

DIAGNOSIS WITHOUT SOLUTION: AGAMBEN AND ESPOSITO

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Abstract: The paper concerns the way how Giorgio Agamben deals with the paradigm of political theology in his *Homo sacer* project. The author compares Agamben's ideas with those presented by Roberto Esposito – a thinker who apparently seems to have a lot in common with Agamben. In fact choosing different intellectual strategy Esposito's ideas could be used as a critical tool against some parts of Agamben's project (e.g. the concept of profanations). In spite of Agamben's declarations and (or rather: precisely because of) unprecedented scope and deepness of his studies, he is not able to provide the way out of the political theology regime. The author tries to prove abovementioned thesis by examining the terminological level of Agamben's ideas, the direction in which his thought is developed or the way how he conducts his genealogies. Consequently *Homo sacer* project seems to remind the silent language of the Impolitical.

Keywords: Giorgio Agamben, Roberto Esposito, political theology, economic theology, profanations

1. Mario Scattola's thesis – presenting the twentieth century as “a ‘truth’ of the whole political theology” (Scattola 2011, 171), a moment allowing both for its articulation and an understanding of its function in history – needs to be revised after Giorgio Agamben's *Homo sacer* project. What the Italian philosopher surely managed to do is reveal how far Carl Schmitt and his discussion opponents were from grasping the complexity of the phenomena in political theology.

Agamben's achievement is simultaneously his blessing and curse. The scope of his genealogical inquiry, meticulous approach, and erudition beyond compare constitutes a challenge that hardly any thinker can cope with. However, these attributes are simultaneously the cause of his troubles. Agamben has immersed himself in the abyss of political theology so deeply that even if he declares the will to transgress it, he cannot find his way out of it. In his *Introduction* to the first volume of *Homo sacer* he declares:

The weakness of anarchist and Marxian critiques of the State was precisely to have not caught sight of this structure and thus to have quickly left the *arcanum imperii* aside, as if it had no substance outside of the simulacra and the ideologies invoked to justify it. But one ends up identifying with an enemy whose structure one does not understand, and the theory of the State [...] is the reef on which the revolutions of our century have been shipwrecked (Agamben 1998, 12)¹.

It seems thus that Agamben very reasonably tries to avoid the abovementioned mistakes and that he intentionally chooses another strategy, up until then neglected, on which to base his confrontations with a sovereign state. The question is, however, whether at the end of his intellectual enterprise Agamben himself did not become a victim of the same Marxian reef – not by being shipwrecked, but by getting bogged down in it. In the following pages of this text, I explore that thesis and try to provide an answer to the question it contains.

One of those who realised and defined Agamben's theoretical problem is his compatriot, Roberto Esposito. The discussion, which could be sketched out on the basis of their books and other publications, shows that what is known as the “Italian Theory” is not composed of the similarities² between its representatives, but rather of slight points of

1 As it is easily noticed here, from the very beginning of his enterprises in the field of political philosophy, Agamben called into question the distinction between theory and practice. It is unquestionable that the author managed, in the whole *Homo sacer* series, to prove how deeply the early medieval theoretical treatises determined the form that modern political and economic institutions attained. Esposito also noticed this and he reasonably added that the programmatic impracticability of Agamben's thought is obviously connected to the concept of inoperativity (see Esposito 2012a, 254).

2 Even if they operationalise it differently, Agamben and Esposito share a very basic thesis that the political (meta-)structure of the West is founded on the so-called “exclusionary inclusion” (Agamben 1998; Agamben 2005c; Esposito 2013a; Esposito 2014).

disagreements which cut through it³. Moreover, it is also visible that political theology lies at the very centre of the Italian contemporary philosophy. For this reason one can claim that political theology achieves its apogee not in twentieth-century Germany, but rather in 21st century Italy.

Admittedly, Esposito occasionally commented on Agamben's philosophy in his earlier books (especially in *Living Thought*, pretending to be a guide to Italian philosophy, where from the wide range of Agamben's themes attention is put exclusively on the topic of economic theology), but it was undoubtedly his book *Due* that forged a relationship with *Profanations* and, even more, with *The Kingdom and the Glory* – the crucial and most pivotal book for the overall construction of Agamben's project. Esposito's *Due* was printed when the major part of the *Homo sacer* project was already publicly available. *Due* is entirely devoted to the problem of political theology and opens with a discussion on two fundamental issues raised in *The Kingdom and the Glory*: exploration of the category of the dispositive and reconstruction of the polemics which took place in the 20th century between, among others, Carl Schmitt and Erik Peterson, over the very possibility of a political theology. At the beginning of the book Esposito also makes a brief reference to the idea of profanations (Esposito 2013a, 4). However, what is most interesting is the fact that Esposito, taking almost the same starting point as Agamben in his book on economic theology, presents in *Due* a true alternative to *Homo sacer* and other publications that emerged as side-effects of Agamben's key project⁴. As a result the references to the author of *Immunitas* will help in the exploration of the abovementioned thesis of this article.

2. All the biopolitical issues and affirmative and negative variations, which would constitute an interesting theme for a comparative study, are left aside here in order to place emphasis on the question: How Agamben's propositions regarding political and economic theology should be perceived from Esposito's point of view? Regardless of the context, whether a biopolitical or theological one, Esposito never refers to Agamben's ideas disrespectfully. He follows his compatriot's publications with great attention (direct references appear in his books, even if they are not very frequent) and does not refrain from classifying some of his colleague's theses as literally innovative (Esposito 2012a, 250). This however does not mean that the author of *Immunitas* accepts all of Agamben's concepts without reservation. On the contrary – Esposito's praise in one aspect is usually immediately followed by a critique of Agamben,

3 Twenty years after publication of first volume of *Homo sacer*, the project of Giorgio Agamben has already been criticized by many scholars all around the World, as well as such great philosophers as, inter alia, Slavoj Žižek or Ernesto Laclau. I have decided however to focus on his Italian interlocutors (Esposito in particular), because it seems to me they explore the theologian context of Agamben's oeuvre in the best way.

4 The subsequent parts of *Homo sacer* and other publications, such as *Profanations*, *The Time That Remains* and *The Coming Community* are interconnected and thus, in my opinion, inseparable.

expressed in an attempt to distinguish his own thoughts from those formulated by the latter. This particular appreciation (innovativeness) concerns the way Agamben takes over the Foucaultian investigations and uses them to bring together the arguments of Schmitt (that the supreme theologico-political concept is sovereignty exercised through the state of exception) on the one hand, and Peterson (claiming that only the economic, and not political, theology is possible within Christianity) on the other, which arguments were traditionally deemed irreconcilable. As a consequence Agamben managed not only to find the relationship between the ancient and modern paradigm of governing (or transpose the earlier to the later), but most of all was able to link together that which in the Western tradition had become separated: politics and economy. Esposito therefore admits that Agamben was able to provide an interpretation not carried out before by anyone else; however this doesn't mean that he managed to change somehow the paradigm. In examining Esposito's way of thinking it becomes evident that he could not be fully contented with Agamben's proposition. And it seems that he is more satisfied with the fact that the dispute between Peterson and Schmitt was resolved "in the defeat of both" (Esposito 2012a, 252), rather than with the balance established by Agamben's theoretical movement which would reinforce the theological legitimacy of the West.

The reason why the defeat of Schmitt is welcomed by Esposito is fairly clear in the context of his entire work. The German jurist's oeuvre, considered as a continuation of Thomas Hobbes's thought and therefore the common adversary of both Esposito and Agamben, is characterised by the logic of *reductio ad unum* (which is, according to Esposito, fully compatible with political theology). This means the suppression of the original communal diversity, designed to establish an order within which all members are subordinated to the single person of the sovereign (Esposito 2005, 5–14). Revolting against the immunization paradigm, Esposito cannot accept such a philosophical and political stance.

At first glance it might seem that, having proved the impossibility of political theology, Peterson was more favourably inclined towards the same position as the one occupied by the author of *Bíos* (which to some extent is true). Nevertheless, by defining political theology in *Due* as a machine that "operates precisely by separating what it purports to join and by unifying what it divides, by submitting one part to the domination of the other"⁵ (Esposito 2013a, 5), and by accepting the arguments formulated against Peterson by Schmitt in his *Political Theology II*, Esposito takes a stance opposite to that adopted by the author of *Monotbeism as a Political Problem*. In the context of economic theology he writes that "if the political-theological dispositive is in itself a unity divided by a duality, then a further

5 I would like to thank Zakiya Hanafi, who has agreed to share her English translation of Esposito's *Due* with me. It helped me both better understand his thought and adjust the quotations used in this paper to the official publications that are now being prepared by Fordham University Press.

separation is not going to provide a way out” (Esposito 2013a, 69)⁶. The way in which Peterson discredited and overthrew Schmitt’s idea of political theology was thus very illusory. This is not only because of the fact, pointed out by the German jurist, that for the theological liquidation of political theology some kind of political type of division (an exclusionary one) is needed (see Schmitt 2008, 114). Rather, or mostly, it is because the Trinitarian type economy – instead of cutting the bond between Good and power – just changes the field of its manifestation: from sovereignty to biopolitics. The person of the King as the earthly representative of God could be replaced by “*oikonomia* of apparatuses that seek to govern and guide them [creatures, living beings – MB] toward the good”, which Agamben clearly shows in his analysis of the term *dispositif* (Agamben 2009, 13).

Consequently, Esposito agrees with Agamben in his judgement of the inadequacy of responses provided by Schmitt and Peterson with regard to the complexity of political and economic theology. The author of *Language and Death* immensely problematizes the discussed phenomena. However, what makes his stance unacceptable for Esposito is the solution: just like Peterson, he does not provide the way out of the theological paradigm. Hence, Esposito characterizes Agamben’s proposition as “highly problematic” (Esposito 2012a, 254), pointing out that his way of deactivating the political and governmental paradigm of the West could not be successful. But why is this so? Esposito clearly formulates two main mutually-linked objections to Agamben’s project. The first pertains to the terminological level, and the second – to the direction in which his thought is running.

3. In one of his numerous interviews, Agamben explains:

My books are not in any way theological gestures, rather they are confrontations with theology. Walter Benjamin once wrote: “my relation to theology is like that of blotting paper to ink. The paper absorbs the ink, but if it were up to the blotting paper, not a single drop would remain”. This is exactly how things stand with theology. I am

⁶ What is needed instead is to transpose the logic of division into the logic of difference. Taking a strictly Deleuzian point of view, Esposito explains it roughly as follows: “The only opening, not for exiting the horizon of the machine [of political theology], but for flipping it into the affirmative, is to define a plane of immanence that is not opposite to transcendence but coextensive with it – and only in this way sheltered from its effect of exclusionary splitting. When immanence is understood as the stark opposite of transcendence, it does nothing except redouble the dual logic. To defuse it, the only thing that remains is to increase its plural tension, transposing division into difference – by comparing the One not to the Two, but to the many of which it is composed. This would mean placing oneself not outside the machine, but transgressing the boundary that divides the inside from the outside, the internal from the external, the proper from the common” (Esposito 2013a, 219).

completely steeped in theology, and so then there is no more; all the ink is gone (Agamben n.d.)⁷.

This is an interesting quote in that it fuses the elements which are completely true and those which constitute Agamben's wishful thinking. In terms of the genealogical research that Agamben carried out on the political and economic paradigm of power, he certainly presented studies of unprecedented scope and deepness, allowing us to understand how persistent and complex this paradigm is. However, his intention was to deactivate those paradigms and the function of blotting paper should thus be achieved by profanations consisting of returning people and things that were sacrificed to gods (stamped by theology/religion) to use for the common good (Agamben 2007, 73). By practising them regularly, what was sacred would disappear (like ink in contact with blotting paper).

In this respect, it could be stated that the concept of profanation has at least two advantages:

1) Since it is a part of the theological tradition, profanations comprise an absolutely immanent mechanism of transformations – one taken from the very core of the logic of religion;

2) Understanding religion as separation which constitutes the impossibility of touching (Agamben 2007, 75) (in Esposito's language: immunization), profanations allow for bringing things back to the domain of the common, thus introducing the concept of "use" (which is fundamental for the whole project of *Homo sacer* and two parts of volume IV in particular: *The Highest Poverty* (Agamben 2013)⁸ and *L'uso dei corpi*) as the notion that is necessary to rebuild the community (paradoxically, in Agamben's case the community of the profaned world seems to be simultaneously a messianic one)⁹.

Unfortunately, the practice of profanation has also serious disadvantages:

1) As pointed out by Esposito who, when classifying this and some other concepts, both in *Living Thought* (Esposito 2012a, 254) and *Due*, stated that:

All the categories that have been employed on various occasions to arrive at the connection between politics and theology – like disenchantment or secularization or profanation – turn out to have political-theological origins themselves. By this I mean

7 Quoted from: de la Durantaye 2009, 369.

8 The term "use" also appears with the same connotation in *Profanations* (Agamben 2007, 82–83) as well as in *The Time That Remains* (Agamben 2005b, 27–29). A different context (the Aristotelian one) is introduced by Agamben in *L'uso dei corpi* (the English translation of which, entitled *The Use of the Body*, is now in preparation by Adam Kotsko for Stanford University Press).

9 The same title of *The Coming Community* refers inevitably, as a paraphrase, to the biblical concepts of the coming kingdom – the theme well known from the book of Jeremiah (23, 5–6) or the Apocalypse.

that they presuppose what they should explain: because without some sort of enchantment there could be no disenchantment, and without something sacred there would be nothing to desecrate (Esposito 2013a, 3);

2) The very idea that things could become profaned and common is not a definitive process; on the contrary – it could still be reversed. The mechanism of profanation works inevitably in two directions, precisely like that of gaining or losing the status of a person in Ancient Rome, which Esposito described in *Third Person* (Esposito 2012b, 76–80).

Therefore, while Agamben solemnly declares that profanations are “the political task of the coming generation” (Agamben 2007, 92), Esposito argues that the task to come is to develop a philosophy which would be completely free from political theology, including from its hidden dispositive and vocabulary (Esposito 2013a, 219). By that the Neapolitan also understands the idea of profanations as something which remains “bound to it [political theology – MB] in a way that Nietzsche would have defined as reactive” (Esposito 2013a, 219). In this sense, the ink cannot be perceived as something that is already gone.

Unfortunately, Agamben’s other concepts – his whole messianic project for instance – are also strictly associated with the paradigm that should be overcome. Even though Agamben directly juxtaposes messianism with political theology (the community of messianic vocations is the opposite of the political power of the Church), he still remains within the very core of the field of religion. Regardless of the fact that the term *kleisis*, analysed in *Time That Remains*, is, as Agamben proved, incompatible with any particular order¹⁰, its strong religious signature (rooted directly in Pauline thought) remains unquestionable. Even if Agamben does not need the true coming of the Messiah and is even less intent on his personal intervention, his figure is indispensable as a postponed horizon inaugurating the potentialities of an “operational time”.

The same objection may be raised against those concepts which should have an “emancipating” character, for example the abovementioned “use” (or “rule” as something different from “law”), to which the author of *The Highest Poverty* ascribes a strictly religious signature. Although it was used by the Franciscan movement against the official policy of the pope and is especially inspiring in the era of capitalistic religion (Benjamin 1996), it still inevitably shares the same stigma-related lexicon with the Church. It cannot be otherwise because, as the given examples have shown, Agamben takes his “subversive” ideas exactly from the field of Christian theology.

Agamben’s vocabulary (which is carefully elaborated within his own thought) is not easy to understand, in particular if someone takes into consideration how deeply aware he is

¹⁰ “The messianic vocation is the revocation of every vocation” (Agamben 2005b, 23).

of the perplexity of different notions. The author of *Means without End* is not just the thinker who declares: “I really do think that the a-critical use of concepts can be responsible for many defeats” (Agamben 2005a); but also the author who, after Foucault, has developed the most powerful interpretation of the concept of “signature”, which he uses not only with regard to other philosophers (including, *inter alia*, Schmitt; see Agamben 2011, 4), but also in order to understand such a phenomenon as nudity¹¹ (Agamben 2010). Thus he is able to find that which refers many concepts back to the original determinate field, but not to that which is included in the terms he himself employs.

This is especially striking when one reads the final part of *The Highest Poverty*, where Agamben, after reconstructing the argument between the papal Curia and the Franciscans over the possibility of *vivere sine proprio* (living without any property), states:

This doctrine [the concept of *usus facti* and the idea of the separability of use from ownership – MB], precisely insofar as it essentially proposed to define poverty with respect to the law, revealed itself to be a double-edged sword, which had opened the path to the decisive attack carried out by John XXII precisely in the name of the law. Once the status of poverty was defined with purely negative arguments with respect to law and according to modalities that presupposed the collaboration of the Curia, which reserved for itself the ownership of the goods of which the Franciscans had the use, it was clear that the doctrine of the *usus facti* represented for the Friars Minor a very fragile shield against the heavy artillery of the Curial jurists (Agamben 2013, 137).

This diagnosis could be directly applied to his own project. Like the Friars Minor, who confronted the Church and consequently became entangled in its logic, he too was faced with the paradigm founded on political theology. He tried to dismantle it, but in doing so it inevitably soaked into his thought, concepts and language. It seems that the Franciscans attract Agamben’s attention exactly because they, as no one else, initiated the immanent revolt (the philosopher claims that they – or at least some of them, like e.g. Peter John Olivi – did so while being perfectly aware of starting an absolutely new life experience), and like him aimed to transform human way of life from its very inside. Despite their failure, Agamben sympathizes with them. He is able to clearly diagnose their lost cause: “What is lacking in the Franciscan literature is a definition of use in itself, and not only in opposition to law” (Agamben 2013, 137), and he can propose an alternative and possibly more effective line of

11 In the titled essay from the *Nudity* volume, Agamben wrote: “Nudity, in our culture, is inseparable from a theological signature” (Agamben 2010a, 57). In order to explain this, he come back to the biblical scene when, after their sin, Adam and Eve suddenly noticed that they were naked. Exploring in detail the dispute between St. Augustine and Pelagius about the category of human nature and grace, Agamben shows how deeply our perception of nudity is rooted in the fact that Christianity is built on a theology of clothing (Agamben 2010a, 58).

the Franciscans argument against the Curia; but what he cannot do is transpose their lesson to his own intellectual proposition built on negative reference to political theology. For whether he wishes to recognize it or not, his project, even the emancipatory part, possesses a strong theological imprint. With reference to the quote from Agamben's interview, a lot could be said about his project, but certainly not that the "ink is gone".

4. Therefore, it seems that Agamben, as he himself said, could only abandon (and not finish) his *Homo sacer*. But this was not only because of the inexhaustible potential of the project (like that of a painting; see Agamben 2014), but also due to the fact that he chose a wrong direction. As long as his plume remains immersed in ink, political theology will not disappear from his oeuvre. Instead of seeking the way out, Agamben was digging deeper and deeper in genealogy, getting finally stuck in the paradigm of political and economic theology. Alberto Toscano is not far from the truth when he points out that one of Agamben's major problems lies in an unjust and imprudent interpretation of the whole tradition of political philosophy (even the Marxist one invoked at the beginning of *Homo sacer*), understood as a variation on the Christian concept of *oikonomia* (Toscano 2011, 125–129; Agamben 2011, 91). According to Esposito, Agamben's mistake consists in the fact that his economic theology (without saying everything) is strongly mediated by the logic of political theology (Esposito 2013b, 60). The author of *Profanations* has thus completely fallen into the paradigm of continuity¹², forgetting about the possible disruptions, the hidden struggle of forces, and the discontinuities. Are there any "lines of flight" if our whole tradition, and especially our language, is permeated with theology? Were there any mistakes, or differences that could have ever have softened this homogenous paradigm?

These questions can't be easily dismissed since they concern not only the heart of Agamben's project, but also his method of thinking. It is said that the author of *State of Exception* practices and develops Foucaultian genealogy, thanks to which he certainly elevates political theology to a higher level than just a structural analogy between the two domains that compose its name. However, his enterprise has completely different results than those revealed by Foucault. Agamben seems to do exactly what Foucault criticized: he tries "to go back in time to restore an unbroken continuity that operates beyond the dispersion of forgotten things", to show that "the past actively exists in the present, that it continues secretly to animate the present" (Foucault 1984, 81). So instead of setting out the "numberless beginnings" (and cultivating the details and accidents that accompanying them), Agamben finds only one: Christian theology – which constitutes the focal point collecting and determining all other historical episodes of the West. The only reason for which he recalls the phenomena proceeding Christianity – like Homer's poems or even the texts of

¹² This has also been an soft-voiced objection to Agamben's approach to biopolitics, especially in comparison with Foucault's stance.

Vedic era (both present in *The Kingdom and the Glory*) – is the fact that they resound strongly in some of the Christian ideas. And if we come across any conceptual or practical phenomena against the mainstream paradigm, like the Franciscan way of life, their histories are not taken as rather a proof of possible heterogeneity but, quite the contrary, as reflections of theological omnipotence and its homogenizing power. Thus our contemporaneous reality constitutes – regardless of whether we are aware of it or not – just an extreme deviation from the irremovable theological pattern. Consequently it is difficult to state that Agamben’s genealogical investigations truly open for us the new experiences promised, or that he provides the way out of political theology.

In contrast, Esposito, without neglecting theology and its impact on modernity (thus following the advice of the author of *Opus Dei*, see Agamben 2010b, 111), tries to move beyond its horizon, carefully reconstructing not only its dispositive of power (the mainstream tradition and its minor branches, like the Franciscans or messianism, among others), but also that which flourished entirely on the margins. His idea is based on the assumption that within the history of philosophy there runs a “broken path” (Esposito 2010, 15), which he incrementally tries to reconstruct. And in each of his books he adds a succeeding segment of that alternative line of thought, also called a “subterranean river” (Esposito 2010, 14). According to Esposito, by following its hidden stream it is possible to get outside of the political theology paradigm. In the context of political theology, the tunnel of this river was previously hollowed out by such thinkers as, among others, Averroes, Bruno, Spinoza, Nietzsche and – last but not least – Deleuze¹³. Agamben occasionally recalls their names and is even sometimes considered a successor of their intellectual tradition (as suggested by Emmanuele Coccia, and after him by Paweł Mościcki (2012, 242–258), but he never used them as a directly subversive tool against political theology. Admittedly, their concepts and heretic language have not yet dismantled the theological paradigm, but they allow for gaining some footholds where thinking, freed from its scope, could find its beginnings. How powerful this could be is shown by, e.g., Antonio Negri in his numerous books based on Spinoza’s thought. Even though Agamben knows these propositions very well (which is beyond any doubt), he deliberately does not want to take advantage of them. He prefers instead to deal with the machinery of political theology absolutely in his own way, neglecting projects that were formed outside this paradigm.

13 The reference to Deleuze is somehow symptomatic: whereas Agamben still seems attached to Foucault (even if through his criticism), Esposito is becoming more inclined towards Deleuzian concepts – his three last books: *Bíos*, *Third Person* and *Due*, all ended with the passages devoted to the author of *Difference and Repetition*. It is easy to see that Deleuze could be very useful for Agamben too; for instance, using his concept of virtuality/actuality, the Italian philosopher could easily replace the metaphysical dichotomy of potentiality/actuality.

Using a popular proverb one could conclude that Agamben wants to have his cake and eat it too. This is what deactivation means. However consequently elaborated in his books, the new form of life is nothing more than a promise. Maybe this explains why – being deprived of the points that could help him truly and affirmatively separate his thinking from the political theology regime – the messianic spirit needs to hover over the *Homo sacer* project. It is exactly the messianic tone of conducting a political inquiry which prompts Esposito to compare Agamben’s stance to “the silent language of the Impolitical” (Esposito 2011, 66) – something that constitutes an internal “critical counterpoint” within the regime, but “ends up affirming what it should differentiate itself from” (Esposito 2012, 225)¹⁴. It thus seems that whereas Agamben is an outstanding diagnostician, who in a spectacular manner unveils how complex the dispositive of political-economic theology really is and provides us with an extraordinary number of intellectual tools to understand the socio-political phenomena of the contemporary world, Esposito is more precise in proposing a solution on how to eliminate or surpass the exclusionary inclusive mechanism of power. Therefore, they should be read together as two complementary parts of the *act-ual*¹⁵ Italian thought. We owe them both for a first-rate philosophy that should not be analysed separately.

14 Esposito is an author who somewhere about the turn of the millennium clearly distanced himself from his previously negative (namely impolitical) way of thinking and started to think affirmatively on the basis of the immunization paradigm and biopolitics.

15 Referring to the first footnote, it is worth recalling a linguistic observation made by the English translator of *Living Thought*, Zakiya Hanfi: “*Attualità* not only refers to contemporariness [...], but also to something that is *in atto*, meaning ‘underway’ or ‘in progress’. It further calls to mind the notion of action (praxis) and the name of Giovanni Gentile’s philosophy (Attualismo)” (Esposito 2012a, xi).

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TYTUŁ: Diagnoza bez rozwiązania – Agamben i Esposito

ABSTRAKT: Artykuł problematyzuje sposób, w jaki Giorgio Agamben rozprawia się z paradygmatem teologii politycznej w swoim cyklu *Homo sacer*. Autor porównuje koncepcje Agambena z tymi, które w ostatnich latach zaproponował Roberto Esposito – myśliciel, który wydaje się mieć wiele wspólnego z Agambenem. W rzeczywistości jednak, wybierając inną strategię intelektualną, idee Esposito mogą zostać użyte jako krytyczne narzędzia przeciwko niektórym aspektom projektu Agambena (np. przeciwko koncepcji profanacji). Wbrew deklaracjom Agambena oraz bezprecedensowego zasięgu i głębi jego studiów (a raczej: właśnie z powodu tychże), nie jest on w stanie zaproponować drogi wyjścia z reżimu teologii politycznej. Autor stara się udowodnić powyższą tezę, analizując terminologiczny poziom koncepcji Agambena, kierunek rozwoju jego myśli oraz sposób prowadzenia przez niego badań genealogicznych. W efekcie projekt *Homo sacer* zaczyna przypominać niemy język tego, co impolityczne.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: Giorgio Agamben, Roberto Esposito, teologia polityczna, teologia ekonomiczna, profanacje