

On Benjamin's Temporality of Crisis, Foucault's Subjugated Knowledges and their Import in Theorising Revitalisation Movements: A Critical Theoretical Examination

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Abstract

The central purpose of this paper will be to explore the socio-cultural phenomenon of revitalisation movements through the theoretical lenses of Walter Benjamin's highly enigmatic approach to temporality and experience, and Michel Foucault's notion of subjugated knowledges, and the genealogies utilised to unearth these subjugated knowledges. Inasmuch as Benjamin's approach to history and human experience is extremely cryptic in certain portions of his *oeuvre*, a considerable portion of this paper will attempt to explicate this approach as perspicaciously as possible. In that it considers two very different approaches to seeing the world and socio-cultural phenomena historically, then, this paper is heuristic and exploratory – it offers a route through which to explore and work through two theoretical ways of approaching temporality and historicity in order to see how they contrast and compare with respect to changing (through agency, creativity, and the requisite conceptual tools) the circumstances of the present and future based on an optics of the past – that is, revitalisation movements. I conclude the paper by attempting to apply the aforementioned theoretical approaches to history to the 19th century Native American revitalisation movement known as the Ghost Dance.

KEYWORDS: Walter Benjamin, Michel Foucault, revitalisation movements, history, temporality

Every great human being exerts a retroactive force: for his sake all history is put on the scale again, and a thousand secrets of the past crawl out of their hiding places – into his sunshine. There is no telling what may yet become a part of history. Maybe the past is still essentially undiscovered! So many retroactive forces are still needed!

Friedrich Nietzsche 1882

Historical materialists like Marx and his ilk are like so many thieves under the tattered and worn cloak of darkness. They poach and gather up forever all of time's most oblique and tiny moments – those that do not align well with the artifice of history's inexorable rational progress and revolutionary potential – and leave them for dead. What of those forgotten in the push toward our revolutionary goal? Must they lie scattered and motionless like so many dead on the battlefield of time?

Anonymous

Introduction: Orientations in Time

An icebreaker shifts steadily through the pack-ice somewhere in a northern sea. There is nothing but bleakness, fathomless expanse and ice in every direction. As it negotiates with the white limit before it – the frozen, seemingly homogenous horizon – the breaker yields every so often to loud creaking and rigid repetitions: the ice, building and standing up in jagged figures like soldiers on the front lines heading for battle, heaves and groans bitterly (as if in protest); then, as casualties of this strange cold war, they fall back despondently into a silent sub-aqueous medium – their fate – before the determined and unsympathetic force of the breaker's reinforced hull. Left behind is nothing more than a turbulent wake, a battlefield as it were: a scattered trail of ice-white hunks, floating and bobbing in a swell of dark blue-green fluid, surrounded by a visible echo of froth, bubbles and crystalline rivulets; all of which cling together desperately as the ice-fragments separate from each other and float away pell-mell like so much mercury spilled haphazardly onto a hard surface.

As the ship heads toward its destination (wherever this may be, we do not know), a permanent change has been effected: as it met with the ship's hull, that homogenous expanse of ice undifferentiated with the horizon turned into a broken, fragmented and uneven course behind it – as written in the ice by means of the double-cleaved furrows of its wake, it revealed a certain direction. And so with our icebreaker, such is the direction of time and our experience thereof: as we travel on our existential courses, our pasts submit, sometimes unrelentingly, to a seemingly perpetual forward motion; and we are left with naught but fragments of experience (the ice-white hunks) behind us – sometimes scrambling in the paroxysms of nostalgia, crisis, or fear to piece them back together again, yet they forever remain elusive. But is this always the case? Does this really capture the ultimate nature or being of history – its ontology? Is this how history is, especially as it relates to our orientations toward the future? Are our experiences always fragmented as we are buffeted helplessly along with the course of time? Finally, has modernity – this seemingly fragmentary and uncompromising epistemic, temporal and political ethos – really separated us from each other and our capacities to remember collectively?

Although somewhat indirectly, these are some of the questions I seek to address throughout the course of this paper. Inasmuch as the aforementioned questions echo some of the questions Walter Benjamin occupied himself with throughout the course of his lifetime (especially regarding his seemingly dolorous approach to the future), my task here will be to provide a provisional rejoinder to Benjamin's diagnosis of modernity and the future, and its accompanying experiential modifications: my argument here, tethered as it is to the concept or status of history to the collective or group, will revolve in part around Benjamin's central notion of experience, personal memory and history (herein referred to as his tripartite notion of temporality).

The crux of this paper, and therefore its central purpose, will be to explore heuristically (i.e., what aspects of the theories considered herein are useful for understanding the problem at hand) the phenomenon of revitalisation movements¹ through the lenses of Benjamin's tripartite notion of temporality, and Michel Foucault's notion of subjugated knowledges and the genealogies used to unearth these knowledges. I am interested herein seeing whether the aforementioned theories can help us better understand the dynamics at work in revitalisation movements. In that it considers two very different approaches to seeing the world historically, this paper is exploratory – it offers a route through which to explore two different ways of approaching temporality in order to see how they contrast and compare with respect to actually changing the circumstances of the present and future based on an optics of the past – that is, revitalisation movements.

My argument in this paper has two parts: firstly, I will consider Benjamin's tripartite notion of temporality, and make the claim that it seems to romanticise and idealise the past; and that it also views the present as helpless against the inexorable march toward capitalist-driven progress. Secondly, and building on my first argument, I probe further the claim that Benjamin's tripartite notion of temporality leaves seems to leave no room for human agency for action with respect to actually changing the circumstances of the present so as to make the future a better place: to Benjamin, we all seem to be marionettes at the mercy of the forces of modernity and capitalism, our ability to relate to each other meaningfully has become degraded, and our conative capacity, eclipsed. Insofar as this is the case for Benjamin, history – owing to the ideologies of the ruling classes – is in a permanent state of existential entropy. I will argue that this view of history, tradition, and the perilous condition thereof, is too totalising, and is not necessarily the case in socio-cultural contexts very different Benjamin's own.

To this end, then, in support of my arguments, and as a possible corrective for the seeming lack of agency inherent in Benjamin's approach, I will be drawing upon Michel Foucault's notion of *subjugated knowledges* (2003), and the genealogies employed to access these knowledges. I will maintain that regardless of how strong the storm of progress blows, or how complete its putative destruction of history may be, individuals and the groups in which they inhere always have some degree of agency to exert; and that, as a result of this

¹ Defined as: 'a deliberate, organized, conscious effort by members of a society to construct a more satisfying culture' (Wallace 1956: 265).

agency, there are always possibilities for subversive remembrance, and the continuation of collective memory (even though these modes may be perceived to be disappearing). My position herein,² then, will be that – as I understand it – Benjamin’s tripartite notion of temporality, offers nothing more than a passive optics of history, whilst Foucault’s genealogies of subjugated knowledges not only provides a view or a way of seeing, but also provides a means to act and to put into effect what has been remembered.

To qualify my use of Foucault’s notion of subjugated knowledges, it must be stated that Benjamin, too, would have called tradition – or, or those forgotten aspects that capitalist ideology leaves behind; the very knowledges that subtend and foster tradition – subjugated.³ However, I am arguing here that regardless of what Benjamin would have called the *tradition*, maybe something like traditions or history of the vanquished (i.e., those left behind by capitalism and modernity), the forms of knowledge that constitute a *tradition* can never be fully destroyed (as Benjamin intimates); they are always already circulating throughout *society* (whichever or wherever this may be).

As I will argue, they exist beneath the officially state-sanctioned epistemological veneer of *official knowledge*, and thus only need to be *unearthed* or *revealed*. Conceiving tradition as such, then, I will supplement my use of subjugated knowledges and their genealogies with an ethnographic example, gleaned from Alexander Lesser’s paper on the Ghost Dance revitalisation movement: *The Cultural Significance of the Ghost Dance* (1985).

Benjamin’s Tripartite Notion of Temporality and Experience

Benjamin’s tripartite notion of temporality can be found strewn throughout the following pieces:⁴ *The Storyteller: Reflections on the Works of Nikolai Leskov* (2007a), *On Some Motifs of Baudelaire* (2007b), *The Image of Proust* (2007c), *On the Concept of History* (2003a), and its counterpart, *Paralipomena to On the Concept of History* (2003b).⁵ As such, one needs to perform what I call an *imbricated reading* of these pieces in order to understand (provisionally) how Benjamin’s approach to human experience, personal memory and history form a synergy in the truest sense of the word: the combined and cooperative action of multiple segments (his approaches to human experience, personal memory, historical materialism, etc.) which constitute a whole (his epistemology of history), and from which the combined effect is greater than the mere sum of its parts. Below, I will treat each of Benjamin’s notions which constitute his tripartite notion of temporality individually, starting with his approach to human communication and experience; I will

² It should be noted that in keeping with the true meaning of the term essay (*essai*, from the French), the reader should note that the analyses included herein are merely an attempt, a weighing in what I have gathered from my reading of Benjamin thus far.

³ Benjamin’s utopian vision was to piece back together history in all of its moments, both large (cultural achievements of the victors) and small (the forgotten events of the vanquished – subjugated knowledges)

⁴ The former three pieces were taken from *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections* (2007); whilst the latter two were taken from *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings Volume 4 (1938–1940)* and *Volume 3 (1935–1938)* respectively.

⁵ Benjamin’s Arcades Projects is, perhaps, one of the most important works in his oeuvre. Unfortunately, owing to constraints of time and space I had to limit my readings to those pieces mentioned above.

then move on to his understanding of personal memory; and, finally, I will discuss how these aforementioned theories subtend his notion of history.

Benjamin frames his approach to communication historically, focusing first on the evolution of memory and its bifurcation into two related, but ultimately different modalities of remembrance. In his piece entitled *The Storyteller* (2007a), Benjamin explains that, according to the Greek Epic tradition (a tradition derived from Mnemosyne, the female personification of memory), storytelling was based on one undifferentiated form of collective epic memory, or, what he refers to as a universal historiography – a people's record of memory. This epic form of collective memory, says Benjamin (ibid.), is encapsulated in an undifferentiated whole what would later become two modes of transmitting memory: the story (narrative) and the novel (written text). As time progressed, these forms of memory slowly dislodged from each other and separated into two distinct forms of recalling the past.⁶

The first form of memory, what Benjamin calls storytelling, entails the process of intersubjectivity required for collective communication via the process of storytelling; it is a means of transmitting tradition orally from one person to another, and, likewise, from one generation to another. As the purveyors of wisdom and counsel, the stories recounted by the storyteller are based upon his or her own experiences, and thus transferred to his or her audience, with the ultimate effect of augmenting his/her audience's store of experience.

To this end, then, storytelling is a narrative event and a collective means for transmitting memory and socio-cultural mores. Moreover, it is a means through which a group can cohere through interpersonal, social, cultural and moral means through the collective processes of listening and telling, and the imaginative involvement therewith. Storytelling is a means through which one person's experience can, by means of narrative conveyance, be incorporated into another's experience. To Benjamin, the crux of storytelling is that it affords one the opportunity to literally tender one's experience so that it may be used and passed on – as the currency of wisdom or counsel – by another in the economy of intersubjectivity.

The issue, though, according to Benjamin (2007a), is that through time the undifferentiated Greek Epic art of storytelling revealed a subtle betrayal, and thus the Muse-derived modality for conveying memory split into two distinct forms: storytelling, with its characteristic narrative transmission of scattered and multiple, short-lived⁷ reminiscences (*Gedächtnis*), which are based on the threading together of chains of multiple events, and conveyed to small audiences gathered around a storyteller. And, in contrast, the Greek Epic novel (e.g. the Homeric epics), with this characteristic transmission of singular remembrance (*Eingedenken*): remembrance of a single event, a hero, a place, or a combination thereof.

⁶ Before their bifurcation, there was a dialectical relation between these two forms of memory.

⁷ Short-lived to the extent that they are based on peoples' actual experiences – which, since they are not codified in an enduring text, must, by default of the limits and vagaries of human memory, be rather short and open to multiple interpretations compared to lasting nature of a written text.

According to Benjamin (2007a), the mass dissemination of the modern novel – just a faint echo of its predecessor, the Greek Epic novel – was born out of isolation. Owing to the introduction of the printing press (operated and controlled by the ruling class), the novel was written by individuals and disseminated for individuals without any form of collective or narrative transmission in mind. As such, the novel precipitates a shift from dialogicity to monologicity – breaking the perceived adamantine chains holding the collective together – whereby individuals no longer chose to relay their own experiences of life through stories and oral histories for the counsel and wisdom of the other. Instead, individuals preferred to steel themselves away with a novel to read in silence, alone; basing their formulations of self and other on the textual productions of another. Says Benjamin, insofar as the birthplace of the novel is the individual ‘[he or she] is no longer able to express himself [*sic*] by giving examples of his most important concerns, is himself [*sic*] uncounseled, and cannot counsel others’ (2007a: 87).

It follows, then, that the novel and its means of transmission, the printing press, bring with them a profound change in the conveyance and structure of human experience – and this is the crux, I believe, of Benjamin’s theory of experience. The richness and meaning of human communication is reduced to what Benjamin calls information – all communication now, in the modernist era, is mere information.

A world comprised of mere information, then, as I read Benjamin, constricts the social potential for communication, and thus makes the individual dependent on him/herself for seeking out noteworthy stories: it is up to the individual to turn on the radio, read a book, pamphlet or the newspaper. The community is seemingly no longer there to circulate, foster and transmit living stories through the warmth of its social body. Such reliance on seemingly artificial, external mediums, then, denudes the individual of any creative capacity for interpretation of stories. ‘Information lays claim’, Benjamin tells us, ‘to prompt verifiability’ (2007a: 89) – communication, then, owing to the mechanisation of our world has grown all the poorer. The beauty of the orally transmitted story, we can infer, was its very hermeneutic volatility – its capacity for multiple and sometimes markedly contrasting interpretations (such is the imperfect and multiform stamp which bears the impress of human experience)!

To Benjamin, the problematic of modernity and its dissemination of information (which started with the advent of the novel, and which gathered force after the First World War), is that it isolates the individual from his/her community, and from him/herself. Moreover, the individual’s biography becomes something alien, something inaccessible in that it has become decoupled as it were from community-based modes of recollecting the past. When the individual has become separated from the community all he/she has at his/her disposal are fragmented, highly personal memories: the moorings holding fast the individual to the community have been rent asunder, and *eo ipso*, the continuity of self and other, and the mnemonic medium that inheres in them – collective memory – has been changed forever. ‘More and more often’, Benjamin laments, ‘there is embarrassment all around when the wish to hear a story is expressed. It is as if something that seemed inalienable to us, the securest among our possessions, were taken from us: the ability to exchange experiences’ (2007a: 83).

So, at this point it may be in our best interest to pause for a moment and ask ourselves the following question: what does the shift from storytelling to the novel, or, more specifically, the shift from communication grounded in intersubjectivity to an individual's inundation with mechanised and anonymous information have to do with *history*. To answer this question, we will have to shift from our previous focus – *The Storyteller* – to Benjamin's pieces on Baudelaire and Proust: namely, *On some Motifs in Baudelaire* (2007b) and *The Image of Proust* (2007c) respectively. It is in these two pieces that Benjamin expounds his theory of personal memory, which, I will show later on, has direct bearing on his theory of history.

These aforementioned pieces, which overlap greatly with the leitmotif of *The Storyteller* (Benjamin 2007a), illustrate that the structure of experience has affected one's ability to recollect one's own life history. Benjamin then turns to Proust for a greater understanding of how one is to come to terms with his or her experience in the rapidly changing modern world. We can see here that Benjamin perceives Proust as a welcomed ford in the swiftly coursing river of modernity – he represents one of the last 'storytellers' who has managed to adapt to the circumstances of modernity, and, as such, retained his gift of relaying experience through memory. 'Proust's eight volume work (*À la Recherche du Temps Perdu*, volumes 1–8 [1913–1927])', Benjamin explains, 'conveys an idea of the efforts it took to restore the figure of the story teller to the present generation' (2007c: 159).

Inasmuch as the changes precipitated by the present are permanent, we can never hope to fully regain the continuity between self, other and community which obtained in the dialectical relation between reminiscence (*Gedächtnis*, community based and multiplex: out of which came oral memory and narrative) and remembrance (*Eingedenken*, singular and narrow in focus: out of which came the prototype of the novel). Both modes of recalling the past are now beyond the control of the individual; however, remembrance far exceeds the individual's capacity to recall his past life *in toto* to the extent that experience has now become more fragmented and heterogeneous than ever. As such, we now have a double problematic: the individual, cut from the community, is isolated and inundated with anonymous information; and, owing to this isolation and inundation of information, he/she now has great difficulty accessing the continuity of meaningful biographical memories.⁸

What Proust manages to formulate in *À la Recherche du Temps Perdu* is the distinction between what he calls *mémoire volontaire* and *mémoire involontaire*. The former, existing solely in the service of the intellect, is based on an assumed continuity that is no longer available; it is a form of memory that submits – or attempts to do so – to the call of attentiveness (Benjamin 2007c). It assumes that one's memories are part of an accessible continuum, and that one need only to recollect in order to re-experience a certain memory, to re-capture a certain feeling.

⁸ The individual no longer has the support from the community. Inasmuch as collective memory and individual memory have undergone a shift, the community no longer has the mnemonic means through which to renew its traditions, which, in turn would have afforded prompts for the individual to renew his/her own biographical memory (Wohlfarth 1978) – the individual now is nothing more than a monad.

Inversely, the latter form of memory (*mémoire involuntaire*) is based, Benjamin informs us, purely on chance: a memory manifests itself to the isolated individual as momentary and aleatory flashes – or, if you will, charged pulses of visual content before the mind’s eye wherein the entirety of one’s life history is imploded into an instantaneous image.⁹ These memories are usually triggered by some form of sensation: a smell, a taste, a sound – to Proust, it was the taste of the *madeleine* which, through the sensation of its taste, pulled him, involuntarily, into the past (Benjamin 2007c). That the various historical modes of communication such as Greek Epic memory – that is narrative and storytelling, and its cohesive effects on the individual and society – have been replaced by information, and information and the mere sensations it effects result in nothing more than the atrophy of human experience (Benjamin 2007c).

The upshot, then, to this is interesting: according to Benjamin, in this age of the impoverishment of experience, *mémoire involuntaire* is the closest form (albeit in a compromised sense) of memory akin to Greek Epic memory (namely, the singular remembrance of the novel with its rather isolated focus). *Mémoire involuntaire* afforded Proust the means through which to capture aspects of his childhood in order to recount them to an audience through the format of the novel. Save for its more modern means of expression, *mémoire involuntaire* is as Wolthfarth (1978), following Benjamin states, the most promising form of remembering available to the present situation.

Before I begin to draw connections between Benjamin’s tripartite notion of temporality, namely his theory of experience (reminiscence, remembrance, information and the atrophy of experience), memory (*mémoire volontaire* and *involuntaire*) and history (the role of the Angel of History and the redemption of history), I will first – for the sake of clarity and emphasis – outline below what Benjamin’s approach to history rejected, namely, historicism.¹⁰

Of Angels and Revolutions: Benjamin’s Critique of Historicism

Historicism to Benjamin, was an attempt, to discover the truth of history through reflection; to make the past available to the inquiring mind in its entirety to the present.¹¹ Seen as a continuum, the movement of history to the historicist was teleological: the *telos* of this forward movement was constant, ineluctable progress. And this continual progress could be explained easily – undergirded by a positivistic epistemology – by viewing each moment in time as part of a causal chain, concatenated *ex post facto* by the historicist. That historicism sought to reconstruct history according to ideologies of progress and inevitable development meant that this process was inherently selective: it was an approach to history

⁹ Like a dying person who sees his/her life flash before his/her eyes just before the immanence of death, correlatively, through the seemingly random experiences of an unexpected sensation (a taste, sound, smell, etc.) one can re-visit in a burst of re-experience (via *mémoire involuntaire*), one’s entire childhood – if only for a moment.

¹⁰ Historicism was the academic counterpart to the Social Democratic Party’s ideologies of inevitable progress and development (Beiner 1984; Benjamin 1940/2003).

¹¹ This approach echoes Proust’s notion of *mémoire volontaire* – albeit on a societal scale.

that favoured the victors of history and not the vanquished. It was this exclusive focus on the events of the winners of history that Benjamin was determined to rail against.

Benjamin proffers his readers an incisive critique of historicism in his piece entitled *Eduard Fuchs, Collector and Historian* (2003c) – the first of his pieces wherein he outlines his unique approach to historical materialism. Arguing against historicism's approach to history as an epic whole, Benjamin states that the historian, working within the purview of historical materialism must at all costs eschew the epic, homogenous approach to history, and, instead centre his/her efforts on 'blast[ing] a specific era out of the homogenous course of history...the specific epoch, the specific life, the specific work' (Benjamin 1937/2003: 262). For Benjamin, historical materialism was, as it was for Marx, characterised by a revolutionary approach to history. However, unlike Marx, the revolutionary potential of history lay not in the future (to Marx, the historical past was always understood in terms of what was to come in the future, i.e., progress and liberation), but in the present looking backwards toward the past (Beiner 1984).

The revolutionary injunction, the infinite task of historical materialism, opines Benjamin (2003a; 2003b), was to save the past (by those in the present) and not the future from the destructive effects of progress espoused by proponents of historicism. This sentiment is perhaps best encapsulated in the following statement toward the end of Thesis XVIIa from his *Paralipomena to "On the Concept of History"* (2003b): 'Marx says that revolutions are the locomotive of world history', Benjamin explains, '[b]ut perhaps it is otherwise. Perhaps revolutions are an attempt by the passengers on this train –the human race – to activate the emergency brake' (ibid.: 402). Following this perspective, we should be asking ourselves: if the revolutionary potential of history lies in the present with an orientation toward the past, how exactly is this revolutionary? And, furthermore, how exactly does this conceptualisation of history and revolution align itself with Benjamin's theories of memory and human experience?

A provisional answer lies in his famous yet enigmatic Thesis IX of *On the Concept of History* (2003a) – a piece inspired by the visual image of Paul Klee's painting entitled *Angelus Novus*. Reading this thesis, we are afforded a dramatic picture of Angel¹² moving further and further away from history and human events at the moment they transpire. 'His eyes are wide', Benjamin explains, keeping our attention affixed to this somewhat eldritch image, 'his mouth is open, his wings are spread. His face is turned toward the past. Where a chain of events appears before us, *he* sees one single catastrophe, which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it at his feet' (2003a: 392). 'The angel', he continues, 'would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise and has got caught in his wings; it is so strong that the angel can no longer close them' (ibid.). With his back turned toward the future, the helpless angel is buffeted unmercifully into the future by the storm that is progress, all the while an ever-growing pile of temporal wreckage grows steadily on the ground.

¹² The Angel, to me, is an allegorical representation of Benjamin himself.

If the Angel of History sees history as one single catastrophe, how does the past manifest itself to us – as mortal, humans? Benjamin tells us that we see the past as a chain of events, but there has to be more to it than this. When we direct our attention to Thesis V of the same piece, we learn that ‘[t]he true image of the past flits by’, and, furthermore, ‘the past can be seized only as an image that flashes up at the moment of its recognisability, and is never seen again’. Benjamin closes Thesis V by explaining that ‘it is the irretrievable image of the past which threatens to disappear in any present that does not recognise itself as intended in that image’ (2003a: 391). Aligning these last fragments from Thesis V with the image of the Angel of History limned in Thesis IX, we can finally start to piece together how Benjamin’s theories of experience and memory sit flush with his theses on history (forming the synergy that is his tripartite approach to temporality).

Insofar as the Angel sees one single catastrophe where we can only see a chain of fragmented events, we can surmise that the Angel’s *optics of temporality* is most akin to that of remembrance (*Eingedenken* – remembrance, according to the novel, of a single event, a single hero, or, in this case, the singular event of history in its entirety), than it is to seeing events in their multiplicity as sequences or chains (*Gedächtnis*). But if the Angel, who sees human history as a single catastrophe, is being blow away by the strong winds of progress, it is assumed, as stated above, that we see and experience nothing more than the traces of the transpiration of history as fragments of detritus – a temporal heap of rubble.

We can see now a very clear parallel between the purview of historicism and Proust’s notion of *mémoire volontaire*: historicism and its approach to the totality of human temporal movement through time, and the very accessibility and comprehension thereof, is much like the ability of an individual to muse about his/her past, and simply recall events with an air of insouciance. But, as Benjamin informed us, this is no longer possible: inasmuch as we are bombarded in our daily lives with information, we have, as a result, become dissociated from our communities, and from ourselves – communication, experience and memory are all thrown into jeopardy.

That we can no longer remember as we once did – as in the Greek Epic mode of remembering – we are left with a compromised modality for understanding the past. And, as we gleaned from Proust, this modality was referred to as *mémoire involontaire*: the accessibility of the past, in the form of pulses and flashes from one’s personal history, through random sensations. By transferring and politicising this notion of *mémoire involontaire* to history as a whole, we can now understand what Benjamin means by the statement ‘[t]he past can be seized only as an image that flashes up at the moment of its recognisability,¹³ and is never seen again’ (2003a: 391).

¹³ To Benjamin, these aleatory images of the past reveal themselves through a dialectic process. To Benjamin, dialectics at a standstill works by the involuntary presentation of images of the past from a position rooted in the present: the relation between past and present produces an image: ‘in drawing itself together in the moment – in the dialectical image – the past becomes part of humanity’s involuntary memory... [t]he dialectical image is an occurrence of ball lightning that runs across the whole horizon of the past’ (Benjamin 2003a: 402). As such, then, like Proust’s *mémoire involontaire*, the entirety of human history is condensed through a mass involution into a series of disjointed images.

To address the question of how Benjamin's notion of historical materialism is revolutionary if it is not directed toward the future, we can say that it is revolutionary insofar as it is directed toward the *past* – a rather curious orientation for a Marxist. Again, in a highly idiosyncratic sense, Benjamin's revolution is the movement, or lack thereof (it is actually a freezing of time), of Marx's historical dialectical materialism: the revolution, both 'mystical and profane' (Wohlfarth 1978: 175), inheres in an historical dialectic which halts its own forward movement, and tarries with an anxious focus on the fleeting images of the past. To repeat: for Marx, revolution lies in the potential for an uprising in the oppressed classes to precipitate change so that a classless society could emerge in the future. Inversely, for Benjamin, revolution lay in the freezing of time – a halting of the forward movement of progress toward a classless society in order to tarry in the present through the experience of aleatory historical images. It is only through this halting or freezing of time through the emergency of the historical image that, for Benjamin, all historical narrative can actually escape ideology (Wohlfarth 1979).

The 'Images' of History: Problematizing Benjamin's Notion of the Messiah

The next question, then, is if history, according to Benjamin, can only reveal itself to us as fragmented images which flash up and then recede forever – down into the bubbling depths of the river *Lethe*, so to speak – what are we to do with this? What exactly is revolutionary about this? A trace of an answer to these foresaid questions appears in Thesis VI of *On the Concept of History* (2003a). 'Historical materialism', we are told, 'wishes to hold fast that image of the past which unexpectedly appears to the historical subject in a moment of danger. The danger threatens both the content of the tradition and those who inherit it' (Benjamin 2003a: 391). 'For both', Benjamin continues, 'it is one and the same thing: the danger of becoming a tool of the ruling classes. Every age must strive anew to wrest tradition away from conformism that is working to overpower it' (ibid.). Perhaps the most important line in Thesis VI, to the extent that it crystallises Benjamin's approach to revolution, is the following: 'The Messiah comes not only as the redeemer; he comes as the victor over the Antichrist' (ibid.).

But this, to me, needs more unpacking, as it still seems quite enigmatic. Let us continue, then. The role of the Messiah *qua* redeemer, for Benjamin, is to make whole that which has been fragmented by modernity. More clearly, what the Angel of History (who, to Benjamin, is *not* the Messiah) sees is the entirety of human temporality as one single catastrophe – it is a singular event, seen through optics of remembrance (*Eingedenken*). We can infer, then, that this metaphor is meant to illustrate that the ruling classes, backed by the ideologies of National Socialism (undergirded by the purview of historicism), have chosen to emphasise progress and development, using a skewed interpretation of history and tradition (as ideological fodder) to support their claims.

According to Benjamin, National Socialism and the ruling classes were interested in nothing but the furthering of their own aims: control, power and the secure continuation thereof. History and tradition become the tools to achieve this power and control; they

become nothing more than a means to an end, and thus it follows that the only form of history and tradition they will use is that of the victor – only insofar as the history of the common person, the multiple and fragmented histories will not be of any use in the socio-political machinations of taking over power and maintaining it.

The logical corollary, then, is the complete destruction of the history of the vanquished (through inattention, forgetfulness, and distraction), and therefore, the whole of human history. Leaving the vanquished (the helpless victims of the ruling classes) absolutely no purchase on their own past by dint of an ideologically-grounded orientation toward the future and its promise of progress, causes history to lose its power (wisdom, truth, authenticity). To Benjamin, historicism reduces histor(ies) to History – and therefore, owing to this exclusive focus on the ruling classes and their unquestioned embrace of modernity (technology and mechanisation) further exacerbates the ‘atrophy of experience’. Following suit with Benjamin’s Messianic approach to the redemption of history, it is the Messiah, who is the only one who can restore the distortion of history wrought by the National Socialists, the historicists, and the ethos of modernity in which we all are helplessly caught.

Our soteriological orientation toward the past can only be brought about, then, with the coming of the Messiah. What the Angel of History can only see, the Messiah can restore. But again more questions follow. What does the Messiah actually do? According to Wohlfarth (1978), the Messiah will realign the fragmentary images of history and constellate them into a whole again so that we, as the children of modernity, may re-member what has been seemingly irreparably distorted by ideologies of progress and forced forgetting. This *whole* that Benjamin sees the Messiah reconstituting is nothing more than the re-fusion of those elements of Greek Epic memory: of *Gedächtnis* and *Eingedenken*, to wit, the storyteller’s reminiscences and the novelist’s remembrance, (*mémoire volontaire* and *mémoire involontaire*) and the dialectical intertwining thereof.

Through re-focusing our attention on the past, and through realigning our orientations back toward intersubjectivity, Benjamin’s notion of Messianic redemption is centred on saving tradition so that we may bring it forth into the present to assist in the utopian reconstruction of the future. The crux of Benjamin’s position on history, then, is that only a redeemed humanity in a Messianic age can bring about total recall of the past into the present. Until then, all recall of the past will be fragmentary, distorted and condensed to desultory images.

What I see as an obvious lacuna in Benjamin’s conceptualisation of Messianic redemption is his lack of explaining what exactly is to happen after redemption has occurred. Does this mean that the future is now saved, too, and not just the past? Insofar as his revolutionary approach is supposed to halt the train that is progress, so that we may tarry in the present and experience the past authentically, how is this supposed to bring about the dissolution of the ruling classes? Or, how it is supposed to enact alternative ways of enduring through time, so as not to submit fully to the atrophy of experience that modernity brings. Following these questions, Benjamin provides a characteristically enigmatic response: ‘[w]hoever wishes to know what the situation of a “redeemed humanity” might actually be, what conditions are required for the development of such a situation, and

when this development can be expected to occur, poses questions to which there are no answers' (2003a: 402).

Heretofore we have considered the complicated synergy that is Benjamin's tripartite notion of temporality, and, earlier in the paper I argued that in order to understand one of Benjamin's theories, the reader had to perform an imbricated reading of his pieces on human experience and memory, in order to at least partially appreciate what he is trying to convey. Now that I have attempted to delineate somewhat of a map outlining key areas of this thought and how they interrelate, I feel that it will be far easier to articulate the spirit driving my critique of the theories mentioned above.

In a word, Benjamin's theories of experience, memory and history form a utopian optics of tradition and history; and, by virtue of this utopian orientation to the past, I feel that Benjamin's view of the future is strongly melancholic. As such, tradition to Benjamin, from my own position, seems to be nothing more than a *Fata Morgana* – a constructed illusion. Levying my critique particularly on the first part of his tripartite notion of temporality, namely, his theory of experience, I feel that he is giving tremendously short shrift to the subversive modes and means through which to keep memory insulated from the sometimes injurious assaults of modernity. By romanticising and idealising Greek Epic memory, as the dialectic between the reminiscence of the storyteller the remembrance of the novelist, I feel that this is, perhaps, oversimplifying the actual historical state of affairs.

When considering the context in which Benjamin was writing his tripartite notion of temporality, and was lamenting the loss of tradition, it does seem that he was sacrificing the smaller social group (the tribe, the family, the village, etc., and their own modes of authentic experience, communication and relations) at the expense of the large modernist city (the context in which Benjamin wrote his works, and where the fragmenting effects of modernity were perhaps nowhere more keenly felt). More specifically, I feel that Benjamin was extrapolating insights gleaned from his personal experiences¹⁴ to the greater context of world history. Put simply, Benjamin seems to be imposing his melancholic *Weltanschauung*, which was rooted firmly in the socio-political climate of Berlin, to other social contexts – some of which were markedly different from Benjamin's – and then intimating that this *Weltanschauung* provided an explanation for the world historical state of affairs.

Following my critique even further, and building on the above, it is rather obvious after having become acquainted with Benjamin's tripartite notion of temporality that it seems to efface human agency. Peoples' seeming inability to engage in reflexivity, improvisation and action, in Benjamin's approach, is attenuated to such an extent that we need the Messiah as a *dues ex machina* to appear from the ether and save us, since we cannot save ourselves. Otherwise, we are left with the capacity to experience only random images of history via a collective capacity for *mémoire involuntaire*. With the Messiah's arrival, only he can redeem and reinstate our sense of efficacy regarding the ability to carry forth tradition into the present; only he can make it so that the future may be free from the fetters of the ruling class and its complicity with modernisation.

¹⁴ It was Nietzsche who once stated that all philosophy is veiled autobiography.

I feel that such a reading of Benjamin renders the aforementioned approach to temporality as too theological and not politically significant. As such, while awaiting the arrival of the Messiah, the historical materialist has nothing more to work with than the present and its fractured relation to the past. As such, according to Benjamin, 'like every generation that preceded us, we have been endowed with a weak messianic power, a power on which the past has a claim. Such a claim cannot be settled cheaply' (2003a: 390). The weak messianic power, the ability to stop progress temporarily through dialectics at a standstill – to tarry in the present while attempting to arrest the images of the past as they flit by – appears is if by chance, and only fleetingly.

To this end, following Ferris (2008), Benjamin makes a distinction between the Messiah and the *messianic*: the former is he who will bring the end of history, the complete fusion between *Gedächtnis* and *Eingedenken*; while the latter refers to the weak messianic power the present is maintains over the past – the ability to arrest the empty progress of time through the fleeting perception of images (the 'true' experience of an historical moment). This messianic relation to the past is also the revolutionary aspect: Benjamin's interpretation of historical materialism claims that the messianic power of the present is weak, it only appears in the brief moments of the images it hopes to fully redeem; however, insofar as its power is weak, it cannot defeat fully the ideological powers which hold it at bay (*ibid.*).

Since the Messiah cannot figure into Benjamin's approach to temporality (until the end of history in an eschatological sense), all the Messiah can offer now are tremendous abbreviations of what he would bring with the end of history: the images of the past wherein all of history is encapsulated in a brief pulse or flash (*ibid.*). To the historical materialist like Benjamin, history can only be redeemed in a partial sense.

For Benjamin's Angel of History and his/her optics of temporality (more specifically remembrance), is it so that all of history for *everyone* is perforce fragmented by the threat of capitalism and its accompanying ideologies? And is it so that only Benjamin's Angel can see historical transpiration in its entirety? It does seem that the Angel's gaze is a little too encompassing, and, *a fortiori*, Benjamin's gaze a little too constrictive inasmuch as it precludes any form of creative or subversive re-working memory and tradition of people in different socio-cultural contexts.

A Rejoinder to Benjamin: Foucault, Subjugated Knowledges and Revitalisation Movements

Contra Benjamin, if indeed we are not passive automatons and, quite the contrary, *can* exert at least some agency against the impoverishment of experience, what would these tactics look like? What would be their conditions of possibility? To provide a tentative answer to the questions outlined above, and to further marshal my critique of Benjamin's tripartite notion of temporality, I will now turn to the work of Michel Foucault, particularly his notion of subjugated knowledges¹⁵ and their occult or hidden genealogies.

¹⁵ In the sense that I am using the term, subjugated knowledges refers to those traditions that remain hidden from view, undergirded by a strategic silence – in order to keep them from being fully destroyed by the prevailing state apparatus which they seek to discretely oppose.

To Foucault (2003), subjugated knowledges consist of bodies of historical knowledges that were somehow masked and rendered occult through various knowledge/power practices of the state; they are ways of understanding that have been made illegitimate in light of more official systematisations of knowledge and their socio-politically sanctioned modes of access and dissemination – as ‘underground’ modes of knowing, they have somehow slipped through the leaky cracks of the epistemological containers imposed by the state, the school, or disciplines of power and control (the medical field, juridical system, etc.).

Foucault further explains that subjugated knowledges are, unlike their official counterparts, inchoate, naïve or non-hierarchical knowledges or modalities of apprehending the phenomena of the world and acting upon it – they are, perforce, highly plastic in that they lack any formal centralisation, and thus connect, de-connect and re-connect according to the situation at hand. And, as such, they need to be understood or revealed from below – through the interstices of the socio-cultural systems through which they circulate.

Coupled with this notion of subjugated knowledges is Foucault’s Nietzschean notion of genealogy. To Foucault, a genealogy is a counter-measure for uncovering subjugated or forbidden knowledge’s.¹⁶ Moreover, they are, as explained by Foucault (2003), attempts to desubjugate these buried knowledges in order to release them from the fetters of inattention, disqualification and socio-politically induced forgetting.

Genealogies afford the opportunity to ‘oppose and struggle against the coercion of a unitary, formal, and scientific [and political] theoretical discourse’ (Foucault 2003: 10). The crux, then, of these unsystematised and fragmented genealogies, to Foucault, is to ‘reactivate local [or subjugated] knowledges... against the scientific [and political] hierarchicalization of knowledge and its intrinsic power effects’ (ibid.).

So, then, building on this last statement, and applying Foucault’s own position on the creative use of theory/philosophy,¹⁷ I would like to make the case that genealogies are not just tools for academics like Foucault, but are actually existential tactics or means to an end that certain groups can draw on and employ in light of the encroachment of other, more formalised and systematised knowledges (‘at the moment of danger’ as Benjamin would say).

Whereas Benjamin would have argued that capitalist ideology and the technical advances concomitant with modernity destroy tradition, and thus render the authentic continuity thereof impossible, my countermand is that this view is far too totalising and inapplicable to all socio-cultural and historic contexts. As such, my take is that capitalist ideology and the technical advances concomitant with modernity, in some cases, enable and open up lacunae (not occlude them) for the creative circulation of subjugated knowledges which flow, sometimes interrupted, sometimes not, through the interstices of official knowledge.

¹⁶ Knowledges grounded, possibly, in oral and narrative traditions, or at least the way I am envisioning them for the purposes of this paper.

¹⁷ As Foucault said of the creative use of another’s theory (whomever this may be): ‘one must not be afraid to use it, deform it, to make it groan and protest’ (1980: 53–54).

Whereas Benjamin's Angel of History passively observes the piling up of historical detritus (those forgotten fragments that historicism leaves out in its quest to further official history) at his/her feet, as he/she is blown helplessly into the future by the gale of progress; and where the Messiah is the only figure bestowed with the power to save the past by aligning the fragmented pieces thereof, I see the past or tradition as always already aligned for certain groups and available for creative configuring. Perhaps we can modify Benjamin's idea of the image resulting from *mémoire involuntaire*, and think of tradition as presenting itself as an echo resonating from the past and calling forth to those willing to listen into the present – so as to act themselves upon the present in order to save the future.

What becomes of interest, then, is the hiding away or keeping secret these echoes or distant resonations of tradition that are perceived by the ruling classes as inimical to the forward reach of progress. To this end, then, certain groups may actively align the past themselves as capable, willing and active agents, by responding, through what I will call the tactics of genealogies, to the resonant echoes of tradition.¹⁸

Instead of awaiting the multiple traces of the past to be aligned and redeemed by Benjamin's notion of the Messiah, those who are willing can listen selectively to the echoes of the past; and, working as true *bricoleurs*, construct and constellate these echoes into a new cultural form in order to accommodate entirely new socio-cultural, political, religious and existential circumstances with which they are constantly faced.

Writing as an anthropologist, what I see as a consummate example of the tactics of genealogy, where groups have listened to and acted upon the resonant echoes of the past, are what Anthony Wallace (1956) referred to as revitalisation movements. According to Wallace, these movements are defined as 'a deliberate, organized, conscious effort by members of a society to construct a more satisfying culture' (1956: 265). Moreover, members of a group or society feel that their current cultural system is unsatisfactory; and they must innovate not merely discrete items, but a new cultural system, specifying new relationships as well as, in some cases, new traits. It follows that dissatisfaction, innovation and, *a fortiori*, agency, are necessary ingredients in enabling a society or group to re-work tradition, or certain aspects thereof, in order respond to a certain lack in their current socio-cultural, political, economic, religious or existential predicament.

Through some form of precipitating factor – whether this be a dream, communication with an 'other than human being', an insurrection, a failed revolution, war, an economic downturn, or a spiritual crisis, etc. – revitalisation movements are processual phenomena: to me, they require a reinstatement of the dialectic between *Gedächtnis* and *Eingedenken* Benjamin says decoupled with the onset of modernity and capitalism. Through the agentive reaching back into a group's historical narrative – like veritable *bricoleurs*, choosing certain aspects from historically-rooted tradition to respond to present dissatisfactions in the life-world – members of a group or society can themselves inflect the tone of their situation positively. By listening to the echoes of tradition, and through engaging

¹⁸ A process Benjamin doubtless would have referred to as an ersatz redemption.

the dialectic between collective memory and individual memory, made possible through the tactics of genealogies which allow subjugated knowledges to resurface in opposition to dominant, more pervasive ideologies, knowledge (in the singular), groups can literally re-invent themselves (within the parameters of their current context) accordingly.

An ethnographic example of the tactics of genealogies and subjugated knowledges uncovered therefrom, can be found in Alexander Lesser's paper, entitled *The Cultural Significance of the Ghost Dance* (1985), on the Pawnee revival of the Ghost Dance ceremony. The Ghost Dance spread throughout North American Indian tribes at a time when Native American cultures were in an advanced state of devolution (Lesser 1985). According to Lesser (*ibid.*) the devolution of Pawnee culture was precipitated by two rapidly changing conditions: 1) the near eradication of buffalo herds – buffalo meat was an integral component of the Pawnee bundle ceremonies; and, 2) the mode of cultural knowledge transmission, which was based on handing down cultural practices from the elderly to the young. As a result of these changes in Pawnee culture, ordinary social and cultural activities of daily life had, to a large extent, broken down (*ibid.*). Yet owing to the cultural and economic decline brought by the whites, not many Pawnee youth were interested in learning cultural traditions such as the bundle ceremonies, so fewer and fewer people were interested in learning the requisite rites and rituals associated with the bundles.

Cultural forgetting thus reached an accelerated rate, resulting in the near-loss of Pawnee traditions. However, owing to the role of certain visionaries, the Ghost Dance was thought of as a means through which to rejuvenate Pawnee traditions. Thus through ecstatic trances, the dancers claimed to be able to see into the next world where they witnessed their ancestors dancing and taking part in the old forgotten Pawnee rituals and traditions – all of which were thought to have been subjugated or disqualified. Through the tactics of genealogies, the visionaries – through dialogue with their ancestors in the world beyond – would remember through listening to instructions for the ancestors a forgotten ritual or tradition, and would subsequently relay the memory to others in the community (Lesser 1985). Lesser tells us that many visionaries would meet in order to pool their memories in order to revive as many rituals and traditions as they could remember (*ibid.*).

The process of revitalisation, Lesser (1985) tells us, brought with it a re-integration of old and new ways – leading, sometimes, to entirely new syncretic cultural creations. Through constant iteration and transformation, certain revivals of old societies were incorporated, new versions of the Ghost Dance hand game arose, and new forms of intertribal visiting were brought into effect (*ibid.*).

With respect to the tactics of genealogies, then, the underlying cultural traits of the Pawnee were, through listening and responding to the echoes of their ancestors, carried through to the present in sometimes productive and creative ways that underwrite social cohesion, or, as I would prefer, augment individual and collective experience meaning – hence, the reinstatement of the dialectic between *Gedächtnis* and *Eingedenken*.

As such, elements of Pawnee culture were re-introduced, through the visions of certain visionaries, as brief and sudden pulses or flashes into the constantly shifting half-light of the present, marked by the cultural dissolution owing to the advancement of the

whites. In such a manner, cultural elements lit up by bursts of cultural insight or interest can be given entirely new interpretations, or, in some cases even produce new, syncretic traditions (e.g. the Pawnee hand games – which, today, have been taken out of their ritual context, and are now played for purely recreational purposes) (ibid.). In order to understand this change, though, one needs to situate cultural practices within an historic frame. This allows for a creative understanding of those cultural elements that are interpellated from their resting/hiding places, called through the uneven accretions of time, changed, and re-interpreted in the present, for the present.

The Ghost Dance revitalisation movement, then, illustrates clearly how through agency and cultural innovation the Pawnee were able to reject the assimilation strategies of the white man by engaging in the tactics of genealogies (in the case of the Pawnee, this meant listening to the echoes of the past – the idolum or spectral trace of past rituals and traditions – through visionary dreams), thus uncovering oppositional and subjugated knowledges – which, ultimately led to the revitalisation of certain cultural elements, and the further empowerment of their people (which has had a lasting effect, starting from the inception of the Ghost Dance movement in the late 19th century, through to the present day).

Benjamin's triadic notion of temporality, it should now be clear, approaches history, and by logical extension, culture, as a seemingly rigid system wherein the introduction of outside influences (such as capitalism) effects a slow and systematic degradation in seemingly all facets of a group's existence – particularly with respect to intersubjectivity (i.e., dialogicity) and the very constitution thereof. Following this, it is only the Messiah, and not ourselves, who can save and redeem history and tradition.

Conclusion

Contra Benjamin, a more anthropological understanding of history and culture, as in the case described above, reveals that cultures (and the histories that provide their conditions of possibility), instead of existing as rigid systems wherein breakdown is immanent with the introduction of external forces (such as new ideas, drastic shifts in the power-balance, wars, etc.), are dynamic and protean symbolic systems which facilitate meaning and communication. Moreover, cultures, especially in the case of the Pawnee, are amoebic in that they have no definite form; they are motile and constantly changing form depending on the environment or context – and thus members of a culture, through group efficacy and agency, can adapt to markedly adverse situations through the tactics of genealogies and the uncovering of subjugated knowledges which these tactics accord.

My two central arguments, tethered as they were to a critique of Benjamin, revolved around the following: 1) Benjamin's tripartite notion of temporality seems to be grounded in a far too romantic perception of human experience, memory and history; and, 2) owing to this overly romanticised approach to experience, memory and history, and owing to his reliance on the coming of the Messiah to restore the fragmented images of history, Benjamin leaves no room for human agency in the active reconstitution or revitalisation of tradition, especially during what Benjamin referred to as 'the moment of danger': the inroads of capitalism, and the concomitant ideologies of the progress and development of the vic-

tors – the ruling classes. By drawing on Foucault, I countermanded Benjamin's approach by claiming that, through the tactics of genealogies and the subjugated knowledges they disclose, groups are afforded the means through which to carry their traditions creatively into the present so as to render the future less hostile and more meaningful – especially through the phenomena known as revitalisation movements. History, as it was shown, is always already open to creative possibilities, and that groups, acting as *bricoleurs*, are able to construct for themselves meaningful frameworks based on traditions rooted in history in order to respond to socio-cultural, political, religious, economic or existential crises.

Now, returning to our icebreaker we can see that it has resumed its course; and, whilst still heading steadily northward, we now see that in the double-cleaved furrow of its wake the ice-white hunks are now starting to draw together and re-fuse, albeit very slowly and haphazardly. However, the re-fusions of ice before us do not align perfectly with their original orientations, before their forced separation by the breaker's uncompromising hull. That the icy fragments are re-fusing on their own accord, then, suggests that either the temperature outside has plunged drastically, or, more likely, that our icebreaker is not achieving the particular effect its captain was so certain of. And, so, as with the ice we see drawing close together behind the breaker, history, through whatever means of understanding we would like to employ, always already remains accessible and present – all one need do is listen to, and, if willing, respond (that is, act, create, adapt), to the resonant echoes from the – past.

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Povzetek

Osrednji namen prispevka je raziskati družbeno-kulturni pojav revitalizacijskih gibanj skozi teoretsko lečo Walterja Benjamina in njegov zelo enigmatični pristop k časovnosti in izkustvu, ter skozi teorijo podvrženih vednosti in genealogije Michela Foucaulta, ki je genealogijo uporabil za izkopavanje podvrženih vednosti. Ker je Benjaminov pristop do zgodovine in človeških izkustev nekaterih delih njegovega opusa zelo kriptičen, skušam v precejšnjem delu tega besedila Benjaminov pristop čim bolj nazorno razložiti. Ker v prispevku predstavljam dva zelo različna pristopa k videnju sveta in k zgodovinskemu gledanju na družbeno-kulturne pojave, bi ga lahko označil za hevrističnega in raziskovalnega. Ponuja namreč pot, prek katere je mogoče raziskovati in delati na dva teoretska načina približevanja časovnosti in zgodovinskosti. Na ta način lahko vidimo, kako ju lahko soočimo in primerjamo v luči revitalizacijskih gibanj – glede na spremembe (skozi delovanje, kreativnost in potrebna konceptualna orodja) pogojev sedanjosti in prihodnosti, ki temeljijo na optiki preteklosti. Prispevek zaključujem z aplikacijo predstavljenih teoretskih pristopov k zgodovini na primeru revitalizacijskega gibanja ameriških staroselcev 19. stoletja, ki ga poznamo tudi kot Ples duhov (*Ghost Dance*).

KLJUČNE BESEDE: Walter Benjamin, Michel Foucault, revitalizacijska gibanja, zgodovina, časovnost

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