

# Eschatology and Revolution. Building on Giorgio Agamben

**Veranstalter** Universität Erfurt, Max-Weber-Kolleg für kultur- und sozialwissenschaftliche Studien

**Veranstaltungsort** Bildungshaus St. Ursula

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## International workshop in Erfurt, 13-14 May 2020

**Location:** Bildungshaus St. Ursula, Trommsdorffstraße 29, 99084 Erfurt

As a result of the publication in different languages of the complete series of *Homo Sacer*, the name of Giorgio Agamben (1942), already renowned on a European, if not global scale has recently become even more established within the philosophical debate. Studies and events devoted to him abound. Our two-day workshop aims to follow up on the general discussion about the Italian philosopher, although our intention is neither to limit ourselves to the texts included in the project "*Homo Sacer*", nor to concentrate on the sole *œuvre* of Agamben. Our purpose is rather to take his production as a starting or ending point for further reflections on two themes that we consider to be at the very heart of his philosophy: *eschatology* and *revolution*. In fact, we believe that Agamben's publications, which now stretch over more than half a century, contain conceptual tools that are worth testing in other fields – tools that, to date, critics have perhaps failed to fully value. We are convinced that looking at Agamben's eschatological concerns and determining the proper place of (the concept of) "revolution" in his thought can help to bring out some of them. Therefore, papers examining the intersections of the two topics are particularly welcomed, since our working hypothesis is that eschatology and revolution share a similar ontological structure. Against this background, it would be preferable to present proposals that aim to treat Agamben's philosophy as a theoretical springboard to *systematical* considerations.

**A.** Eschatology is the subject of one of Agamben's most acclaimed books: *The Time*

*That Remains. A Commentary on the "Letter to the Romans"* (2000; en. tr., 2005). As the title suggests, Agamben's standpoint is completely internal to the Jewish-Christian tradition, whose understanding of "eschatology" can be coupled with the idea of "revolution" interpreted as a radical shift of paradigm. With this work as an orientation, we are looking for contributions able to identify both textual evidence of an analogous theme in Agamben's previous publications and *systematical* effects mirrored in his later writings. Furthermore, particularly interesting to us are submissions that try to place this book in the context of the theological debate of the last twenty years. In addition, one of our main purposes is to assess the accuracy and reliability of the Italian philosopher's appeal to theology and theologians, as well as to other specialised disciplines. Priority will be given to proposals willing to approach these problems from Agamben's less popular writings. In this sense, special attention will be paid to papers by scholars from outside philosophy.

**B.** As far as revolution is concerned, it is our intention to include in the programme presentations that question "revolution" as a concept. For instance, in the case of a scientific revolution, "revolution" could indicate, among other aspects, a shift of paradigm: does this hold true for political revolutions as well? Contributions exploring the political component of the Agambenian work are, therefore, encouraged, but equal space will be given to papers seeking to connect "revolution" as a philosophical concept with other notions investigated by the Italian author over the decades. As for this second issue, it is particularly difficult to move away from strictly philosophical analyses. Consequently, proposals capable of establishing a dialogue between philosophy and other subjects inherent to Agamben's encyclopaedia (philology, linguistics, history, etc.) are especially welcomed.

**C.** Since both the organisers and the organising institutions are committed to themes such as "rituality", "relationality", "affection/emotion", "subjectivity", "temporality", "form of life", "authenticity/inauthenticity", etc. presentations combining these topics with Agamben's reading of eschatology and revolution are highly appreciated.

### **Some further questions**

- How can the eschatological perspective and the concept of "revolution" be related to each other?
- How can Agamben's conception of time be understood with regard to history (and prehistory)?
- How is the notion of "revolution" internally connected to the phenomenon of στάσις? How can Agamben's theory of action be described? Agamben often underlines the link between the Deleuzian concept of "resistance" and the Aristotelian dialectic of "capacity-incapacity" (δύναμις-αδυναμία). What does it mean to think actions from the standpoint of internal incapacities?
- What could a theological reading of the notion of "resistance" be?

