

The objective of this research project is to analyze the role of Jewish messianism in Walter Benjamin's and Giorgio Agamben's theories of political subjectivity. Benjamin (1892-1940) was one of the most significant continental philosophers of the 20th century while Agamben (1942-) continues and revises his philosophy. They both argue that in modern Western societies the *modus operandi* of political subjectivity is the state of exception, being the domain of sovereign power. This leads to the increasing desubjectivation of political subjects. In my project I hypothesize that Jewish messianism is a theory of the 'real' state of exception, able to dismantle the structure of political exception and work out a new formula of political subjectivity beyond the paradigm of sovereignty. I further argue that different backgrounds of Benjamin's and Agamben's philosophy result in their contrasting interpretations of the 'real' state of exception and alternative formulae of new political subjectivity. Also, Agamben's philosophical orientation results in a significant modification – and at times distortion – of Jewish messianic idea.

Political subjectivity has been chosen as the research problem of this project because it is the political concept which urgently needs philosophical revision. Although the crisis of modern political subjects (nation, class, the people) is a fact, post-class and post-national narratives are still not accompanied by convincing alternatives and the response to the weakening democratic legitimacy has so far been predominantly populist. It has become all the more pressing to meditate on the new formula of subjectivity and conceptualize a political community without the oppressive criteria of belonging.

My project brings a new quality to the research on Benjamin and Agamben because it conducts the first systematic comparative analysis of the influence of Jewish messianism on their theories of political subjectivity and offers innovative methodology: the use of the state of exception as the analytic key to these theories.

The project is significant for the development of political philosophy because 1) it confronts the crisis of community and helps to reconceptualize political subjectivity beyond the opposition of individual and collective; 2) it analyzes the mechanisms of the state of exception at a time when liberal-democratic procedures are increasingly bypassed in national and international decision-making processes; 3) it reinterprets messianism as a universal form of political action, freed from particular, especially national, connotations.

It will also contribute to the general development of human sciences because 1) it shows theology as a discipline which can invigorate the discourse of contemporary humanities; 2) it develops the 'messianic turn' in today's humanities by applying it to the analysis of political phenomena; 3) it shows Judaism as a reservoir of concepts and theories which are useful for the examination of modern phenomena.