (2010: 285) pointed out, “in academic life cohorts of readers and writers can become so self-sustaining that the debates in which they are embroiled endure for decades”. The collective drift of history seems to ensnare us all. Since there is only so much intellectual energy to go around, it means resources are drawn away from projects or topics which do not fit narrow parameters, and all that which does not fit into this – whether ‘this’ is an age, a school of thought, a mode of business thinking – it cast aside, often never to be mentioned again. As the field of management and organization has always been keen to affix itself to the most recent trends and the latest success stories, it will inevitably amass a sizeable ‘trash heap’ of history. What remains unclear, though, is just how much of the discarded material of the field has deserved such a fate? Seeing as we represent a field that is often accused of flitting from one fashionable theme to the next, it would seem that the history of the field may well contain much that deserves to be re-remembered, engaged with anew, returned to.

In the call for papers for this special issue we invited papers that would engage with alternate or suppressed histories, what-if stories, unfashionable theoretical approaches and disdained empirical fields – to mine the great expanse of forgotten and discarded notions in the field. These, we hoped, could provide important alternative perspectives on the nature of management and organization and those who study it, and perhaps create a new range of readers and open new debates. What weird and wonderful hybrids, we wondered, can we create once we pay attention to the ruins that populate and the spectres that haunt our field of enquiry?

It should be clear from the epigraph that our purpose in this special issue is not simply a recovery of the past. This would merely offer what Benjamin (2002) called the “strongest narcotic of the century” (AP N3, 4). Rather, our intention is to liberate “the enormous energies that are bound up in the ‘once upon a time’ of classical historiography” (ibid: AP N3, 4). Such a move implies a radical challenge to the dominant paradigms in management and organization studies that are built on the foundations of this ‘once upon a time’ of self-justification and genealogical narration. We put this challenge to work in this special issue by drawing out a form of organization analysis that remains ‘untimely’ - latent in Benjamin, and still forthcoming in the discipline of organization studies (O’Doherty et al., 2013). What can we do with the hitherto ignored and scorned reaches of history (organizational or otherwise)? What energies and passions reside in the vanishing and outmoded: old factory buildings, discarded objects, outmoded consumer products, once-fashionable venues, or organizational initiatives and structures when the vogue has begun to ebb from them? Could this stratum of material, the alluvium of the past circulating unnoticed in the shadows of organization and management studies, allow us to assemble a host of chimeras, strange hybrids “in which life under capitalism is productively mated with (rather than replaced by) the devalued, degraded, and other obsolete realizations of other modes of life” (Willmott, 2009: 135)?

In the following pages you will discover how our various authors responded to and/or creatively reinterpreted this brief, invoking in some cases “original forms of hesitation, a new kind of trembling or shimmering of the present in which new ghosts now seem on the point of walking” (Jameson, 1999: 65). Before we introduce their work we first would like to provide a ‘theoretical armature’[[1]](#footnote-1) for this special issue. Where better to find this than in Benjamin’s famous spectral artifact, perhaps best known in the English speaking world as the ‘Theses on the Philosophy of History’. As we shall see, any adequate treatment of Benjamin’s work might very well threaten to bring management and organization studies to its own ‘standstill’...

**A brief history of Benjamin’s ‘On the Concept of History’**

“Spectrality is not difficult to circumscribe, as what makes the present waver: like the vibrations of a heat wave through which the massiveness of the object world - indeed of matter itself - now shimmers like a mirage... (Jameson, 1999: 38-39)”.

It is only fitting for an author who had such a keen eye for the forgotten, outmoded, discarded and ignored, that we pay some attention to the reception history of what was to become such a classic short text. We base ourselves here on the editorial notes which comprise Volume I. 3 of the Gesammelte Schriften (Collected Writings[[2]](#footnote-2) - Benjamin, 1991: hereafter ‘GS’) edited by Tiedemann and Schweppenhäuser. This brief reception history will explain amongst other things why the name of the piece is referred to as ‘Theses on the Philosophy of History’ in Harry Zorn ‘s translation which appears in the popular Illuminations, edited by Hannah Arendt (1961/1999), itself a selection of the two-volume Schriften, a first attempt by Theodor Adorno to present Benjamin’s work to a wider audience in the mid 1950s, whilst more recent translations such as Dennis Redmond’s[[3]](#footnote-3) carry the title “On the Concept of History”.

The first mention of his work on the ‘Theses’ is in a letter written in French by Benjamin to Max Horkheimer dated February 22nd 1940. He explicitly refers to its function as “armature théorique” and as a “new way of looking at history” (GS, 1225). In a letter from April 1940 to Gretel Adorno, Benjamin hints that the ‘Theses’ have reached a first finished version. He writes: “The war, and the constellation it produced, has brought me to write down some thoughts of which I have been the custodian for 20 years… I would like to point you explicitly to thesis 17 which provides the hidden but conclusive connection between these observations and my previous work… ” (GS, 1226). In a letter from May 7 to Theodor Adorno he mentions that work on his Baudelaire piece has been delayed , “the main reason is my work on the Theses of which you will soon receive some fragments…” (GS, 1227). It can be said with a reasonable degree of confidence that the ‘Theses’ are Benjamin’s last ‘finished’ work, as his sister Dora - who acted as his secretary in his final days in Paris - confirms in a 1946 letter to Adorno (GS, 1227).

We have to put the word ‘finished’ in parentheses though as there exist four ‘final’ versions of the Theses accompanied by various paralipomena written by Benjamin (reproduced on pages 1229-1252 of the Gesammelte Schriften). The four German versions are listed by Tiedemann and Schweppenhäuser as follows (GS, 1252-1253):

T1 Typescript-carbon copy, no title, with handwritten additions and corrections

T2a Typescript-carbon copy, Title: ‘On the Concept of History’ added in handwriting by Gretel Adorno

T2b Typescript-carbon copy of the same original, no title.

T2c Typescript-carbon copy of the same original, Title: ‘Theses on the Philosophy of History’ added in handwriting by Theodor Adorno

T3a Original Typescript entitled ‘On the Concept of History’

T3b-c Carbon copies of T3a

M Manuscript without title with many corrections, 9 pages, in the possession of Hannah Arendt

Finally, there is also the French translation of the Theses – ‘Sur le concept d’histoire’ – by Benjamin himself which has, however, several theses missing (VIII, XI, XIII, XIV, XVIII). It was revised by Pierre Missac and published in Les Temps Modernes in 1947.

The earliest finished version of the theses on the philosophy of history that survives is manuscript M, containing all the theses numbered from I to XVIII on six pages with a further three pages of additional theses and variants of the earlier theses. The back of some of these pages had postage dates on them[[4]](#footnote-4), thus allowing the editors to date the terminus a quo of the manuscript as 9/02/1940. All the T2 typescripts are carbon copies of a lost original. The editors date T2 later than M but earlier than T1 (GS, 1253). They contain no written corrections by Benjamin and may have been produced at the New School for Social Research – but the editors are confident that it is impossible that T2 would have been produced without Benjamin’s involvement. The T2 typescripts contain the additional theses A and B, typographically separated by a big space from the other theses, and were possibly meant to be exchanged or deleted. T1 is the version that seems to follow Benjamin’s intention the closest according to the editors, with thesis A and B finally left out. Typescript T3 was produced even later than T1 but seems to have been subject to self-censorship. In a letter to Theodor Adorno from 1946, Dora Benjamin wrote “We both believed that it would not be wise to entrust the work in its original form to the postal service at that moment in time. The changes were not significant and mostly of a formal nature…” The only version that actually received a title by Benjamin is T3. It goes by the name ‘On the Concept of History’. But in the Schriften version from 1955 we find the title Adorno gave typescript T2 - ‘Theses on the Philosophy of History’ - which can be found nowhere in Benjamin’s notes and is really more a reflection of the content of the work. After this extensive reception history Tiedemann and Schweppenhäuser then go on to contrast the text T1 they mainly worked from with the variants M, T2a and T3a over the following pages. As our main purpose is to demonstrate that the text is rather unstable, a beautiful ruin rather than a solid edifice, with sentences and even entire sections appearing, disappearing and reappearing depending on the version, it would serve no purpose to go into such a comparative textual analysis. Better to turn to the actual arguments and suggestions contained in the Theses[[5]](#footnote-5).

**Benjamin’s philosophy of history**

“Historical Materialism must renounce the epic element in history. It blasts the epoch out of the reified ‘continuity of history’. But it also explodes the homogeneity of the epoch, interspersing it with ruins – that is, with the present” (Benjamin, 2002, AP N9a,6).

Benjamin’s philosophy of history is very much positioned against linear notions of historical accumulation and progress which he attributed to the Second and Third Internationals fully as much as bourgeois thinking (Jameson, 2005). His concern is to dissipate the illusion of continuity in history and endow the present with its virtuality, i.e. its ability to become other than it is and has been. Benjamin dreamt of bringing a certain history to a standstill, a Zustand, and thus to keep open the possibility of what is yet to come (Weber, 2008). He draws a firm distinction between two kinds of philosophies of history: on the one hand a philosophy of history that he refers to as historicism (relying on the traditional Enlightenment idea of progress), and on the other hand, an interruptive philosophy of history which concerns the historical materialist. Benjamin writes:

“The concept of mankind's historical progress cannot be sundered from the concept of its progression through a homogeneous, empty time. A critique of the concept of such a progression must underlie any criticism of the concept of progress itself”. [thesis XIII]

In thesis XVII, Benjamin contrasts the traditional approach to history whose “method is additive: it offers a mass of facts to fill up a homogeneous and empty time,” with one where “thinking suddenly comes to a stop in a constellation saturated with tensions, it gives that constellation a shock, by which thinking is crystallized as a monad”. Historical intelligibility is not the establishment of a causal connection between two events, but as the clash of a moment of the past and a moment of the present “in which time originates and has come to a standstill” [thesis XVI]. For Benjamin, “a materialist presentation of history leads the past to bring the present into a critical state” (AP N7a, 5). By critical state he understands the moment at which history emerges from the dream that unwittingly assumes history is an accumulation and record of progress. As he put it pithily: “Definitions of basic historical concepts: Catastrophe – to have missed the opportunity. Critical moment – the status quo threatens to be preserved” (AP N10,2). For Benjamin the catastrophe is not something awaiting us, but is simply the fact that everything goes on, and continues to go on, exactly as it does[[6]](#footnote-6). For history to have a chance to be something more than the mere registration and reproduction of what has been, the past has to be able to *interrupt* the present. The task of the historical materialist is therefore to revive the urgency of the historical situation, which is slumbering neglected in the history books, and thus allow us to grasp our own present moment in terms of a critical situation in which we are able to intervene (Jameson, 2009).

For Benjamin, a critical state arises when the past and the present suddenly enter into a ‘constellation’ – a constellation made up of a complex tangle of objects and ideas, or rather of fragments and apparent oddities that have not yet congealed into the familiar dualism of matter and idea, object and subject, etc Such constellations do not allow themselves to be enveloped in an ongoing history or narrative. This critical state causes an instantaneous flash where the past is illuminated precisely at the moment of its disappearance into the present (Lucero-Montano, 2004). Benjamin writes:

“The true image of the past whizzes by. Only as an image, which flashes its final farewell in the moment of its recognisability, is the past to be held fast... For it is an irretrievable image of the past, which threatens to disappear with every present, which does not recognize itself as meant in it”. [thesis V]

A constellation ignites in the ‘moment of its recognisability’. Its significance is not to present the past as it really was; this is the preoccupation of the reactionaries and conservatives who wish to retain an authoritative version of history for the purposes of discipline and control. We are never far from a ‘fascist’ mobilisation of a nation state and its population and there may be some who recognise elements of this mobilisation in the 2012 London Olympic Games. The constellation rather offers a form of counter-discipline in which the past is worked and understood in ways that reveal its inherent instability or what in recent developments in organization theory might be understood (following the work of Laclau and Mouffe (1985)) in the terms of a ‘constitutive outside’ that always leave the social contingent and incomplete (O’Doherty and Willmott, 2009; Al-Almoudi and Willmott, 2011). Only in this present (here and now) are we able to recognize this instability. The contingency in the past is preserved for the time in which its significance becomes readable in this ‘moment of recognisability’, allowing it to appear momentarily as a force in the present (De Cock, 2012). Benjamin elaborates the concept in thesis A: “He grasps the constellation which his own era has formed with a definite earlier one. Thus, he establishes a conception of the present as the ‘time of the now’ which is shot through with splinters of messianic time.” Messianic time must be understood as a break in the course of history — the ‘time of the now’; or interrupting time. This splinter of messianic time is, for Benjamin, the revolutionary chance that no other concept of history appears able to offer (Ferris, 2008).

Benjamin’s take on the philosophy of history means that the truth content he aims at cannot be revealed directly; there is no fixed historical moment proper to its revelation precisely because of the importance of the unexpected moment (Jameson, 1999). Benjamin was therefore always careful so as not to ruin his investigations with explanations that sought to provide causal or systematic connections, preferring the metaphor of drilling – “plumbing the depths of language and thought” – to that of excavating. As Arendt (1999: 52) comments:

“In so doing Benjamin was quite aware that this new method of 'drilling' resulted in a certain ‘forcing of insights . . . whose inelegant pedantry, however, is preferable to today's almost universal habit of falsifying them’; it was equally clear to him that this method was bound to be ‘the cause of certain obscurities’ (Briefe I, 330)”.

Benjamin’s proclivity for the montage aesthetic as historical method is well documented (Arendt, 1999; Steiner, 2001, Weber, 2008). Such a method “allows fragments and fractures to connect without having to supply a narrative of causality; it allows micro-descriptions to sit suggestively and awkwardly on a stage of an ill-disciplined totality” (Highmore, 2009: 81). Or in Benjamin’s own words:

“Method of this project: literary montage. I needn’t say anything. Merely show. I shall purloin no valuables, appropriate no ingenuous formulations. But the rags, the refuse – these I will not inventory but allow, in the only way possible, to come in their own: by making use of them” (AP N1a, 8).

For traditional philosophies of history what really counts are not the details of everyday life, but the history of events, the history of the species, the ultima ratio of history (Lucero- Montano, 2004). Yet, to dismiss the transient and everyday, the grief and the misery of the historical subject, is as Berger (1978: 358) suggested, “to deny the value of too much history and too many lives”. Benjamin presents a philosophy of history as “something in which every detail of a life counted, nothing was to be forgotten, the present had an ironclad obligation to the past, and running as a slender thread through all of this was the ever-so-faint possibility of redemption” (Taussig, 2006: 6). He believed that history’s victors write out not just those they defeated, but also the possible futures they represented. Yet, those futures can be redeemed. Benjamin voraciously collected the trash of history in order to salvage what no one had seen before him and tried to turn it into a tool of redemption (Tiedemann, 2002). One can say that his project aimed at actualising the future of pasts which scarcely existed, trying out what history started but did not carry out. The experience of these forgotten pasts can become the condition of our insight into the present as proper historical time, as one that does not exhaust the potential of reality. The past that Benjamin is interested in has therefore a spectral presence in the present. His gaze was firmly fixed on the debris, the neglected, the obsolete, and the slightly dilapidated. He believed that such material could shine an unknown light that could help us (re)discover the present and counter what he saw as the aestheticizing and mythologizing forces that combine to produce the fascist state (Ferris, 2008).

In Benjamin's view, the past that really matters, the liberating past, is one that is absent. Only if the present generation makes the hopes of the past generations its own hopes, can it break open the present, and hope something different from what already it is (Weber, 2008). He does not think that a dominant tradition (the ideology of progress), which establishes continuity (historicism), can fulfil those unsatisfied hopes. In Benjamin’s words:

“There is a secret agreement between past generations and the present one. Then our coming was expected on earth. Then, like every generation that preceded us, we have been endowed with a weak messianic power, a power on which the past has a claim”. [thesis II]

In the interruption of time (when the “true image of the past whizzes by”) there is a chance for history to be redeemed from the ideological forces that have distorted it. As Ferris (2008: 134) comments: “The possibility of redeeming the past from the forces of conformism rests on this power. Without it, the secret index or agreement between the past and the present cannot take place”. Benjamin thus maintains the hope that history possesses something that will redeem it; however, this hope is by no means unconditional[[7]](#footnote-7): “The only historian capable of fanning the spark of hope in the past is the one who is firmly convinced that even the dead will not be safe from the enemy if he is victorious. And this enemy has never ceased to be victorious” (thesis VI). Past and present may overlap in a political possibility but they will remain disconnected until courageous political action explodes the continuum of history and blasts humanity out of it like “the tigers leap into what has gone before... The same leap in the open sky of history is the dialectical one, as Marx conceptualized the revolution” [thesis XIV].

This, for us, is where the issue of management and organizational history comes into the picture. Management is conventionally taught in the form of the ‘transfer’ and acquisition of technical skills that celebrates what has recently been called a ‘neophilia’ in organization studies (De Cock and Rehn, 2006; Rhodes and Pullen, 2011). This perhaps remains the dominant myth in business schools and wider public policy in higher education, but never has its inadequacy been more systematically exposed. We are doubtless on the cusp of a new world order given the recent ‘Arab spring’ and the emergence of the BRIC economies, a new ordering though within which the axes of division and conflict proliferate and disseminate. In this context the UK, and Europe more widely, face an uncertain future reflected perhaps in the beguiling surrealism of the past re-presented in the opening ceremony of the London Olympic Games. With its constellation of fragments and incoherencies this ceremony perhaps represents a last desperate effort in which the UK struggles to orientate itself historically – or a maybe a moment of truth in which the old coherences are visible but only at the moment of their final disappearance. In an age which is questioning the very foundations of capitalism and the market economy, we cannot simply look for our field’s redemption only in the contemporary, but also have to reflect on the manner in which we might re-capture our own history and awaken the dynamics inherent herein. Might we not find new avenues, better avenues, in all those things that we once drew upon but cast aside as the next big thing came along? Might we not explore the history of management and organization in the spirit Benjamin intended – not as the bloodless stating of facts but as a political and transformative act.

**Introducing the papers**

Willmott (2009: 134) suggests, admittedly indirectly, that what Benjamin ultimately offers us are “attempts to leap over or shatter unified images of the present with a motley army of re-animated ruins and specters of pasts and presents lured from the shadows of capitalist production”. In conclusion to our editorial essay we will briefly introduce our own “motley army of re-animated ruins”. Some of the articles engage explicitly with Benjamin’s work; others are more implicit about their Benjaminian impulses. But all submerge themselves, like Benjamin, in the hitherto ignored and scorned reaches of history and engage in some way with the disdained or forgotten, thus allowing it to rise above a horizon of social invisibility.

Our first paper, by Kate Kenny, addresses Ireland’s Industrial School system, and the manner in which past violence can be understood and re-imagined with the help of Benjamin. By highlighting the manner in which violence and oppression has historically involved complex organizations, she urges us to look towards cases of abusive organizations not just in order to expose these, but also to make possible a reframing of said cases. By way of disruptive montages and an ontological recasting of the historical understanding of children, Kenny argues against the trend of wishing for closure, and instead shows the need for an understanding of history “in which past and present are not forced apart.”

In his paper on Lev Termen, better known as Leon Theremin, the inventor of the eponymously named Theremin, Charles Booth presents us with “a fractional biography of failure”. Rather than merely rehashing the story of an inventor and his inventions, Booth juxtaposes several approaches to writing the history of an innovation, and in doing so highlights the need to challenge historical writing that relies on glorification and reduction. Instead of presenting the story of Theremin and the Theremin as that of innovation triumphant, we get fractions and fragments, ultimately ending in failure as measured by conventional histories of organization and management – but not without hope. This multi-track historical writing takes the form of ‘fractured’ narrative but it is through this technique that new readings are invited allowing historians to track possible resonances across disparate sources of ‘data’ to extend what we might call the pitch and amplitude of historical understanding. The article ends by making a call for a less linear writing of organizational history and a deeper engagement with science and technology studies – and in extension, with the kinds of issues raised by Benjamin.

Our third paper engages with Benjamin in an exceptionally direct, even tactile way. Rather than merely writing about our idiosyncratic thinker, Ann Rippin’s paper grows out of a craft project which has created “13 notebooks for Walter Benjamin”. As Benjamin was renowned for his affection for notebooks, Rippin takes this passion and re-channels this through both actual, crafted artifacts and a meditation on both notebooks as material objects and the need to re-see objects around us. While the notion of visual studies of organizations has become increasingly popular in the last years, we may still need to debate the need for a sensory history of organization, and it is into this discussion that Rippin is gently leading us.

In the fourth paper of the issue, Sara Louise Muhr and Azad Salem look to the manner in which history can be both present and forgotten in organizational settings. By way of a study of how a Swedish multinational corporation handles issues of diversity, Muhr and Salem highlight the “spectres of colonialism” that can haunt an organization. This paper also shows the importance of not utilizing simplistic templates when trying to understand the historical context of an organization. By focusing on a country that few know has a colonial history - a forgetting which permeates Sweden itself - the authors attempt the kind of interruption that Benjamin saw as critical in the project of history.

The theme of cultures meeting is continued in the paper by Wilson Ng and Declan Scully in which they inquire into sovereign wealth funds and the manner in which these create “wish-images” around their investments in China and Singapore. By utilizing a Benjaminian reflective stance, Ng and Scully show that the manner in which contemporary financial practice is conducted can be analyzed through a lens of critical historiography, one that can also be extended into an engagement with the future. Interestingly, Ng and Scully also suggest that their case can be read through Benjamin’s notion of critical states, and that this has the potential to shake the very identity of financial powerhouses that are often analyzed as monolithic.

Our final paper is written by Sheena Vachhani, and is notable in that it doesn’t address a history per se, but rather the manner in which people engage with a particular idea of history. By way of an original reading of the affective everyday practice of knitting culture and vinyl collectors, Vachhani argues for a more multifaceted understanding of the way in which we engage with objects with a past. By bringing in sensibilities from the field of retro, she argues for a need of linking together ideas of novelty, creativity and innovation with a more historically and affectively grounded theorization. Vachhani’s paper shows how an understanding of our multiple engagements with history and that which might otherwise be discarded can, in fact, guide us into the future. And what better way to close a special issue such as this?

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1. Benjamin’s own turn of phrase in thesis XVII. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Whilst the English version of the collected works was based on the Gesammelte Schriften, it does not contain the extensive notes provided by editors Tiedemann and Schweppenhäuser. These notes make up the third book of volume I and run into many hundreds of pages spread over the various volumes. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. This is published under a Creative Commons licence at: <http://www.efn.org/~dredmond/Theses_on_History.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Benjamin used to keep hotel and restaurant bills as well as the postage wrappers of newspapers he had delivered to him, and which he later used as paper to write on. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Given the instability of the original text and its various translations we took the liberty to drift between various translations (either of the Theses in their entirety, or sometimes translations of fragments by critical commentators such as for example Weber, 2008). Hence we will not provide traditional bibliographical references for our quotes from the Theses below, but simply note the actual number of the relevant thesis. We will also make use of certain fragments from convolute N, On the Theory of Knowledge, Theory of Progress, from Benjamin’s uncompleted Arcades Project (Benjamin, 2002) on which he was also working at the time of writing the Theses. That text has of course a well documented reception history all of its own about which we best remain silent so as not to overburden this text. We will follow the notations of the Arcades Projects rather than page numbers to facilitate possible cross-referencing. Thus ‘AP N9a,6’, for example, means that the quote can be found in the Arcades Project, convolute N, note 9a,6. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. In thesis IX Benjamin introduces his famous Angel of History (based on Paul Klee’s painting Angelus Novus) who rather than “see the appearance of a chain of events” in history, sees “one single catastrophe, which keeps pilling wreckage upon wreckage”. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Consider this devastating exchange in Benjamin’s (1999: 113) essay on Kafka: “We are nihilistic thoughts, suicidal thoughts that come into God's head,” Kafka said. This reminded me at first of the Gnostic view of life: God as the evil demiurge, the world as his Fall. “Oh no,” said Kafka, “our world is only a bad mood of God, a bad day of his.” “Then there is hope outside this manifestation of the world that we know.” He smiled. “Oh, plenty of hope, an infinite amount of hope - but not for us.” Benjamin comments in the follow-up essay: “There is an infinite amount of hope, but not for us. This statement really contains Kafka’s hope; it is the source of his radiant serenity” (p.142). [↑](#footnote-ref-7)