

# COMING TO TERMS: SLOGANIZATION IN LANGUAGE EDUCATION DISCOURSE



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# Slogанизation today

- Neoliberalism, academic marketization
- ‘Neoliberalese’
- Utilitarian view of language, language learning, language teaching
- Impact on scholarship:
  - Branding
  - Boasting
  - Slogанизing
- “[The] culture of competition and self-promotion is seeping into the content of our academic writing. This is a culture in which success and boasting seem to go hand in hand.” (Billig, 2013, p. 5)

# Slogанизation: Superdiversity

Superdiversity facilitates our lives in more ways than one. Activists concerned about language endangerment would have sent us to far-away places, while the new sociolinguistics legitimizes research in our own backyard and makes ‘uncovering’ of its own traces through the office window more rewarding – in terms of academic benefits – than the decidedly unsexy documentation of indigenous languages of Australia and North America or the labor-intensive ethnography of multilingual communication in Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu.

(Pavlenko, 2019, p. 161)

# Sloganization: Superdiversity

As a framing device, rather than a theory, superdiversity also makes lives easier by allowing scholars of multilingualism to retain their traditional questions, concepts and methods [...]. Most importantly, it soothes disciplinary anxiety by aligning us with the wider world. The key advantage of the slogan – proudly flagged by Arnaut, Blommaert, Rampton and Spotti (2016a: 4) – is its ‘strategic purchase in the field of social policy’. A convenient euphemism, superdiversity hits the spot with European governing bodies concerned about the refugee crisis, the new migration and the management of ethnolinguistic Superdiversity and Why It Isn’t diversity.

(Pavlenko, 2019, p. 161f.)

# Sloganization: Superdiversity

The best-hidden secret of superdiversity is that it does not change the way linguistic diversity operates and is researched – what it does is to improve the lives of those who signal allegiance to Newspeak. The reward for the allegiance is the ‘rising scholarly currency of the superdiversity framework’ (Faudree & Schulties, 2015b: 3) and generous funding for research on languages and superdiversity (Pavlenko 2019, p. 161f.)

# Slogans. An incomplete list

- Superdiversity
- Affective filter
- $i + 1$
- Digital native

# Digital native - sample

[T]his is not just a joke. It's very serious, because the single biggest problem facing education today is that our Digital Immigrant instructors, who speak an outdated language (that of the pre-digital age), are struggling to teach a population that speaks an entirely new language.

This is obvious to the Digital Natives – school often feels pretty much as if we've brought in a population of heavily accented, unintelligible foreigners to lecture them. They often can't understand what the Immigrants are saying. What does "dial" a number mean, anyway?

(Prensky, 2001, p. 2)

# Digital native

- Digital native/digital immigrant
- (first used by Barlow, 1996; popularized by Prensky, 2001)
- modeled on native/non-native binary (insurmountable difference)
- Linked to languages (two radically different languages; utterly foreign)
- linked to nativity vs. immigration (another binary)
- linked to generational conflict (yet another binary)
- Invested with additional meanings based on assumptions about competence/incompetence, access to and use of technology
- simplistic 'us versus them' construction
  - we – natives – young – competent – our language – new ways of living and learning – digital
  - them – non-native – old – incompetent – foreign language – old-fashioned and outdated teaching – analog/Gutenberg

# Slogans. An incomplete list

- Superdiversity
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- $i + 1$
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- Native speaker

# Native speaker

“The concept of native speaker occupies a curious position in applied linguistics. On the one hand it is widely used as a benchmark for knowledge of a language (and as such attracts opposition because it excludes those who are not native speakers), and as a criterion for employment; on the other hand a definition of the native speaker is elusive.” (Davies, 2004, p. 431)

# Defining the native speaker. Six attempts

- The native speaker acquires the L1 of which she/he is a native speaker in childhood.
- The native speaker has intuitions (in terms of acceptability and productive-ness) about his/her idiolectal grammar.
- The native speaker has intuitions about those features of the standard language grammar which are distinct from his/her idiolectal grammar.
- The native speaker has a unique capacity to produce fluent spontaneous discourse, which exhibits pauses mainly at clause boundaries (the “one clause at a time” facility) and which is facilitated by a huge memory stock of complete lexical items (Pawley & Syder, 1983). In both production and comprehension the native speaker exhibits a wide range of communicative competence.
- The native speaker has a unique capacity to write creatively (and this includes, of course, literature at all levels from jokes to epics, metaphor to novels).
- The native speaker has a unique capacity to interpret and translate into the L1 of which she/he is a native speaker. Disagreements about the deployment of an individual’s capacity are likely to stem from a dispute about the standard or (standard) language. (Davies, 2004, p. 435)

# Slogans. An incomplete list

## **Slogans... mere slogans**

- **superdiversity**
- **affective filter**
- **i + 1**
- **digital native**
- **native speaker**
- ...

## **Sloganization alert: Maybe terms, maybe slogans**

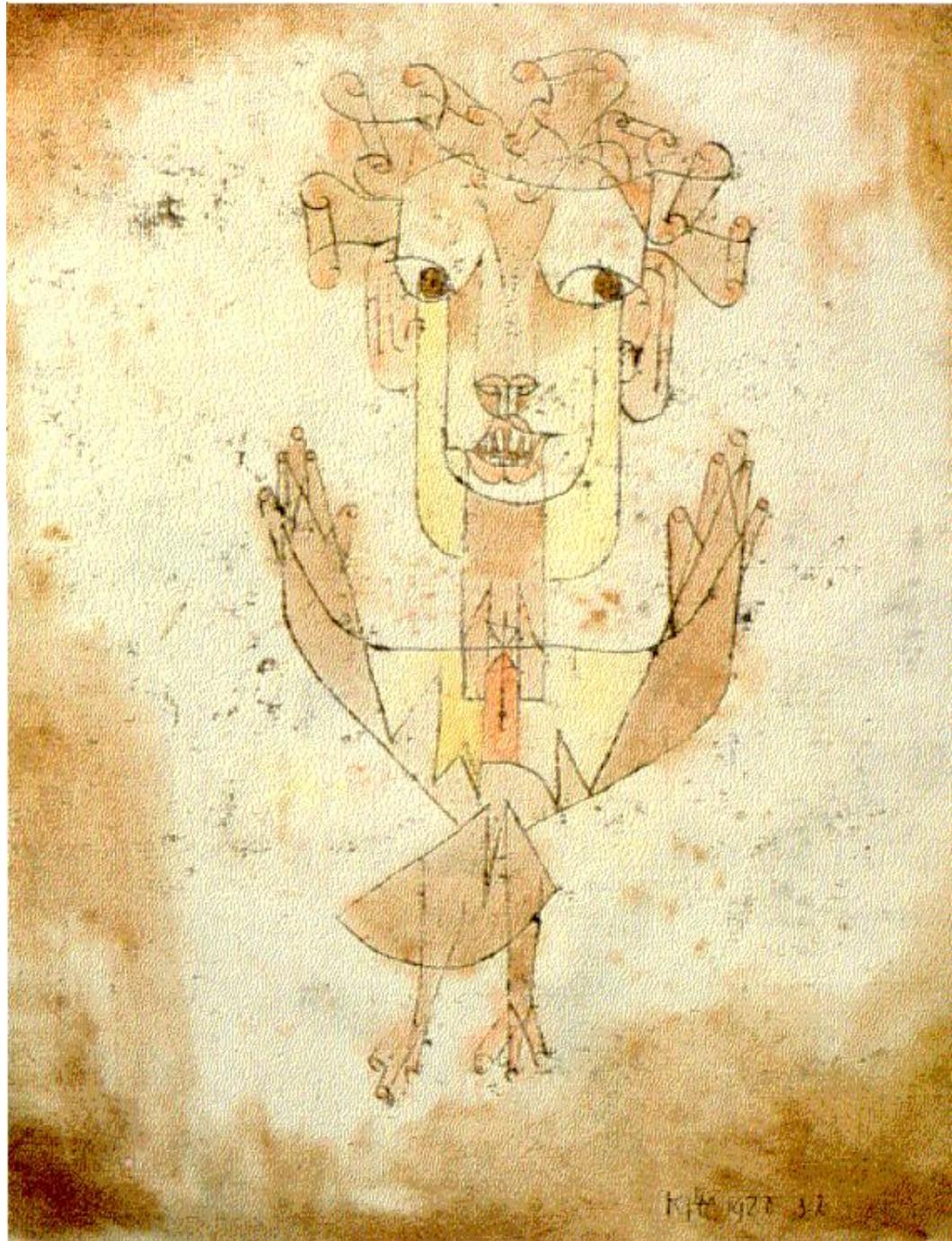
- **innovation**
- **authenticity**
- **paradigm shift**
- **holistic learning**
- **learner autonomy**
- **communicative competence**
- **intercultural competence**
- **monolingualism**
- ...

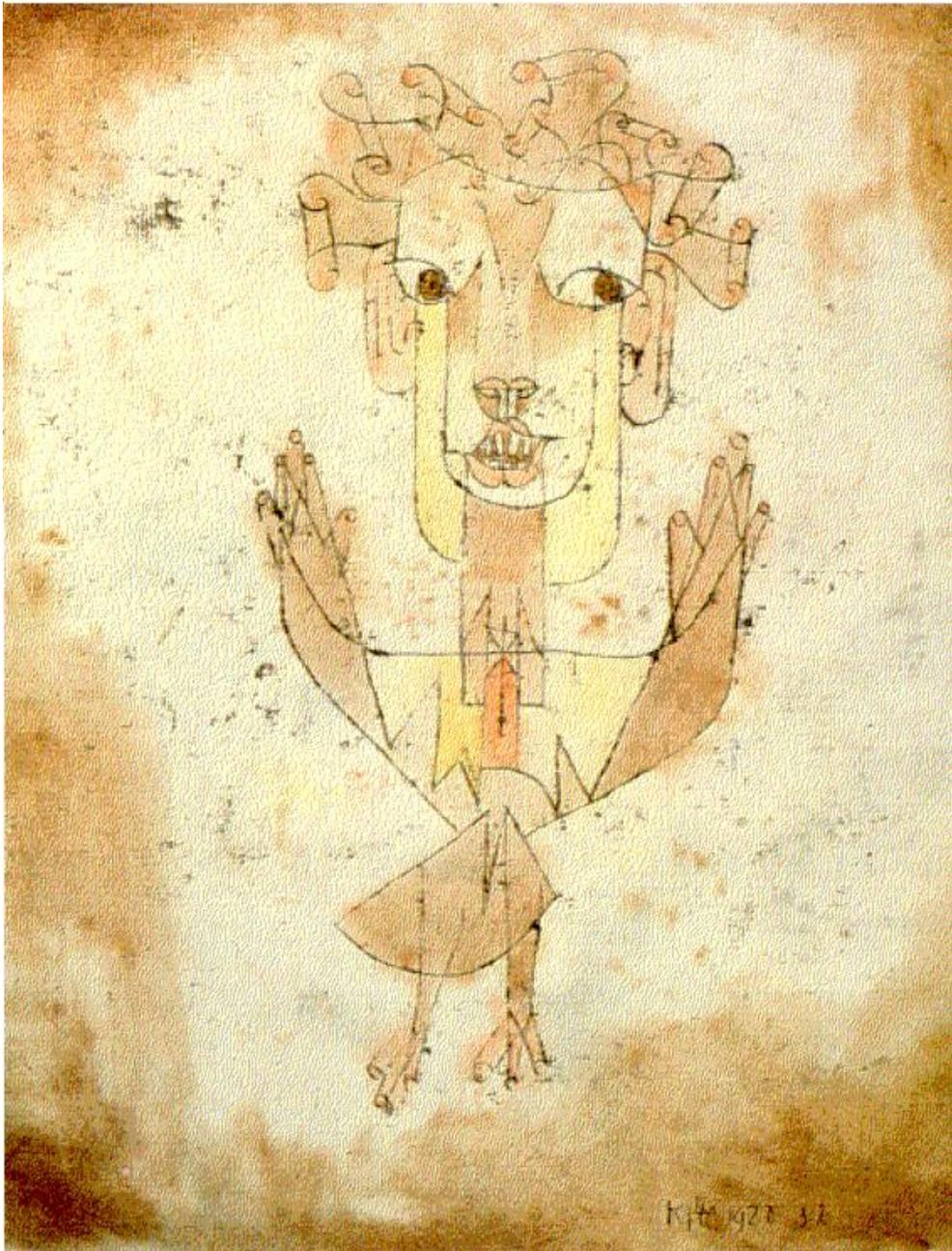
# Sloganization definition

Sloganization is meant to denote a tendency to use a range of popular terms in scholarship, policy papers, practical applications and curriculum development as if their meaning were obvious and shared across the globe. Assuming that the meaning of a popular term is obvious and globally shared leads to foregoing precise definitions, ignoring the whereabouts of concepts, overlooking the variety and inconsistencies of different meanings attached to them, and perpetuating seemingly straightforward and unproblematic terms that would sometimes more appropriately be considered slogans.

*(Sloganization vol., p. 4)*

# **Scrutinizing Language Education Discourse**

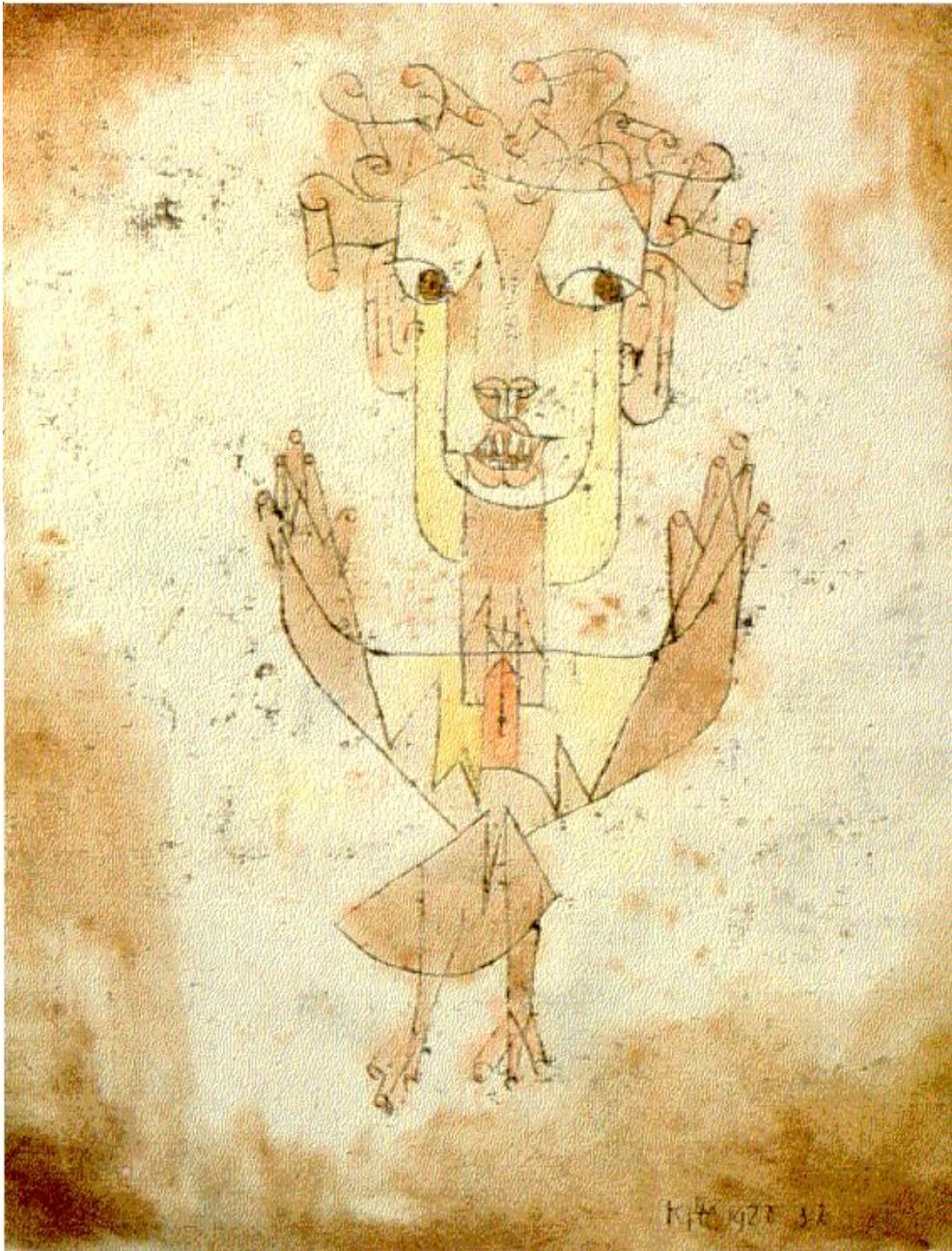




## Paul Klee, *Angelus Novus* (1920)

He stands slack-jawed, his four front teeth protruding from his open mouth like uneven stalactites. His head is topped by a mess of curls, which look more like sheets of parchment than strands of hair, and his jug ears stick so far out from his cylindrical face that they're almost flush with his jiggly eyes. His dainty chicken feet, joined to spindly legs, are complemented by large, grand wings – spread open, but tangled and ungainly. Paul Klee's *Angelus Novus*, a 1920 oil transfer drawing with watercolour, is a fearsome but fragile seraph: afloat, aghast, going who knows where. (Farago, 2016, n.p.)

*Angelus Novus*, perhaps more than any other artwork of the last century, really has exceeded the boundaries of the gallery: it is an image more fully understood as a myth than as a work of art." (Farago, 2016, n.p.)



Paul Klee, *Angelus Novus* (1920)

**Walter Benjamin:** “Theses on the philosophy of history” (publ. 1969; orig. *Über den Begriff der Geschichte* [on the concept of history])

### **Thesis 9**

A Klee painting named ‘Angelus Novus’ shows an angel looking as though he is about to move away from something he is fixedly contemplating. His eyes are staring, his mouth is open, his wings are spread. This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed.

But a storm is blowing in from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such a violence that the angel can no longer close them. The storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress.

# The Angel as *Denkbild* (image for thought)

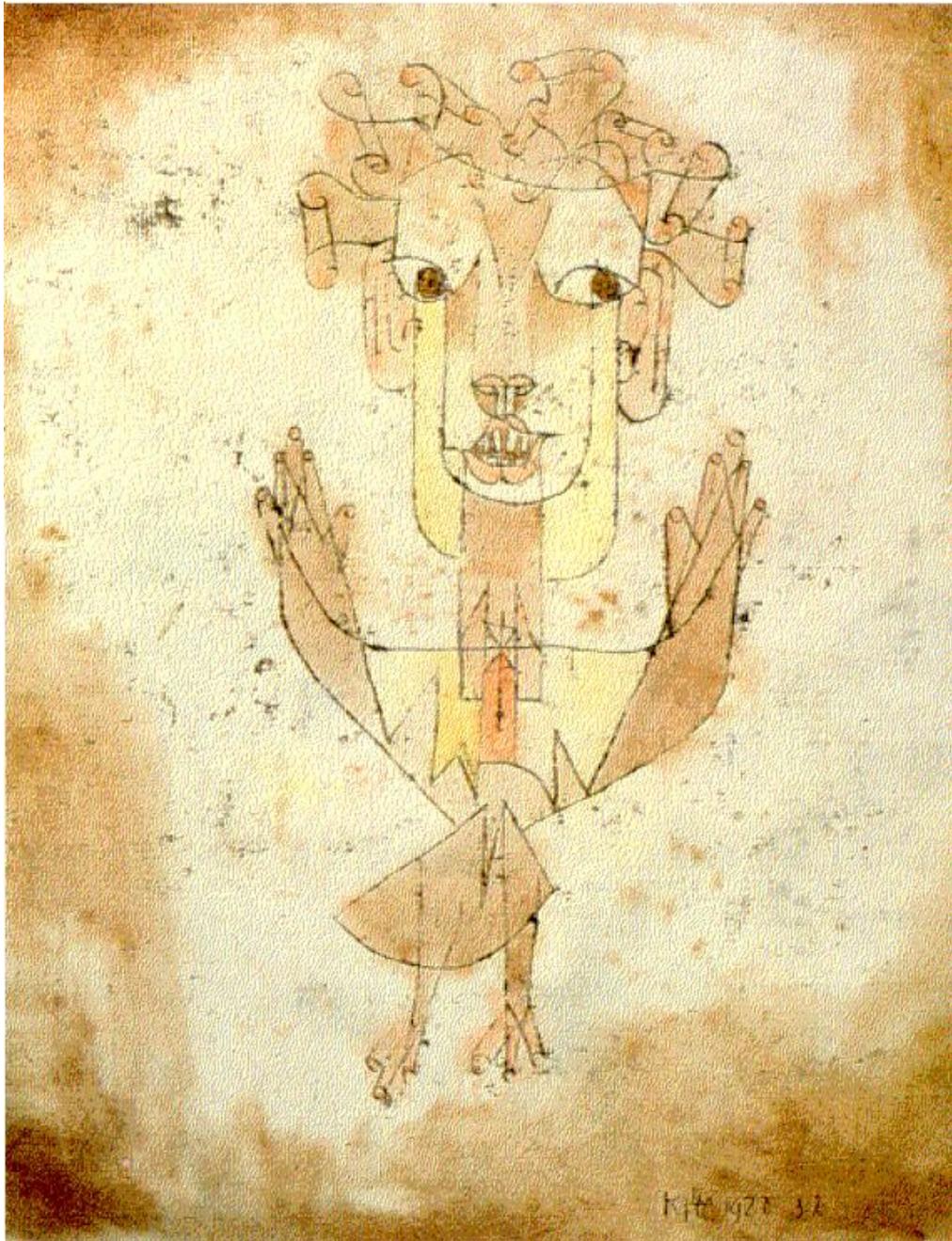
1. backward-facing position of the angel:
    - *facing* the past, i.e. turning one's face (and attention) towards things past and passed
    - food for thought: slogans pile up – a mess of its own kind
  2. critique of the predominant focus on history as progress
    - forward-looking, future-oriented, seeking constant innovation
    - closely linked to neoliberal, utilitarian views of language and scholarship
    - implies view of the past as 'old' and outdated
    - wreckage continues to pile up behind the backs of innovators
- Inherent 'newness imperative' almost inevitably leads to sloganization

**Angel of History**

**Angel of Memory**

**?**





Paul Klee, *Angelus Novus* (1920)