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Enrique Dussel, George Ciccariello-Maher

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The Liberatory Event in Paul of Tarsus

ENRIQUE DUSSEL

Translated by George Ciccariello-Maher

In this work we hope to rethink a very timely subject for political philosophy in recent years.¹ For epistemological reasons, however, we must deal in a different way with some themes common to the philosophy currently in vogue in Europe and the United States.

Today political philosophy has unexpectedly taken up a subject that had been ignored since the Enlightenment. Kant himself, in *Religion within the Limits of Pure Reason*, addressed the subject with some degree of precision.² In *The Conflict of the Faculties* he distinguished clearly between the tasks of the faculty of theology and the faculty of philosophy (W, 9:263ff.). In his time the great university *faculties* (or disciplines)—both those of Latin-Germanic Europe and those in the Byzantine and Muslim worlds—had always consisted of theology and law. It was only with the Enlightenment (and above all with Humboldt's founding of the University of Berlin) that the *faculty* of philosophy would gain the status of the *fundamental* faculty within the university. In an appendix (W, 1, 2:300ff.) to chapter 1 of the latter work, Kant sketches out the *conflict* between the faculties of theology and philosophy as a question of "interpretations." For the philosopher from Königsberg, "the biblical theologian is, properly speaking, he who is learned in the Scripture (*der Schriftgelehrte*) of the Church's faith," (W,

I, A44:300) while with regard to Scripture (or the Bible) the philosopher “is he who is learned in reason (*der Vernunftgelehrte*) . . . based on the internal laws that can be deduced from the very reason of each human being.” (W, I, A44: 300). And after an extensive argument he concludes that “this is how one must conduct all *interpretations of Scripture (Schriftauslegungen)*” (300)—that is, of the texts of Judeo-Christian Scripture (and the same could be said of the Egyptian *Book of the Dead*, the Indian *Upanishads*, the corpus of Buddhist texts, the Islamic Qur’an, or other texts considered sacred, and often held to be direct revelation, by their respective communities). Within the structure of the university, scripture resides within the faculty of theology (in Germano-Anglo-Saxon universities at least, because in Latin Europe these faculties would disappear from public universities for well-known historic reasons). Within the faculty of philosophy—since the Enlightenment—one could teach with reference to texts consisting of extensive, symbolically based rational narratives like Homer’s *Iliad* and *Odyssey* or Hesiod’s *Theogony*, which are religious texts “full of gods,” but which were nevertheless considered suitable for philosophical interpretation. On the contrary, it was strictly forbidden to philosophically use or interpret texts from the Judeo-Christian Bible such as Exodus, the Gospel of John, or Paul of Tarsus’s Epistle to the Romans, as though these were intrinsically theological.

The present task is to haul out these moth-eaten symbolic narratives (considered “theological” by enlightened Jacobin secularism) that are housed and studied in the faculty of theology, and to situate them for the first time within the faculty of philosophy as well. This would entail subjecting these texts to a *hermeneutics*, a “strictly *philosophical*” interpretation. And yet, going beyond Kant’s meditations on the subject, we wish to clarify the question in a different and more precise manner.

In the first place, (a) since they belong to everyday languages of the past, these symbolic, religious, and even in some cases mystical texts ought to be defined as “*symbolically based* rational narratives,” in the sense that they constitute *myths*, as Paul Ricoeur defines the term.³ These narratives, in the second place, can undergo a double-hermeneutic or interpretation: on the one hand, (b.1)

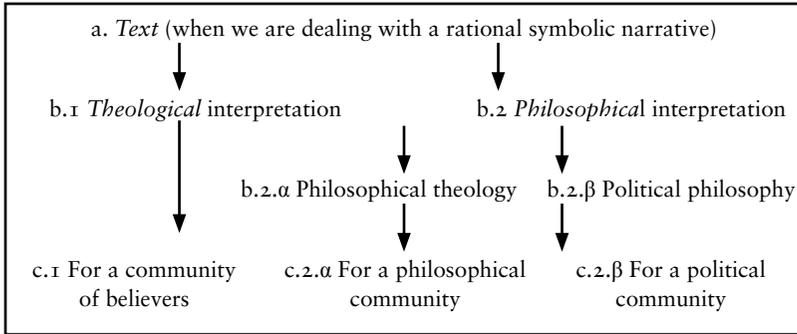


Fig. 1. Various methods of interpreting a rational symbolic narrative.

theologically, that is, and as Kant indicated, executed from a position of subjective conviction (what we could call “religious faith”), and (c.1) with reference to a religious community (what Kant calls a “Church”). Or, on the other hand, *philosophically* (b.2), to take up these symbolically based rational texts or narratives toward the goal of discovering their full rational meaning and the implicit theoretical-universal categories embedded within them (what Kant terms “concepts established through reason”⁴) (W, 1, A65:312), a process that occurs (c.2) with reference to a secular community (see figure 1).

In our case, then, we are dealing with the *philosophical interpretation* (b.2) of a *text* (a) as an activity in relation to a political community (c.2.β), dealing specifically with the *categories* used implicitly by the everyday rational narrative constructed on the basis of *symbols* (that is to say, which hermeneutically has a *double meaning* with respect to possible semantic references).⁵ This interpretation still needs to be distinguished from what Kant calls “philosophical theology” (W, 7:655) (which is the so-called Theodicy) (b.2.a).⁶ We will term it more precisely—correcting the ambiguous common use of the term *political theology*—a *philosophical-political interpretation of symbolically based, rational texts or narratives* (b.2.β) (religious or not), whose target audience is the political community.

The expository strategy of this article will have two parts. In the first I will clarify a critical position toward the debate surrounding Saint Paul as interpreted within a *Politics of Liberation*, taking ad-

vantage of all the positive and recoverable elements with which the subject is dealt by contemporary political philosophers. In the second part I will present critically the positions of other fashionable philosophers, indicating both agreements with and critical dissidences toward the thesis proposed in the first part. In general, and to foreshadow my argument, we will see that all interpretations of the texts—with the exception of those originating in peripheral countries—tend not to link the hermeneutic process with the concrete political-economic reality of the exclusionary globalized system of the time, thereby exposing in their proponents various degrees of an “idealism” indifferent to the terrible global situation.

This subject was instigated at the suggestion of Carl Schmitt and his “political theology,” on the basis of a reflection upon the work of Thomas Hobbes.⁷ We must specify the question from the outset. Hobbes, in part 3 of his famous *Leviathan*, according to the distinctions proposed above, engages in a strictly “theological interpretation” (b.1), that is, a “political theology” that takes up the Scripture no longer as a philosopher but as member of a community of believers, because the Hobbesian text is written for this historical Christian community. This he clearly indicates:

But in that I am next to handle, which is the Nature and Rights of a *Christian Commonwealth*, whereof there dependeth much upon Supernaturall Revelations of the Will of God; *the ground of my Discourse* must be, not only the *Naturall* Word of God, but also the *Propheticall*.⁸

Hobbes then indicates explicitly that his will be the “Propheticall” discourse of a believer, which would nevertheless also make use of “feelings and experience,” and “our natural reason” (and as a result his text is already a *theological* [b.1] construction) setting out from “this Scripture, out of which I am to take the Principles of my Discourse” (a) (*L*, 259). Schmitt indicates that the philosophy of modern law (b.2.β) takes elements of theological constructions (b.1), without warning that to do so involves passing to a different level. There are other cases in which there is a direct passage from the early everyday symbolic texts of Western culture—which were frequently religious (a), as in all other cultures of the epoch—to a

political philosophy. Such is the movement of Schmitt—as we can see in the dramatic dialogue before his death with Jacob Taubes—who takes Paul’s Epistles as the inspiration for his political doctrine of the “*katégon*,” passing from Paul’s rational symbolic narrative ([a] in figure 1) to his political philosophy (b.2.β). We, on the other hand, should follow a more precise itinerary.

That is, we will take the *symbolic narratives* (a), which should not be worked hermeneutically *only* within the faculty of theology (b.1), locating these instead within the faculty of philosophy (b.2), to engage in the philosophical-political interpretive task (b.2.β) of a *Politics of Liberation*, a task that is strictly *philosophical*. This is not a philosophical recovery of theology, but rather a recovery for the sake of philosophy of foundational texts that *implicitly contain critical categories* which gave rise to a culture (that of Eastern and Western Christendom, including Modern Europe), and can be constructed as *critical philosophical categories* of great relevance for our present moment. To repeat: there would be critical categories and methodological distinctions *implicit* in these *symbolic* rational narratives—with their everyday language, expressed in the religious sphere (in the case of our study)—that can be abstracted from their religious environment and univocally or analogically *fixed* or determined in one of the meanings of the symbolic text. This specific philosophical determination (which does not yet entail the *double meaning* of the symbol) is the task of political philosophy (b.2.β) with reference to a secular political community (c.2.β). All this has led to abundant *confusion* as to how these questions are dealt with from Hegel to Nietzsche, passing through Heidegger, and including the majority of contemporary political philosophers!

The case that we want to tackle, then, is that of Saul (Paul’s given name), a Jew, a Pharisee from the school of Gamaliel in Jerusalem, a Roman citizen, in the generation that followed that of Jeshúa ben Josef, the founder of Christianity.⁹

1. Paul’s Political Categories as Implicitly Philosophical

In the first place we would like to indicate the hermeneutic categories according to which we will *philosophically* read the Epistles

of Paul, which we understand to be symbolically based rational narratives addressed to communities of believers—religious believers, at the time—representing a critical diagnosis with a view to a *political-religious praxis that produced a radical transformation (Veränderung) of the given historical order.*

Recalling what many contemporary philosophical interpreters of the Epistles forget, these writings must be situated in the *political economic* context of the Roman Empire during the stage of the consolidation of the structure of slave-based domination and an oligarchy marked by tragic inequalities, which awoke an immense clamor among the growing majority of oppressed and exploited masses, who were reduced to withstanding indescribable suffering: “Humanity watches impatiently (*apokaradokía*) waiting for what it is *to be children of God* to be revealed” (Rom. 8:19).¹⁰ The Epistles constitute a response to this clamor for universal political and economic justice. In her *Contra toda condena: La justificación por la fe desde los excluidos*, Elsa Tamez, a Costa Rican specialist on the subject, shows us the way.¹¹

In effect, the situation of injustice upon which the Roman Empire was constructed was far more serious than what is revealed by an institution of Roman law like the mere *homo sacer*.¹² Saul was a Jew, a tolerated *ethnicity* (enjoying certain rights) in the Empire, from a commercial transit city in the eastern Empire (Tarsus), in the diaspora, which is to say primarily urban religious communities dispersed since the Babylonian exile. These communities were heavily exploited by special tributes (the *laographia*) that were applied to those not of Roman origin. Paul, from a family of artisans, learned the manual trade of weaver and supplier of shops (*skenopoios*), working with his hands day and night, living always as a poor among the poor. He was jailed several times in Philippi, Caesarea, and Rome; he faced tribunals in Thessaloniki; he was imprisoned in Ephesus. He lived the violence, torture, and humiliation typical to slaves. Although likely a Roman citizen, he received the *summum supplicium* (the death penalty). This dominated life was suffered within a militarily, politically, and economically dominating Empire. Since the death of Caesar Augustus (29 CE) the urban prosperity of the Empire rested on a horrific system of slavery,

in which the majority of the population of the Empire were slaves, poor freed slaves, or farmers smothered by countless tributes that were, in practice, converted into a position of servitude or semi-servitude. Roman civilization leaned strategically upon the inex-pugnable efficiency that its legions enjoyed at the time, as military organizations of unmatched strategic effectiveness at that moment. Wars of colonial domination were vital to providing the Empire's slaves, who constituted the booty of all expansive military actions. The patricians appropriated the fertile fields, the new provinces, and the *ager publicus* of the exploited peoples. After the Romans, the local elites were the beneficiaries of newly conquered territories. Few citizens qualified as such: only the rich, those discharging high public offices, well-known military leaders, and members of the famous *ordines*, whether senators, equestrians, or decurions. As a product of the legislative genius of this *sui generis* Empire, *Roman Law* sought to justify the validity of this coercive structure with clearly defined duties (posts) and rights. Differences in *status* were thereby guaranteed, legitimizing the power exercised by the *honestiores* (a minority) over the *humiliores* (the immense majority). To be a slave, *servus sine dominio*, meant quite simply not to be subject to rights: unable to marry, unable to have a family or goods; unable to serve as a creditor, debtor, or to prosecute a trial. The possessor of the slave could sell it, give it as a gift, punish it, or kill it, and female slaves suffered even more indignity, humiliation, exploitation, and violence (see *PL*, 1:33–38).

It was from the perspective of this massive suffering by the carnal, living subjectivities of the Imperial multitudes that the Pauline Epistles were written, directed toward “ethical communities” (as Kant would call them¹³) so that they might gain a critical intersubjective consciousness and act accordingly (a theoretical proposal in function of a liberatory, critical, and transformative praxis). Paul sets out from a Semitic anthropological understanding completely distinct from the Greco-Roman view. The human being is not a divine soul (*psykhé*), which is singular, ingenerate, and immortal, fallen into a body (*soma*).¹⁴ For Paul, as for the Semites and Egyptians (and also for the Synoptic Gospels and the Gospel of John), the human was categorized as a “flesh” (in Greek: σάρξ; in

Hebrew: בשר) or as a “psychic or mental body” (*soma psychikós*: σῶμα ψυχικόν).¹⁵ This was an intersubjective anthropological category showing the situation of the human “outside the Alliance”:

Thereby the resurrection (*anástasis*) of the dead (*nekrón*) . . . is planted in a *psychic body* and reborn in a *spiritual body* (σῶμα πνευματικόν). . . . It is written: the first man, Adam, was a living soul (*psychikón zóan*); the last Adam is a vivifying spirit (*pneúma zoopoioún*). . . . I affirm, brothers, *flesh* (*sárx*) and *blood* (*haíma*) cannot inherit the Kingdom of God (1 Cor. 15:42–50).¹⁶

Here we have two anthropologies—the Greco-Roman and the Semitic-Egyptian—standing in contradiction to one another. The philosophically implicit categories are clear. For the Greco-Roman rational symbolic narrative ([a] in figure 1) and its corresponding philosophies (b.2), matter or the body functions as the principle of determination and of evil; the soul is immortal (this is the subject of my book *HH*). For Semites and Egyptians, the human is unitary, it is flesh (*basar* or *sóma psikhikós*) and it dies. There is a first death (that of the *first Adam*) that leaves *flesh* with (psychic) “life” but without salvation, isolated, with no choices, no hope, no community, no salvation. That *flesh* enters intersubjectively into an alliance, a contract, a testament (in Hebrew: *brit*, ברית), from which a *first rebirth* (resurrection) can take place: this is the “spiritual body” (*sóma pneumatikós*).¹⁷ We will soon see the meaning, by contradiction, of the two orders, *eones* between the “Law” and the “spirit” in the Paul of the Epistle to the Romans.¹⁸

We are dealing, then, with two *orders*, two levels, two worlds: the “kingdom of this world” (with its “prince,” its “dominators,” and its “angels”) and the “Kingdom of God” (which similarly has its “apostles” or “envoys” to militantly fulfill a historic-political action). We are therefore confronting two *categories* that we can *construct* in an explicitly *philosophical* manner: one a) that indicates the “order of the flesh,” or the prevailing *Totality*, insofar as it claims to be a closed, self-referential *Totality* and constitutes, moreover, the given;¹⁹ another, b) that of the “order of the spirit,” that we could call, with Emmanuel Levinas (while modifying his meaning) the trans-ontological sphere, Exteriority or the meta-

physical, but which is situated as a concrete community of Others beyond the prevailing, coercive Totality (the *sóma pneumatikós*). Now, we are dealing with philosophical *categories* in *sensu stricto*, which will allow us to interpret the Epistle to the Romans in a very different manner from what tends to be the case in contemporary European and U.S. political philosophy.

In effect, Paul's Epistle to the Romans represents a *critical* culmination of Semitic, Jewish thought in the Roman Empire. It is no less than a rational symbolic narrative launched against the Empire in *its very essence*: it shakes the very foundation upon which the *legitimation of the Roman State* in its totality rested. But, at the same time, this was also a critique of other groups within the Jewish tradition from which the new "messianic" community was slowly *differentiating* itself.²⁰ In the third place, the document opposed a certain form of legalism of "Judaizing" groups of the primitive messianic ("Christian") community that failed to grasp the novelty of the new position of the founding group. This does not contradict the fact that for Jacob Taubes and an entire contemporary Jewish tradition Paul is incorporated within a strictly Jewish horizon. Indeed, what we want to indicate here is that, being *in all aspects Jewish*, Paul (on the basis of the "event" of Jeshúa ben Josef and his apostles, without any rupture, but with complementary differences: a true "subsumption": *katargéin*) is the creative genius of the formulation—for the new "messianic" community—of a diagnostic and a political strategy that this community would follow within the conjunctural "situation" of the Empire and against various Jewish groups, giving the expansive "messianic" community overwhelming *results*, the fruit of a political decision, a singular practical judgment. This represented, politically, a continuation of the critical tradition of the Semites, the Jews, but also entailed the opening of an untraveled path, something not clearly indicated among contemporary political philosophers. This is why there has been a failure to sufficiently value its current impact in the context of a civilizational crisis similar to that which Paul himself confronted, but which today appears ever more immense in the so-called globalization that marks the end of the Modernity we are suffering.

The Epistle to the “messianic” community of the Imperial headquarters essentially tackles the question of the insufficient legitimacy of the praxis and institutions of the Empire and diasporic Judaism, with their unitary criteria of Roman *Law* (*lex*) or the *toráh* (תורה) of the Jewish people, which had in the post-Babylonian-exile diaspora become the foundation of rabbinical communities due to the remoteness, and the later destruction, of the sacerdotal institution of the Temple of Jerusalem. This *Law* had become fetishized.

The Epistle, according to the *philosophical* interpretation we propose, deals with six fundamental themes (all of which revolve around the fourth): (1) the meaning of the *justification* or the final criterion of the historical legitimation of praxis, the agent, and institutions; (2) the very concept of Law as foundation of the *first* prevailing order (*eón*); (3) the *collapse* of the Law due to its insufficiency, its fetishization; (4) the *new* justificatory criterion; (5) the messianic community that bursts in at the time of liberatory praxis (“messianic Now-Time”); thereby (6) creating a *new* order beyond the Law. Here we have a sketch of the themes, the diachronic moments—of the *two eónes*, with their temporalities and the passage (*Übergehen*) from one to the other—and the essential categories that will be mobilized by a *Politics of Liberation*, which remains impossible for the merely ontological tradition of Greco-Roman philosophy or Modernity from Hobbes onward to recognize. Contrary to what Taubes claims, this is a profoundly dialectical narrative that we feel has not been seriously taken into account, perhaps as a result of the social-democratic orientation of many European philosophers, or perhaps since they lack the solvent of political creativity that has been experienced in Latin America since the end of the twentieth century.

In the first place, the Epistle speaks at the outset of justification (Rom. 1:17), a concept that will need to be clarified. The word *justification* (δικαιοσύνη) comes from *justice* (from the Greek: *dike*, and the Hebrew: *tsadik*, צדק).²¹ “To justify,” or to declare that an actor or the praxis for which she is agent is just, requires various moments: (1) obviously an actor who is producing an act, which (2) according to some criterion or foundation, (3) is judged by a

court or observer, which (4) assigns to the actor or her act the character of “just” or “righteous” (and thereby worthy of reward), or on the contrary the character of “unjust” (and thereby guilty and deserving punishment). The *justification* is, properly speaking, the fourth moment, that of the subsumption of the concrete (the actor or the praxis) to the universal (the criterion according to which the evaluative judgment is based). This subject refers us to the myth of Osiris, of the final Judgment of the *Ma’at* in Egypt—which is repeated in the Jewish and Christian traditions—in which the dead are *judged* for their works, according to which they have either fulfilled divine mandate (the *Law*) or not. Salvation or resurrection of the dead in Egypt is the effect of a positive *justification*; that is, the judged has avoided the obstacle posed by the judgment in being characterized as *just*. He or she has been *justified*. “It is not enough to know the Law to be *just* (*dikaioi*) before God, one must *act on* the Law to be justified (*diaiothésontai*)” (Rom. 2:13).

In the second place, the Epistle deals with the meaning of the *Law*. The Law is the criterion held as valid for all, for “justification” (of the agent and her praxis). From the ancient Egyptian goddess *Ma’at* to the *nómos physikón* of the Greeks, to Roman Law or the Jewish *toráh*, the *Law* operates as a fundamental imperative. This is why “the function of the Law is to give *consciousness* (*epígnosis*) of sin” (Rom. 3:20).²² Or, alternatively, the Law determines a limit or *framework* (as Rosa Luxemburg would say) for the will, as a criterion to be able to judge by differentiating what is just (and fulfills the Law) from what is perverse (because it violates the Law). Without this *framework* good cannot be discerned from evil, and as a result there exists no moral consciousness of one or the other (that is, of moral error).

On the other hand, the Law presupposes (a) a time *prior* to its dictation, a time of chaos beginning with the “sin of the *first* Adam” (which is also metaphorically the time of Egyptian slavery); (b) another time of hope, corresponding to Abraham (the time of the *first* Alliance); and (c) the time properly speaking of the *first* Law, pronounced by Moses out of Egypt and in the desert, that of the order which still prevailed in Paul’s time. It is with Moses that we have what Alain Badiou might call an “event” in refer-

ence to the ontological order, but beyond Badiou we must consider this moment as the “*first event*,” the foundational event (which we have explained in *PL* at §15, 262ff.). Notice that we must begin to engage in a diachronic description of *two* events, in the dialectic of *two* times, which has frequently gone unnoticed for many interpreters of the text we are analyzing. There is a *before* and an *after* that are essential for the *Politics of Liberation*. The *Law* plays its function in a *first* moment that must be overcome, without which everything loses its meaning. To summarize what we have accomplished up to this point, we could say that, in effect, the *Law* is the criterion or foundation for the *justification* of the praxis carried out in any given, prevailing order.

In the third place, the legitimacy of the *Law collapses*. This is a first dramatic, critical, and novel moment in the Epistle to the Romans, the *negative* moment, one which could be interpreted as anarchist (or certainly one that leads toward anarchy), thereby constituting the political moment *par excellence* that will permeate all later critical traditions (and leftist traditions since the eighteenth century). While the *Law* is the criterion of justification for actors and praxis within the prevailing order, it can nevertheless become fetishized and corrupted, falling into contradiction with even itself, and thereby producing its own collapse. How does Paul explain this negativity? From what sort of situations can the very foundations of the system be called into question?

In order to be able to negate the *Law*, this *Law* would first need to have the pretension of functioning as the absolute reference for justification. This is what we mean by the fetishism of the *Law*, and it appears when this *Law* is affirmed as the *single* and *ultimate* foundation of said justification: it becomes absolutized, self-referential. This occurs when the *Law* is situated above *Life itself*. Franz Hinkelammert, writing with reference to the Gospel of John in his book *The Cry of the Subject*, describes how Jeshúa ben Josef healed a blind man on Saturday (a day on which, according to the *Law*, no work should be done), for which he was reprimanded by the observers of the *Law*:²³

Jesus transgressed the law. He does this to cure a sick man. The law should not impede human life. Those who oppose him, do

so in name of obeying the law. Jesus reproaches those demanding the fulfillment of the law for the sin of not helping one's fellow man.²⁴

For the founder of Christianity, the *new* criterion is Life, which in turn provides the *ultimate* foundation for the Law.²⁵ Life is the *content* of the Law; its *inversion* is what Jeshúa and Paul of Tarsus criticize. Paul argues in various ways that the Law is ambiguous, showing firstly the impossibility of its perfect fulfillment:

I did not know what desire was until the Law told me: *Thou shalt not desire* (Exod. 20:17); at which point sin, taking this commandment as its basis, provoked in me all sorts of desires. (Rom. 7:7–8)

These passages have been commented upon by Jacques Lacan and Slavoj Žižek, but they must be situated within the effort to prove that the Law cannot serve as the *final* criterion for justification because, in this case, no one could possibly be deemed righteous.²⁶ “The Law is holy and the commandment holy, just, and good, but although good in itself it became death for me” (Rom. 7:12). Perfect fulfillment of the Law is impossible, such that everyone is left definitively without any possible justification. Not only this, but, moreover, the Law in its fetishized state demands such a degree of application that it can even produce death.

In effect, Paul knew very well the repressive power of the Law, since he had heard Stephen's speech in Jerusalem before he was killed:

They killed those who announced the coming of the Righteous, [Stephen exclaimed,] and you have now betrayed and murdered him. You, who received the Law by mediation of the envoys and have not observed it.” . . . The witnesses, leaving their hats at the feet of a man named Saul, set to stoning Stephen. . . . Saul approved the execution. (Acts of the Apostles 7:52–58, 1)

This all coincides with the passage in the Gospel of Luke (24:26): “Did not the *meshíakh* have to suffer all this to demonstrate his glory?” Here, *dóxa* indicates precisely the “glory” of the *meshíakh* in its full revelation, in the manifest presence that would dismiss

any pretension of the Law as ultimate foundation. If the Law killed the Righteous, this revealed to the new messianic community in the very act of the murder on the cross the corruption, the fetishism of the Law, and with this the community was liberated from the Law and denied it the power of serving as the basis for justification.²⁷ How could human beings be deemed just or unjust if the law itself had become *unjust*? As Hinkelammert says of the act according to which the death of Jeshúa ben Josef was justified:

Now Jesus attacks head-on: “If you [the members of the tribunal, the Law] were the children of Abraham, you would fulfill the work of Abraham. But you are trying to kill me, who has told you the truth I heard from God. Abraham did not do this. You do the same as your father. . . . You have Satan as your father and want to carry out the desires of your father.” (John 8:40–44, qtd. in *EG*, 45)

In effect, Abraham, *against the Law* of the Semitic people who sacrificed their firstborn sons, did not sacrifice his son Isaac (thereby constituting an anti-Oedipal situation). To be descended from Abraham is to know that there are occasions in which it is not necessary to obey the Law when Life is at risk. The prevailing orders (be they those of the Romans, Jews, or legalist Christians) could not call the Law into question as the single criterion for justification. Paul, alongside Jeshúa ben Josef, placed Life and *emunáh* above the Law.

Now I believe that the decisive moment of the Pauline argument can be grasped, and it is to be found in reference to the question of the *new* justificatory criterion. Therefore, and fourthly, Paul clearly states: “This is our thesis: the human being is *justified* by *emunáh* [in Hebrew: *עֲמוּנָה*; in Greek *pístis*: *πίστις*], independent of *the work of the Law*” (Rom. 3:28). This statement is the origin of all transformative—and even revolutionary—imperatives, one that radically transmutes the categorical framework of all political philosophy of the past twenty centuries (something impossible for the Greeks and Romans). This is the focus of the Epistle to the Romans, which deals in the last instance not with the question of the Law, but with the problem of the *new* justificatory criterion (which, in turn, is to

be understood according to the *subsumption* [καταργέιν] of the old Law to the *new* Law).²⁸

To respect the Law as the ultimate foundation for justification is like “putting oneself at the disposition of someone, obeying them like a slave; [and in fact in this obedience] one is a slave” (Rom. 6:16). One is an enslaved member of the Totality of the prevailing coercive system. Antonio Gramsci would say that, under the hegemony of the Law, it is the dominated who grant *consensus* to the ruling class. On the other hand, their *critical dissensus* destroys the possibility of constructing a legitimate hegemonic project: it attacks the foundation.

Only now can we tackle the concept of *emunáh*. To simply say “faith”—and considering the interpretive superpositions of the last twenty centuries, which have ended up burying the term’s meaning—is to commit a serious error. Moreover, applying the hermeneutical method that passes from the metaphor, or the rational symbolic account, to its categorical content, this question demands sufficient creativity to discover new semantic layers. As we have repeated many times, the traditional justificatory method was the Law. Now, the messianic community, the *remainder*, discovers a new source of legitimation. We propose that this be understood—for political philosophy, transferring the symbol—as the *new critical consensus* of a messianic community confronted with the collapse of the Law. The messianic community, the *people*, confronting the immense power of the (Roman) Empire, the temple (of Israel), and tradition (maintained by new Christians unable to overcome their ancient rites, customs, sacrifices, etc.), nevertheless dared to confront these powers from the *certainty* of possessing a conviction that can transform reality in its totality. That certainty—that *critical* consensus of the community itself—is what is called *emunáh* in Hebrew (אמונה) or *pístis* (πίστις) in Paul’s Greek, and which could be described as the enthusiastic certainty of the *critical* community (whose source is to be found in the people itself),²⁹ and which could be translated as a mutual *confidence* that is continuous through time as the intersubjective fidelity of the members of such a community, convinced of their responsibility to create a new agreement, contract, Alliance, or Testament. This new agreement

would legitimize or *justify* (“judge as just”) the fearless praxis of the extreme danger of “messianic time” (of Walter Benjamin) as a source for the legitimation of the *future* system.³⁰ (And here we part ways with Agamben, as we will see below.) I believe that this is how political philosophy should understand “justification by *faith*.”

In a political speech, Fidel Castro once exclaimed the following: “By *people*, we mean . . . when [a group] *believes in something and someone, above all when it believes sufficiently in itself*”—in other words, when it believes itself capable of being the collective actor responsible for creating a new and more just political system.³¹ This *belief*, this *faith*, this *confidence*, this intersubjective *fidelity* is a *new* source of *justification*, and it is self-referential. This is no longer the *justification according to the Law* that has ceased to be valid (for example, the *Laws of the Kingdoms of the Indies* of 1681 for New Spain in the process of independence), but rather a new *justification according to the faith* “of” the people “in” that same people, which is self-affirmed as an agent of historical transformation. (Or even revolutionary transformation were this necessary, as for example the creative event giving rise to the future and new legality of the 1814 *Constitution of Chilpancingo* for independent Mexico.)

Yet there remains a symbol whose meaning should be clarified. Paul writes:

Now [this is “Now-Time”], on the other hand, by dying to what had bound us we were free before the Law and we can serve (δουλεύειν)³² in virtue of a new *ruakh* [רוח in Hebrew; *pneuma*, πνεύμα in Greek], and not an old code” (Rom. 7:6).

That “spirit” indicates the beginning of the second *eón*, beyond the Totality of the Law. This is once again the enthusiasm, the mutual solidarity of the “rescued,” the “redeemed,” those “liberated” from the oppressive slavery of the Law.³³

But we still need to attempt to clarify a concept disputed by Schmitt and Taubes. We refer to the historical category of the *katékhoon* (κατέχων), with which Paul expresses the force that *holds back* the full realization of “*anomia*,” the moment in which the le-

gal system—reaching its self-referential or fetishistic culmination—kills the righteous (or the innocent) in the name of legality. This is the moment in which the contradiction of the Law is revealed, which is to say that it marks the end of the self-justification of the prevailing system. In order to avoid reaching this moment, it is necessary to “reform” all that is reformable to give more life, more time, as a prolongation of the prevailing system so that it does not become clearly repressive in its own eyes.³⁴ When what “holds it back” is annihilated, the system plunges, revealed in all its evil.³⁵ It is the moment of *anomía* in the time of the Law (the *legal* killing of innocents in Iraq or *extra-legal* torture in Guantánamo, which nevertheless appears *ad intra* a cynical legalism), which unleashes the second *anomía*, that of the *meshíakh*, which in no longer being able to respect the Law, rises up in rebellion, overthrowing it. This irruption of “Now-Time” begins the agonistic task seeking to found a just system, passing in extreme cases to even the complete destruction of the unjust order (as in the case of social and political revolutions).

In the fifth place, and faced with the *anomía* or the moment of the final repression of the repressive system, we see the emergence of those who decide to live in freedom: “Now (vuví), by dying to what had bound us we were free before the Law” (Rom. 7:6). Who are those who are freed from the *old* system’s Law? This is where the entire question of the *meshíakh*—and the messianic *people* (which is nearly redundant, since the *people* is messianic or it isn’t a people at all)—emerges.

Those who confront the Law—a law that has collapsed in the eyes of the “messianic” community—are those who abandon the mere “everyday *time* of the Law” (χρόνος) and burst into another world, another *eón*, from the Exteriority of the Law, from those held to be nothing. This explosive, *creative entry from the nothingness* of the system, gives rise to a different kind of *time* (καιρός). Now the messianic moment manifests itself, “in the *Now-Time*” (ἐν τῷ νῦν καιρῷ)³⁶ of the “*second* event”—with respect to what is now relegated as a *first* ontological “event” in Badiou’s terms—messianic *time*, the time of danger, the time in which all of the functions that were carried out under the old Legal order (of the

repressive system) are carried out *as if they weren't the same*, because now their meaning has radically changed.³⁷ Before they reinforced the system and were legitimized by it. Now they become *critical* of the system (even if they represent the same praxis: eating, being married, being a soldier), because that praxis is *oriented toward* [*se endereza a*] another project (that of the collapse of the system, as negativity, toward the construction of a future and more just system, as positivity). In this *time* of danger, Miguel Hidalgo y Portilla, a Mexican-born European and integrated member of the clergy, and the whole *people*, would become the liberators of Mexico. This is the *time* of George Washington, of Mao Zedong, and of Evo Morales. This is the moment at which Miguel Hidalgo sounded the bell of his church, not to announce the customary liturgical celebration (the colonial *khrónos*), but rather to convene an army to battle against the Spanish oppressors, abandoning his everyday life in that *Now-Time* (*kairós*) and transcending himself toward a *different* horizon. This is the very same messianic time (theorized in a secular manner by Benjamin), around which the most original categories of a critical and liberatory politics must be constructed.

Those responding to the *call* of the anointed (the *meshíakh*: Miguel Hidalgo, for example) now constitute a community that “splits off” from Israel as a whole, that for political philosophy refers to the mere “political community” in general as a *Totality*. In the *symbolic* categories of the Pauline (and Jewish) narrative, this is the “remainder” (λεῖμμα, *leimma* in Greek; שְׂאֵר, *she'ar* in Hebrew):

In the *Now-Time* there is left a remainder, chosen by grace. And if this is gratuitous, then the works [of the old system] are no longer of value, because that which is free would cease to be so. What follows? That Israel did not achieve what it sought;³⁸ the chosen [the new, messianic community] did, while the rest have been blinded, as was written: *God blinded their spirit, he gave them eyes not to see and ears not to hear* (Rom. 11:5–8).

The “scission” (*aforismós*), consequently, divides a Part from the Whole, a Part that is also itself partly outside the Whole, an op-

pressed Part at the heart of the political community now gains a creative presence such that it maintains a degree of *exteriority*: the *plebs*. This *plebs* constitutes, moreover, the origin of a future *populus* suggested by Ernesto Laclau, and that *populus* represents the community within a new order as a Whole, expressed in the symbolic narrative as a struggle to arrive at the *Promised Land*, “where milk and honey flows” (as the Sandinista hymn goes). Agamben rightly emphasizes:

*At a decisive instant, the elected people, every people, will necessarily situate itself as a remnant, as not-all.*³⁹ . . . The remnant is the figure, or the substantiality assumed by a people in a decisive moment, and as such is the only real political subject.⁴⁰ (TR, 58)

Those who remain within the old system (colonial New Spain for Hidalgo) do so as fetishists (*eyes that do not see, ears that do not hear*), unable to understand the *new creative event*. This is no longer a founding event (that of Hernán Cortés who organized New Spain as a colony), but the birth of a new system (independent Mexico). The original community (all of Israel) has divided. Some remain faithful to the old *truth* of the Law, slaves to it (the Spanish realists and their collaborators); others form a “remainder” in the danger of the “remaining time” (1 Cor. 7:29). The ruling class, as Gramsci would say, becomes a coercive and repressive class, the Law kills the just that rise up in rejection of the established consensus. The prevailing hegemony, the “kingdom of this world” in all its rigor, disintegrates. The “called” (from which we get “church,” *ecclesia*, from *klao*) and the “chosen” are now a splintered part of the nation as a whole. In this way, a “people” is born (*laos*, *λόας* in Greek; *am*, *אם* in Hebrew): “I will call them my *people*, those who are not my *people*” (Rom. 9:25).⁴¹ Hence the entire categorical problem of the *people* in political philosophy can be found within the symbolism of Pauline messianism: the central collective act in the historical creation of the new.

This praxis of those who throw themselves into the struggle for the *new* is seen, by “the wisdom of the world,” by the law, as “madness.” A *critical* political philosophy, then, understands that it will be paradoxical and incomprehensible for the system that it

leaves behind (the colony of New Spain seen from the metropolitan monarchy):

We put forward a *knowledge* [σοφίαν, *sophían* in Greek; a new epistemology], but not the knowledge of this world [the Law] and nor of the rulers who follow from the present time; . . . this no ruler in present history has come to understand (1 Cor. 2:6–8). For this reason God was kind enough to rescue [to redeem, to liberate] those who *believe* (πιστεύοντες) in the *madness* that we preach (1:22).

The wisdom of the messianic proposal (of Miguel Hidalgo or Evo Morales) to confront the Power of Imperial Law is *madness* for the old system (which draws its legitimacy from the *Laws of the Kingdoms of the Indies*, or the recommendations of the World Bank), but not for the messianic *people*, or indeed any *people* (Mexican or Bolivian).

Paul can therefore be found underlying certain essential *critical* categories that would later be employed (and frequently inverted) by the political philosophies of Byzantine and Latin Christendoms, of the Islamic world, of Modern Europe (including Marxism) and of contemporary political theories. He would be the dwarf moving the pieces on the chessboard of these cultures, just as Benjamin believed (according to Agamben's suggestive interpretation, which we will discuss below).

2. The Political Categories of Paul of Tarsus as Interpreted by Heidegger, Badiou, Žižek, Benjamin, Taubes, Agamben, and Hinkelammert

Let us approach the subject through some existing interpretations of Paul's symbolic narrative and from the perspective of political philosophy.

A

It is well known that the young Martin Heidegger (1889–1976) dedicated the years of 1920–1921 to *University Lectures* on Paul of Tarsus, which would prove determinant for the category of *fac-*

ticity on which his *Being and Time* (1927) would be based, and while this is not strictly a work of political philosophy, it can serve as a useful introduction to our subject. Here we can see clearly the Heideggerian methodological intention—correct, as far as I am concerned—and which is of interest for our exposition:

It is necessary to determine the meaning of words of the lecture's announcement preliminarily. This necessity is grounded in the peculiarity of philosophical concepts.⁴² . . . In the following, we do not intend to give a dogmatic or theological-exegetical interpretation, nor a historical study or a religious meditation, but only guidance for phenomenological understanding. (*PR*, 2:1, §14 [p. 45])

Which is to say that Heidegger would extract the *implicit philosophical concepts* (or *categories*, level [b.2] in figure 1) from the factical-everyday narrative of Paul's texts (level [a]) for his own ends. He would interpret phenomenologically the "factual experience of everyday life," which constitutes the existential horizon according to which the Epistles are written, with the latter thereby being considered as rational, symbolically based narratives. And on this level Heidegger distances himself from Martin Luther (in the insistence that "we need to liberate ourselves from Luther's point of view"⁴³), by advancing an existential approach to Paul from Paul himself, while attempting to prevent this interpretation from objectifying *modern* experience.

Heidegger engaged in some methodological clarifications that gesture toward *Being and Time*—which Badiou also takes advantage of—such as the concept of "factual life experience" as an ontological departure point. This "experience" is differentiated from other possible positions within the world, such as, for example, philosophical thought or scientific explanation (*PR*, §4, pp. 9ff.). Diverging from Troeltsch, Dilthey, Windelband, Rickert, Scheler and others, he describes the "historical" being in which we find "Concern of Factual Dasein [Being-there]" (*PR*, 2, §10, pp. 33ff.). He defines the "situation" as "something that belongs to *understanding* in the manner of enactment, [and] does not designate anything in the manner of an order. . . . We cannot *project* a situation

into a particular field of being, nor into *consciousness*” (PR, 2:3, §24, pp. 61ff.; [Dussel’s emphasis—Trans.]).⁴⁴ Once equipped with some *methodological* and *categorical* advances, Heidegger goes on to interpret “Paul’s experience.” This is an existential-philosophical reflection, not political philosophy; moreover, while it is eschatological, it does not discover the subject of “messianism” (which Benjamin along with Gershom Scholem glimpsed in the work of Franz Rosenzweig). Furthermore, Paul’s “world” is simply an independent ontological sphere, and not woven as the antithesis of the “world of the Law” as the horizon to be abolished and assumed (subsumed). What it lacks, then, is the dialectic character of the interpretation we are seeking.

It seems strange to us that Heidegger begins his interpretation with the Epistle to the Thessalonians, a text loaded with eschatological tension, with its temporality stretching tautly toward the future (*Sein-können*).⁴⁵ The question is: “How is the *world shared with others* given to him in the *situation* of epistolary redaction?” (PE, 114). The response can only be partial, because “we do not know the *world* around him” in a perfect sense (114). In any case, the effort is to “put oneself” into his world with the best possible information in order to discover the *meaning* of what confronted him every day. It is interesting to note that Heidegger, as he tends to do, begins to “work the words” in their capacity as signifiers, passing to their etymological origin and relating them to one another. Upon reaching *Thessalonians* 5:1, he comes across the expression: “About *time* [everyday: *khrónos*] and the *time* [messianic: *kairós*] . . . of the *Day of the Lord* [*heméra Kyríou*] will arrive like a thief in the night. But for Heidegger this lacks any special messianic meaning. He refers back to this subject later, when he says that: “To the Christian only his *tò nûn* [the *Now*] of the complex of enactment in which he really stands is to be decisive, but not the anticipation of a special *event* that is futurally situated in temporality” (PR, 4:§29, p. 81; [Dussel’s emphasis—Trans.]).

We similarly read that

from this complex of enactment with God arises something like *temporality* to begin with. II. Thess. 2:6–7: ‘*kai nûn tò katékhor*’ [and you know what is *now* restraining him]. . . . Theodoret,

Augustine, and others see in *katékho*n the precipitous order of the Roman Empire, which *suppresses* persecution of Christians by Jews. (*PR*, 4, §29; p. 81; [Dussel's emphasis—Trans.])⁴⁶

It is therefore worth indicating that the future philosopher of Freiburg was also preoccupied with Paul from a *philosophical* perspective, but one that was largely *phenomenological* rather than leading toward any kind of *political philosophy*. Furthermore, his reflections do not constitute a messianic interpretation, which is visible in the non-tension between the *world* of everyday life under the Law and the *new world* that originates in its critique.

B

Let us now touch on some points in Alain Badiou's (1937–) discussion of the subject, recalling that we have already dedicated some pages to the subject previously.⁴⁷ We will take into account what we said there, touching now only on a reading of *Saint Paul: The Foundation of Universalism*.⁴⁸

For Badiou, the case of Paul is a “pretext,” that is, it is an example to help better understand his own theory of the “subject” on the basis of the “event” (which constitutes a response to the crisis of the “historical subject as the proletariat” essentialized in certain *standard* Marxisms). The space for the articulation of the two terms (subject/event)—on which we agree—is “militancy” as an epistemological location, (*SP*, 31) a *singular* experience from which a *universalism* is opened up (45) (with which we disagree). Badiou has been building slowly on this theme during the course of nearly forty years,⁴⁹ but this remains a “politics of *emancipation*” that is very different from our “politics of *liberation*.” It is necessary from the beginning to clarify two methodological presuppositions. The first, with regard to the relationship between philosophy and the Pauline text itself. The second, the absence of categories that transcend a monadic ontology (i.e., the lack of the *third* dialectical moment of the political process, which was explained perfectly by Paul but not recognized by Badiou).

With regard to the first point, Badiou tirelessly affirms that his is not the same sort of access to the text that a “religious believer” could have, but rather an exclusively philosophical one (which I be-

lieve to be correct). But this does not mean that we can objectify Paul's position as an "anti-philosophical" one (Badiou attempts to demonstrate this, for example, with his failure at the Areopagus⁵⁰). But this is because he understands his philosophical task as one of desacralization, and as the negation of religion as such (failing to distinguish desacralization from de-fetishization, as we will see). If we bear in mind the distinctions we have already formulated, we can clarify these confusions. *Paul's text* is a symbolically based *rational* narrative (not irrational, as Badiou believes, seemingly aligning rationality with modern or Greco-Roman ontological experience). Since Badiou rejects hermeneutics, it is impossible for him to clarify the "double" meaning of the symbol in Paul's everyday text in order to thereby decant its *implicit* categories. I think, on the contrary, that the task is to enable the symbol to pass (level a of figure 1) to the level of a *strictly* conceptual philosophical discourse (2.b).

The second, and more serious point, is that Badiou moves *solely* on the ontological level, that of the Totality that is given or called into question (from the perspective of an abstract, singular, idealist subject, with no relation to the *situation*, to memory, to history, or to the socioeconomic and political conditions of the Roman Empire and the rabbinical Judaism of the diaspora). Paul is a good pretext to demonstrate the "conversion" as the "exception" that emerges from nothingness and has as a project the "vacuum" that is progressively filled in "fidelity" to a *purely* subjective "truth" (*SP*, 2).⁵¹ For us, on the other hand, Paul is materially inserted into a world of slaves and deep structures of imperial domination, against the unjust legalism in fulfillment of the Law, in order to irrupt *communiterily* (as a "remainder") into the Empire, into rabbinical Judaism, and into "messianic" groups, against those like Peter, who want to obey both an already subjectively abolished Law and the *new law* of the critical consensus of the same community, the *people*, established by *emunáh* (which has nothing to do with "faith" as Badiou explains it, in its inverted and fetishized contemporary meaning). Badiou finds himself with no dialectical "exit" to overcome the trap of the prevailing Totality (and even less so if it is thought from the perspective of the ontology of "*mathémata*") through an empirical, historic, conditioned militant com-

munity that “*rises up*” (*is raised from the dead*).⁵² The community thus *materially* affirms the negated life of the slaves, the oppressed, the excluded, et cetera (that is, agreeing with Marx’s position), and *formally* as a new “justification” or legitimacy, and which has “hope” (ἐλπίς) in a more just future. “To leave” the system (“this world”) and “rise up” (rise from the dead) was the “messianic” act of irrupting from a concrete *situation* into empirical history as a precise, collective act: the “*Now-Time*” that *reverses the reversal*. Without this “*third term*”—the “spirit,” the *new, future Totality*, the postulate based in the pardoning of sin⁵³—nothing in Paul can be understood. And Badiou does not have a *third* dialectical term (exteriority or the ethical, metaphysical transcendence suggested by Levinas, although it is impossible to derive *political* conclusions from the latter).

It is correct to say, in this case, that “the subject does not pre-exist the event,” but not that “truth is entirely *subjective*” (*SP*, 14, 29). The messianic act (to speak like Benjamin) emerges as an “event,” but not as the “first” (which is the only one that Badiou considers), but rather as the *second* “event.” The *first* event, during the first *eón*—from the *sin* of Adam to hope and the *first* Alliance with Abraham—culminates in the Law promulgated by Moses in the Sinai. It constitutes the given, prevailing Totality, explained in the *Architectonics of the Politics of Liberation*. The *second* event (which we now propose through Badiou, beyond Badiou) is the pardon of the sins of the second Adam and the *new* Alliance, both achieved by Jeshúa ben Josef. After the messianic act, the *old* “privilege” of the chosen People of Israel loses its exceptionality, since the *old* Law becomes more of a burden than an advantage. The new *choice* is not a privilege, but a responsibility. It is no longer *particular* to the single chosen people, but is also available to the “*goím*” (גוים), to all nations.⁵⁴ It is not *singularity* that attains *universality*, as Badiou would argue (*SP*, 13).⁵⁵ It is a concrete and historical messianic *community* that breaks down the walls of the ontological horizon of the *Being of the world* (of the Empire, of the temple, of the Law, etc.) and launches a “truth-process,” yes, but one with a completely different density than the “truth” of the *modern* subject that Badiou still hopes to recover.

Truth is played out in time as a “process,” as “fidelity,” not as freedom attained, but as libera-*tion*, that is, as a process. But this process cannot be “indifferent to the state of the situation,” but rather must be precisely linked to and rooted in that situation. The subject Badiou is proposing for us—one “unconditioned” by “conversion”—is frankly anti-Pauline (and, furthermore, anti-Marxist) (*SP*, 15). The relativity of determination is one thing, but the total indeterminacy of the irrational origin of the “convert” (as Badiou explains) is another. In the Second and Third *Theses on Feuerbach*, Marx reminds us:

The question whether objective truth can be attributed to human thinking is not a question of theory but is a *practical* question.⁵⁶

The [naïve] materialist doctrine that men are products of circumstances and upbringing, and that, therefore, changed men are products of other circumstances and changed upbringing, forgets that it is men who change circumstances. . . . The coincidence of the changing [*veränderte*] of circumstances [Badiou’s state of the situation?] and the transformation of human beings themselves [“messianic” action?] can be conceived and rationally understood only as *transformative practice* [*umwälzende Praxis*]. (*MEW*, 3:534)

But that “transformation” (on the economic, political, pedagogical, religious, or aesthetic levels, etc.) is neither singular, nor unconditioned, nor solely subjective. It is a “truth-process” as “fidelity,” but one that is *real* and *objective*. Paul demonstrated this *objectivity* without detaching it from “messianic” subjectivity (which is *transformative*, and not merely *reformist*).⁵⁷

C

For his part, Slavoj Žižek, in *The Puppet and the Dwarf: The Perverse Core of Christianity*, advances (in his customarily suggestive but unsystematic manner, making precise understanding difficult) a Lacanian interpretation within a Hegelian and Marxist horizon.⁵⁸ His existential location, on the geographic periphery of Europe (his native Slovenia), partially explains his return to Eurocentric positions, evident among other things in arguments

that reflect his recent transition to *radical Christian orthodoxy*.⁵⁹ This can be seen in his use of the text *Orthodoxy*, written by the subtle, intelligent, and paradoxical conservative Catholic Gilbert Keith Chesterton.⁶⁰

Lacan alluded to our subject in a session of his *Seminar on The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, and felt the need to make use, as one might suppose, of chapter 7 of the Epistle to the Romans, confronting the psychoanalytic paradox Paul presents:

Is the Law the Thing [*Ding*]? Certainly not [Lacan exclaims]. Yet I can only know of the Thing by means of the Law. . . . But even without the Law, I was once alive. But when the commandment appeared, the Thing flared up, returned once again, I met my death. . . . some of you at least will have begun to suspect that it is no longer I who have been speaking. In fact, . . . this is the speech of Saint Paul on the subject of the relations between the law and sin in the Epistle to the Romans, Chapter 7, paragraph 7. Whatever some may think in certain [Jacobin] milieux, you would be wrong to think that the religious authors aren't a good read. . . . The dialectical relationship between desire and the Law causes our *desire* to flare up only in relation to the Law, through which it becomes the *desire for death*.⁶¹

This chapter of the Pauline text refers to the *impossibility* of fulfilling the Law due to the very tendencies of human finitude. By this Paul seeks to suggest that those who justify the rectitude of their action according to the Law will always be condemned in the end, because it cannot be obeyed *perfectly*. *Death* is sin, the death of the worthiness of promised happiness. The way to avoid the *death of desire* is to situate this desire in another *place*: as desire and “messianic” hope, in a *different* time and field. This is no longer the (contradictory) field of the “works of the Law,” but the “messianic” field of *emunáh*, where “justification” does not refer to the *perfect* fulfillment of a Law but instead to the “faithful” (again, *emunáh*) compromise to a *responsibility* in the agony of the *deconstruction* of the order of the Law (which produces the death of those opposing it: like “the righteous crucified”) and the *construction* as a *people* (the “remainder”) of a *new*, future order,

the “*new Jerusalem*” of the book of Apocalypse (also adequately translated as Revelation). In this case we have taken Paul out of the realm of *psychoanalysis*, which can fall into a certain psychologizing subjectivism in its interpretations, in order to move him into the more objective realm of *politics*. (This is not to deny, however, the possibility of epistemologically keeping him at the level of psychoanalysis.)

Žižek is like a fish in water in the discourse of Lacanian subjectivity, which is partly compensated for by the objectivity of his Marxist-Hegelianism.⁶² Within philosophy of religion (which can be *therapeutic* like Chesterton’s or *critical* like Paul’s) his thesis of the coincidence of materialism and Christianity has already been explicitly argued by Ernst Bloch.⁶³ But Žižek rightly offers a “materialist” element (which I understand as a final reference to the factual, concrete human Life of those who “are *hungry*”) for the Pauline question we are dealing with that we need to incorporate into the debate: “to become a true dialectical materialist, one should go through the Christian experience” (PD, 6) whose central “kernel” is “subversive,” but which at the same time has a “perverse” aspect consisting in the need for treason: that of Judas. (And here Žižek comes very close to the position of the Gnostic *Gospel of Judas*.) As a result of this treason, the *meshíakh* can manifest his glory and “rescue the *multitude*.”⁶⁴ As Isaiah sings in the fourth “Poem of the Servant of Yahveh”:

Through the suffering of his entire being, he will see the light and will be satisfied; in his pain my righteous servant, he will justify the *multitude*. . . . He has borne the shortcomings of the multitude (53, 11).

The “servant” (*hébed*, עֶבֶד in Hebrew) “rescues” (“redeems”) the slaves, the people, from the slavery of the Legal system: “In this way he will astonish the multitude of the *goím*” (PD, 52, 15).⁶⁵ Žižek rightly opposes a legalist view of the meaning of the death of *Khrístós*, but he only partially outlines the alternative view (thereby maintaining the thesis of the “perverse kernel”).⁶⁶ In this case everyone would have *participated* in his death at the hands of the Law and would therefore be free. But it would seem that this

“participation” is something metaphysical (in the sense of some Hellenized Church Fathers). What is lost is the meaning of the *empirical* death—of “Christ’s death as such” (*PD*, 102)—which seems to have no importance for Žižek. If on the other hand we understand the *empirical* death of the righteous man, according to his own people’s eyes (those of the “*messianic* community,” the “remainder”), as a *critical consensus* on the need to overthrow the Law (as *emunáh*), this materialistically destroys the *apparent* justice of the Law—the *first*, prevailing Totality—since it is understood that this death also kills the Law. In the messianic community and messianic *time* all have been sinners and all have been pardoned, and there is now no difference between Jews and *goím* (the non-Jewish nations): all are in debt to *grace* (recovered innocence), but all are *chosen* in the *responsibility* of the militant compromise to the new task *beyond* the horizon of the Law (the *new*, future Totality). Žižek does not have access to this possibility, because he dialectically lacks the *second* Totality, the Alterity that maintains *Exteriority* vis-à-vis the Legal system. He lacks the creative political reconstruction of ethical institutions of Levinas, although he continuously touches on the subject.

Judas was not necessary, nor was his treason. The death of the *meshíakh* was not necessary, since those in charge of the Law had received the Light of the message.⁶⁷ But having closed the doors leading out of the system, those in charge of this system murdered the righteous innocent. This is the divine moment when human being can face God as an Other, God, to complete his work and demonstrate his perfection, can shout against Gnostics and Leibniz: “Evil exists!, *ergo* it is possible for the perfect Being who has engendered so much glory to exist as well!”⁶⁸ The *first* Totality fell in the *adikía* (the final time of repression and death against those who cease to grant consensus to domination), and as a result, the system (the *flesh*) does not allow power to “accumulate” at the base. It eliminates the “teacher” (*rabí*, as they called them), in an effort to eliminate *criticism*, but in so doing the Law decrees its own collapse. Therefore, the death of the *meshíakh* could not be desired, much less decreed by the Father. This was the deed of the Law, of its fetishized power, of the “princes of this world” (Mark 10:42) at

the beginning of its end. The disciples and the “messianic” community were *born* in the contemplation of that death of the righteous innocent at the hands of the Law that thereby lost its “foundation.” The Law, as a justificatory system, grants *legitimation*, which is to say that it is *based* on the *consensus populi* (as Bartolomé de las Casas would define it). Upon losing that consensus the Law *collapses*, and Paul describes this in a precise manner: “Being of a divine nature [like all human beings] *alienated himself* and came to be a *servant*, one of many . . . being faithful until death, and even death on the cross. [For this reason he was praised as] Jeshúa, the *meshíakh*” (Phil. 2:6–11). This a materialist interpretation of the meaning of the death of the *meshíakh* “as such,” and his death has a central meaning for the message, but not within a psychologized, intimate hermeneutic that might think that mere pain can lead to one’s salvation. This is masochism (by the believer) or sadism (by such a God). Perhaps there is no “perverse kernel of Christianity.” Perhaps there is instead a central kernel in Christianity that is woven around the *paradigm of the Exodus*.⁶⁹

Žižek speaks of “love” in Paul’s Epistles.⁷⁰ However, he does not distinguish clearly between *éros* (desire) and *philia* (Greco-Roman friendship) on the one hand, both within the order of the Law, and *agápe* (*ἀγάπη* in Greek) on the other, which is proper to the “messianic” community. *Agápe* is a love for the Other as other, a love based on responsibility for the full realization of the Other, a love of *service* and availability that surpasses mere *fraternity* (as the friendship of the community under the Law). It represents *solidarity* with “the widow, the orphan, the poor, the foreigner” since the times of Hammurabi; solidarity with the weak, the oppressed, and the exploited. Greco-Roman ethics under the Law had no understanding of this ethical-trans-ontological affectivity, that along with Levinas we could term *metaphysical desire* (*désir métaphysique*).⁷¹ This is love, which in effect is not “internal,” but rather intersubjective, historical, and politically subversive, and solidifies the messianic “remainder,” giving it the necessary courage to confront the danger: “We the strong must bear the weaknesses of the weak and not seek that which pleases us. Let us achieve *the satisfaction of the Other* for their good, looking toward the constructive. Nor did the *meshíakh* seek his *own* satisfaction” (Rom. 15:1–2).

D

Walter Benjamin (1892–1940) allows us to see certain traces of his interest in Paul, as he specifically derives from the latter his concept of *messianic* time. This concept must be linked with the following enigmatic expression: “The authentic conception of historic time rests entirely on the image of *redemption* (*Erlösung*),” which can provide for us the key to his complex and difficult thought.⁷² Michael Löwy writes:

Utopia, anarchism, revolution and messianism combine alchemically and join with a neo-romantic cultural critique of “progress” and purely scientific/technical knowledge. The past (monastic communities) and the future (anarchist utopia) are directly associated in typically romantic/revolutionary terms.⁷³

Benjamin belongs to a generation of young assimilated Jews that emerges around the so-called First World War, thanks to a movement that is launched by, among others, the old Hermann Cohen (1842–1918), who had retired in 1912 from the neo-Kantian University of Marburg, dedicating himself to rethinking the experience of his Jewish community in Berlin. Franz Rosenzweig himself (1886–1929) attended Cohen’s *Lehranstalt*, and his work *The Star of Redemption* is certainly inspired by Cohen’s book *Religion of Reason Out of the Sources of Judaism*.⁷⁴ Cohen theorizes Judaism through a neo-Kantian philosophical lens; Rosenzweig would do so through the Hegelian tradition, which would later be more comprehensible for Marxists like Benjamin or Heideggerians (like Levinas). The “world” (*Welt*) or Totality would be Rosenzweig’s meta-category that would need to be overcome.

In effect, this foundational text by Cohen attempts to think, from the perspective of neo-Kantian philosophical culture, the generative kernel of the Jewish experience. It is interesting to observe that Cohen’s exposition is very similar to the framework that Rosenzweig would develop in his work, which was written after having read Cohen’s still unpublished text in Berlin. We can say that its essential structure consists of four central categories. Cohen begins with (a) idolatry,⁷⁵ from which the possibility of surpassing this experience emerges as the task proper to Judaism. This overcoming has

a dialectic; it passes (b) from the *creation*, (c) to *revelation* (where he lingers for several long paragraphs), in order to culminate (d) in reconciliation through *redemption* (at which point he describes the content of Jewish life in great detail until the end of the book).⁷⁶ This constitutes a reflection by a believer with significant philosophical education, such that he poses the questions at the heights of the most demanding of academic cultures. He says little of Paul, and what little he does say is generally negative:

Distrust of the value of the law was aroused principally by Paul, and it has been kept alive through his criticism and polemics. . . . To begin with, Paul's own example reveals how difficult it is to leave the moral law undamaged. . . . [For him] moral law would be not only superfluous but, even more, damaging. Paul's intention is to disparage the law . . . because he wants to establish faith in salvation [redemption] . . . as the only basis for human morality. (RR, 43)

At this point his interpretation is a traditional one. Cohen refers to the *meshíakh* (RR, chapter 13 and elsewhere), but it is not a fundamental category within his argument. However, it is necessary to note that Cohen has a special sensitivity for the *economic-material* level (and this attitude will not appear with the same vehemence later). He writes, for example:

The Messiah . . . is the representative of suffering. . . . Poverty is the moral defect of previous history. . . . The Messiah is seized by the distress of mankind in its entirety. . . . He is diseased and weak . . . riding upon an ass. (RR, 264, 266)

The principle of “justice” (in Hebrew *tsadakah*: צדקה) refers fundamentally to the slave and her liberation (on payment of a ransom or redemption), to the worker and her just wage, to property that must be dissolved and returned to the community every seven years; et cetera. Therefore, “the entire Torah is a remembrance of the *liberation* from Egyptian slavery, which, as the cradle of the Jewish people, is not deplored, let alone condemned, but celebrated in gratitude” (RR, 431; [Dussel's emphasis—Trans.]). *A Politics of Liberation* sets out from precisely this type of critical category.

Gershom Scholem (1897–1982) recommended to Benjamin that he read Rosenzweig’s book, which had just appeared in 1920.⁷⁷ Benjamin was part of the Jewish “youth movements” in 1913 when he met Scholem (*WB*, 3).⁷⁸ Both were assimilated Jews who did not practice their religion, and the speech that the young (twenty-one-year-old) Benjamin gave shows his attitude: his argument was criticized by the most resolute among the Zionists. Benjamin was an assimilated Jew but never a Zionist, which led to him not seriously studying Hebrew (perhaps out of an *enlightened* philosophical resistance) nor leaving for Israel as his close friend Scholem did. He understood messianism but not explicitly as a believer, because he decided to remain within European intellectual circles (even if these comprised an unrecognized and strange spectrum). Though not an atheist he was a decided Marxist, at least during the second part of his life; this would not make him trustworthy for party members, whom he considered joining. In the end, however, and for the same reasons that he did not travel to Israel, he did not want to be an unconditional militant. He was a neo-romantic as were so many studied by Löwy, with no intention of operating in concrete, day-to-day politics. On this past point he followed the reflections of Cohen:

The universalism of messianism is the consequence of the anomaly between state and people in the history of Israel (*RR*, 254). . . . Another riddle is explained through this contradiction. The *state* had to perish; the *people*, however, had to remain. (*RR*, 252; [Dussel’s emphasis—Trans.])

This Jewish anarchism would enter into crisis with the Zionist appearance of the State of Israel, and much more with the outbreak of the infernal hunting of Palestinians, a genocide similar to the Warsaw Ghetto (which we are still living today, January 4, 2009, with the destruction of the five-thousand-year-old community of Gaza).⁷⁹

Benjamin says little explicitly about Paul of Tarsus, but if we follow the lead of Agamben’s well-founded suspicions, we can nevertheless say that Paul’s explicit absence does not mean that he is

not a fundamental presence (see Agamben, *TR*, 138ss). All signs point us toward the enigmatic passage at the outset of his *On the Concept of History*, in which he describes the presence of a dwarf hidden under the chessboard, who moves the pieces but remains unseen. He concludes:

One can imagine a philosophic counterpart to this apparatus. The puppet, called “historical materialism,” is to win all the time. It can easily be a match for anyone if it enlists the services of theology, which today, as we know, is small and ugly and has to keep out of sight.⁸⁰

Agamben asks himself unexpectedly: “Who is this hunchback theologian, so well hidden by the author in his theses that not a single person yet has identified him?” (*SC*, 138). And I ask myself: Why is it that this *dwarf* and indeed *theology* itself “must be kept out of sight”? And furthermore: Why appeal to a theology that is considered “small and ugly” by the Jacobin Enlightenment, which removed such texts from the faculties of philosophy, as we mentioned above? Benjamin, an unorthodox neo-romantic who is equally unorthodox in his Marxism and materialism, does not want to deny his Jewish origin, but rather interprets his people as a *culture*—which is enough for him as a philosopher and art critic—more than as a religion or a secularized religion, as Scholem affirmed. Therefore, in the intellectual circles in which he hopes to gain influence he hides these sources, presenting them instead as enigmas to be resolved. Agamben, I believe, is correct.

This subtle argument is based on indirect insinuations. At the end of the second thesis, we read:

Then, like every generation that preceded us, we have been endowed with a weak messianic power [*eine schwache messianische Kraft*],⁸¹ a power on which the past has a claim. Such a claim cannot be settled cheaply. The historical materialist is aware of this. (*OC*, 390)

Agamben suggests that Paul dealt with this question in 2 Corinthians 12:9–10, when in Luther’s German translation the following is written: “power (*Kraft*) is fulfilled in weakness (*Schwache*).”

Moreover, following J. Taubes, Agamben indicates that in the *Political-Theological Fragment* Benjamin is referring to the Epistle to the Romans, because of its content (however inverted) and the presence of the concept of the “fleeting,” the “ephemeral” (*Vergänglichkeit*), used on three occasions at the end of the text in question (*GS*, 1/2:204).

Also, the concept of “image” (*Bild*) that Benjamin employs refers to Paul as well. Agamben shows that the “typological relation” (*TR*, 73) (of a past event that announces and is taken up in messianic *Now-Time*) was expressed in Luther’s German with the term “*Bild*” (image),⁸² and is especially present in Thesis V:

The true image [*Bild*] of the past flits by [*huscht*]. The past can be seized only as an image that flashes up at the moment of its recognizability, 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. (*OC*, 391)⁸³

Moreover, as we read, it “passes suddenly,” rapidly; this is another reference to 1 Corinthians 7:29–31: “Time has become shorter . . . and so the *figure* of this world *passes*.”

The entire Pauline influence is synthesized in the discovery of “*Now-Time*” (*Jetzt-Zeit*), which is a literal translation of the Greek expression that we have already transcribed above; *hò nūn kairós*, frequently found in the Epistle to the Romans, and which Benjamin expresses in Thesis XIV: “History is the object of a construction whose place is formed not in homogenous and empty time, but in that which is fulfilled by *Now-Time*.⁸⁴ For Robespierre, Roman antiquity was a past charged with this *Now-Time*, which he exploded out of the continuum of history” (*GS*, Thesis XIV [701]; [English translation modified—Trans.]). This is the messianic time that we have been discussing in all the authors considered above. It is from this messianic time of the now, the present, that we have the capacity to read moments in the past that had the same messianic density. It is from the danger of the messianic compromise that we can understand and recover those moments in the past fulfilled according to the same attitude. Agamben closes his discussion with a passage by Benjamin:

The read *image*, that is, the image in the now of recognizability (*Erkennbarkeit*), bears to a high degree the marks of this critical and dangerous (*gefährlichen*) moment which is discovered beneath all reading.⁸⁵

When, in *Now-Time*, someone like Evo Morales reads the sacred texts of the consecration of ancestral Aymara authorities at the “Sun Gate” in Tihawanaku, these ancient texts are “recognizable” to him (in all their significance) from the danger of the *now* of challenging the white *criollo* and *ladino* customs that have predominated for five centuries. The past, which lies hidden, which can disappear without a trace, and which soon passes, is recalled, revived in the messianic *now* of the Bolivian cultural revolution.

Benjamin wrote, as we have quoted, that “the authentic conception of historic time rests entirely on the image of *redemption* (*Erlösung*).” What could such a proposition mean? We have already seen the importance of redemption in Cohen and Rosenzweig, and Paul uses the term frequently. In its original Greek form, “redemption” refers to the manumission of the slave, the paying of a ransom in exchange for the slave’s freedom. Redemption, therefore, refers to the “*liberation* of the slaves.” As a result, *critical* politics, a politics of *liberation* (or *redemption*) sets out from the moment in which a part of the political community (the “remainder,” the “people” as *plebs*) has been “rescued,” or in Paul’s language: they are not held responsible for errors (*amartía*) or the guilt of having committed them. Pardon opens up a regime of gratitude. The “people” finds itself freed, rescued from the “slavery of sin,” from the Law. This state of recovered innocence is the effect of “redemption,” of the “ransom.” The Egyptian slave stands up and sets out on a path. Paul speaks repeatedly of the ἀπολύτρωσις (in Greek, *apolytrosis*; “redemption,” “liberation”) that comes from λύτρον (*lytron* in Greek; in Hebrew: גואל, the rescuer, the liberator). Now we will see how this category will be used in critical political philosophy.

E

Jacob Taubes (1923–1982) is in a completely different situation from those discussed up to this point. At the end of the twentieth

century, Taubes had lived through the experience of the Holocaust and the foundation of the state of Israel. What Levinas believed would signify the end of the crisis of Jewish assimilation through the creation of a state ended up producing an inevitable crisis. Jews were now living the same contradiction that Christians had suffered in the fourth century. The Davidic state, founded by Zionism, was no panacea. Judaism needed to ask itself once again about its own meaning. Taubes, moreover, is a political philosopher who maintained a respectful friendship with Schmitt in postwar Germany (which seems incomprehensible). His 1987 Heidelberg seminar on Paul of Tarsus is especially significant. Taubes describes Paul, a diasporic Jew, as one who acts and thinks from a strict Jewish tradition without, however, sparing the critique he would make (in spite of himself) of the sin of the Jewish people. In so doing—as a Jew showing his own people how they had fallen into the desertion of their God so often predicted by their prophets—he situated himself within the best tradition of Israel. This is a *Paul who is Jewish*, perfectly Jewish, but who supports a new *messianism*, and this is the basis of his “Christianity” (a term that he never used in its current sense). Taubes is not interested in the figure of Jeshúa ben Josef, as he calls him (a name we have adopted), and in this the position of Hinkelammert is very much the opposite (as with others who have dealt with the subject in Latin America).

As a student of Scholem, Taubes has a special relationship with Benjamin (whom he nevertheless criticizes), and he even joins in a creative and respectful dialogue with the right-wing Catholic Schmitt. Taubes’s firsthand knowledge of the academic atmosphere of Germany, the United States, and Israel does not prevent him from ironically critiquing their institutions. The work we will discuss here is a passionate one.⁸⁶ Its intuitions, based on extensive research, are the most original existing on the subject, including those we have considered already. However, from the beginning we would like to mention a suspicion that allows us to enunciate a position that could be called “with Taubes, beyond Taubes.” Referring to Bloch and Benjamin, he writes the following:

I don’t like the mystical tone of their Marxism . . . , within which, in my opinion, there remains no space for religious expe-

rience. . . . Of course, I understand what Ernst Bloch and Walter Benjamin hope to do: to the point of trivialization, it is being repeated on the Catholic and Protestant left, and it is echoed in the Christianity of the popular church in Latin America. But despite the spiritual effort that Bloch and Benjamin make on the terrain of the concept and the image, there remains a hiatus [*hiato*] that cannot be overcome in a Marxist fashion.⁸⁷

This is a passing phrase, but we are grateful to him for making it explicit, because it allows us to see his *Eurocentrism*, his disdain for and neglect of Latin American thought—he would benefit from reading the work of Michael Löwy, at least—and his inability to understand Benjamin’s discussion of “materialism.” (Coming from someone like Hinkelammert, this discussion gains a degree of authority that Benjamin, like Taubes, would never have managed to achieve, because he lacked a *precise, in-depth* reconstructively oriented study of Marx’s entire body of work, as we ourselves have undertaken.) Let us return to the subject at hand.

In the first place, since Paul had never been to Rome, the Epistle is sent to an unknown “messianic” (Christian) community, the majority of whom were *proselytes*.⁸⁸ But at the same time it would seem as though Paul needed to justify himself to members of the community who demanded proof of his authority, since he was not among the “twelve.” As a result the Epistle is exceedingly argumentative, setting out from the ancient traditions of the Jewish people. He needed to attract the community’s attention through his knowledge of the Law. But at the same time, he also needed to use weapons of argumentation, because the Epistle is a formidable indictment of the prevailing Power, insofar as it aims to give the *messianic* community a strategy to use within the very heart of the immense Empire founded on (justified by) the *Lex Romana*. Politically, Paul showed that the law had ceased to serve as the criterion of “justification.” This attack is aimed, as we have already said, against Roman Law, against the Jewish Torah, and against the orthodox formalism of the ambiguities of some Judaizing members of the “messianic” (*Christian*) community. Taubes’s Paul is wholly Jewish, and so needs to prove to the Jews why, despite having been chosen—and without God denying that choice—they can never-

theless lose the privileges of the Alliance due to the sin committed by Israel. Being chosen was not a privilege but a responsibility. Due to their betrayal, God now chooses the *goím*. But at the same time God is counting on the people of Israel, because it is from among their ranks that a *faithful remainder* will be chosen, and from them, all of them Jews, that there will be an opening to the non-Jewish nations: a *new* people that is transformed from the remainder of a people and a “non-people” into “my people.” The choice of nations occupies chapters 2–7 of the Epistle. But Taubes is especially interested by chapters 9–12, and this is the subject of his discussion with Carl Schmitt in 1970. A central point is the following:

*I have reserved for myself seven thousand men who have not knelt before Baal.*⁸⁹ And the same in the *Now-Time*, there remains a freely chosen *residue*. And if it is free (*kharity*) it is not based on works (*érgon*), otherwise the free (*kháris*) would cease to be such. What follows? That although Israel did not achieve what it sought, the [newly] chosen achieved it. (Rom. 8:4–8).

Taubes demonstrates that the possibility of God rejecting the people and breaking the Alliance has always been present for Israel. An original element of his interpretation lies in situating the *rite* as his explanatory moment (so prevalent today in the indigenous communities of revolutionary Bolivia, in Zapatista Chiapas, or in the Jewish tradition). The text of the Epistle to the Romans was written with the purpose of explaining the situation celebrated in a Jewish festival, the “Days of Awe” of Yom Kippur: for centuries Jews have implored God to pardon their sins, and thus prevented him breaking the pact, the Alliance, because of their inevitable infidelities. Paul responds: “Enough!” The measure has been fulfilled; the line has been crossed: he who preached “*metanoia*” (conversion) has been murdered. The death of the Righteous, the *meshiákh*, under the Law, has destroyed that Law’s very meaning.

Thus three legal instances collapse: the Roman Empire, the temple and the synagogue, and the norms that the Judaizing Christians attempted to impose on the new *messianic* community. Now, as always, “justification” refers to the *emunáh*. The promise was made to Abraham because he had *emunáh*, before the Law even existed.

This attitude (*emunáh*) only bursts forth in history, in *Now-Time*, when the “remainder” appears as a *messianic* actor, constituting itself as a community receiving the “spirit” (*pneuma*). Here Taubes reviews the meaning of the concept of “spirit” from Aristotle to Hegel (*PT*, 38, 128), in order to say—synthesizing his position, almost in passing—that “*pneuma* [is] a force that transforms a people” (*PT*, 45). Once the people, arising from this “spirit” (which I will philosophically call a “*critical intersubjective consensus*,” and which in a precise manner constitutes a people as *people*, the “remainder”—the *plebs*—in rupture with the divided political community), begins its historic-messianic task, it will bear the events of the world of the first *eón*, under the Law (the Roman Empire, Israel, etc.) “*as if they did not*” now have the capacity to give existence meaning: “So, from now on, . . . let those who suffer [do so] *as if they did not*, and those who enjoy, *as if they did not*” (1 Cor. 7:29–31). This would constitute, in Taubes’s interpretation, the meaning of Benjamin’s *nihilism*. In Latin America someone like Evo Morales, for example, dresses like a *campesino* despite being president, because he lives *as though he were not* president of the traditional bourgeois system, since in *messianic time*, the time of the continued *danger* of being murdered by the oligarchy (and the intelligence service of the United States: this is not metaphorical!), the president is a servant of the people in the delegated exercise of *obediential power* (as he himself has called it; see “Thesis 4” in *TTP*).

The interpretations that Taubes puts forth of the positions taken toward Paul of Tarsus by C. Schmitt, Hans Blumenberg, and even Freud and Nietzsche are of great interest to us. (In this last case the metaphysician of the “eternal return” must have believed himself the “Anti-Paul,” since he thought Jeshúa was a vulgar idiot, meaning that it would not have been worth it to be the “Anti-Christ.”)

The richness of Taubes’s book is inexhaustible, and we will bear it in mind throughout our *Critique of Bourgeois Political Philosophy* [that is, the *PL*—Trans.], as Marx would have called it, had he written a treatise on politics rather than critical economics. Our final thesis can be synthesized in two extreme positions proposed by the editors of this valuable book (alongside a third, which I believe remains necessary):

But while Taubes (and Paul⁹⁰) derive from this the conclusion that there are no legitimate political orders whatsoever (but only legal orders)—this point of view regards itself as “negative political theology”—Schmitt retains the postulate of the representative political order, which draws its legitimacy from the divine sovereignty that it has made manifest. Only the truth that has been revealed as God’s will is capable of founding an authority that demands obedience. (*PT*, 139)⁹¹

The first position (a) sounds like anarchy and approximates Levinas’s interpretation of politics. The second, on the other hand, (b) is better understood as a traditionally right-wing position, holding that all power comes from God and is delegated to authorities. By contrast, I follow Paul and think (c) that the doctrine of “justification by *emunáh*” opens the door to power emerging from the *people* itself receiving the “spirit”; a “spirit” that represents the messianic consciousness of the community of the New Alliance and receives a new promise insofar as it faithfully reconstructs the Kingdom of God, where justification sets out from the consensus of the people as “children of God” and not as “slaves” under the Law. In this context, Paul employs a strange concept: “they received a spirit which *transforms them into children* (ἰοθεσία) and they can shout: ¡Abba! ¡Father!” (Rom. 8:15); “because all those who allow themselves to be carried by the *spirit* of God are *God’s children*” (8:14). In the middle of the Empire, the slaves in their quarters and those oppressed under the Law, heard a message that came from below, from the poor and weak, the humbled and suffering: “We are all God’s children!” “God is our father,” who forgives us and calls us to responsibility to Others. The *meshíakh* is each and every one, those who risk themselves beyond the Law to walk on the water of obedience to the law as a “Law of love.” We will see the significance that these phrases take on in Franz Hinkelammert’s discussion of the topic through Marx, in a way that might scandalize Taubes.

F

Giorgio Agamben’s book *The Time That Remains: A Commentary on the Letter to the Romans* is the fruit of what is perhaps the

most specialized investigation of our subject, and is therefore full of suggestiveness and relevance for the present. Agamben achieves a great deal of precision and clarity regarding some elements of Paul's thought debated in philosophical circles in the United States and Europe. His book consists of six great "days," which we will consider one by one.

The first "day" travels through a demonstration of the "messianic" significance of Paul's Epistle. In the second, the central theme is the Greek word *kletós*: the "calling" or "vocation" from which *ekklesia* (those messianically "called together") is derived. The "calling together" to form part of the messianic community overcomes, absorbs, absolves, *subsumes* the function previously fulfilled within the order of the Law. This is where the "as if not" begins to function: to be a slave as if one were no longer a slave. That is, the slave of a Roman lord *begins to live the experience* of being free, like unknown "children of God." "*The messianic vocation is the revocation of every vocation*" (TR, 23). In the case of someone like Evo Morales, his previous "vocation" or "occupation" as a shepherd or a coca farmer gives way to a new and total responsibility, and he confronts the danger (more than just the threat of assassination) of being president: but he is president (under the Law as head of state with many privileges and benefits) *as if he were not*, in his simplicity, poverty, humility, and horizontal commitment to the indigenous peoples, et cetera. What Benjamin describes as every event's reference to *redemption* also attests to this new world opened up by the messianic "calling" that is related to the act of paying the ransom that frees the *subject* from her prior function under the Law. In this new state, members of the messianic community make "use" (from the Greek *khrêsis*) of the goods at their disposal, but purely as mediations in view of the messianic responsibility of service to indigenous peoples that have been oppressed for centuries. In this sense the *proletariat*—in its original, pre-Marx meaning—indicates that summoned totality. (In German, this would be the *Stände*, that is, all the popular strata as a whole, which must be distinguished from a specific social "class," even the working class [TR, 26–31]).

In the third "day," Agamben occupies himself with the con-

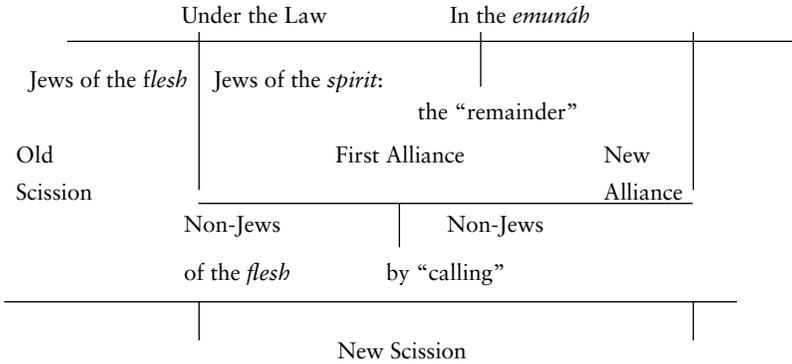


Fig. 2. The new messianic scission and the new alliance.

cept of *aphorisménos* (in Greek ἀφορισμένος, in Hebrew *parush*, פרוש):⁹² that which is *separated, set aside, split, divided*. Paul knew that the Law *separated* Jews from non-Jews (the *goîm*). But from the convocation to the formation of part of the messianic community—the *new people*—another type of division occurred. The old “wall” dividing Jews/*goîm* was overcome, but a new division appeared between Law/*Spirit* or Law/*emunáh* (figure 2).⁹³

What is interesting about this *new scission* is that it divides the Jewish community into two moments: those who remain faithful to the Law as the ultimate justificatory criterion (according to the *flesh*), and those who now adhere to the *new criterion*. This is *emunáh*, no longer the “flesh” (of the old Alliance), but rather the “spirit” (in Hebrew *ruakh*, רוח), Israel’s “remainder,” the root of the *new people*. As Agamben writes:

A fundamental chapter in the semantic history of the term “people” thus begins here and should be traced up to the contemporary usage. . . . *At a decisive instant, the elected people, every people, will necessarily situate itself as a remnant, as not-all.* (TR, 47, 55)

Here it would seem that Agamben loses his footing. In regard to the “whole/part” question that so interests Taubes, Agamben claims that the people is “neither the all, nor a part of the all, but the impossibility for the part and the all to coincide with them-

selves or with each other” (*TR*, 55). It would seem he has lost his compass by not understanding that the “all,” *all* of Israel (which is for us the “political community” of the *Architectonic of a Politics of Liberation*) splits, shedding a “part,” the “remainder” (or the originating kernel of the *new* messianic community or “*my-people*”), which in turn is not “yet” an “all”: the new future order. So that calling this original messianic community (“part” of Israel) the *plebs* (as Agamben argues M. Foucault suggests)—which will in the future become the community of the *New Alliance* (the “all” of the “called,” *ekklesia*: the *populus*)—does not entail any difficulty if situated *diachronically*. But this is precisely what Agamben opposes: “the [Pauline] remnant no longer consists in a concept *turned toward the future*, as with the prophets” (*TR*, 55; [Dussel’s emphasis—Trans.]). Without looking toward the future we can understand nothing.

The fourth “day” is perhaps the most interesting, dealing as it does with the whole problem of various “times” and their qualifications. There exist *two* types of “time,” and there are likewise two levels (*eones*) of each, the second being inaugurated by “messianic time.” For Agamben (see figure 3) the two times are (A) everyday “time” (like that of Benjamin) and (B) messianic time, which inaugurates (C) “eschatological” time or that which opens upon eternity (*TR*, 69). It seems as though Agamben has lost the historical-political meaning of messianic time. He is correct to say that what is decisive here is “that the *plērōma* of *kairoi* is understood as the relation of each instant to the Messiah” (76). But this does not mean that it is an *individual*, discrete, chaotic experience that exists outside *historical time*. The messianic “event” is communal, pertaining as it does to a messianic community, within historical time (the everyday time of *khrónos*), *bursting in as an other time* (like *kairós*), and not merely in the present or the past: it certainly recalls all that “Now-Time” has announced (the “images”), and it saves, within that memory—which situated the new moment within messianic history—the victims of the past. It is the redeeming act (that which pays the ransom) of the past (by memory) and the present (by putting the messianic community into action, as real collective actors), in view of the future (“all” Israel, the popu-

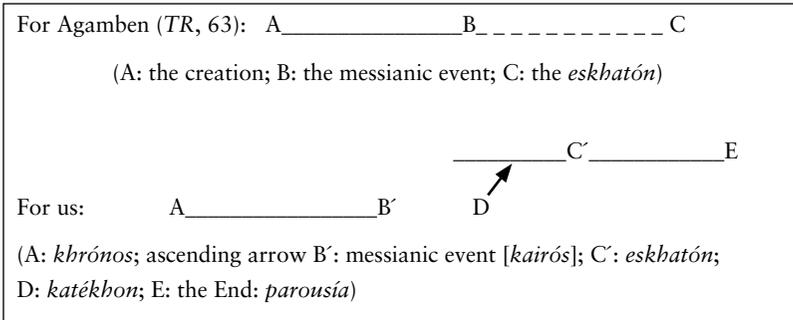


Fig. 3. The *two* times and *two* eons. [The first of these recreates Agamben’s formulation—Trans.]

lus). It is in that messianic enthusiasm (with the “spirit”) that the *meshíakh* manifests, who can be a “teacher” or “every one” of the members of the community.

In this case the “everyday time” of the Law (A) receives the impact of the messianic community in the “Now-Time” (B) that establishes an *other* time (which will in the end be a *khrónos*) (C), which will be “held back” by the *katégon* (D) up to the final moment (E). Agamben opposes this “traditional” view. But it is not traditional and furthermore recovers the future (utopia, political postulates, concrete projects, and gives way to *hegemony*).

The messianic event *subsumes* (in the concept of *katargéin*)⁹⁴ the Law (A), negates it with its *time* and its *eón*, but *surpasses* it (ascending arrow B’) and *establishes* it on another level (C’), but this is no longer the same history (ABC is not the same as AB’C’, since they do not pertain to the same level or horizon; a qualitative leap has taken place).

But the suspension of the Law in the messianic event is not a “state of exception,” because the latter is in the final instance a reference to the Law, since in lifting the “state of exception” the “rule of law” returns; rather, the messianic suspension of the Law constitutes an authentic “state of rebellion” with no return. This “state of rebellion” is followed by a *new eón* (C’), a new time, with the dictation of an-*other*, alternative and more just law (one that completes the old Law). This is not a mere inversion or restoration, but the “redemption” that establishes a *new* order, one that would

not, however, represent the Eschatological Kingdom (the postulate of a classless, stateless, propertyless society, etc.) but instead a time (Paul could still not imagine the many times of future *empires*, but could only think of the Roman empire and a *parousía* in the near future) in which the Law (often) will become “ineffective” (*katargéin*) and the *anomías* (when each Legal system becomes coercive and terminally repressive) will be “held back” (the *katégéon*) until unleashed again (killing the future *meshíakh*, all the *mesías* in history). These final reflections are clearly no longer those of Agamben, but rather our own, and we therefore see the possibility of thinking a politics which begins from Paul.

The sixth “day” deals with the whole question of the *emunáh* (or *faith*) and in connection the subject of the *new “brit”* (in Hebrew: ברית). The pardoning of sins by the *mesiakh* is foregrounded rather than the sin of Adam. The new Alliance with the messianic community—with the “non-people” now “my-people”—confronts the Alliance with Abraham. And the Law of Moses, which kills when fetishized, is surpassed by the new law of freedom, of life, of faith, of love, of the new eon, one that rescues and redeems. The process of a politics of redemption (or liberation) progressively appears in the transition, the *Übergang*, from *Architectonic* to *Critique*, from the *Totality* to the *Exteriority* (and the *new*, future *Totality*). “Liberation” is critique, is *redemption*, is recreation of a new praxis and of new political systems based on *critical consensus*, on community “faith,” on the collective actor of the new politics: the *people*. In the “Now-Time” of the political process developing at the outset of the twenty-first century in Latin America, a *Politics of Liberation* recalls past messianic acts (vol. 1), analyzing the structure (as Paul Ricoeur’s “long route”) of politics in everyday and abstract time (vol. 2), in order to make a “tiger’s leap” to the present and the profound revolution underway (in this, vol. 3).⁹⁵

G

Now we will finally touch on an author who is different from all those discussed above: Franz Hinkelammert (1931–).⁹⁶ He has the advantage, with respect to those thinkers discussed previously, of being an excellent economist and unparalleled in his knowledge

of Marx, being philosophically educated and for many years surrounded by a group of liberation theologians (having begun his education in the latter discipline with the Lutheran Marxist professor Helmut Gollwitzer in Berlin). His *enunciative location* is the peripheral, post-colonial, Latin American world, and he has been committed to the most advanced of popular movements since the 1960s. None of the authors discussed above brings together such a breadth of qualities. And to distinguish him still more, instead of dealing exclusively with Paul of Tarsus, Hinkelammert takes as his reference the Gospel of John and Revelation, thereby invalidating von Harnack's hypothesis of the distance separating Jeshúa ben Josef from Saint Paul (a view to which Taubes and many others also subscribe). In *The Cry of the Subject*, Hinkelammert indicates methodologically an aspect to which we have already referred:

I take the *Gospel of John* as a text which speaks about a reality . . . The text is not [only] *theological*, but instead interprets reality in light of a tradition, for which the theological represents an integral part . . . However, for the reflection of our present in its history, in its genesis, texts like the *Gospel of John* have been immunized by being declared *theological* texts. . . . In declaring our founding texts to be theological, we surround them with an impenetrable taboo. The fact that these are our founding texts transforms them in our central taboo and our history becomes a great enigma. . . . In this sense I would like to deal with the text of the *Gospel of John* as a founding text of our culture. (*EG*, 11–14)

The theses arising from Hinkelammert's reading of these texts is much different from all those carried out by the previous authors. What he proposes is the following:

I would like to demonstrate that the *Gospel of John* is a text which has been *inverted* as a meaningful whole throughout the course of later history . . . , the same has occurred with Paul's central works. (*EG*, 48)

For Hinkelammert (see vol. 1 of my *PL*, 35ff.) the central moment of the Gospel of John plays out in the trial of Jesus between John 18:12 and 19:22. The rest is either preparatory or corollary. The

pivotal moment is the death sentence itself: “You are children of Abraham [Jesus proclaims before the judges], complete the works of Abraham. But you are trying to kill me. . . . Abraham did not kill [Isaac]” (John 8:39–40). Abraham loved his son’s life, but Semitic law at the time ordered him to kill his first-born. For the love of life, Abraham did not obey the law. Jesus, too, cured the sick on a Saturday, when the law prohibited work. Interpreted in this way, the Abrahamic myth was an “anti-Oedipus” more radical than any that psychoanalysis was ever able to analyze. Hinkelammert comments:

Jesus seems to interpret this [Abrahamic] myth differently and in this way recovers the original meaning of the text. Abraham freed himself from the law; he realized that the law required a murder and discovers a God whose law is the law of life. Abraham converts and is liberated. He does not kill, because he realized that freedom is given to not kill, not his son, nor others. Abraham, free thanks to the law, liberated himself in order to become an Abraham free before the law, with his refusal to kill as the root of his liberty. In this sense we can understand what Jesus says: *You are trying to kill me. Abraham did not kill* . . . Jesus always makes judgments on the basis of liberation and toward the recovery of the *living subject* before the law . . . Jesus universalizes in the *living subject* a needy subject who rebels against obedience to the law [as the only justificatory criterion], insofar as that law destroys life. This subject and her demand can appear insofar as the law has been transformed into law as [fetishized] normative obedience. . . . In the presence of this tautologization of the law a universal subject appears, not merely any concrete subject. Jesus vindicates this *subject* (EG, 46, 48, 72)

Up to this point we are more or less in agreement with the philosophers discussed above, although with severely different nuances. But now Hinkelammert follows his argument, and shows the inversion of the inversion of the law produced by Jesus and his follower Paul. *The* sin, the single and fundamental one, is not concrete and differential disobedience of some aspect of the law, but rather the judgment of sin in the final instance solely and exclusively as “transgression of the law.” For Jesus, when the law denies life one

must know how to deny the law. But this principle—subversive toward the Empire and the formalism of those in power in Israel—will be subverted over time, a subject with which Hinkelammert deals in his fourth chapter: “The Christianization of the Empire and the Imperialization of Christianity” (EG, 93). Greco-Roman thought cannot reverse itself, since it is and has always involved grounding power vis-à-vis slaves, women, barbarians, et cetera, in a despotic manner. Christianity, on the other hand, gives voice to the Other, to the oppressed, to the poor, to slaves. But since the fourth century, there emerges in “Christendom” (EG, 33, 3945) the “Law of Christ” as that which governs the Church and the Empire; a new fetishization has occurred (in moment C’ of figure 3), a new historical order of the law, a theoretical “Platonization” of Christianity:

The basis for the opposition is the relationship of the reason for his death by the law. Jesus, according to *John*, is condemned by the law, and fulfills the law in his death. As a result his entire death turns on the scandal of the law. The innocent dies for a law . . . and in his death fulfills the law. The interpretation of the death of Socrates is the opposite. The judges distort the law, it is not the law that condemns him, but instead the bad judges who abuse the law. The death of Socrates confirms the law; the death of Jesus creates the scandal of the law. (EG, 98)⁹⁷

In the new imperial order, that of Byzantine and Latin Christendom, this critical demand was unacceptable, unbearable. Christian law and order needed to be imposed as the foundation for all justification. Hinkelammert cites a text by Saint Bernard of Clairvaux, preaching the crusades:

And the soldiers of Christ fight confidently in God’s battles, without any fear of putting themselves at risk of death and killing the enemy. For them, to die or to kill for Christ does not imply any criminality at all and carries with it great glory. (EG, 134)

The *enemies* are now those who oppose the Sacro Roman Empire organized by the Franks. The poor who rise up in peasant wars (also condemned by Luther and Calvin), the feminists who were

massacred in the persecution of movements of “witches,” the heresiarchs who criticize church injustices, those who take up the banners that the Christians had hoisted against the Roman Empire now become the persecuted, the burned, the tortured, those murdered in the name of the Law of Christ. And these would later be the Jews, freethinkers, and communists, et cetera. Christ himself, whose name was for many centuries Lucifer (he who bears light), is sent to hell.⁹⁸

In Hinkelammert’s sixth chapter, “Cynical Capitalism and Its Critique: Ideology Critique and the Critique of Nihilism” (EG, 177), he surpasses by far Benjamin’s “intuitions” regarding the “materialism” of messianism. Here Hinkelammert, with a strict understanding of Marx’s thinking, dismantles the cynicism of capitalism through the inversion of the Christianity of Jesus and Paul, when he writes:

The neoliberal transformation of liberal (and neo-classical) economic theory leads to a theory which no longer speaks of reality. It speaks only of the *institution* of the market, without the slightest reference to concrete reality. . . . Seen from the perspective of neoliberal theory, human beings do not have needs. . . . At root, they are walking wallets with a computer for a compass to calculate profit maximization. . . . This is an angel who has been seduced by the splendors of *this world* and who groans for a return to his pure state. This is *homo economicus*. (EG, 188)

This is the perfect fetishism of the legality of the market, of the law, of the system as a Totality, Paul’s *sôma psychikós*, the “sin of the *flesh*” as the absolutization of the law (in this case, the “law of the market”). The formalism of legality undermines the materiality of human life. Debts *must* be paid, even if the debtor dies impoverished.

In his most recent work, *Hacia una crítica de la razón mítica: El laberinto de la Modernidad*, Hinkelammert critiques the final horizon of the fetishization of the law (but equally of the *episteme*, of politics, of Modernity). He finds inspiration in a passage by Marx from the 1844 “Introduction to the Critique of Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right*”:

The *critique of religion* leads to the doctrine of the *human being as the supreme essence for the human being*, and consequently to the categorical imperative to undermine all relations in which the human being is a humiliated, subjugated, abandoned, and worthless being.⁹⁹

Paul's "critique of the law" is a moment of the "critique of religion" begun by Jesus, as a critic of the temple of Jerusalem for its corruption and sacrificial doctrine, for its law that had fallen into fetishized formalism, for interpreting Israel's chosen status as a privilege while forgetting its injustices, and most importantly for not having exercised this chosen status as a responsibility to the poorest, widows, orphans, and other peoples. If anyone began a *critique of fetishized religion* it was Jesus and his follower Paul. Hinkelammert explains that at the base of this fetishization lie certain myths, which survive in all cultures as well as in Modernity. Marx confronts and critiques these. Hinkelammert shows us how Jesus began this de-mythologization by proposing new foundational myths. Human rationality always needs such myths, and not only is it the case that they are not opposed to empirical science, but the latter always inevitably presupposes such myths (and we must not forget that the project running throughout Hinkelammert's work is one of *epistemological critique*).¹⁰⁰ As we are unable to deal with the subject exhaustively here, we will merely suggest some elements of the argument to conclude this aside.

Lying beneath and serving as the foundation for the rebellion of the oppressed and slaves who constituted the *messianic* community that dismissed the law as a final justificatory criterion, we find the *self-affirmation* of the excluded and oppressed as possible *creators* of such daring: rebellion against the Empire, the temple, the Law. Hinkelammert discusses this subject in the two texts we are discussing:

At the origins of Christianity lies this *subject*,¹⁰¹ Jesus, who in the *Gospel of John* says: *I have said: You are gods* (*John* 10, 33). . . . he awakens a *subject*, which before was sleeping or buried. Paul comes to the same conclusion. According to him there is no longer *Jew nor Greek; neither slave nor free; neither man nor wom-*

an (*Galatians* 3, 28). The fact that we are dealing with a needy and bodily subject is expressed through faith in resurrection, first of Jesus and later of everyone. . . . It is through this *subject* that we can understand the phrase of Ireneo of Lyon [frequently repeated by Mons. Romero, murdered in 1980 by the military in El Salvador]: *Gloria Dei, vivens homo* [the glory of God is that the human being lives]. God himself becomes a collaborator and accomplice of this project of the *subject*, a co-conspirator. It is in this that the rupture consists. (*HU*, 22)

When the oppressed and excluded mythically affirm themselves as “children of God” (or as Marx formulates it: “the human being is the supreme essence for the human being”), they can rebel against the emperor himself, whose exclusive title was that of “child of the gods.” This self-affirmation from the horizon of the myth is the very emergence of the *subject* as collective author of a new history. Confronting the abstract and destructive myth of Modernity, of linear and quantitative *progress*, and knowing that “myths create categorical frameworks for thought faced with the contingency of the world” (*HU*, 55), the philosophical-political categories that can be made explicit (from the symbolic level of mythical narratives) from what Paul proposes enjoy a great deal of currency in the critique of the myths and discourses that justify coercive institutions, unjust social laws, and the order organized according to the logic of capital that is imposed as the prevailing Law on the basis of fetishized Power:

The God of Power becomes Satan. . . . This is God in a *state of exception*.¹⁰² This is the God of Reagan, of Bush, even of Hitler. . . . This is the Power into which all constituent power, as constituted power, can fall. This is what Saint Paul refers to when he says that *the* sin acts behind the law’s back. . . . This is a God present in Power, and as a result, a God whose presence is inverted, in this false, deceptive, and even idolatrous sense. . . . [In contrast,] on the basis of the human being as *subject* a different God appears. This is the God of human *redemption*, of complicity. The God who is an accomplice to human liberation. This is an absent God, whose absence is present. This is a God who is

not to be seen in a mirror, and as a result, not to be seen inverted.
(*HU*, 184)

Before concluding, we would like to recall a messianic event that bears all the characteristics noted by Agamben and Hinkelammert. In a passage we can read the following:

He was given a scroll . . . where it is written: “The *spirit*¹⁰³ of the Lord is over me and has *anointed me* [in Hebrew מָשַׁח, *mashakh*, in the sense of “consecrating” the *meshiakh*] to give the good news to the poor. He has *sent me* [in the sense of “apostle” (see *TR*, 59ff.)] to announce *freedom* [in Greek, *afésin*] for the oppressed, and sight to the blind,¹⁰⁴ to proclaim the *redemption* [in Hebrew *deror*, דָּרֹר, to pay the “ransom” for the captive, the slave: to liberate her] of the captive.” He rolled up the scroll . . . and told them: “*Today, in presence*¹⁰⁵ this passage has been fulfilled.” (Gospel of Luke, 4:17–20)

We are dealing with full awareness of the messianic moment par excellence to which Paul does not cease to constantly refer, however indirectly. This was the *explosion* of the singularity of the *subject* that begins the movement—this is the function of leadership—and moves the *remainder*, the initial kernel, to summon a new *people* (*plebs*) that will send the Roman Empire and Israel into upheaval. Beginning with Badiou, Benjamin, or Taubes, this *subject* has been put forth as a foundational figure of a *critical* political philosophy.

Notes

1. This text is drawn from the third volume of Dussel’s massive *Política de la liberación*, which appears in outlined and condensed form in his *Twenty Theses on Politics*, trans. George Ciccariello-Maher (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008).—Trans. Vol. 1 of *Política de la liberación: Historia mundial y crítica* (Madrid: Trotta, 2007) is hereafter cited as *PL*.
2. Immanuel Kant, *Werke*, 10 vols. (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1968). Hereafter cited as *W*.
3. A myth, as Paul Ricoeur has explained, is a symbolically based rational narrative, whether religious or not.

4. “*Begriffe der Vernunft*,” interpreted through “symbolic representations” (*symbolischen Vosstellungen*). A bit later Kant adds: “This book [the Scriptures] can be interpreted (*ausgelegt*) theoretically . . . according to practical, rational concepts” (W, 1:A65, 312).
5. See what I have already indicated in vol. 1 of *PL*, 33–38. There I discuss the present subject, but with reference to the founder of Christianity, one Jeshúa ben Josef (to call him as he was called by the Semites or by Jacob Taubes in *The Political Theology of Paul* [Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004]). Taubes’s book is hereafter cited as *PT*.
6. In *Religion within the Limits of Pure Reason* (in W) Kant writes, “This [philosophical] theology, insofar as it remains *within the limits of pure reason* and utilizes for its confirmation and the clarification of its theses history, languages, the books of all peoples, including the Bible, but only for itself, without introducing such theses in Biblical theology” (7:655), that is, remaining on a philosophical horizon.
7. See Carl Schmitt’s two volumes entitled *Politische Theologie: Vier Kapitel zur Lehre von der Souveränität*, published in 1922 (Berlin: Duncker und Humblot, 1996), and *Politische Theologie II: Die Legende von der Erledigung jeder Politischen Theologie*, published in 1970 (Berlin: Duncker und Humblot, 1996).
8. It should be understood that said “Christian Commonwealth,” Anglican to be specific, is already a community of believers, a historical, concrete, and religious Church: the ambiguous Christendom. This is level c.1 of figure 1 (see *PL*, 1:39ff.). The “Prophetical” would be precisely Kant’s “rational theology” (or Theodicy) as we have seen. Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 255 (3: chapter 32). Hereafter cited as *L*.
9. We will write *Jeshúa* (or *Josef*) with a *j*, which in some Mediterranean languages (Greek, Hebrew, or Spanish) is guttural (like the Spanish *j* of Arabic origin), but which will be pronounced here like a Latin *i* (*Ieshúa*). On the other hand, for the Spanish *j* we will use the letters *kh* and not *j*. Among Semitic peoples when a male has no descendants his parentage is indicated (son of Josef: *ben Josef*).
10. The meaning of “being children of God” enunciated for slaves, the oppressed, and the excluded is the moment of the “ransom” (the payment to free the slave: “redemption,” a subject suggested so clearly by Benjamin). See Franz Hinkelammert, *Hacia una crítica de la razón mítica: El laberinto de la Modernidad* (México: Driada, 2008), 17ff.. Hereafter cited as *HU*. Here he engages in a reflection upon Marx’s text: “The *critique of religion* leads to the doctrine of the *human be-*

- ing as the supreme essence for the human being, and consequently to the categorical imperative to undermine all relations in which the human being is a humiliated, subjugated, abandoned, and worthless being [*ein erniedrigtes, ein geknechtetes, ein verlassenes, ein verächtliches*].” Karl Marx, *Marx-Engels Werke* (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1956), 1:385. Marx’s works are hereafter cited as *MEW*.
11. Elsa Tamez, *Contra toda condena: La justificación por la fe desde los excluidos* (San José, Costa Rica: DEI, 1991), 51–75. This is a very precise commentary on Paul’s Epistle to the Romans.
 12. Giorgio Agamben, *Homo sacer: Il potere sovrano e la nuda vita* (Turin: Einaudi, 1995), hereafter cited as *HS*. We need to understand that the fundamental categories of Roman law are not, universally, the same categories of a necessary *Politics of Liberation*. If the *nuda vita* is the initial ontological moment of Roman law this does not mean that it should be used in the same manner today. *Nuda vita* should be instead reinterpreted with reference to another horizon (see *PL*, 2:250ff. [§14]).
 13. *Religion within the Limits of Pure Reason*, in *W*, 3:3, A 130ff., B 129ff.; 7:757ff.: “The concept of an ethical community (*ethischen Gemeinen*) is the concept of a people of God (*Volke Gottes*) under ethical laws.” This is what Hegel, writing to Schelling, would call the “invisible Church.”
 14. See Dussel, *El humanismo helénico* (Buenos Aires: EUDEBA, 1975), 1:3ff. Hereafter cited as *HH*.
 15. In general, contemporary philosophical discussions of Paul of Tarsus drift about in a deep ignorance of the *anthropological* vision of this great militant (who Slavoj Žižek rightly compares to Lenin, although we will show where we disagree with his interpretation later). Years ago, I studied this question *in great detail*. See at the very least Dussel, *El humanismo semita: Estructuras intencionales radicales del pueblo de Israel y otros semitas* (Buenos Aires: Eudeba, 1969); hereafter cited as *EH*; and Dussel, *El dualismo en la antropología de la Cristiandad* (Buenos Aires: Guadalupe, 1974); hereafter cited as *DA*. Few among those philosophers discussing such themes at present show sufficient knowledge of these distinctions.
 16. Against what many have believed since Harnack (who Benjamin and many others read) and Nietzsche, this expression is identical to the following: “What has been born of the *flesh* (*sárx*) is *flesh*, and what has been born of *spirit* (*pnéuma*) is *spirit*” (John 3:6).
 17. The second *death*, the physical, was in turn interpreted not as the de-

valuing of the body in the impersonal immortality of the soul, but instead as the valorization of the *flesh* as deserving of its resurrection or *personal*, singular reaffirmation, with one's own name (as in the final Judgment of *Ma'at* before Osiris; see my *PL*, 8). On intersubjective Semitic anthropology, see my *EH*. The later process of confrontation between Hellenic and Semitic-Christian conceptions of anthropology occurs from the first century CE onward (see my *DA*).

18. "Do not conform to this *eón* (αἰῶνι)" (Rom., 12:2). On these two orders, ages, or *eónes*, see figure 9 of my book *TT*, 79. We are speaking of the *philosophical* categories "Totality" and "Exteriority" in my vocabulary, as will be seen below.
19. See Martin Jay's work *Marxism and Totality* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), as well as all of my works (you can search for this concept using the program "copernic.com" in my books at www.enriquedussel.org).
20. From now on, whenever we use the term *messianic* or *messianism* (which originate from *messiah* (*mesías*), with its semantic roots in the Hebrew for *oil*, as he who *consecrates* the *anointed*; in Hebrew: *meshíakh*, מָשִׁיחַ; in Greek: *khrístós*, χριστός), we refer to those who fulfill one of two possible functions: that of king ("Davidic messianism") or that of prophet ("prophetic messianism"). As a result, in Antiochia the community of followers of Jeshúa ben Josef was deemed: *khristianóí* (messianics). When we use the word *messianics* between quotes, this should be read as "Christians."
21. See, in vol. 2 of my *Polítca de la liberación*, 2:377ff., the difference between foundation, justification, and application (and still a fourth concept could be proposed: the subsumption of an act into a principle, or a principle into a field). Recall Kant's distinction between "reflective judgment" (from the particular to the universal) and "determinant judgment" (from the given universal to the particular); this distinction is clarified in vol. 1 (*PL*, 1:172). Here the justificatory criterion is the universal, and it "subsumes" (*subsumiert*) the particular (the actor or act to be justified). Kant, UK, B: xxvi, A: xxiv; Kant, W, 7:251. The text refers to *tsadik*, according to the following passage: "the righteous [*tsadik*] will live by *emunáh*" (*Habakkuk* 2, 4), and not so much here to the concept of "justification" as *mishpat*.
22. The god Osiris, again, in Egyptian ethical-political myth observed (and was therefore represented by an eye in hieroglyphic texts) all acts, even the most secret, which would be judged publicly in the final Judgment of *Ma'at*. This is already "moral conscience," an everyday anticipation of such transcendental Judgment.

23. Indicating with this the continuity between the position of the Gospel of John and Paul's Epistles (against Harnack's claim, which is supported to some degree by Taubes), a continuity that in my personal view extends even to Revelation (*HU*).
24. Franz Hinkelammert, *El grito del sujeto* (San José, Costa Rica: DEI, 1998), 97. Hereafter cited as *EG*.
25. This in reality was an old criterion, but one that had been obscured among the Law's many commandments.
26. Jacques Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Dennis Porter (New York: Norton, 1992), 83–84). Hereafter cited as *EP*.
27. I have already shown elsewhere the contrast to Greek thought that, for example, in the death of the righteous (Socrates) demonstrates (to his disciples) the injustice of the judges without ever calling into question the very justice of the law. Now we confront a much more radical position.
28. See Agamben's interpretation in *The Time That Remains: A Commentary on the Letter to the Romans*, trans. Patricia Dailey (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 99. Hereafter cited as *TR*. Dialectically and diachronically, the *old* Law is that of the unjust prevailing political system that will need to be deconstructed and overcome in the *new* future system (with its *new* Law). Evo Morales, for example, inaugurates his delegated and obediencial exercise of power through the proclamation of a *new* Constitution, which derogates the previous one, not merely contradicting it but surpassing it in a *new* form. This is the diachronic political dialectic that is implicit in Paul's rational, symbolic-religious narrative.
29. It is clear that for the symbolic religious narrative the ultimate source was divinity, the eternal Word, which constituted a new intersubjective subjectivity through a gift called *grace*. We need to read these symbolic expressions in light of categorical, philosophical rationality.
30. "The mark of this critical and dangerous moment," Walter Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 7 vols. (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1991) 5:578. Hereafter cited as *GS*.
31. "La historia me absolverá," in Fidel Castro, *La revolución cubana* (México: Era, 1975), 39.
32. This concept [mutual solidarity] is rooted in "*doûlos*," servant, slave. It is the praxis proper to the "*hebed*" (עֶבֶד), the *meshíakh*. See my article on the "*Servant to Yahveh*" (*EH*, appendix), which is also liberatory praxis as *labor*, as *service* (הַבֹּדָה, *habodá*).
33. *Agápe* (αγάπη, which in the terms "charity" or "love" has lost its

powerful original meaning) refers in Greek to this affection, this solidary fraternity that transcends the “friendship” of the dominators, and that unifies the “messianic” community: “*Agápe* (love) without frictions. . . . Do not go backward in your tasks, remain fervent in *pneúmati* (spirit)” (Rom. 12:9–11). It is in this precise sense that this is a politics of “liberation,” of the “redemption” of the oppressed, the exploited, the excluded. “*Sôma pneumatikós*” refers directly to the rescued human being in a new Alliance (that of the “messianic people”): as when Evo Morales launches a profound transformative process that will culminate in a referendum to approve a *new* Constitution (the law that subsumes the old, expired Law).

34. Here it would be necessary to distinguish between those “transformations” necessary in the creative time of the emergence of the new political system (diachronically, moment A) and even those of classical time (moment B of institutions, see my *TT*, thesis 17.2) from those “transformations” or mere “reforms” occurring in the period of institutional decadence, which is what is referred to by the subject of the *katégon*, a question that is debated by Schmitt and Taubes (*PT*, 107–13).
35. This is something like, for example, when after the end of the Cold War, the United States no longer had anyone to “hold it back”—not Europe, not Russia, no one—and began to launch military interventions that are suicidal for the Empire itself, which fell into a delirium and then into the terrible “financial crisis,” the effect of its own immoral contradiction so many times foretold by, among others, Wallerstein and myself.
36. This expression “in the now-time,” translated directly as W. Benjamin’s “*Jetzt-Zeit*,” appears frequently in the Epistle to the Romans. See for example its use in 3:26, 8:18. It expresses within the Jewish symbolic narrative the “Day (דַּי) (of the *manifestation*) of God,” the *dóxa Theoú*.
37. This is the “as if not” (ὡςμὴ) (1 Cor. 7:29–31) analyzed so well by Agamben in *TR*, 75ff.
38. In the example of Mexico this refers to the *old* system that has been surpassed. It matters not if this was done by a priest from among the creole elite or a *mestizo* like Morelos y Pavón. A “hero” is determined by his or her behavior in the new situation, not in the old one. The “bandit” Pancho Villa was able to become a “hero” in the “messianic time” of the 1910 Mexican Revolution.
39. Here Agamben makes an essential wager: “every people,” insofar as

it “stands up as a people” (as Rousseau would say), is “the” chosen people.

40. And for our purposes this is essential. Here Agamben cites a passage by Michel Foucault: “This part of pleb does not represent some exteriority with regard to power relationships as much as it represents their limit, their ruin, their consequence.” I have used concepts similar to those employed by Agamben and Foucault for more than forty-eight years (see my article written in 1961 (*EH*, 156ff.) and Dussel, *Para una ética de la liberación latinoamericana* [Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, 1973], 2:§63, 64ff.), the only difference being that this *plebs* always maintained a certain degree of “exteriority” (*beyond* an intra-systemic, constitutive domination), and from this relative Exteriority the seat of a *new* power can now be affirmed, the “*hyper-potentia*” (or *creative* “hyper-power” that constitutes the central thesis of the *PL*). The *people* is discussed in this sense in §38. See also *TT*, thesis 11.3.
41. This is a profoundly revolutionary passage: “καλέσω τὸν οὐ λαόν μου (יִקְרָא אֱלֹהִים), λαόν μου.”
42. Martin Heidegger, *The Phenomenology of Religious Life*, trans. Matthias Fritsch (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004), 1:1, §1. Hereafter cited as *PR*.
43. Rereading Luther’s texts (see, for example, *Aus der Roemerbriefvorlesung 1515–1516* or *Aus der Galaterbriefvorlesung 1516–1517*, in Martin Luther, *Luther Werke in Auswahl*, 7 vols. [Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1963], vol. 5; hereafter cited as *LW*) we can see in this great reformer a rather individualist and subjectivist interpretation, rather than a more “messianic,” intersubjective, and communal view. This leads him to ambiguous formulations, such as when he writes: “Igitur ego ipse *mente* servio legi Dei, *carne* autem legi peccati” (*Roemerbrief*, Duodecimum; *LW*, 259). In this passage, the “*spiritual*” is considered as a moment of the “*mind*,” and the “*flesh*” as *body*. He thereby eliminates all of the intersubjective and communal meaning of *messianic concepts*, and “flattens” them as anthropological moments (body-soul, and part of the soul). In this way, “being at the *same* time [*simul*] righteous [as both *spiritual* and as a free gift] and sinner [as *flesh* under the Law]” are not clearly discerned as pertaining to *two different times*. In the *first time* of the Law one is a *sinner* without the possibility of being saved (*khrónos*); in the *second time* (*kairós*), the messianic time of *emunáh*, one is *righteous* (through the intervention of a gratuitous justice in *redemption* [the *ransom* that frees the slave from the Law], because the sins of the *first time* are pardoned inso-

far as one is committed to the labor of the “dangerous time” of the messianic saga: a transcendental *time* and *space* with respect to the facticity of everyday life under the Law). Regardless, Luther understands well that the *medieval* Church (which was still not “catholic” because “Catholicism” is a *modern* phenomenon, one concomitant with and simultaneous to the “Protestant Reformation”) had fallen—as “Latin-Germanic Christendom”—into a system “under the Law” (Augustine’s “City of Cain”; see what we have written in *PL*, 1:66 and 95ss).

44. It would take a long time, leading us away from our subject, if we were to follow Heidegger’s phenomenological itinerary step-by-step. But in any case, we must mention that in §22 he clarifies the three fundamental aspects of the “factual life experience”: a) It is a historic situation; b) we must manage to observe the unfolding of the situation, describing the plurality of its moments, reorienting ourselves toward its generative kernel, and describing the rest on the basis of this center, and finally, c) returning to the origin (57).
45. See my *Para una ética de la liberación latinoamericana*, 2 vols. (Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, 1973), 1:§4. Hereafter cited as *PE*.
46. [Dussel’s emphasis—Tr.] As we can see, Heidegger echoes this historically-implausible anti-Jewish judgment.
47. See my *PL*, 2:§15 (262ff.). Moreover, one could consult Laclau for a critique of the foundations of Badiou’s interpretation (to which we will return later, in §37 [of the *Política*—Trans.]).
48. Alain Badiou, *Saint Paul: The Foundation of Universalism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003; translated from the original 1997 French edition). Hereafter cited as *SP*.
49. Since “Le (re)commencement du materialisme dialectique,” *Critique* 240 (1967): 438–46, passing through *Théorie du sujet* (Paris: Seuil, 1982); *Peut-on penser la politique* (Paris: Seuil, 1985), and up to the first volume of *L’être et l’événement* (Paris: Seuil, 1988), and the second in 2006.
50. See the discussion of this subject in Badiou, *Saint Paul: The Foundation of Universalism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 25–50 *passim*. In effect, first, when Paul speaks of the “unknown god,” he is listened to attentively, because this is a subject that is *understandable* (from everyday life [level (a) in figure 1] and Greek philosophy [level (c.2.a)]). But when he speaks of the “resurrection of the flesh” they no longer listen to him, because this is an *incomprehensible* subject for the everyday and Greco-Roman philosophical worlds

(not because it is irrational or anti-philosophical). On the other hand, it is a subject that is perfectly *understandable* on both levels within the *Semitic* or Egyptian worlds (and in no way are we introducing the false question of *theology* [level (b.1)], into which many fall, including even Habermas and Vattimo years ago and many others who think that the phenomenological philosophy elaborated in the *Semitic* experience of Levinas, or my own, is *theology*). Stefan Gandler (as well as my very esteemed colleague Bolívar Echeverría, whom I appreciate for his knowledge of Marx) also claims that “Enrique Dussel, the ex-liberation theologian” (*Marxismo crítico en México: Adolfo Sánchez Vázquez y Bolívar Echeverría* [México: FCE, 2007], 34), in the end supports the Catholic Church and falls into dogmatism; that is to say, I am accused of engaging covertly in theology. I believe that they have understood little of what I am saying. For his part, Michael Löwy comes to the defense of “liberation Christianity” when he writes: “it seems to me that Stefan Gandler *is mistaken* in considering Samuel Ruíz and liberation theologians to be *committed to the brutal power of Karol Wojtila*” (in the prologue to his *Redemption and Utopia*, 16) [translated from the Spanish edition—Tr.]. This is still a Eurocentric and modern view of the question, since the popular religious imaginary has not been grasped on the everyday level, on the basis of which it can become philosophy! We should return to the subject at hand.

51. The comparison of Paul with Pascal, Kierkegaard, or Claudel is far from incidental (see *SP*, 2).
52. In Hebrew (Aramaic), Jeshúa ben Josef orders a dead girl: “*Talíta kúmi*” (Young girl, arise!). For Paul, “death” certainly had many meanings, one referring to those who respected the Law of the prevailing system. For Badiou, death linked to suffering has no meaning, because he believes that the only meaning can be the masochistic view that suffering in itself can save someone. We are dealing with something very different. The “death of the righteous” contemplated by his disciples (or the death of the members of the “messianic” community in the Roman Circus before the multitude of Roman slaves and oppressed) produces the contradiction of the system with itself and dismisses the Law (which kills the innocent); it undermines its “legitimacy,” erasing the subjective adhesion of the members of the system that gives foundation to its normativity in a Law that kills unjustly. “Justification by Law” is swept away by the “death” (of the righteous).
53. The *first* and the *second* terms being dominator and dominated

within the Totality, the “flesh,” “this world,” “under the regime of the Law.”

54. This concept translates into Greek as *éthne* (ἔθνη): “nation,” or in the plural, “the nations,” the pagans, the non-chosen, the not-Israel, those for whom Paul sees the possibility of *dialectical overcoming* (or *Übergehen*, but in this case, strictly speaking, this is ana-lectical rather than dialectical, because it offers *novelty* from the *Exteriority* of Greco-Roman life, the *positive* Semitic experience, that of the slaves and those dominated from *outside* the Empire). This overcoming occurs through the “messianic” community that would dismiss the Empire, the temple, the Law, and the old contradictory customs prevailing within the very same “messianic” community (signified in the figure of “Peter,” who does not dare to disobey the *old* Law).
55. It is not *singular* because it is *communal*, as a *people* (the *remainder*), and has negative causal conditions: the suffering of millions of human beings throughout the Empire, and the anguish of the impossibility of fulfilling Israel’s Law.
56. *Thesis 2* (MEW, 3:533). Up to this point we agree with Badiou.
57. See thesis 17.2 in my book Dussel, 2008 [PL]. This *change* would be a) “reformist” if it intends “to work” within the Law (the “works of the Law” that were perhaps not interpreted in this way by Martin Luther and Karl Barth) that still serves as the foundation of its “justification” (this would be under the mandates of the “flesh,” the Empire, and the legalists among Jews and Christians, or today’s legalists of capital). It would be b) “transformation,” if the criterion for “justification” were, on the other hand, the “critical consensus” of the “messianic” community (an *intersubjective, objective, historic, concrete* consensus that emerges from the reality of suffering that is an effect of *economic, political, aesthetic, or religious* injustice, etc.) but one that maintains a relationship of transcendence with regard to the totality of the system. A movement would be “*free before the Law*” if and when it transcends the order of that Law. It is transcendent but nevertheless conditioned, just as the “situation” determines (but *not absolutely*) the “event” as transformative praxis. It would seem as though Marx wrote this passage with reference to Badiou: “Feuerbach . . . seems obligated . . . to dispense with the *historical process* . . . presupposing an *isolated [isoliert] individual*” (*Thesis 6; MEW, 3:535*). Is this not Paul’s *pure subjectivity* that has been individually “converted” according to Badiou’s interpretation? Returning to Barth, who especially cites Kierkegaard at the outset of his com-

mentary, “faith” is wagered as an act of the singular: the faith of Paul in the messiah (see Barth, *Epistle to the Romans* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968], 107ff.). We, on the other hand, have proposed a meaning that is communal and constitutes another form of *emunáh*.

58. Slavoj Žižek, *The Puppet and the Dwarf. The Perverse Core of Christianity* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003). Hereafter cited as *PD*.
59. See the critique by Nelson Maldonado-torres (“Liberation Theology and the Search for the Lost Paradigm,” in *Latin American Liberation Theology: The Next Generation*, ed. Ivan Petrella [New York: Orbis Books, 2005]), where he attempts to situate Žižek in relation to the argument of John Milbank (in *Radical Orthodoxy: A New Theology*, ed. John Milbank, Catherine Pickstock, and Graham Ward [London: Routledge, 1999]), with whom I entered into a dialogue in 2007 at Birkbeck College in London, allowing me to experience his Eurocentric conservatism firsthand. Milbank’s view represents a tendency toward recuperating the “Christian heritage”—vis-à-vis secularism and certain form of anti-Christian Judaism—within which we find Vatimo as well, which is completely distinct from the Latin American liberation theology movement (and equally distinct from its Islamic, Jewish, Buddhist forms, etc., and from a *Politics of Liberation*), which situates itself (*locus enuntiationis*) in a “messianic” attitude (that is *critical* toward the prevailing order “of the Law”) defining the relevant antagonists within the global, national, capitalist, *machista*, racist power bloc, et cetera. This critical tradition is not interested in recuperating the legacy of Christendom, which with Kierkegaard we interpret as the inversion of Christianity. Instead, our interest is to recuperate the Jewish-Christianity of Jeshúa ben Josef, of the Synoptics, of Paul, which was opened *universally* to the *goím* beginning in the first centuries prior to Constantine, and prior to the “restoration” of the Law as a justificatory criterion with Theodosius (Roman-Christian law: from this moment on it was possible to “kill” in the name of the crucified, and *Lucifer*, Christ, would be sent to “hell”; see Franz Hinkelammert, *Sacrificios humanos y sociedad occidental: Lucifer y la bestia* (San José, Costa Rica: DEI, 1991). This is why Nietzsche, who in the course of his grandiloquent pirouettes discovers himself to be the anti-Christ, but by objecting to that *Pantokrator*, the Christ-Emperor or the new fetish, hardly recovers some very deformed attributes of the critical nature of the historical *Khrístós* who was crucified). What is the use of recuperating the heritage of this

- long *inversion*? It would be better to stand on its feet what the centuries have stood on its head. I don't know if Žižek would agree!
60. G. K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy* (London: John Lane, 1908). Chesterton does not critique the system from the perspective of the oppressed, but rather from the perspective of the past and with an eye toward the revitalization of existing institutions. In one of his books he describes how a subject carefully prepares an attack on a house; arriving dramatically the night of the events, he enters the bedroom of the house to be robbed through a window; and finding a woman, he seized her and makes love to her passionately, raping her with great pleasure . . . and it was his wife! The traditional institution had been reaffirmed by the *pleasure* of the affair of his transgression (think of Bataille). It was as though Paul were to confuse the *enjoyment* of the “messianic” risk with the *pleasure* of the pure transgression of the Law. Paul was no hippie, although I do understand, but do not justify, the nihilistic rebellion of a youth lacking in any feasible, historic project for *transformation*.
 61. Jacques Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis* (New York: Norton, 1992), 83–84.
 62. In various works (*La producción teórica de Marx* [1985], *Hacia un Marx Desconocido* [1989], and *El último Marx (1863–1882) y la liberación latinoamericana* [1990]) we have attempted to show the major differences distinguishing Hegelian from Marxist discourses. Žižek does not clearly demonstrate this distinction.
 63. Ernst Bloch, *Atheismus im Christentum: Zur Religion des Exodus un des Reichs* (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1970). If we read carefully vol. 32, 157ff.: “Paulus, sogenannte Geduld des Kreuzes, aber auch Beschwoerung von Auferstehung und Leben,” we find many elements useful for our subject. Death? Everyone dies, he tells us, but for the disciples of the *meshíakh* Jeshúa, his death on the cross—rather than his preaching or miracles (which did occur)—was what allowed them to understand the “message” of overthrowing the Law. Bloch, a Jewish Marxist, has been reinterpreting Christianity from the perspective of messianic Judaism since long ago!
 64. In the *New Testament* we read the following, in the most political passage of all the Synoptic Gospels: “The Son of Man has not come to be served but *to serve* . . . to surrender his life as *ransom (redemption)* for the multitude” (Mark 10:45). See also my *Twenty Theses on Politics*, trans. G. Ciccariello-Maher (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), *Thesis 4.35*. Hereafter cited as *TTP*.

65. This *universalist* passage from the Second Isaiah is deeply Jewish, which shows us that the “messianic” Jews (from the movement of Jeshúa ben Josef) coherently extended what was an *old* Jewish tradition.
66. We have attributed this *inversion* of Christianity to Anselm in full Latin Christendom, when the pardoning of sins is rejected, since from the horizon of a sacrificial God, to be righteous one must demand payment for Adam’s *infinite* debt (because it is a debt against the *Infinite*), a debt that is not humanly payable. As a result, the sadistic and Oedipal Father (in contrast to the Abrahamic myth, since Abraham loves his son Isaac and does not sacrifice him, even though this is against the Law) sends his Son to the “butcher.” This entire story, the inversion that is Christendom, Žižek rightly characterizes as “legalistic” (*PD*, 102).
67. “The true Light, that which illuminates all man, was arriving to the world. It was in the world and . . . the world did not know it . . . and the *dabar* (דבר) was made *flesh* (σάρξ in Greek, in Hebrew בשר) [the order of the Law], dwelling among us” (John 1:8–14). Here it is necessary to read the work of Michael Henry, a great phenomenologist, Marxist, and scholar of psychoanalysis (*Incarnation: Une philosophie de la chair*, in English as *The Phenomenology of Religious Life*, trans M. Fritsch and J. Gosetti-Ferencei [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000]), and *C’est moi, la vérité* [Paris: Seuil, 1996]). Or again Hinkelammert (*Hacia una crítica de la razón mítica: El laberinto de la Modernidad* [México: Editorial Driada, 2008]) who explains the history of the myth of Prometheus, the mythical narrative that provides the entire categorical framework for so-called Western culture, through Marx: “Jesus the man, son of God, by which *all* are children of God” (75). We will return to this question later.
68. The existence of human freedom, which constitutes the apex of being “equal to God” as *Other than God*, must be played out to its final consequences. These consequences—as inevitable negative possibilities—include evil, injustice, the fetishization of systems of injustice, the Law that kills. The Supreme Being would not be so perfect if it had only created puppets with no possibility of being truly *Other than God*, and thereby the cause of evil.
69. I wrote an article on the subject years ago: “El paradigma del *Éxodo*,” *Concilium* 209 (1987): 99–114. This will slowly and progressively unfold throughout volume 2 of the *Politics of Liberation*.
70. See *PD*, 111–21, and Slavoj Žižek, *The Fragile Absolute—or, Why*

Is the Christian Legacy Worth Fighting For? (London: Verso, 2000), 145–48, for the “disconnection” related to the subject of “as-if-not” (which we will see in Giorgio Agamben), etc.

71. See my “From Fraternity to Solidarity: Toward a *Politics of Liberation*,” in *Journal of Social Philosophy* 38, no. 1 (2007): 73–93.
72. Walter Benjamin, *Passagenwerk, Aufzeichnungen und Materialien, N*, in *GS*, vol. 5/1, 600. “Redemption” also constitutes the central moment of Cohen and Rosenzweig’s respective frameworks.
73. Michael Löwy, *Redemption and Utopia: Jewish Libertarian Thought in Central Europe: A Study in Elective Affinity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), 97. Hereafter cited as *RU*.
74. See *RU*; Hermann Cohen, *Religion of Reason out of the Sources of Judaism* (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1972); hereafter cited as *RR*
75. See “The Elements or the Everlasting Primordial World [*Vorwelt*],” part 1 (in Franz Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption* [Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005], 9ff.; hereafter cited as *SoR*).
76. [For creation,] “The Path or the Ever Renewed World [*allzeiterneuer Welt*],” in *SoR*, 103ss. It is interesting that Rosenzweig, against Cohen, begins with the subject of Paul as surpassing the pagan “world”: “On Belief” (124ff.). Subject II, 1, is “Creation [*Schoepfung*]” (123ff.). [For revelation,] “Revelation [*Offenbarung*],” in *SoR*, 169ff. This subject in Rosenzweig does not have a messianic meaning. [For redemption,] “Redemption [*Erloesung*],” in *SoR*, 221ss. Cohen calls more attention to “reconciliation,” not showing that the “ransom” (redemption) of the slave occurs first, and the latter then “reconciles herself” with her old master, but under the equality of a *new* system (the “promised Land,” the “Kingdom of God” that Cohen but also Rosenzweig and Benjamin summon).
77. See Gershom Scholem, *Walter Benjamin: The Story of a Friendship* (New York: Schocken, 1981), 101. Hereafter cited as *WB*.
78. It bears mentioning that between the two European wars, a youth movement existed not only among Jews but equally among Christians and Muslims. Gramsci refers to Catholic Action in Italy, for example, which was very powerful in Latin America, from Mexico to Brazil to Argentina, existing in parallel to the youth organizations of the Communist Party and the Italian fascist movement. It is out of Catholic Action that worker and university movements would emerge, giving rise toward the end of the 1960s to Latin American Liberation Theology. In Egypt in 1926, a similar democratic and progressive youth movement was organized under the name “Muslim Brotherhood,”

with a clearly popular political orientation. Abdel Nasser “built himself” on this organization (with more than 3 million members), persecuting it and killing its leaders, which led to the movement’s transition toward radical fundamentalism (see the work of Tariq Ramadan and his Egyptian grandfather). In order to understand many aspects of contemporary politics, we must study the “youth movements” that existed from 1920 to 1950.

79. I have written a brief article (“Cuando la Realidad habla más que las palabras”) on this terrible subject, which will be published as an appendix to a book entitled *Meditaciones semitas* (Barcelona: Anthropos, forthcoming).
80. Walter Benjamin, *On the Concept of History*, in *Selected Writings*, vol. 4, 1938–1940, ed. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings, trans. Edmund Jephcott et al. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 389–400, 389. Hereafter cited as OC.
81. Benjamin types this spacing out the letters: “s c h w a c h e,” which at that time was a way of indicating a word in bold or italics.
82. “Typos.” In Rom. 5:14: “This was an image [*Gegenbild* in Luther and Benjamin; τύπος in Greek] of the one to come.”
83. With regard to the meaning of this passage I recommend chapter 5 in the work by Reyes Mate, *Medianoche en la historia: Comentario a las tesis de Walter Benjamin: “Sobre el concepto de la historia”* (Madrid: Trotta, 2006), 107ff. In order to explain the passage, Mate makes the following comment on Thesis VII: “That present, illuminated not with its own light, but instead with that which comes to it from the past [writes Mate], *crystallized in images (Bildern) that can be called dialectical. They represent a salvational discovery for humanity.*” See GS, vol. 1.3, p. 1248). A Zapatista in the present moment refers to Emiliano Zapata of the past, recalling as living a past messianic time which is actualized in the FZLN action in the present: the “image” of the past reinterpreted from the perspective of the present grounds the messianic condition of the present. A typological dialectical relationship. Zapata is the “image.”
84. We would say *hò khrónos*. [Now-Time] is *hò kairós*.
85. Benjamin, *Das Passagen-Werk*, in GS, vol. 5.1, 578.
86. Jacob Taubes, *The Political Theology of Paul* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004). Hereafter cited as PT.
87. This passage, drawn from p. 168 of the Spanish edition, cannot be located in the English edition and is therefore translated directly—Trans.

88. The *messianic* (Christian) communities must be understood within a tradition of Jewish *proselytism*. Normal *proselytism* allows for the *go'im* (non-Jews) to enter the community while becoming “Judaized” on the long run. The originality of this *messianic* Jewish group or *sect* (those called “Christians”) is that they conceived of a “new” Alliance, within which the *proselytes* were not required to fulfill the old Jewish rites. Hence a new calendar and new celebrations (*rites*) were born, and given its massive expansion this group left its original Jewish community as an absolute minority, not only numerically, but also in terms of their understanding of the *transformation* of the Greco-Roman world. We must clarify in a categorical manner this *messianism* that has had such significant *political* results, but that Taubes is not interested in analyzing.
89. It will be of the utmost importance for political philosophy to adequately grasp—as a philosophical category—this scission that is produced within “*all* [*pán* in Greek] Israel” with respect to a “*part* [*the remainder*] of Israel,” a question that Taubes announces as the underlying subject of the first four chapters of the letter 1 Corinthians. Gramsci would argue that “the social bloc of the oppressed” splits away from the hegemonic consensus of “the whole political community” under the authority of the “historic bloc in power.” In effect, the “remainder” is not a member of the *part* that, controlling the temple, the schools of legal interpreters and Pharisees, would bring the Righteous to the cross. These were the dominant groups. Here we find an entire implicit categorical structure that Taubes himself does not recognize.
90. I don’t believe that this is Paul’s position.
91. This editor’s epilogue from the German edition is included as well in both the Spanish and English editions of Taubes’s text—Trans.].
92. The word *Pharisee* has the same root, *parushim*: פרושים; those who are *separated, pure, strict*.
93. This is a modified form of the figure that appears on Agamben, *TR*, 51, to which Dussel adds the Law/flesh equation as well as the distinction within *emunáh* between spirit and calling (both, for Agamben, rendered “breath”)—Trans.
94. Important for Agamben is the Pauline origin of the concept of “*subsumptio*” (according to the Latin root) or “*Aufhebung*” in German, which has a long tradition in Kant, Hegel, and Marx (*TR*, 99ff.), a question that I have dealt with on many occasions in my work.
95. Dussel refers to the three volumes of his *PL*, from the third of which this essay is drawn—Trans.]

96. See the excellent introduction to this author's difficult thought, presented archaeologically, in Juan José Bautista, *Hacia una crítica ética del pensamiento latinoamericano: Introducción al pensamiento crítico de Franz J. Hinkelammert* (La Paz, Bolivia: Grupo Grito del Sujeto, 2007). Hereafter cited as *HuC*.
97. The death of Socrates devours the death of Jesus. The death of Socrates is a sacrificial death. It is death on the altar of the law, demanded by and accepted by the law itself. . . . The death of Jesus is a sacrifice by the law, by a law that is fulfilled in front of Jesus who [like Abraham] refuses to obey it; instead he interrogates it in the name of life, toward which the law must function. . . . The law sacrifices him, but Jesus does not sacrifice himself on the altar of the law. Jesus is required to not escape, but to confront the law. But God does not demand this as a sacrifice, doing so instead to reveal what it means when the law kills the innocent in its fulfillment. The death of Jesus is the catastrophe of the law. . . . Socrates is the hero of power . . . , Jesus is the paradigm of the relativization of the law in function of the *living subject*" (*EG*, 104–5).
98. See part 3 of Hobbes's *Leviathan* in order to see the inversion of which we are speaking.
99. *MEW*, 1:385: "der Mensch das höchste Wesen für den Menschen sei."
100. See *HuC*, 103ss: "Hinkelammert considers it fundamental to dismantle the foundational myths of the west, not only because it is these in the last instance that provide grounding for the grand western narrative, but also because if we do not gain a critical consciousness of these myths, we will remain trapped within them." And this applies first and foremost to all the social sciences.
101. Moreover, it is useful to keep in mind the fact that this entire theme is sketched out by Badiou and the Althusserians, who wonder how to reformulate the question of the *subject* after the essentialist death of the "subject of history."
102. Here we have an inversion of Agamben's proposal. If it is true that the messianic event (*B'* in figure 3) could appear as a "state of exception," it is in reality something more radical: the "state of rebellion" that suppresses the Law when it kills. On the contrary, fetishized Power continually institutes "government by law" through the "state of exception," but not on the basis of the will of the people but its opposite, the despotic will of the dominator (that of Caesar over the Roman Law of the Senate, which is no longer "dictator-

ship” according to the Law; Hitler presiding over the weak law of the republic).

103. In Greek, *pneûma* is used, in Hebrew *ruakh*. Jeshúa ben Josef is reading a passage from the Third Isaiah (Isaías 61, 1-3). In the version found in Luke, we find reference to the modified translation of the Seventy in Greek.
104. Those who “see” are those who accept the Law; the “blind” are those who do not know it, but “they will see” their contradiction and will be able to cease to obey it.
105. In Greek *sémeron* (σήμερον). This is, precisely, “*Now-Time*”: “today” is “now,” and “in presence” is the *kairós* that inaugurates the messianic “event” (*B*’ in figure 3).

Errata

The three figures included in Enrique Dussel’s “The Liberatory Event in Paul of Tarsus” in the last issue (18, no. 1) were published in error. The alignment of the figures was accidentally corrupted in the course of production. The correct, final versions are included below. We apologize for any inconvenience or confusion.

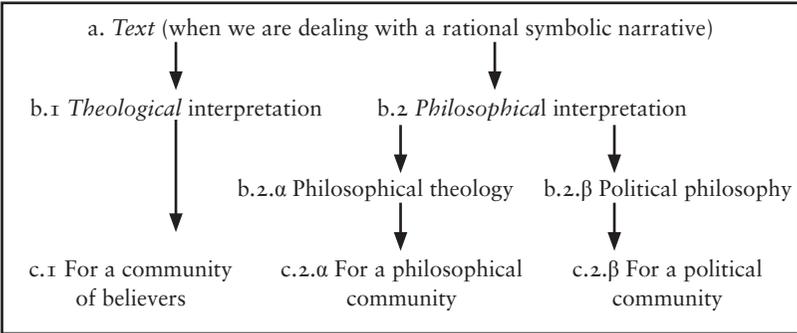


Fig. 1. Various methods of interpreting a rational symbolic narrative.

