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ECONOMIC THEOLOGIES

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ECONOMIC THEOLOGIES

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INTRODUCTION: THEOLOGY AS A CRITIQUE

MIKOŁAJ RATAJCZAK, RAFAŁ ZAWISZA

Abstract: This is an introduction to the issue of “Theoretical Practice” (“Praktyka Teoretyczna”), entitled “Economic Theologies” (no. 3, 2015), edited by Mikołaj Ratajczak and Rafał Zawisza. It contains contextual explanation of the theoretical field projected by the Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben, namely a critique of the economic theology elaborated on the basis of early Christian theological debates concerning the concept of divine “oikonomia”. The introduction also includes short summaries of the articles, translations and reviews collected in the issue.

Keywords: Giorgio Agamben, economic theology, *oikonomia*, theology, secularization, Karl Marx, Marxism, biopolitics

In his book published in 2007, Merio Scattola deemed the 20th century to embody the “truth” of the whole field of political theology (Scattola 2007). If we accept this thesis, then it may come as less of a surprise that at the beginning of the 21st century it was no other discourse than, precisely, political theology that was used by many intellectuals on the left to revive the philosophical glossary of political theory – from the postsecularism of late deconstruction and some strains of the Lacanian left, through a sudden rise of interest in Paul’s messianic letters at the threshold of the centuries, through the coining of the uncanny notion of “psychotheology”, and finally to a direct use of the actual term “political theology” in an endeavour to project a new ethics and politics (see e.g. Reinhard, Santner and Žižek 2013). The status of Giorgio Agamben’s work within this renaissance of political theology is a complicated issue. Perceived initially as one of the figures in a “theological turn in contemporary continental thought” (Kaufman 2008, 37), since the publication of the last volumes of his *Homo sacer* series Agamben can no longer be seen as someone who reaches out to the fields of theology or religion to try to find some sort of existential, political or even plain intellectual salvation. Neither can his work be used as a “theory” of theological or political problems. The initial idea of this issue of *Praktyka Teoretyczna* came to us in the form of a simple, but in our view profound hypothesis: that Agamben’s work shows how to use theology not as a theory, but as a critique.

It shouldn’t therefore be considered a demotion if we have tried to summarize the whole philosophy of Giorgio Agamben in one gesture, namely by evoking the magnificent moment in Hans Christian Andersen’s tale *The Emperor’s New Clothes* when a child cries out: “But he isn’t wearing anything at all!” Such a move is perfectly in tune with an apologia for the imaginative and linguistic potentialities of infancy (Agamben 1993), as well as with his reflections on nudity (2010) and even poverty (2006; 2013). Agamben preserved this widely known, sometimes obtrusive and importunate way of posing questions which characterizes children, with their relentless obstinacy that leads to the question: “But why?” After all, would any critique be possible if it weren’t for this infantile speech? And yet, although one may think this a naïve stance and believe in the *potenza* of genealogical, archaeological and critical investigations, the remnants of his philosophical excavations are doubtlessly impressive.

Although the *Homo sacer* series is still not complete – we lack volume II.4, and the latest publication of *Stasis* (Agamben 2015b) has shown that some volumes may appear in

more than one book (*Stasis* bears the same number as *The Kingdom and the Glory*, namely II.2) – the stakes of Agamben’s project are already clearly visible. A genealogical critique should assume the form of a *destituent power* that liberates the capacity of human beings to contemplate their own potentiality to act and to live (Agamben 2014, 351). However vague and impractical this ideal may seem, it constitutes a sort of regulatory idea that guides Agamben’s genealogical investigation into theological scriptures and gives it not only a political, but also a metaphysical significance. The publication of *The Kingdom and the Glory* in 2007, a seminal moment in the development of Agamben’s work, reinforced a direction marked already by a study from 2000 on Paulinian messianism, but traceable to his early writing on language and death (Agamben 2006). It became clear that Agamben intends to confront himself with the theological legacy of the West in order to continue Martin Heidegger’s attempt to rethink “ontotheology”, a reflection about the being of God, humans, and the world – which can be traced back to ancient Greece through Christian medieval times (and via the Arabic reception¹).

The Kingdom and the Glory provoked divergent reactions. We will mention some of them in order to point out how deep confusion Agamben caused by seriously stepping onto the ground reserved up to now for theologians alone – not because of any interdict, but because of the ignorance of other scholars. While Paul Colilli stated that the Italian philosopher “theorizes [...] in a para-theological manner” (Colilli 2008, 470), some reviewers, like Vincent Lloyd, even dared to write about “the redemptive power of the theological” (Lloyd 2013, 61). Does this suggest that Giorgio Agamben has recently become a Church Father²? Or is it rather a parodist performance? According to Michael Fagenblat, the whole

1 Which is the least elaborated part in the whole genealogy, despite Agamben’s rare attempts to speculate with reference to the Arabic sources (for a notable exception, see his introduction to Emanuele Coccia’s book *La trasparenza delle immagini*, Agamben 2005). Their inclusion would not only broaden philosophical self-understanding, but also destabilise the conceptualisation of the borders defining “the West”. Quoting Marlène Zarader, one could say that Western philosophy persistently keeps *la dette impensée* (Zarader 1990). See also Roberto Esposito’s chapter on Averroes in his *Due* (Esposito 2013, 157–165) and the bibliographical references therein, as well as Ewa Łukaszyk’s commentary about a reciprocal, currently emerging tendency seen in, on the one hand, the attempts of some European humanists, among them Giorgio Agamben, to enter into deep intellectual dialogue with Arabic-Muslim traditions, and on the other hand a reappearance of the figure of the Muslim intellectual within the European horizon (Łukaszyk 2015).

2 Paul Colilli places Agamben in a vaster post-secular paradigm, for which Colilli invented the term “late patrology”, and which he describes as follows: “Patristic literature functions as witness to the teachings of the Church, while late patrology refers to those thinkers who, as a result of the annihilation of ideologies, find it necessary to not only name God, but to speak around God’s name, albeit with a sense of ‘lateness.’ In other words, late patrology refers to contemporary and near-contemporary thinkers who are ‘late’ in their reading and

Agambenian project focusing on theology is nothing but a “nihilistic eschatology” (Fagenblat 2014, 274). He seems to refuse the Italian philosopher the right to study theology legitimately. A similar accusation from an apologetic angle was formulated by Daniel M. Bell Jr., who blamed not only Agamben’s, but also other immanent visions of community, as insufficiently democratic, because they lacked the horizon that promises a unity of the redeemed (Bell Jr. 2010).

However, those critiques do not touch the place which Agamben occupies.

The place of theology as a critique is beyond the civil wars between clericalism and anticlericalism, between liberal and traditionalist theologies, between the sacred and the profane. Seen from his perspective,

[...] theology is stripped of spiritual faith and transformed into a “dispositivo” that mediates between our bodies and the sum of human material practices. [...] Agamben is not intrigued by the presence or absence of God; rather, what interests him are the discursive structures that theologians have formulated in order to speak about God (Colilli 2008, 470).

There is no agreement among scholars as to how and where Agamben posits himself while he quotes and comments on the theological texts. On the one hand, the religious edifice, legitimised thanks to theological discourse, is perceived as being in a state of collapse: “Agamben sifts through the textual ruins of theology with the view of re-assembling them in order to construct a new understanding of the present” (Colilli 2008, 467). On the other hand, theology – encapsulated in its cocoon of self-referentiality – appears to be merely at risk of ruination. As Colby Dickinson puts it,

[...] another risk is constantly being run: that Agamben’s philosophy suggestively “undoes” theology, at least as we historically have known it, or that it perhaps threatens to remove its content while preserving its empty shell alone (Dickinson 2011, 8).

We need not decide between those two versions – fragile and stable discourse – because both exist simultaneously. What is at stake in Agamben’s philosophy is the ability to explain how something initially contingent can gain a validity that turns it into fate: in other words,

uses the material covered in the patrological tradition”. And then: “[...] late patrology is the mutilated memory of patrology that haunts the traumatized present” (Colilli 2013, 5, 9).

how the arbitrary acquires and legitimizes its normative status³. Agamben's aim – and his constantly repeated first step which he nonetheless declares indispensable – is to describe a mechanism with the help of which every symbolic order (and theology seems to be only one of its cantilevers) hides its own foundations. Indeed the very problem of “foundation” (even if understood in a negative manner, like the metaphysical Voice or bare life, as the effects of specific dispositives rather than “positive” entities) seems to constitute the main difference between Agamben's and Foucault's notions of genealogical investigations. But it is precisely for this reason that Agamben claims that both theology and religion must not only be studied, but first of all profanated. Colby Dickinson acknowledges the necessity of this profanation – which, he agrees, could be called “blasphemous” from the traditionalist point of view – since “religion does express a profound truth about our reality, but it also serves to mask this truth at the same time” (Dickinson 2011, 22). If religion doesn't explore a possibility of blasphemy, it becomes a prison. Agamben's work, analysing Judeo-Christian tradition in a way practised earlier by Gershom Scholem and Jacob Taubes, seeks this blasphemous – parodic – tendency at the very core of religious practice, namely in mysteries, rituals, and liturgical performance. The proper goal is not a parodied liturgy (transgression⁴), but the revelation of the parodic nature of liturgy as such (profanation). If liturgy is parodic, then only parody can preserve what so-called “tradition”⁵ cannot (Dickinson 2011, 30), because tradition repeats itself without a sense of humour; it considers itself to be serious, but in reality isn't serious enough, being too serious as it pretends to be unsmiling⁶. At this point profanations and study seem to enter a zone of indistinctness, but this may be precisely what Agamben is aiming for – to practise only the form of theological studies that reveal the parodic nature of theological reality, thus profanating it.

3 Dickinson also believes that the social structures rest on a duplex construction principle: “the significations themselves may be arbitrary or empty, but they do indeed reflect the coordinates of established power relations” (Dickinson 2011, 16).

4 In this way Agamben tries to distance himself from Georges Bataille. In *L'uso dei corpi* the name of Bataille is mentioned only once, in a commentary placed in brackets in the original, and, significantly, as a negative point of reference: “To supersede this bare life separated from its form, from its abjection, by the superior principle – the sovereignty or the sacred – is a limit of Bataille's thought which renders it unusable for us” (Agamben 2014, 267). This is nothing other than a later critique of Bataille's thought and his use of negativity that we initially find elaborated in the first volume of *Homo sacer*.

5 The very notion of tradition was elaborated in the book published in 2013, *Pilato e Gesù* (Agamben 2015a).

6 Translated into the political realm, this hard-hitting message of Agamben would sound like this: why should we treat any practice imposed on us so seriously, if it was constructed as something banal and silly? Labour dressed as ultimate vocation looks like jobbery.

But, all in all, what does Agamben intend to achieve by using theology? What is at stake in his use of theology as a critique? – if it is neither an attempt to politicise religion, nor a confession of faith, nor an intention to reinforce any church, nor to demolish it. Among the multiplicity of possible resonances, we would like to mention three that are related to the texts collected in this issue of *Praktyka Teoretyczna*. *Primo*, analysis of the theological language and the construction of Trinitarian theology in particular leads to an understanding of women and men as speaking beings and constitutes a contribution to a critical political anthropology. *Secundo*, Agamben's engagement with theology implies the creation of a new perspective on secularization and a critique of overestimation of the concept of political theology. *Tertio*, the elaboration of the discourse on *oikonomia* enables the Italian philosopher to explain and critique contemporary power relations, including those between economy and politics.

Agamben's philosophical meditations on speaking operate on the very edge of language, where we find the unspeakable. That approach connects him to theology. In a manner elaborated also by, among others, Sloterdijk and Virno we can say that, for Agamben, Christian theologians, through theo poetic reflection on the incarnated Word, struggled with the rudiments of human existence and how it is conditioned by language. Agamben formulates the problem as follows:

The dimension of meaning of the word “being,” whose eternal quest and eternal loss (*aei zetoumenon kai aei aporoumenon*, *Metaphysics* 1028b, 3) constitute the history of metaphysics, coincides with the taking place of language; metaphysics is that experience of language that, in every speech act, grasps the disclosure of that dimension, and in all speech, experiences above all the “marvel” that language exists (Agamben 2006, 25).

But this dimension is exactly the one that language itself is unable to grasp and to name properly. Hence the intimate relation between theology and metaphysics, and – beyond that – political theology that strives to name the unsayable source and origin of power held by some over others. But this practice, truly ascetic in its form, of dwelling on the edge of the sayable – a proper dwelling place for an animal that has language, as Agamben seems to tell us – inspires the search for a language that coincides with “the essence of what makes us human” and with “an attempt to pronounce the unpronounceable name of God” (Dickinson 2011, 10). It means that theology, philosophy and linguistics can find their common root in

anthropology⁷, which itself is “grounded” in uprootedness “guaranteed” by the fact that we, as humans, are derived from and depend on the event of language (Virno 2015). Unlike mystics, who entered into the *via negativa* and dissolved in the face of the unpronounceable, Giorgio Agamben remains faithful to worldly matters and breaks a pious silence that can only deepen mystification. The sublime aura of mystery encourages speaking beings to surrender to the negative power of language, law and death; however, the same discovery – that the king is nude, that the throne is empty – could empower her or him to trust in the creative potentialities of language to contradict despair.

When it comes to the debate about secularization, *The Kingdom and the Glory* introduces a new phase, or level, of discussion. Once again, Agamben tries to avoid a civil war of twin conceptions: while Carl Schmitt pushed forward a thesis that modern political vocabulary derives from theology, Erik Peterson, on the contrary, insisted that theological concepts of Christendom were drawn out of and built upon the political terms which remained in daily use in antiquity. Agamben assesses this quarrel as futile because of its irresolvable character, and for that reason he decided to develop a framework that helps to neutralize the above-mentioned contradictory statements. Moreover, by neutralizing them, Agamben detects the point that is missed in the debate between Schmitt and Peterson, namely the economic paradigm contained in the theological discourses on the inner life of God in Trinity, the incarnation of Jesus Christ, and – of the greatest importance here – the reconciliation of God’s transcendence (otherworldliness, timelessness, unchangeable essence, etc.) with his immanent manifestations (incarnation and actions of the Son as the Highest Priest and influences of the Holy Spirit as the prerequisites that could legitimize the very existence of the Church and its pretensions to political power and properties).

Agamben’s proposal has already ignited some concrete discussions⁸. But there has also been a general critique. An example of such criticism, based on the secularization debate, was written by Alberto Toscano (Toscano 2011; republished in this issue in Polish translation), who accused Agamben of historical substantialism (caused by negligence in regard to Hans Blumenberg’s refutation of Schmitt’s political theology) and insufficient

7 Lorenzo Chiesa and Frank Ruda therefore mislead the reader when they speak about the “primacy of theology” in Agamben (Chiesa and Ruda 2011, 170–171).

8 See Karsenti 2009, Bielik-Robson 2010, Colilli 2013, Adler 2014, Dickinson and Kotsko 2015. As for the Petersonian field, we observe a favourable reception (McLoughlin 2015) as well as a fierce criticism (Schmidt 2014).

analysis of contemporary capitalism. Toscano dismissed Agamben as a successor of Michel Foucault and aimed to discredit his adherence to Marxism. Toscano warned that Agamben stands too close to Schmitt through underlining the dependence of modernity and secular politics on theology. Scholars diverge on that matter. For instance, Paul Colilli argues that

Agamben is interested in the paradigmatic value that these ancient theological writings might have, rather than their possibility as an ethical and moral source or matrix which continuous⁹ to animate the contemporary idea of politics (Colilli 2008, 474).

However, other commentators state that according to Agamben “modernity is not, therefore, some epoch other than the Middle Ages, but its continuation, and with the rise of the administrative state, its completion” (McAleeer 2014, 109)¹⁰. The stake in these issues is not insignificant; it concerns a question of historical dimension, namely: “Whose guilt? Whose responsibility?” Since Agamben detected the managerial paradigm of contemporary economy and bureaucracy in the theological discussions of Trinity and angels dating from the second century onwards, it implies important methodological questions about the nature of epochal change, ways of historical inheritance and scope of causality. Even if those questions do not seem crucial at first glance, they could determine possible lines of interpreting and understanding economic theology in terms of what or whom Giorgio Agamben criticizes, what form-of-life he opts for, and whether that would be a reinvention inspired by past accomplishments or something unprecedented.

But there is, in addition, a more political question concerning Agamben’s genealogy of the economic paradigm in theology, one that also concerns Toscano’s relegation of Agamben from a Marxist perspective: does economic theology constitute a field of research that can be of any significance for a critique of political economy? There’s probably no simple answer to this question, which might even be deemed a wrong question in itself (why should one field of inquiry be important only from the standpoint of another, substantially different field?). And yet, more and more is being written on Agamben’s input into the debates on contemporary capitalism and neoliberalism, with some new contributions included in this issue. If indeed theology can be used as a critique, we should test the limits of its critical

⁹ It should rather be “continues”.

¹⁰ The second opinion could be extracted from a statement with which Agamben ends *Il regno e la gloria*: “Modernity, removing God from the world, has not only failed to leave theology behind, but in some ways has done nothing other than to lead the project of the providential *oikonomia* to completion” (Agamben 2011, 287).

application with no hesitation and no false humility, since there can never be enough grounds for a ruthless criticism of everything that exists.

The issue opens with Polish translations of texts that mark the first wave of reactions to Agamben's elaboration of the economic-theological paradigm. We gather a polemical essay by Alberto Toscano together with two reviews written by Antonio Negri in immediate response to the publication of *Il regno e la gloria* (2007) and *Opus Dei* (2012). Sometimes this "family quarrel" proceeds in the atmosphere of mutual recognition, e.g. when Negri seeks to persuade Agamben to intensify his relations with Spinozism and to establish leftist political theology on that basis. However, what Negri's critique in general and Toscano's text in particular point to is a gesture of exclusion: according to them, Agamben had betrayed Marx and Foucault, remaining tethered to Schmittian and Heideggerian legacies that he intended to overcome.

Three articles in the present issue go against this negative diagnosis. German Eduardo Primera and Mikołaj Ratajczak insist that Giorgio Agamben's genealogical study of divine *oikonomia* cannot be limited – when it comes to its possible scope of influence and application – to the role of explanation of past theological debates. Both authors defend the actuality of the critique of economic theology which – under the patient gaze of the Italian philosopher – turns into an adequate, paradigmatic description of the reigning mechanisms that maintain the contemporary capitalist regime, which seems to tighten around life on Earth like a noose. Primera rebuts Toscano's critique of Agamben's proclaimed inability to explain the brand new financial mechanisms of capitalism in its current, neoliberal guise. The aim of Mikołaj Ratajczak is a biopolitical reading of the paradigm of economic theology, directly combining its genealogies with the Marxian notion of subsumption of life under capital, with particular emphasis placed on the human practice: as liturgy distinguishes some "actions" and "works" (*opera*) as valuable (productive) and others as abortive, the same happens with the division between productive and unproductive labour, which is imposed from the outside onto the plurality of social relations according to the principle *divide et impera*.

Rafał Zawisza asks what meaning could be ascribed to Agamben's deepening involvement with the theological heritage – in the context of the secularization theorem. He

responds to Toscano's accusations that Agamben's approach could be equated with historical substantialism and that theology dominates critical impulses in his late writings. On the contrary, *Il regno e la gloria* is not a methodological regress, but inaugurates a new phase of the discussion on the meaning of secularization. Moreover, Zawisza underlines that in Agamben's thought religion and theology do not play the role of a hidden matrix of every discourse – these spheres are interpreted as merely providing some of the many possible responses to the problems that have arisen on a deeper level, that of anthropogenesis.

The consequences of Agamben's decision to analyze Christian theologians and, in so doing, to complete Michel Foucault's genealogical research, are presented by Colby Dickinson who shows that the critique of Western governmentality could be and should be intertwined with Agamben's scrupulous analysis. It illuminates the extent to which such concepts as divine providence, divine governance and the very justification of the existence of hierarchy have shaped Western political imaginaries by acting as a legitimizing branch of the political theologies, serving both churches and states by helping them to maintain their domination over people. Hence it functioned as a duplex paradigm, to criticize theology and its legacy, and to criticize a seemingly secular politics that in fact still depends on theological schemas. Dickinson also prepares the ground for a historiographical discussion of the place of grassroots religious movements, and particularly the crucial question of whether they were "heretical" outsiders or justified internal opponents of orthodoxies, defeated and pacified by the ruling classes. Special significance in that regard is found in the Franciscan tradition, which Agamben confronted in his *Altissima povertà. Regola e forma di vita nel monachesimo* (2011).

Mateusz Burzyk presents his hesitation over the potential of Agambenian philosophy to overcome the obstacles which it nevertheless brilliantly diagnoses. For that purpose, Burzyk engages the theoretical tools elaborated by a philosopher whose work has been developed in dialogical closeness to Agamben, namely Roberto Esposito. According to Burzyk, the more sophisticated Agamben's research becomes, the more difficult it is to distill from it a critical, emancipatory direction. For that reason, the most fruitful strategy consists of a double, simultaneous reading of both Italian thinkers. Except for highlighting points of cohesion, this text unveils the tensions within so-called "Italian theory".

Mateusz Piotrowski, in his (to some extent) Hegelian reading of the Marxian critique of political economy, argues that by using a theoretical framework of theology – the one which accentuates its Wholeness as well as its paradoxically anarchic structure and internal

divisions – critical thought gains indispensable tools for analysing the nature of contemporary capitalism. It remains polemical towards purely immanentist critiques, like that of Negri. Piotrowski reads theological metaphors used by Karl Marx in order to find their economic counterparts and explain the mysterious (miraculous, phantasmic) status of commodity fetishism in materialist terms. In effect, we obtain an interpretive suggestion of how materialism and theology could be elaborated together to deconstruct and deactivate the bipolar machine of divine *oikonomia*.

A review by Michał Jędrzejek offers Polish readers a brief summary of Franz Overbeck's legacy, part of which has just been translated and edited by Tadeusz Zatorski. Overbeck as an agnostic theologian designed a highly innovative critique of theology with help from its own methods. Traces of the Overbeckian ethos and many of the topics he was interested in are easily detectable in Giorgio Agamben's writings. Both thinkers operate in terms of post-religious alternatives, being aware that the theological legacy must be studied carefully, lest its most negative outcomes overshadow the secular world.

Eventually, it was Giorgio Agamben's oeuvre that moved to the centre of this issue and thus constitutes the main reference point for the analyses of economic theologies contained therein. But we do hope that the material presented here will be useful for further elaborations of the problem of economic theologies, a research field that is slowly gaining momentum. It combines not only theological genealogies of the biopolitical and managerial paradigms of power, but also investigations into the subjectivization dispositives of modernity and contemporaneity, as well as studies of the history of political theology, and, ultimately, reflection on some basic notions of political and social philosophy in itself. The publication of Roberto Esposito's *Due* [Two] (Esposito 2013) can be considered an important moment in the consolidation of this research program, since Esposito makes an important return to the origins of contemporary debates on political theology and includes in a systematic manner the famous essay by Walter Benjamin, *Capitalism as Religion*. The importance of Esposito's book lies in his attempt to combine political and economic theology, which Agamben separates to an extent, referring both of them to a single conceptual knot that he finds in the concept of the person (see Mikołaj Ratajczak's review of the book). One should also mention Elletra Stimilli's books on the problem of debt (2011;

2015), that combine the lexicon of theology with the language of political economy and Foucault's studies on forms of subjectivity. An important book by Massimo Cacciari, *Il potere che frena* [The power that restrains] (Cacciari 2013), represents another perspective on the problem of economic theology. Cacciari is concerned less with the theological origins of the economy itself and more with the relation between forms of state power (or any power that can join in itself the *potestas* and the *auctoritas*) capable of governing and managing the relations between private, individual interests in the "era of Epimetheus". The theological paradigm for this form of power is, for Cacciari, the *katechon*: the power that does not so much conserve the proper and the good, as restrain the evil and postpone the end. The notion of *katechon* became an object of interest recently not only for Cacciari (and Esposito as well), but also for Mario Tronti and Paolo Virno, who in his *E così via, all'infinito* (Virno 2011) imagines *katechon* as a form of non-sovereign power of the multitude. Italian philosophy is right now a laboratory for new modes of thinking about the political, the economic and their mutual entanglement. Hence, economic theology, in its different, still fluid forms, constitutes an element of this renaissance of political philosophy in contemporary Italy (for a short discussion of the recently published volume *Difference italiane* [Italian differences] that aims to present the current problems and perspectives of "Italian Theory", see Piotr Sadzik's review).

Our hope is that this issue of *Praktyka Teoretyczna* will serve as an experiment in testing the ways, modes and perspectives on how to *use* economic theology, first of all – as a critique. If the published material will prove useful in further analyses of the conflicts and power relations of the contemporary world, we will consider our task fulfilled. At the end of this introduction we would like to extend our thanks to persons and institutions that have made it possible to transform our initial project into actuality. We would like to thank the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the Polish Academy of Sciences for awarding us a grant for preparing the issue; the Institute for Human Sciences in Vienna, where Rafał Zawisza was a junior fellow and was provided with excellent conditions for preparation of the issue; all the authors for their valuable contributions; translators (Katarzyna Burzyk, Kuba Krzeski and Anna Piekarska) for their dedication to this hard task of rendering the same thoughts in a different language; reviewers for their time, input and important notes; proof-readers (James Hartzell, Katherine Perlo and Anna Wojczyńska) for their indispensable, yet often

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Economic theologies

SUWERENNOŚĆ: BOSKIE RZĄDZENIE ZIEMSKIMI SPRAWAMI¹

RECENZJA KSIĄŻKI *IL REGNO E LA GLORIA. PER UNA GENEALOGIA TEOLOGICA DELL'ECONOMIA E DEL GOVERNO* (HOMO SACER II.2)
GIORGIO AGAMBENA

ANTONIO NEGRI

Abstrakt: Poniższy tekst stanowi krytyczną lekturę teorii, którą sformułował Giorgio Agamben, wychodzącą od jego *Il regno e la gloria*. Stanowi także filozoficzne poszukiwania, które po teologii politycznej rekonstruuja teologiczną genealogię myśli ekonomicznej. Skupia się na teoretyczno-krytycznym radykalizmie wobec form oporu, które tworzą konkretne dzieła przeznaczone do tego, by stały się narzędziem władzy, oraz na wynikającej stąd propozycji nieoperatywności rozumianej jako etyczny dyspozytyw powstrzymywania.

Słowa kluczowe: teologia polityczna, rządzenie, suwerenność, ekonomia polityczna, opór, podmiot, Giorgio Agamben, Antonio Negri

1 Tytuł pochodzi od redakcji.

*Zagadką polityki nie jest suwerenność, ale rząd, nie jest nią król,
lecz minister, nie jest nią też prawo, ale policja.*

Książka *Il regno e la gloria. Per una genealogia teologia dell'economia e del governo* (Królestwo i chwała. Genealogia teologii ekonomicznej i rządzenia) Giorgia Agambena powinna być postrzegana jako jedno z przejść między antropologią filozoficzną *Homo sacer* a czwartym tomem cyklu, który jeszcze nie wyszedł na światło dzienne, „poświęconym formom życia” oraz wyjaśnieniu „właściwego znaczenia nieoperatywności jako praktyki właściwej ludziom i polityce”². Drugi tom w tej serii to *Stan wyjątkowy*³, stanowiący krytykę nowoczesnej władzy państwowej. *Il regno e la gloria* stanowi idealne dopełnienie tego drugiego tomu cyklu.

W rzeczywistości esej ten obejmuje dwie książki. Pierwsza (*Królestwo*) kończy rozpoczętą przez niemieckiego filozofa Carla Schmitta operację redukcji polityczności do teologii politycznej i dlatego spójnie wiąże się ze *Stanem wyjątkowym*, przechodząc jednak od analizy natury suwerenności do praktyki rządzenia. Druga (*Chwała*) to z kolei analiza „konsensusu w państwie nowoczesnym”, zjawiska postrzeganego tu w ramach historii zbawienia. I o ile w przeszłości konsensus był wpisany w formy „aklamacji” i entuzjazmu, o tyle dziś zostaje przedstawiony jako alienacja „demokratycznej” opinii publicznej czy też alienacja w ramach reżimu „demokratycznej” opinii publicznej. Z powodu tego tematu i jego charakterystyki *Chwała* powinna być powiązana z książką o Auschwitz, stanowiącą trzeci tom serii *Homo sacer*.

Genealogia ekonomii

Il regno e la gloria to doskonała książka o archeologii nowoczesnej polityki. Warta miana największych odkryć „teologiczno-politycznych” rozpoczętych w XVII wieku i kontynuowanych przez Kantorowicza. Badania te, począwszy już od Spinozy, są zawsze naznaczone przez swój czas. To więc nie przypadek, że archeologia, genealogia i krytyka są tu wyrażone w problematyce zaczerpniętej z dyskursu politycznego. Dzieło to – mieszczące się w bezpośredniej linii Agambenowskiego radykalizmu – pozwala na dotknięcie niektórych wartych przedyskutowania elementów i wyrażenie ewentualnej zgody lub niezgody. Pozwolę sobie zatem nie tyle przedstawić, co zawiera to głębokie studium (jest to zresztą *copyleft*, a więc

2 Recenzja Negriego powstała krótko po wydaniu we Włoszech *Il regno e la gloria*; od tego czasu Agamben wydał już obydwie części czwartego tomu cyklu *Homo sacer*. Zob. uwagi redakcji do polskiego przekładu tekstu Alberta Toscano w tym numerze *Praktyki Teoretycznej* (przyp. red.).

3 Dokładniej pierwsza część drugiego tomu, oznaczona numerem II.1 *Il regno e la gloria* stanowi drugą część drugiego tomu, tj. II.2 (ten sam numer nosi wydany w 2015 roku krótki wykład Agambena poświęcony Lewiatanowi Hobbesa). Drugi tom cyklu *Homo sacer* ma jak dotąd cztery części, ostatnia (*Opus Dei*) opatrzona jest numerem II.5 (przyp. red.).

tekst do czytania i odtwarzania w jakiegokolwiek formie), ale krytycznie zdefiniować jego tematyczny zakres, co umożliwi nam lepszą nad nim dyskusję.

W pierwszej części tomu, w *Królestwie*, Agamben buduje genealogiczną, teologiczno-polityczną strukturę ekonomii, porównywalną do tej, którą przedstawił w *Stanie wyjątkowym*, gdzie figura teologiczno-polityczna została wykuta, aby reprezentować działanie przemocy państwowej. W tej książce dokonuje się istotny krok naprzód, szczególnie kiedy Agamben zestawia w ścisłej relacji ekonomię, teologię polityczną i biopolitykę. Jak sugeruje autor, począwszy od chrześcijańskiej patrystyki, ekonomia przedstawia się jako wyraz biopolityki, gdzie język „zarządzania domem” jest tłumaczony za pomocą definicji Trójcy dla żyjącego Kościoła. *Oikonomia* przedstawia zatem oryginalną teologiczno-polityczną rekompozycję życia w boskości, czy też nawet lepiej, wyrażenie boskości w *bios*. Rozwinięcie tej tezy jest niezwykle bogate. Można by powiedzieć, że zniszczywszy jakiegokolwiek przejawy przemocy nowoczesnej polityczności poprzez zepchnięcie decyzji do jej ekstremalnej granicy (operacja przeprowadzona w *Stanie wyjątkowym*), Agamben pokazuje tutaj, jak ekonomia staje się zwykłą agencją władzy teologiczno-politycznej: wykonaniem przemocy w ramach światowej reprodukcji życia społecznego. Trzeba jednak zauważyć, że w przeciwieństwie do polityki, w ekonomii ta ekstremalna siła może być cicha, niewidoczna, nieskończenie pośrednia. Działające „urządzenie” [governamentalità] jest miejscem i polityczno-teologicznym dyspozytywem interwencji „aniołów” (ministrów, zarządców, policjantów) w życie społeczne, gdy jest ono ujmowane jako ruch i/lub wyobrażenie boskości. Niemniej nawet w obliczu sytuacji synchronicznej decyzji politycznej Agambenowska ekonomia pozostaje stanem wyjątkowym w codziennym życiu.

Utracony podmiot

Chciałbym od razu zauważyć, że to opróżnienie biopolitycznej ekonomii jest co najmniej bardzo wątpliwe. W sytuacionizmie (do politycznych konkluzji którego Agamben mocno się przybliża) podmiot, jakkolwiek stłamszony by się nie wydawał, wciąż tam był – na granicy, na krawędzi, tuż u progu lub za drzwiami... ale był. Z drugiej strony nie jest powiedziane, że „angelologia” musi objawiać się w tej jednolitej formie. Na przykład angelologia biblijna nie odbiera Hiobowi ani zdolności życia, ani woli oporu – nawet jeśli Jahwe przekazuje jednemu z aniołów, Szatanowi, straszne moce. Tutaj natomiast teologiczna reabsorpcja ekonomii – rozpatrywanie Boskości, Państwa i Kapitału czy też „trójcy R”, przeklinanej przez niemieckiego poetę Heinricha Heinego: Richelieu, Robespierre’a i Rothschilda – tworzy obraz, w którym działanie władzy wyraża się homologicznie. Gdzie są poddani albo choćby podmioty ekonomii? Nie sadzę, aby Agamben uważał, że praca ustanawia podmioty natychmiast i koniecznie jako poddanych (jeśli by tak było, ekonomistyczna koncepcja

społeczeństwa nie zostałyby nigdy ani tak jasno wyrażona, ani tak zdecydowanie przyjęta). A zatem dokąd chce nas doprowadzić? Do świata, w którym pojedynczość nie byłaby w żadnym razie definiowana ani jako praca (a tym bardziej jako odrzucenie pracy), ani jako opór (a tym bardziej jako walka)? Nawet nie będąc teologami, łatwo stwierdzić, że wysilek zrozumienia produkcji (tworzenia) w obrębie kręgu teologicznego, nie skutkuje impotencją czy bezpłodnością, ale oporem i aktywnością. „Teologia wyzwolenia” dotknęła tej prawdy ateizmu.

Anielski ekstremizm

W *Homo sacer* znajdowała się negatywna obrona władzy. Wynikało z niej, że ubogi najemnik nie znalazłby ujścia dla swojej produktywności, a proletariuszowi nie udało się utrzymać oporu wobec suwerenności. Teraz, w *Il regno...*, ów Jeden władzy dzieli się na dwóch: a więc w obrębie całej Agambenowskiej strategii pojawia się z jednej strony „stan wyjątkowy”, z drugiej „królestwo”; z jednej „obóz”, z drugiej „chwała”, z jednej strony Suweren, a z drugiej rząd. W *Stanie wyjątkowym* polityczna obrona absolutyzmu władzy może być odczytywana w pojęciach Schmitta doprowadzonych do skrajności. W ekonomii wyjątku ten ekstremizm nie zyskuje potwierdzenia, a w grę zaczynają wkraczać anielska mediacja i władza rządu. A jeśli „polityczny stan wyjątkowy” w swej przesadnej decyzyjności negował „wroga”, to jednak w „wyjątkowym stanie ekonomicznym” aktora, produkcyjnego podmiotu, jakkolwiek ujarzmiony by nie był, zabraknąć nie może: ekonomia i wyzysk z trudem (a może nawet nigdy) się nie rozdzielają. Odnoszę zatem wrażenie, że mimo zmiany założeń Agambenowi nie udaje się zmodyfikować reguł gry. Tak jak w *Stanie wyjątkowym*, tak też w *Il regno...* ekonomia została zaprojektowana na płótnie, na którym nie ma podmiotu produkcyjnego, nie ma robotnika; istnieją jedynie poddany i maszyna, czysta alienacja. Jak zatem bez podmiotu produkcyjnego może funkcjonować ekonomia? Archeologia nie może gubić tego z oczu.

Przemoc akumulacji

W kapitalistycznej ekonomii z tym granicznym i podstawowym aktem politycznym, jakim jest wyjątek, wiąże się akt pierwotnej akumulacji, wzięcia w posiadanie. Niezależnie od przemocy, za pomocą której ten fundacyjny akt został dokonany, faktem pozostaje, że „akumulacja pierwotna”, ustanowienie „posiadania” jako źródła „prawa” są operacjami, które, będąc daleko od utwierdzania jedności władzy, dzielą ją. „Pierwotne wywłaszczenie oznacza oddzielenie pracownika od narzędzi pracy”, pisze Marks, „inaugurując” w ten sposób tak zwaną „walkę klas”. Dziś nie ma ani jedności, ani trójcy, pozostaje tylko dwoje.

A potem nadchodzi Chwała. Poddani sławią władzę: *Christus vincit, Christus regnat, Christus imperat*. Jedynym zapośredniczeniem, na jakie pozwala władza, jest zatem pozostawanie w jej środku niczym coś, co przyjmuje ona jako przejaw własnej dialektyki czy też lepiej: ekonomii. Wydaje się, że Agamben powtarza w tym miejscu, potępiając teologiczny entuzjazm, przedstawioną przez Adorna i Horkheimera krytykę Oświecenia. Debord przeprowadził mniej więcej podobne wnioskowanie i widział, jak każda zdolność oporu zostaje w obliczu władzy zmiażdżona, a każdy stan alienacji staje się, by tak rzec, normalnym. A jednak, poruszając się po terenie negatywnej dialektyki, wyobrażał sobie (na poziomie całości) nagle i niespodziewane wyłonienie się absolutnego oporu, eksplozji negacji. Natomiast w teologii politycznej Agambena jakikolwiek rodzaj oporu kompletnie znika. Można tu jeszcze dojrzeć przeblyski – miejmy nadzieję, że po raz ostatni – Benjaminowskiej teorii przemocy, która w swym apokaliptycznym ruchu dokonała wielkich szkód.

Profanacja nicości

Jak wyjść z tej sytuacji po tym, gdy stan wyjątkowy wkroczył także w obszar reprodukcji życia, ekonomii, a przede wszystkim przestrzeni publicznej? Aby lepiej to zrozumieć, oczekujemy na czwarty tom projektu Agambena, choć już w tej części pojawiają się pewne wskazówki. To nieoperatywność jest tym, co Agamben obiecuje jako etyczny dyspozytyw służący do wyzwolenia się z totalitarnego ucisku władzy stale opierającej się na wyjątku. To rodzaj uwewnętrznionego oporu, nigdy nierealizującego się w konkretnych operacjach, które, jak sugeruje Agamben, mogłyby stać się narzędziami biowładzy. Ale dlaczego Heideggerowskie *Gelassenheit* nie miałyby wiązać się z – albo lepiej: przekształcić w – dyspozytyw wartości? Póki co jednak wprowadzenie do nieoperatywności wydaje się polegać jedynie na profanacji nicości.

To powiedziawszy, w zakończeniu książki znajdujemy dwie genealogiczne zdobycze kluczowe dla teorii politycznej. Pierwsza polega na tym, że „prawdziwym problemem, centralną zagadką polityki nie jest suwerenność, ale rząd, nie Bóg, ale anioł, nie król, lecz minister, nie prawo, ale policja – czyli rządowa maszyna, którą tworzą i podtrzymują w ruchu”. To znaczy, że wyjątek, który tkwi u podstaw każdej władzy, lepiej będzie przechwycić „w ruchu”.

Drugą kluczową zdobyczą jest to, że klasyczna ekonomia, a więc liberalizm (całość teorii ekonomicznej, która uformowała się między Quesnayem i Adamem Smithem) korzysta z całkowicie opatrnościowego modelu. W konsekwencji Agamben może zakończyć

na tym okazałym obrazie, na którym świat stworzony przez Boga utożsamia się ze światem bez Boga, a ewentualność i konieczność, wolność i służebność przenikają się wzajemnie, sławetne centrum urządzającej maszyny ukazuje się w pełnym świetle.

Nowoczesność, usuwając Boga ze świata, nie tylko nie wyszła z teologii, ale też nie zrobiła nic innego, jak tylko doprowadziła do realizacji projektu opatrnościowej *oikonomii*.

Feuerbach i Marks nie powiedzieli tego lepiej: aby zniszczyć państwo panów, trzeba było zniszczyć ich Boga – zarówno Jednego, jak i Trójcę. Oczekujemy na Agambena w kluczowym przejściu krytycznym: niech nam wreszcie powie, kto jest podmiotem, który cierpi, żyje, umiera, zmartwychwstaje, zwycięża w tej walce o wyzwolenie i gdzie znajduje się (o ile jeszcze jest) ten podmiot w teologii politycznej. Życzenie wydaje się możliwe: odnowienie teologii politycznej na sposób Spinozy. Agamben byłby do tego zdolny.

Przełożyła Katarzyna Burzyk

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TITLE: [Il regno e la gloria: recensione di Toni Negri]

ABSTRACT: A review of Giorgio Agamben’s *Il regno e la gloria* by Antonio Negri.

KEYWORDS: political theology, governance, sovereignty, political economy, resistance, subjectivity, Giorgio Agamben, Antonio Negri

UŚWIĘCONY DYLEMAT OPERATYWNOŚCI

RECENZJA KSIĄŻKI *OPUS DEI. ARCHEOLOGIA DELL'UFFICIO* (HOMO SACER II.5) GIORGIO AGAMBENA

ANTONIO NEGRI

Abstrakt: Esej ten stanowi krytyczną recenzję książki *Opus dei* Giorgio Agambena, będącej piątym tomem drugiej części cyklu *Homo sacer*. Antonio Negri nie tylko analizuje najważniejsze argumenty książki, lecz prowadzi także dyskusję z Agambenem dotyczącą całości jego filozoficzno-politycznego projektu.

Słowa kluczowe: obowiązek, wola, ontologia, filozofia polityczna, operatywność, Giorgio Agamben, Antonio Negri

Wydaje się, że wraz z tą książką kończy się podróż, którą Agamben rozpoczął pierwszym tomem *Homo sacer*. Była to całkiem długa, niemal dwudziestoletnia przeprawa, trwająca od początku lat dziewięćdziesiątych. Archeologia ontologii prowadzona (ze skrupulatnością, której nawet dziwaczna i myląca gra numerków, ułożonych tak, by udawać porządek poszczególnych etapów badań, nie uczyniła niejasną) aż po ponowne rozpatrzenie problematyki *Sein*. Wykopalisko, którego nawet Heidegger (zdaniem autora uważającego się za jego młodego ucznia) nie był w stanie doprowadzić do końca – ponieważ tu ontologia jest wyzwolona ze śladów „operatywności”, z iluzji, która mogłaby wiązać się z wolą lub rozkazem. Co z tego pozostaje? „Problemem nadchodzącej filozofii jest pomyślenie ontologii, która byłaby poza operatywnością i rozkazem oraz etyki i polityki całkowicie wyzwolonych od pojęcia obowiązku i woli”.

Bez wątpienia stwierdzenie, że ontologia krytykowana przez Heideggera pozostaje teorią operatywności i woli, jest prawdziwe. Podobną myśl rozwijał już Schrömann, gdy krytykował *Sein* jako samą ideę *archè*, a więc jako coś nierozróżnialnego od początku i rozkazu. Agamben z wielką maestrią zrealizował zadanie prześledzenia rozwoju ontologii operatywności (i jej późniejszej organizacji), która od neoplatoników po Ojców Kościoła, od filozofów łacińskich po Kanta, od Tomasza po Heideggera podtrzymywała tezę o byciu całkowicie zasymilowanym z wolą/rozkazem.

Najpierw Arystoteles. W swej teorii cnoty jako nawyku mógł wyrwać byt z aporetycznego pędu w stronę cnoty, a w ten sposób wyzwolić się z dowartościowywania operatywności – nie zrobił tego, nawet jako ten, kto u początków metafizyki postrzegał cnotę poprzez związek z brakiem oraz jako nieoperatywne określenie ontologiczne. Od tego momentu było już – według Agambena – tylko gorzej. W chrześcijaństwie (ponowne zagłębienie się w związku między neoplatonizmem i patrystyką utwierdza Agambena w jego wcześniejszym rozumowaniu) działanie i wola zaczynają już w pełni panować. Ocenę poprawności Agambenowskiej analizy pozostawmy badaczom średniowiecza – nam wystarczy prześledzenie tropu, który ujawnia niewątpliwą spójność. Aporia Arystotelesa, wyrażona w alternatywie połączenia (lub nie) nawyku i cnoty, bycia i obowiązku, pasywności i aktywności, nie występuje w scholastyce. Krytyczny nawyk jest raczej konstytutywnie nakazany działaniu, a cnota nie polega już na byciu, lecz na czynach – jedynie poprzez działanie człowiek upodabnia się do Boga. Tak pisze Tomasz: „To jest tym konstytutywnym podporządkowaniem nawyku działaniu, które teoria cnoty rozwija i pcha aż do ekstremum”. Od tego momentu historia metafizyki, pozbawiona krytycznej archeologii, ukazuje piękną ciągłość i odsłania pewien rodzaj perwersyjnego niepokoju (według Agambena) rozwijania i pogłębiania tej operatywnej zasady etyki oraz konceptu cnoty jako powinności i obowiązku, przekazanego w spadku przez średniowieczną teologię. „Nieskończony dług”, na którym opiera się według filozofów drugiej scholastyki obowiązek religijny, został w ten sposób

ostatecznie wszczepiony w metafizykę nowoczesności. Wraz z Kantem pojawia się po raz pierwszy pomysł nieskończonych zadań i obowiązków – nieosiągalnych, ale przez to nie mniej obowiązkowych. W przykładowym fragmencie Agamben podsumowuje:

Odtąd widać już jasno, że idea „obowiązku-bycia” nie jest tylko etyczna ani też tylko ontologiczna; raczej w sposób aporetyczny wiąże ona ze sobą bycie i praktykę w muzycznej strukturze fugi, w której działanie poprzedza bycie, nie tylko dlatego, że stale dyktuje mu nowe nakazy, ale też z tego powodu i przede wszystkim dlatego, że bycie nie ma żadnej innej zawartości niż czyste zadłużenie.

Na kolejnych stronach Agamben w polemiczny sposób nalega na uwewnętrznienie idei prawa moralnego, na jej rozwój w formie samoograniczania się, a nawet masochistycznej przyjemności prawa. „Substytucja »sławetnej nazwy ontologii« poprzez »filozofię transcendentalną« oznacza, że ontologia »obowiązku-bycia« utraciła swe miejsce jako ontologia bycia”.

Wywód i konkluzja iście heideggerowskie, można by rzec. A odniesienie to, zauważamy natychmiast, rozczarowuje Agambena. „Nawet Heidegger rozwinął ontologię mającą z paradygmatem operatywności, którą zamierzał skrytykować, więcej wspólnego, niż można by przypuszczać”. To stwierdzenie zaskakuje. Czy Heidegger nie poszedł zatem wystarczająco daleko w swej destrukcji ontologii nowoczesności? Czyż w niewystarczający sposób pozbawił *Sein* tego, co można mu było ludzkiego przypisać? Nie, nalega Agamben: jest punkt, w którym Heidegger ulega pokusie ontologii operatywności: teoria techniki i krytyka *Gestell* ujawniają jego niezdecydowanie. Doświadczenie Auschwitz uczy! Już w *Il regno e la gloria*, przy odrobinie uwagi, można było odnaleźć te konkluzje.

W tym miejscu zaczynam być podejrzliwy. Bowiem książka *Opus Dei*, mimo że, jak już zostało to powiedziane, podsumowuje i rozwija *Il regno e la gloria*, w rzeczywistości nie jest tylko dopełnieniem archeologicznego kierunku myśli i prac Agambena. Ta książka zaznacza przede wszystkim jego definitywne odejście od Heideggera: wybór ontologiczny przewyższa archeologiczną jakość analizy, a starcie dociera do poziomu fundamentalnego. Heidegger jest oskarżony o prowizoryczne jedynie rozwiązanie aporii bycia i obowiązku-bycia (czy też operatywności): niepewność bardziej niż separacja, bardziej niż wybór innego obszaru ontologicznego. Muszę przyznać, że zauważając to, poczułem pewną satysfakcję. Była ona jednak krótka.

Czym jest kolejne tajemnicze *Sein*, które Agamben proponuje dziś w opozycji do Heideggera? Już kiedyś, w 1990 roku, zanim zaangażował się w wielką przygodę z *Homo sacer*, w książce *Wspólnota, która nadchodzi* Agamben oddalił się od Heideggera: uległ benjaminowskiej, niemal marksistowskiej propozycji, wspierając wyzwanie rzucone wobec humanistycznego sensu bycia. To jednak zdecydowanie nie jest kierunek, w którym Agamben

podąża. Wręcz przeciwnie, postępuje on przeciw jakiemukolwiek humanizmowi, jakiegokolwiek możliwości działania, jakiegokolwiek nadziei na rewolucję.

Ale w jaki sposób Agamben dotarł do tego radykalnego nihilizmu, przy którym wyraża zadowolenie z przezwyciężenia (lub ukończenia) projektu Heideggera? Dociera tu po długiej podróży, która rozchodziła się na dwie strony: w kierunku krytyki polityczno-prawnej oraz w kierunku archeologicznym (wykopaliska teologiczno-politycznego). Carl Schmitt znajduje się w centrum tej wędrówki – prowadzi w obydwie strony: w stronę kwalifikacji władzy jako wyjątku, a zatem jako siły i przeznaczenia, absolutnej instrumentalizacji, jako techniki pozbawionej jakości oraz do sadyzmu celowości, a także w stronę kwalifikacji mocy jako teologicznej iluzji, to jest do impotencji, a zatem do niemożliwego zawierzenia w jej efektywność; podlega zatem do nieoperatywności, odrzucenia koniecznej frustracji woli, masochizmu obowiązku. Te dwie kwestie podążają razem. Przy wydobywaniu aktualności takich koncepcji Schmitta, jak „stan wyjątkowy” i „teologia polityczna”, jest prawie niemożliwe zrozumienie, czy stanowią one największe niebezpieczeństwo, czy też chodzi po prostu o otwarcie się na ich prawdę. Metafizyka i polityczna diagnostyka poddają się wobec nierozróżnialności. Byłoby to jednak zupełnie nieistotne, gdyby w tej nierozróżnialności nie zatopiono każdego możliwego oporu. Wracamy do dwóch określonych już kierunków: cała podróż, która następuje w *Homo sacer*, odbywa się na tych podwójnych torach. Drugi kierunek jest podsumowany w *Il regno e la gloria*.

Nalegamy: ten drugi kierunek również jest sprowokowany przez *Teologię polityczną* Carla Schmitta, a także poprzez konfrontację z ontologią Heideggera. Podkreślamy to, aby nie mylić archeologii Agambena z tą uprawianą przez Foucaulta. U Agambena brakuje historii, tej historii, która u Foucaulta jest nie tylko archeologią nowoczesności, ale także aktywną genealogią terażniejszości, jej snuciem się i rozwikłaniem, jej byciem i stawaniem się. Dla Agambena historia nie istnieje – albo inaczej, lepiej: może ona być co najwyżej historią prawa, właściwie jedynym miejscem, w którym filozof może być gramatykiem i badaczem gramatyki rozkazu. Ale jest to oczywiście również miejsce, gdzie biopolityka i genealogia mogą zaprezentować się w sposób linearny – jako przeznaczenie właśnie. Ponieważ nie pojawia się tutaj nawet cień podmiotowości i produkcji, a nawet wydaje się, że ta ostatnia jest zupełnie przygaszona jeśli chodzi o aktywność, technikę, operatywność oraz – przede wszystkim – opór.

Nie dziwią zatem w *Opus Dei* prawne przykłady, które Agamben przedstawia jako ostateczne potwierdzenie swoich tez. Absolutyzacja obowiązku w prawie mogła być wprowadzona raczej przez Pufendorfa niż przez Hobbesa (a proces ten kończy się wraz z Jeanem Domatem). Mogło tak być. Odległa szesnastowieczna historia, postępująca równoległe do narodzin i rozwoju drugiej scholastyki (której wiele zawdzięcza sam Heidegger!) oraz ostatecznej stabilizacji metafizyki operatywności, efektywnej cnoty. To

ważne zwłaszcza dlatego, że to Kant, jak widzieliśmy, podejmuje ten motyw, a po nim Kelsen absolutyzuje go w fundamentalnej figurze obowiązku prawnego – w *Sollen*. Warto pamiętać: nie chodzi tutaj tak bardzo o konkluzję Kelsena, która, potwierdzając relację między prawem a rozkazem jako rodzącą obowiązek, jest oczywiście istotna, ale o to, że przywołuje ona – odległy o tysiące mil od jego pierwszego stwierdzenia, a jednak obecny w całej „ideologii europejskiej” – ten wewnętrzny dla liturgii związek, który biegnie od operatywności ekonomicznej do boskiego bycia, przechodząc niewzruszenie przez prawne dedukcje, aż po fundującą konieczność *Sollen*: wszystko to przedstawia nieprzenikniony rozkaz boskości. W ten sposób Kelsen staje się podobny do Schmitta, a – tak jak przypuszczaliśmy – dwa kierunki otwarte w *Homo sacer* ponownie się schodzą: z jednej strony krytyka wyjątku, a z drugiej krytyka *Sollen* (przefiltrowana przez *oikonomię* chrześcijańską) ostatecznie się jednoczą. Jeśli jednak zaakceptujemy tę redukcję w całości i na obszarze niebędącym już ani prawnym, ani politycznym, jeśli prawdą jest, że praktyka rządu ufundowana na wyjątku i zasadzie ekonomicznej efektywności zastąpiły każdą konstytucyjną formę rządu, jeśli – jak dawno temu pisał Benjamin – „to, co jest obecnie rzeczywiste, to stan wyjątkowy, w którym żyjemy i którego nie potrafimy już odróżnić od reguły” – zatem jeśli to wszystko jest prawdą, to co według Agambena może nas wyzwolić? (O ile pytanie to ma jeszcze jakikolwiek sens!)

Dotarliśmy zatem do końca skomplikowanej wędrówki. Potrzeba nam wyzwolić się z pojęcia i mocy woli – w ten sposób Agamben rozpoczyna swoją odpowiedź. Musimy wyzwolić się z woli, dążącej do stania się instytucją, która chce być efektywna i aktualna. Znamy przyczyny. W klasycznej filozofii greckiej pojęcie woli nie miało znaczenia ontologicznego – to zniekształcenie zostało wprowadzone przez chrześcijaństwo, które wyolbrzymiło elementy obecne u Arystotelesa jedynie szczątkowo; w ten sposób obowiązek jest wprowadzony do etyki, aby dać podstawy rozkazowi; tak idea woli została przepracowana, aby wyjaśnić przejście od potencji do aktu. W taki oto sposób cała filozofia zachodnia ulokowana jest wewnątrz terenu, który składa się z nierozwiązywalnych aporii i triumfuje w pełnej nowoczesności wraz z redefinicją świata jako produktu technologii i przemysłu (co jest bardziej ewidentne w realizowaniu się, w efektywnym stawianiu się władzy w rzeczywistości i w aktualności – czy jest coś bardziej ewidentnego niż ten horyzont?). I znowu pojawia się pytanie: jak z tego wyjść? Jak odzyskać bycie bez efektywności? Jak piękną zagadkę podarował nam Agamben!

Być może istnieje droga, którą Agamben mógłby jeszcze w tym momencie podążać. Jest nią spinozjanizm – droga, w której potencja natychmiast zostaje zorganizowana jako dyspozytyw działania, gdzie przemoc i przyjemność są determinowane w instytucjach wielości, a konstytutywna zdolność staje się wysiłkiem na rzecz budowania (w historii) wolności, sprawiedliwości i tego, co wspólne. Agamben postrzega ją jako drogę ucieczki doskonale ateistycznej. W istocie dostrzega ją w pogardliwym odrzuceniu przez Spinozę

ateizmu, który, w krytycznym momencie nowoczesności, deklarowali zarazem Pufendorf, jak i Leibniz. Ale bycie, które przedstawia nam Agamben, jest póki co tak czarne i płaskie, immanencja tak niewyraźna, ateizm tak mało materialistyczny, nihilizm tak przykry, że Spinoza naprawdę nie może pozostać w grze – nawet jeśli jako przesąd postrzega on każdą ideologię państwa, która nie jest produktem wielości i ciała (ciał wielości), niezbywalnego fundamentu wolności. Z drugiej strony Spinoza nie oczekuje, że zachodnie formy życia osiągną swoje historyczne zużycie (odrzucając w międzyczasie działanie, aby wola nie nadgryzła efektywności). Potrafi natomiast udzielić odpowiedzi na pytanie o działanie, nadzieję oraz przyszłość.

Co to jest oświecenie? To pytanie, które przenika filozofię Spinozy, ale też Machiavellego i Marksa, a bardziej współcześnie podjęte zostało w wielkim stylu przez Foucaulta (przeciw ontologicznemu nazizmowi Heideggera). W gruncie rzeczy jedyne miejsce w długiej podróży Agambena, gdzie ontologiczny próg potencji mógłby zostać osiągnięty, pojawia się, gdy – przesuwając akcent z językowych postaci historycznego bycia – forma życia oddziela się nie od prawa pojętego abstrakcyjnie, ale od prawa danego historycznie (czyli od prawa własności), nie od rozkazu w ogóle, ale od rozkazu kapitalistycznej produkcji i jej państwa. Praca nad rozwiązaniem prawa własności i prawa kapitalizmu jest jedynym operatywnym nihilizmem, który ludzie cnotliwi deklarują i w ramach którego działają. Jednak i ta hipoteza zostaje przez Agambena odrzucona w *Altissima povertà*.

Jak zakończy się ta historia? Jest jeszcze jedna kwestia, która pojawia się na nowo przy okazji takiego dyskursu, jaki spotykamy u Agambena: czy forma – działanie lub instytucja – może uratować się przed destrukcją każdej rodzącej obowiązek treści? Ten, kto nalega w tym kontekście na tony i negacje anarchistyczne, jest tak samo irytujący, jak ci, którzy sądzą, że ciągłość instytucji lub anulowanie każdego negatywnego działania stanowią radykalny krok w tył. Jest natomiast prawdopodobne, że, w przeciwieństwie do tych ekstremizmów, tak jak w innych rewolucyjnych epokach, anarchizm i komunizm (w coraz to nowszych postaciach, w bitwach, które przenikają nasz wiek) będą się do siebie zbliżać. Tak czy inaczej, jedyną pewną rzeczą jest to – jak pisał Spinoza – że „człowiek kierowany przez rozum jest bardziej wolny w państwie, gdzie żyje zgodnie ze wspólną umową niż w samotności, gdzie posłuszny jest jedynie samemu sobie”.

Przełożyła Katarzyna Burzyk

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AUTHOR: Antonio Negri

TITLE: Il sacro dilemma dell’inoperoso. A proposito di *Opus Dei* di Giorgio Agamben [The Sacred Dilemma of Inoperosity. On Giorgio Agamben’s *Opus Dei*]

ABSTRACT: A review of Giorgio Agamben’s *Opus Dei* by Antonio Negri.

KEYWORDS: duty, will, ontology, political philosophy, operativity, Giorgio Agamben, Antonio Negri

**BOSKIE ZARZĄDZANIE: KRYTYCZNE UWAGI NA
TEMAT *IL REGNO E LA GLORIA*
GIORGIO AGAMBENA**

ALBERTO TOSCANO

Abstrakt: Esej Alberta Toscano jest próbą oceny metodologicznej i teoretycznej wagi *Królestwa i chwały* Agambena dla radykalnej krytyki współczesnej polityki i ekonomii. Szczegółnej analizie poddane jest w nim znaczenie sformułowania „teologiczna genealogia ekonomii i zarządzania”, które pojawia się w podtytule książki. Toscano skupia się przede wszystkim na Agambenowskim rozumieniu sekularyzacji, które umożliwia postawienie tezy, że nowoczesność jedynie dopełnia chrześcijańską „ekonomię” opatrności, czy też że Marksowskie pojęcie *praxis* „stanowi w zasadzie zeświecczenie teologicznej koncepcji bycia stworzenia jako boskiego działania”. Autor stara się pokazać, że Agamben w zbytnim stopniu polega na pewnym typie historycznego substancjalizmu, który stoi w sprzeczności z jego deklaracją skupienia się na genealogii. Przygląda się także słabym punktom w Agambenowskim podejściu do tak kluczowych zagadnień, jak pieniądz i administracja.

Słowa kluczowe: Giorgio Agamben, ekonomiczna teologia rządzenia, sekularyzacja, metoda, Karol Marks, chrematystyka

„Nowoczesność, usunawszy Boga ze świata, nie tylko nie doprowadziła do zmierzchu teologii, ale w pewnym sensie domknęła projekt opatrnościowej *oikonomii*” (Agamben 2007, 314)¹. Tymi słowami Giorgio Agamben zamyka swój najnowszy² i najdłuższy dodatek do projektu *Homo Sacer* rozpoczętego w 1995 roku, *Il regno e la gloria. Per una genealogia teologica dell'economia e del governo*³ [Królestwo i chwała. Teologiczna genealogia ekonomii i rządzenia⁴]. Ta górnolotna deklaracja (jest ich wiele w pracach Agambena, a zwłaszcza w omawianej tutaj książce) zawiera w sobie dwa kluczowe założenia Agambenowskich dociekań. Po pierwsze, w *Il regno e la gloria* prym wiedzie teza, że Ojcowie Kościoła, rozwijając teologię trynitarną, chrystologię i angelologię, położyli fundament pod ekonomiczną teologię władzy, która pozostaje w mocy na obecnym etapie rozwoju zachodniej nowoczesności. Po drugie, praca ta opiera się na założeniu, że ateizm czy sekularyzm, które nominalnie opisują współczesną filozofię polityczną – czy to liberalną, konserwatywną, czy też marksistowską – są powierzchownymi efektami, pod którymi kryją się impulsy pochodzące z matrycy teologicznej, „maszyny władzy” głęboko zakorzenionej w chrześcijańskiej przeszłości. Innymi słowy, ograniczenia i ślepe zaułki dzisiejszej myśli politycznej muszą być rozumiane z perspektywy chytrności sekularyzacji: pozorne zniknięcie chrześcijańskiej teologii z wyżyn władzy politycznej jest niczym innym, jak określoną formą przyjętą u początków przez współczesne działanie polityczne w podwójnym aparacie składającym się z teologii politycznej suwerenności i teologii ekonomicznej rządzenia i administracji. Ten drugi element, jak usiłuje pokazać *Il regno e la gloria*, odgrywa tu kluczową rolę.

Oszacowanie doniosłości tezy Agambena czy też zbadanie trafności jego archeologicznych twierdzeń jest doprawdy niemożliwe na kilku stronach. Niniejszy esej stawia sobie za zadanie zaledwie ocenę wagi dociekań przedstawionych w *Il regno e la gloria* dla

1 Angielskie tłumaczenie książki Agambena zostało wydane już po napisaniu niniejszego artykułu, zob. Agamben 2011. Artykuł ten ogranicza się do omówienia *oikonomii* w dość skrótowy sposób, pomijając istotną, i w pewien sposób bardziej przekonującą, analizę spektaklu politycznej chwały przedstawioną przez Agambena, jak również jej związku z wątkiem politycznej antropologii bezczynności – wymiarem, który zarówno ekonomia, jak i chwała w ich bliźniaczym funkcjonowaniu rzekomo przysłaniają czy nawet tłumią. [Dziękujemy redakcji czasopisma naukowego *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities* za zgodę na tłumaczenie niniejszego artykułu. W pierwotnej wersji pod tytułem *Divine Management: Critical Remarks on Giorgio Agamben's "The Kingdom and the Glory"* artykuł ukazał się w numerze *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities* 2011, 16(3): 125–136 – przyp. red.].

2 Artykuł Toscano został opublikowany jesienią roku 2011. Od tego czasu ukazało się kolejnych pięć tomów cyklu *Homo sacer* – przyp. red.

3 Agamben zapowiedział czwarty i ostatni tom poświęcony „formom życia” [zob. Agamben 2013; Agamben 2014 – przyp. red.].

4 Grzegorz Jankowicz i Paweł Mościcki w obszernym posłowie uzupełniającym polskie wydanie *Stanu wyjątkowego* proponują tłumaczyć *governo* jako „władzę”. Biorąc jednak pod uwagę techniczne znaczenie terminu *potere* we włoskiej filozofii politycznej – który najczęściej tłumaczy się właśnie jako „władza” – oddajemy *governo* jako „rządzenie”, co pozostaje w zgodzie z przekładami wykładów Michela Foucaulta na język polski, do których Agamben odwołuje się w *Il regno e la gloria* i w których Foucault zajmuje się „sztuką rządzenia”; zob. Jankowicz i Mościcki 2008 – przyp. red.

radykałnej krytyki współczesnej polityki i ekonomii, a w szczególności ich stosunku do Marksowskiego komunizmu, który Agamben wydaje się uważać za niezdolny do przeprowadzenia prawdziwie radykałnej czy całościowej krytyki *status quo*. W tym celu podzielił swój wywód na trzy części. Po pierwsze, niezbędne jest zdobycie pewnego punktu oparcia, pozwalającego zrozumieć, co kryje się za podtytułem *Teologiczna genealogia ekonomii i rządzenia*. Oznacza to poddanie dokładniejszej analizie obecnego u Agambena szczególnego rozumienia sekularyzacji, które umożliwia mu postawienie tezy, że nowoczesność jedynie dopełnia chrześcijańską „ekonomię” opatrności, czy też że Marksowskie pojęcie *praxis* „stanowi w zasadzie zeświecczenie teologicznej koncepcji bycia stworzenia jako boskiego działania” (Agamben 2007, 106). Chciałbym pokazać, że praca Agambena bazuje na pewnego rodzaju historycznym substancjalizmie, który stoi w sprzeczności z jego deklaracją skupienia się na genealogii. Po drugie, sugerowany przez Agambena wątek genealogiczny, ciągnący się od *oikonomii* trynitarnej aż do Smithiańskiej niewidzialnej ręki i domyślnie wprost do współczesności, zostanie zestawiony z pojmowaniem (nowoczesnej) ekonomii, której przesłankę stanowi bezgraniczność akumulacji pieniądza, niedająca się w żaden sposób włączyć w teologiczną genealogię. Rozważymy wreszcie pewne aspekty odkryć archeologicznych Agambena – w szczególności jego zarys ekonomiczno-teologicznego pojęcia **administracji** – i postawimy pytanie o to, czy umożliwiają one dekonstrukcję marksistowskiego ujęcia komunizmu jako obumierania państwa i zwrotu ku „zarządzaniu rzeczami”.

O metodzie

Skąd zwrot ku „teologicznej genealogii” ekonomii? Wybór Agambena zdaje się mieć dwojakie źródło. Z jednej strony, możemy mówić o pragnieniu rozwinięcia spojrzenia Foucaulta na „biopolitykę”, zgodnie z którym supremacja władzy suwerennej jest zarówno wypierana przez, jak i ponownie łączona z zarządzaniem życiem, gdzie pierwotnym celem władzy nie jest jawna dominacja czy dystrybuowanie śmierci, lecz produktywnie zarządzanie jednostkami i populacjami. Z drugiej strony, Agamben wychodzi od dyskusji Carla Schmitta z teologiem Erikiem Petersonem, dystansując się od Schmittowskiego przywiązania do idei teologii politycznej i wskazując, że także Peterson cofa się przed uznaniem istotności pojęcia *oikonomii* w teologii wczesnochrześcijańskiej. Rozważania Agambena są przede wszystkim skrupulatną i erudycyjną analizą różnych postaci przyjmowanych przez „ekonomię” w teologii wczesnochrześcijańskiej, skupiających się wokół podstawowej semantycznej konstelacji (rozumianej raczej jako *Sinn* niż *Bedeutung*, jak podkreśla Agamben), w której ekonomia oznacza immanentne i „anarchiczne” zarządzanie, uogólnioną pragmatykę. Innymi słowy, podczas gdy Foucault umiejscowił narodziny „rozumu urządzającego” w połowie

osiemnastego wieku we wczesnym dyskursie ekonomii politycznej i równoczesnej praktyce administrowania zdrowiem i produktywnością populacji⁵, Agamben cofa się w czasie o dwa tysiąclecia do pism Arystotelesa i Ksenofonta o *oikonomii*, po czym, poczynając od Pawła, przechodzi do losów tego pojęcia w teologii Ojców Kościoła. Definiowana przez Arystotelesa jako „zarządzanie domem”, w odróżnieniu od formy kolektywnej władzy publicznej wykonywanej w *polis*, u Ksenofonta

oikonomia jest przedstawiana jako sprawna organizacja, czynność zarządcza, która podlega wyłącznie regułom sprawnego funkcjonowania domu (czy też danego przedsięwzięcia). To paradygmat „zarządzania”, definiujący znaczenie pojęcia *oikonomii* (jak również czasownika *oikonomein* oraz rzeczownika *oikonomos*) i determinujący jego stopniowe poszerzanie się poza pierwotne granice (Agamben 2007, 32–33).

Jak podkreśla Agamben, *oikonomia* w ujęciu Ksenofonta wzoruje się na organizacji charakterystycznej dla armii i załogi statku. Jednakże skoro rdzeń semantyczny pojęcia ekonomii zawiera się już w filozofii starożytnej Grecji, to po co zajmować się genealogią **teologiczną**? Syntagma ta wyraźnie bowiem pokazuje, że Agamben nie zamierza poprzestać na śledzeniu zastosowań i mutacji *oikonomii* w granicach teologii chrześcijańskiej.

Stawka, o którą toczy się gra, staje się jaśniejsza, kiedy Agamben przechodzi do rozważań nad miejscem *oikonomii* w tym, co nazywa paradygmatem opatrnościowym i „ontologią aktów rządzenia”, która leży u jego podstaw. Jak pisze:

Opatrzność (rządzenie) jest środkiem, za pomocą którego teologia i filozofia starają się poradzić sobie z pęknięciem klasycznej ontologii na dwie odrębne rzeczywistości: byt i praktykę, transcendentne dobro i immanentne dobro, teologię i *oikonomię*. Prezentuje ona siebie jako maszynę nakierowaną na połączenie tych dwóch fragmentów w formie *gubernatio dei*, czyli boskiego rządzenia światem (Agamben 2007, 157)⁶.

Twierdzenie z *Seinsgeschichte* – rozdzielenie bytu i działania – zostaje przywołane, by poświadczyć o decydującym znaczeniu teologii chrześcijańskiej w kształtowaniu politycznego

5 Zob. przede wszystkim pierwszy wykład Foucaulta datowany na 10 stycznia 1979 roku z Collège de France: Foucault 2011, 21–47. Agamben lekceważy znaczenie kwestii liberalizmu, jak i samoograniczenia władzy w pracach Foucaulta.

6 „An-archiczne”, greckie źródła takiego pojęcia władzy opatrnościowej można odnaleźć, między innymi, w pismach komentatora Arystotelesa, Aleksandra z Afrodyzji, dla którego, według Agambena, „tym, co najistotniejsze jest nie tyle idea ustalonego z góry porządku, co możliwość zarządzania brakiem porządku; nie nieubłagana konieczność losu, lecz trwałość i obliczalność braku porządku; nie nieprzerwany łańcuch związków przyczynowych, ale warunki utrzymywania i ukierunkowywania efektów, które same w sobie są całkowicie kontyngentne” (Agamben 2007, 140).

i metafizycznego horyzontu „Zachodu” (Agamben zdaje się posługiwać tym pojęciem bez większego zastanowienia) aż po „naszą” nowoczesność. W tym sensie to właśnie specyficznie **chrześcijańskie** przeznaczenie *oikonomii* – jako anarchicznej immanencji boskiego rządu, którą opaczność w niejasny sposób łączy z transcendencją Boga, Boga który „panuje, ale nie rządzi” – uzasadnia teologiczny charakter tych genealogicznych dociekań. Według Agambena „opatrznościowy *dispositif* (który sam jest niczym innym jak przeformulowaniem i rozwinięciem teologicznej *oikonomii*) skrywa coś na kształt epistemologicznego paradygmatu nowoczesnej władzy”. Pod postacią rozdzielania na „władzę ustawodawczą, suwerenną oraz władzę wykonawczą czy rząd” nowoczesne państwo **dziedziczy** „teologiczną maszynę rządzenia światem”. Agamben wskazuje na jeden z bardziej niepokojących wymiarów tego dziedzictwa w swojej zwodniczej archeologii pojęcia „skutków ubocznych” i związanego z nim pojęcia „strat ubocznych”. Jak pisze:

Paradygmatem aktu rządzenia w jego czystej formie [...] jest skutek uboczny. Akt rządzenia w zakresie, w jakim nie jest nakierowany na konkretny cel, ale wywodzi się, jako skutek towarzyszący, z prawa i ogólnej ekonomii, reprezentuje sferę nierozróżnialności pomiędzy tym, co ogólne a tym, co szczegółowe, pomiędzy tym, co zamierzone a tym, co nieumyślne. Oto jego „ekonomia” (Agamben 2007, 158).

Na jakiej jednak zasadzie Agamben przechodzi od obstawania przy trwałości pewnych pojęciowych konstelacji i semantycznych rdzeni w odmiennych epokach i formacjach dyskursywnych do dominującego nad całością przekonania, że takie archeologiczne badanie ma dzisiaj doniosłe znaczenie polityczne? Warto zwrócić uwagę, że w przeciwieństwie do historyka idei czy historyka pojęć chcących wykryć utajoną trwałość i ciągły wpływ pewnych schematów myślowych między danymi okresami, Agamben nie przejmuje się żadnymi innymi formami przekazu poza tekstualnymi. Gdy twierdzi, dla przykładu, że Malebranchiański okazjonalizm przechodzi w koncepcję ekonomii politycznej i suwerenności ludu u Rousseau, bądź że teologiczne pojęcie porządku odpowiada koncepcji niewidzialnej ręki u Smitha, warunki tego zgubnego teologicznego dziedziczenia nie są skonfrontowane z innymi genealogiami. Agamben nie zauważa również tego, że trwałość pewnych form myślowych może mieć mniejsze znaczenie niż ich wykorzystanie do radykalnie różnych celów w obrębie nieporównywalnych ze sobą formacji dyskursywnych. Nie poświęca wreszcie szczególnej uwagi możliwości, którą rodzi chociażby rodowód teologicznego *dispositif* biurokracji wyprowadzany przez samego Agambena z empirycznej historii imperiów – że to właściwie nie ciągłość tego, co teologiczne, ale trwałość pewnych stosunków społecznych i ich imaginariów tłumaczy stałe występowanie pewnych idei władzy w perspektywie *longue durée*.

Jest to o tyle symptomatyczne, że na samym początku książki Agamben wyniosłe deprecjonuje teoretyczną istotność debaty o sekularyzacji, która w latach sześćdziesiątych

poróżniła ludzi takich, jak Blumenberg, Schmitt i Löwith; uznaje ją jedynie za zawołany spór o filozofię historii i teologię chrześcijańską. Dla Agambena sekularyzacja jest strategiczną zagrywką, a nie tezą historiograficzną. Sekularyzacja jako strategia – czego przykładem jest jej osławione wykorzystanie przez Schmitta – obejmuje polemiczne odniesienie pojęć politycznych do ich teologicznego źródła. To w tym miejscu Agamben wprowadza dość tajemniczy termin „metodologiczny” *segnatura* (sygnatura). Sekularyzacja funkcjonuje jako element nauki o sygnaturach, czyli nauki o „czymś, co w obrębie znaku lub pojęcia denotuje je i [jednocześnie] poza nie wykracza, by odnieść je z powrotem do oznaczonej interpretacji lub oznaczonego zakresu, nie odchodząc zarazem od semiotyki, by ukonstytuować nowe znaczenie czy nowy koncept” (Agamben 2007, 16). W niedawnym eseju metodologicznym poświęconym genealogii sygnatury Agamben cytuje analizę *Słów i rzeczy* autorstwa włoskiego uczonego, Enza Melandriego, gdzie ten ostatni odnosi się do sygnatury jako „swego rodzaju znaku w znaku; jest to właśnie ten indeks, który w kontekście danej semiologii jednoznacznie odsyła do istniejącej interpretacji” (Agamben 2008, 61). Odejdźmy na chwilę od dość wypaczającego sens zabiegu, pozwalającego Agambenowi przekształcić pojęcie, które, jak sam zauważa, Foucault odnosi do Paracelsusa i przedoświeceniowej *episteme* podobieństwa, w koncepcję, której teoria wypowiedzi samego Foucaulta z *Archeologii wiedzy* stanowi zaledwie przykład. Warto przy tym zwrócić uwagę na to, co dzieje się z samą ideą sekularyzacji, gdy zostanie potraktowana jako „strategiczny środek, przypisujący sygnatury [*segnava*] pojęciom politycznym, by odnieść je do ich teologicznych źródeł” (Agamben 2008, 68). Już samo to przeświadczenie, któremu towarzyszy dość mistyczne założenie, że tylko niewielu może „posiąść zdolność pojmowania znaków i śledzenia wywoływanych przez nie w historii idei dyslokacji i przemieszczeń” (Agamben 2007, 16) oznacza, że nie ma właściwie potrzeby badać mechanizmów umożliwiających przejście od jednego pola dyskursywnego do drugiego, ponieważ już sama obecność sygnatury z **konieczności** odsyła nas z powrotem do teologicznego źródła. Tym samym **pozbawia legitymizacji** same pojęcia polityczne – z zabiegiem tym drobiazgowo rozprawił się w swoich pracach Hans Blumenberg. Przykładowo, [u Agambena] ekonomia polityczna zostaje zredukowana do „społecznej racjonalizacji *oikonomii* opatrności” (Agamben 2007, 310). „Teoria” sygnatur zdaje się zatem zajmować czymś, co moglibyśmy nazwać **redukcjonistycznym idealizmem**, swoistym lustrzanym odbiciem powszechnie krytykowanej Marksowskiej redukcji struktur idealistycznych do stosunków społecznych – materialistycznego zabiegu, który w przypadku niektórych fragmentów książki Agambena byłby bardziej przekonujący niż poszukiwania teologiczno-ekonomicznych sygnatur. Przykładem tego może być prezentowany przez Agambena – w odniesieniu do pseudo-Arystotelesowskiego traktatu *De Mundus* – sposób, w jaki postrzeganie aparatu władzy perskiego króla wpływa na wizerunek boskich hierarchii,

jako że „aparat administracyjny, dzięki któremu ziemscy suwereni podtrzymują swoje królestwa, staje się paradygmatem boskiej władzy nad światem” (Agamben 2007, 96).

Problemem nie jest tylko stosunek Agambena do metody badania – poszukiwanie sygnatur, które w dużym stopniu opiera się na rzekomej indywidualnej intuicji i myśleniu przez analogię. Chodzi tu przede wszystkim o ideę teologicznego **źródła**. Za odniesieniem do niego kryje się nie tylko sympatia Agambena wobec Schmittowskiego pojęcia sekularyzacji, ale również przekonanie, zapośredniczone za sprawą wszechobecnego wpływu Heideggera, o historyczno-ontologicznej **ciągłości**, która pozwala na dowodzenie, że nasz polityczny horyzont jest wciąż determinowany – i co gorsza, determinowany **nieświadomie** – przez semantyczne i pojęciowe struktury uformowane w obrębie dyskursu teologii chrześcijańskiej. Choć Agamben nie ucieleśnia wprost chrześcijańskich intencji apologetycznych, które Hans Blumenberg dostrzega w debatach nad sekularyzacją – mianowicie poglądu, że pojęciowa spuścizna Kościoła została skonfiskowana i niewłaściwie użyta – jednakże przejawia jeden z kluczowych aspektów tego dyskursu, mianowicie ideę substancjalnej ciągłości, bez której, możemy dodać, teoria sygnatur staje się nieoperatywna. Jak ujmuje to Blumenberg: „Tylko tam, gdzie rozumieniem historii rządzi kategoria substancji, pojawiają się powtórzenia, nałożenia i rozdzielenia, a w związku tym – przebrania i demaskacje”. Mimo nieodzownego heideggerowskiego zapewnienia Agambena, że rzeczy mają się inaczej, w rzeczywistości wyłącznie idea ukrytej ciągłości – ciągłości historyczno-ontologicznego **przeznaczenia** – pozwala Agambenowi, mówiąc słowami Blumenberga, „rozpoznać substancję w jej metamorfozach”. W opozycji do wizji historii jako przesłoniętej dla samej siebie, do sekularyzacji jako rodzaju zaklęcia, które odczynić może tylko człowiek sygnatur, warto byłoby rozważyć sugestię, że „istnieje wysoki stopień niezależności pomiędzy pojęciem i jego historią” (Blumenberg 1983, 9, 15, 21).

Idąc tym tropem, trudno nie zauważyć, że postrzeganie Foucaultiańskiej metodologii przez pryzmat Schmitta i Heideggera prowadzi Agambena do zasadniczego i rażącego odejścia od prawideł kierujących pracami Foucaulta – przede wszystkim od nietzscheańskiej i Bachelardiańskiej zasady genealogicznej i archeologicznej nieciągłości. Jak wyjaśnia Foucault w swoim nowatorskim esej *Nietzsche, genealogia, historia*, stwierdzenie, że nie istnieje semantyczna trwałość i że genealogia zajmuje się rozproszonymi, heterogenicznymi wydarzeniami oraz powykrzywianymi lineażami oznacza, że poszukiwanie ciągłości, która stanowi oś historii idei, musi zostać poddane bezlitosnej krytyce. Nietzscheańska genealogia moralności jest więc przeciwstawiona **historii** moralności autorstwa jego przyjaciela, Paula Rée. Ten ostatni „przyjmuje, że słowa strzegły swojego sensu, że pragnienia nadal zmiierzają w jednym kierunku, a idee zachowują własną logikę; ignorując fakt, że ów świat mowy i pragnień naznaczony był przez inwazje, walki, niedostrzeżone grabieże oraz podstępny”

(Foucault 2000, 113)⁷. Stąd też odniesienie Foucaulta do „jednostkowości zdarzeń poza wszelką monotonną celowością” jako czegoś, czym musi zajmować się genealog w duchu rejestrującej „powściągliwości” w stosunku do historii, która „nie opiera się na żadnej stałej” (Foucault 2000, 125). Tylko „monotonna” praca genealogiczna może wyzwolić się od pobożnej, metafizycznej idei posiadania przez rzeczy bezczasowej istoty czy też niezmiennego semantycznego lub ontologicznego rdzenia, odkrywając zarazem „sekrety skrywający to, iż [rzeczy] nie mają istoty bądź że ich istota powstawała stopniowo z form, które były jej obce” (Foucault 2000, 115). Nie tylko źródło, ale sama idea tego, co skrywa się jako „niepomyślane” jest odrzucana przez Foucaulta na rzecz nieciągłej pozytywności analizy dyskursu. Jak sam deklaruje w *Porządku dyskursu*:

istnienie systemów rozrzedzania nie oznacza, że pod nimi lub poza nimi króluje wielki, niczym nie ograniczony, jednostajny i bezgłośny dyskurs, który byłby przez nie tłumiony lub dławiony i że naszym zadaniem jest ich zniesienie, aby właśnie dyskursowi przywrócić należny głos. Przemierzając świat, wplatając się we wszystkie jego formy i między wszystkie jego zdarzenia, nie trzeba wyobrażać sobie tego, co niewypowiedziane lub niepomyślane, a co należałoby ostatecznie wyartykułować lub pomyśleć. Dyskursy powinny być traktowane jako nieciągłe praktyki, które się przecinają, czasem zestawiają ze sobą, lecz także często wykluczają się bądź nic o sobie nie wiedzą (Foucault 2002, 38–39).

To jednak właśnie wiara zarówno w ciągłość, jak i skrywanie się dominuje w Agambenowskiej genealogii **teologicznej** i jego interpretacji zbawczej roli samej archeologii. W przeciwieństwie do Foucaulta, według którego zadaniem genealogii **nie** jest „pokazywanie, że przeszłość jest wciąż obecna w terażniejszości, że ożywia ją potajemnie, nadając każdej napotkanej przeszkodzie od początku zarysowaną formę” (Foucault 2000, 119), Agamben nieugięcie obstaje przy przekonaniu, że archeolog ponownie wstępuje w historię, zmierzając wbrew naturze rzeczy w celu dostąpienia historycznego i antropologicznego zbawienia, które dla Agambena – wedle intrygującego odwołania do islamskiej teologii – **poprzedza** samo stworzenie. Gest archeologa, daleki od monotonnej i niestrudzonej pracy, która może nas prowadzić do zaryzykowania innych wniosków, jest

7 Agamben omawia krótko ten tekst w swoim eseju poświęconym archeologii filozoficznej w *Signatura rerum*, zdaje się jednak zupełnie ignorować powagę wyzwania, jakie stawia jego badaniom sama koncepcja genealogii, dopasowując ją do odkupicielskiej wizji „ontologicznego zakotwiczenia”, dość obcej myśli Foucaulta. Foucault jeszcze mocniej zaznacza swoje przywiązanie do pewnego typu relatywistycznego nominalizmu w wywiadzie z Pauliem Rabinowem z 1982 roku, gdzie deklaruje: „Nic nie jest fundamentalne. To właśnie jest interesujące w analizie społeczeństwa. Dlatego nic nie irytuje mnie bardziej niż owe pytania – z definicji metafizyczne – dotyczące fundamentów władzy w społeczeństwie lub instytucjonalizowania się społeczeństwa. Nie ma zjawisk fundamentalnych. Istnieją tylko wzajemne relacje i ciągle między nimi napięcia” (Foucault 2013, 315).

„paradygmatem każdego prawdziwie ludzkiego działania” (Agamben 2008, 108). Jako taki paradygmat archeologa okazuje się również – w istnej apoteozie historycznego substancjalizmu, będącego prawdopodobnie skutkiem ubocznym dokonanej przez Agambena osobliwej fuzji Heideggera, Schmitta i Benjamina – jedynym politycznym gestem na całkowicie jednolitym horyzoncie. Początku i „anarchicznego” funkcjonowania tego horyzontu należy szukać w idei *oikonomii*, [czyli] władzy jako elastycznego i endemicznego zarządzania [*management*] oraz produkcji „strat ubocznych”. Za sprawą owej substancjalistycznej tezy Agamben porzuca zarówno wierność kluczowym hasłom radykalnej teorii politycznej (na przykład Rousseau’owskiej woli powszechnej, kolejnej „teologicznej spuściznie”), jak i próbę odnowienia świeckiej krytyki religii, uznając ją za złudną i bezrefleksyjną. Jak oświadcza w dodatku do *Il regno e la gloria* poświęconym niewidzialnej ręce, *oikonomia* nowożytności w całości podtrzymuje koncepcję władzy, która wiązała się z teologicznym modelem rządzenia światem:

Dlatego też nie ma sensu, by przeciwstawiać świeckość [*laicismo*] i wolę powszechną teologii, z jej paradygmatem opatrnościowym. Tylko archeologiczne działanie, podobne temu, którego się tutaj podjęliśmy cofające się przed rozłam, który wytworzył je jako konkurencyjne, lecz nierozdzielne, bratnie koncepcje może rozbroić i unieruchomić cały aparat ekonomiczno-teologiczny (Agamben 2007, 313).

„Bezmiar” pieniądza

W odnoszącym się do badań prowadzonych nad *oikonomią* wywiadzie, który poprzedza publikację *Il regno e la gloria*, Agamben w pomocny dla nas sposób streszcza przesłanki swoich dociekań. *Oikonomię* w starożytnej Grecji opisuje jako paradygmat „zarządzania”, jako

system, [który] nie podlega jakiemuś zbiorowi zasad ani nie tworzy wiedzy teoretycznej [*episteme*]; jest wiedzą [*sciENZA*] w sensie ścisłym, choć wymaga różnych decyzji i dyspozycji, aby w określonych sytuacjach radzić sobie z danymi problemami. W tym sensie przekładem terminu *oikonomia* byłoby, jak sugeruje Lidell-Scott, **zarządzanie** [*management*] (Agamben i Sacco 2010, 104).

Ten semantyczny rdzeń czy sens (*Sinn*) zostaje następnie przeniesiony przez Klemensa i Orygenesusa na pierwsze konceptualizacje historii w teologii chrześcijańskiej, gdzie historia jawi się jako „tajemnica ekonomii” czy, jak można powiedzieć, tajemnica boskiego zarządzania – zarządzania, które, jak zauważa Agamben w innym miejscu, odnosząc się do argumentów Reinerja Schürmanna, jest **anarchiczne**. Co więcej, dochowując wierności pojęciu sekularyzacji, Agamben zauważa, że historia jest zatem „tajemną ekonomią, boską

tajemnicą, która stanowi przedmiot chrześcijańskiego objawienia i którą człowiek musi starać się rozszyfrować. Hegel (a po nim Marks) jedynie nawiąże do tego paradygmatu, aby ostatecznie odsłonić tajemnicę” (Agamben i Sacco 2010, 106). Historyczny substancjalizm, który krytykowaliśmy powyżej, jest wyraźny w tego typu fragmentach, definiuje on również roszczenie Agambena do politycznego znaczenia jego archeologicznego przedsięwzięcia. Mimo faktu, że Agamben ledwie porusza temat nowoczesnej ekonomii politycznej, i to tylko poprzez bardzo pobieżne i tendencyjne omówienie Rousseau i Smitha, to wciąż sugeruje, że pewnego rodzaju wątek wiąże „anarchiczną” opatrność teologii chrześcijańskiej z naszym uwikłaniem w kapitalizm. W rzeczy samej, moglibyśmy zaryzykować tezę, że ta podróż przez [mileniamillennia](#), która odwołuje się do (znacznie skromniejszego) zwrotu samego Foucaulta w stronę analiz myśli ekonomicznej (w szczególności neoliberalnego urzędowania), wraz z pomniejszaniem znaczenia Schmittowskiej teologii **politycznej** jest dla Agambena pewnym sposobem udzielenia odpowiedzi na oczywistą krytykę serii *Homo sacer*, w której został całkowicie zignorowany problem **kapitalizmu** jako wyjątkowej formy (bio)władzy i bezwzględного ograniczenia rozmaitych modalności władzy suwerennej oraz prawa. I choć Agamben nieśmiało protestuje, nazywając „przesadą” twierdzenie, że próbuje on „zrekonstruować istotę kapitalizmu”, to jednak uważa, iż „nie możemy pojąć obecnego triumfu ekonomii w oderwaniu od triumfu paradygmatu administracyjnego teologicznej *oikonomii*” (Agamben i Sacco 2010, 109). To [właśnie] w (pustym) pojęciu porządku – tej „sygnaturze” czy ogniwie, które łączy immanencję z transcendencją, *praxis* z bytem, a które zostało rozerwane przez nastanie teologii – Agamben z pomocą paradygmatu teologicznego⁸ dostrzega „kluczowe założenie łączące ekonomię starożytną i nowoczesną” (Agamben i Sacco 2010, 111).

Ciekawym zadaniem byłoby rozważenie, co mogłoby nam powiedzieć o współczesnych koncepcjach porządku ekonomicznego poświęcanie uwagi ich teologicznym prekursorom – chociażby w odniesieniu do sławetnej neoliberalnej ontologii „spontanicznego porządku” Hayeka. Oczywiście trzeba by polegać na czymś innym niż na zdolności filozofa do odszyfrowywania teologicznych sygnatur. Przykładowo astronomia, jak ma to miejsce w przypadku niewidzialnej ręki Smitha, może być bardziej trafną domeną źródłową dla pojęć odnoszących się do porządku. W każdym razie możliwość istnienia asymetrii, rozłączności bądź obojętności między przyczynami a skutkami powinna prowokować nas do podnoszenia różnych genealogicznych zastrzeżeń. Koniec końców, to, że wiele aspektów współczesnej koncepcji porządku może odnosić się przez samą swoją strukturę do średniowiecznych traktatów teologicznych niewiele mówi o jej funkcjonowaniu czy ważności – oczywiście pod warunkiem, że jeszcze nie zaakceptowaliśmy, iż pozostajemy uwięzieni w teologiczno-

⁸ Na temat średniowiecznego post-arystotelesowskiego rozwoju porządku jako paradygmatu politycznego i metafizycznego, zob. Agamben 2007, 99–105.

ekonomicznym aparacie, istniejącym od rzekomego rozpadu jedności bytu i *praxis*, jedności, której przywrócenie w pewien sposób oznaczałoby zbawienie.

Roszczenie do politycznej przydatności i przelomowej głębi wysuwane przez archeologiczne przedsięwzięcie Agambena jeszcze bardziej kompromituje nieuwzględnienie innego paradygmatu zachowań „ekonomicznych”, o którym wspominał przede wszystkim Arystoteles, by przedstawić go jako potencjalne niebezpieczeństwo dla porządku i stabilności *polis*: chrematystyki, czyli nauki o akumulacji pieniądza, jego cyrkulacji i zysku, która przeciwstawiona jest stabilności zarządzania związanej z paradygmatem *oikonomicznym*. Jakkolwiek „anarchiczny” może być porządek zarządzania głoszony przez *oikonomię*, jemu samemu zagraża innego rodzaju anarchia, anarchia pieniądza jako „realnej abstrakcji”, która grozi unicestwieniem każdej stabilnej miarze, każdemu standardowi osądu, każdej regule porządku. Marks opisał to zderzenie filozofii z ekscysem akumulacji w istotnym przypisie do pierwszego tomu *Kapitału*. Warto zacytować go w całości:

Arystoteles przeciwstawia chrematystyce ekonomikę. Punktem wyjścia jest dlań ekonomika. Traktowana jako umiejętność nabywania, ogranicza się ona do zdobywania dóbr niezbędnych do życia i użytecznych dla domu lub państwa. „Prawdziwe bogactwo (ὁ ἀληθινὸς πλοῦτος) składa się z takich wartości użytkowych; gdyż rozmiary własności tego rodzaju wystarczające do wygodnego życia nie są nieograniczone. Lecz istnieje jeszcze innego rodzaju umiejętność nabywania, zwana głównie i słusznie chrematystyką, dzięki której wydaje się, jakoby nie było granicy bogactwa i posiadania. Handel towarowy („ἡ-καπηλική” znaczy dosłownie drobny handel – i Arystoteles o tej formie mówi, bo w niej przeważającą rolę gra wartość użytkowa) z istoty swojej nie należy do chrematystyki, gdyż tu wymiana dotyczy jedynie rzeczy im samym (sprzedawcy i nabywcy) potrzebnych”. Dlatego to, rozumuje dalej, pierwotną formą handlu towarowego był handel zamienny, ale w miarę jego rozszerzania się z konieczności powstał pieniądź. Z wynalezieniem pieniądza handel zamienny musiał się rozwinąć w καπηλική, handel towarowy, a ten znów wbrew swej pierwotnej tendencji rozwinął się w chrematystykę, w umiejętność robienia pieniędzy. Jakoż chrematystyka różni się od ekonomiki tym, że „dla niej cyrkulacja jest źródłem bogactwa (ποιητικὴ χρημάτων [...] διὰ χρημάτων μεταβολῆς). I zdaje się ona obracać naokoło pieniędzy, bo pieniądź jest początkiem i końcem tego rodzaju wymiany (τὸ γὰρ νόμισμα στοιχεῖον καὶ πέρασ τῆς ἀλλαγῆς ἐστίν). Dlatego też to bogactwo, do którego dąży chrematystyka, jest nieograniczone. Podobnie bowiem jak każda umiejętność, która nie jest środkiem do celu, ale jest sama w sobie celem ostatecznym, nie zna granic w swych dążeniach, bo stara się coraz bardziej do swego ideału zbliżyć, podczas gdy umiejętności, które są tylko środkiem do celu jakiegoś wiodącym, nie są nieograniczone, bo cel ten właśnie granicę im zakreśla – tak też chrematystyka ta nie zna granicy swego celu, lecz celem jej jest bezwzględne wzbogacenie się. Ekonomika, ale nie chrematystyka, posiada granicę [...] pierwsza ma na celu coś, co różne jest od pieniądza, druga chce jego pomnożenia

[...] Wskutek pomieszania tych dwu form, które przechodzą jedna w drugą, niektórzy uważają zachowanie i mnożenie w nieskończoność pieniędzy za cel ostateczny ekonomiki” (Marks 1951, 161–162).

Chrematystyka, wykraczając poza naturalny porządek potrzeb i zakładając **nieograniczoną** akumulację, antycypuje nie tylko zasadę **samopomnażania się** kapitału, ale również niszczącą i rozprzegającą siłę zobrazowaną w *Manifeście komunistycznym*. Jednym ze sposobów sformułowania tego rozróżnienia za pomocą pojęć, na które natknęliśmy się już u Agambena, jest powiedzenie, że chrematystyka, mając zarówno za źródło, jak i cel pieniądze, grozi wytworzeniem zupełnie **niezarządzałej** ekonomii i tym samym podkopaniem porządku potrzeb fundującego *polis*, jak również samej zdolności sądenia. Jak zauważa Eric Alliez w odniesieniu do miejsca, gdzie analizy Arystotelesa i Marksa zbiegają się, chrematystyka wprowadza „czas dyslokacji” i „kryzys świata” do arystotelesowskiej polityki i kosmologii, „zastępując społeczną jedność potrzeb, naturalny desygnat znaku pieniądza, zyskiem”. Chrematystyka jest

nauką hybrydalną, [...] która odróżnia się od *oikonomii* opartej na wartości użytkowej tym, że cyrkulacja staje się krynicą nieograniczonego pieniężnego bogactwa. „Pieniądz jest początkiem i końcem tego rodzaju wymiany”: P-T-P⁹. Nauka o pieniądzu, którego zła nieskończoność nawiedza organiczne ciało polityczne, dereguluje postulat wymiany ekwiwalentów (Alliez 1991, 30–32).

Niedawno Chris Arthur próbował pokazać, na podstawie tezy o znacznym stopniu izomorfizmu między systemową dialektyką kapitału Marksa i logiki Hegłowskiej, że pieniądz egzemplifikuje zarówno prawdziwą nieskończoność, ponieważ „wraca do siebie w swoim ruchu okrężnym”, jak i fałszywą, czy złą nieskończoność, gdyż „kapitał jest związany ze wzrostem akumulacji i nie może tego związku rozerwać”. Ruchliwość pieniądza jako kapitału w obrębie „spirali” akumulacji oznacza – czego obawiał się Arystoteles, że ani granica, ani miara nie są w stanie zapewnić mu trwałego kształtu⁹. Sama forma wartości sprawia, że

dobra i zła nieskończoność są ze sobą pomieszane, ponieważ mamy do czynienia z bytem-dla-siebie rozszerzającym się we własną inność; jednak jego szczególną własnością jest bycie czystą abstrakcją jakości (wartości użytkowej), czyli ilością (wartością); dlatego też ruch jest nieograniczony, musi wciąż trwać, ponieważ jego powrót do siebie nigdy nie zamyka się w nim samym, gdyż jego istotę stanowi bezgraniczność. Jak powiada Marks: „Kapitał jako taki wytwarza określoną wartość dodatkową, ponieważ nie może za jednym zamachem stworzyć nieskończonej

9 Jedyną „miarą” kapitału, jak zauważa Christopher Arthur, jest **stopa** akumulacji, czyli forma miary w wysokim stopniu zagrażająca miarom zaproponowanym przez Arystotelesowską *oikonomię*.

wartości dodatkowej; jest jednak bezustannym ruchem, wytwarzającym coraz więcej tego samego”. Tak więc określony kapitał nigdy nie odpowiada swojemu pojęciu i jest zmuszony partycypować w kolejnych ruchach okrężnych akumulacji (Arthur 2004, 148–149).

To bardzo pobieżne podejście do kwestii chrematystyki, ekonomii bezgraniczności i akumulacji, pokazuje, że Agambenowska genealogia teologiczna jest niezdolna do tego, by dokonać wglądu w formy (wartości), które determinują (nie)porządek współczesnej ekonomii. Choć praca *Il regno e la gloria* dostarcza bogatego materiału źródłowego dla badania chrześcijańskiej prehistorii „zarządzania” jako coraz częściej występującej reguły porządku społecznego, to w kwestii „anarchicznego” porządku kapitalistycznej akumulacji pozostaje całkowicie bezradna – czego powodem są być może banalne heideggerowskie uprzedzenia Agambena dotyczące roli pracy i wytwórczości w Marksowskiej krytyce ekonomii politycznej – pomijając ekonomie z zasady niezarządzalne (chrematystyki), którymi chciałaby zarządzać *oikonomia*. Nieciągłość i asymetria między ekonomiką a chrematystyką, bądź między zarządzaniem a akumulacją wskazuje również na to, że próba utrwalenia oklepanej interpretacji myśli Marksa jako „sekularyzacji” jakiejś zamaskowanej i potępionej treści teologicznej pozostaje płonna. Sygnatury tu po prostu nie istnieją. Ani kapitalizm, ani teoria Marksa nie mogą zostać ujęte za pomocą pojęcia *oikonomii* i jego genealogii, teologicznych czy innych. Nie wystarczy połączenie teologii politycznej z teologią ekonomiczną, by zaradzić niedostatkowi pracy Agambena jako narzędzia myślenia teraźniejszości.

Zarządzanie rzeczami

Jako pewnego rodzaju epilog chciałbym zaproponować rozważenie jednego powracającego wątku z *Il regno e la gloria*, mianowicie znaczenia tezy o rzekomym teologicznym źródle biurokracji i administracji dla możliwej krytyki Marksowskiego komunizmu, który Agamben jak przystało na porządnego reprezentanta lewicy heideggerowskiej postrzega jako krępujący, podobnie jak całą teorię polityczną Zachodu, ze względu na ich „teologiczną spuściznę”¹⁰. Nie byłoby trudno wyobrazić sobie rozszerzenia Agambenowskich argumentów odnośnie ekonomii administracji na krytykę, która pokryłaby się z wieloma zarzutami podnoszonymi przeciwko tezom komunistycznym o „obumieraniu państwa” jako postpolitycznej utopii (czy dystopii) przejrzystego planowania. Dla Agambena samo nowoczesne pojęcie administracji –

¹⁰ Na temat lewicy heideggerowskiej zob. Mandarini 2009, 29–48. Agambenowskie rozważania nad chwałą można oczywiście łączyć z debatami nad religiami politycznymi i kultami jednostki ze względu na rolę, jaką odegrały w historii komunizmu. Teza o nasileniu się gloryfikacji jako oznace nieudanej zmiany w praktyce władzy jest dość oczywista, jednak nie jest oczywista potrzeba ontologicznego i antropologicznego tła (koncepcja człowieka jako „sabatowego” czy beczynnego stworzenia), które przydaje jej Agamben.

które dostrzec można w takich tekstach, jak *O autorytecie* Engelsa czy w większości prac napisanych przez Lenina po 1917 roku – związane jest z aparatem opatrnościowym, z maszyną urządzającą [*governmental machine*], łączącą transcendencję planu z immanencją rządzenia, które zawsze jest rządzeniem nad efektami ubocznymi. Agamben pisze:

Nowoczesne państwo w rzeczywistości dziedziczy oba aspekty teologicznej maszyny władzy nad światem i przedstawia się zarówno jako państwo opiekuńcze [*stato-providenzal*], jak i państwo celowe. Poprzez rozróżnienie na władzę ustawodawczą czy suwerenną oraz wykonawczą czy rząd, nowoczesne państwo przyjmuje podwójną strukturę maszyny urządzającej (Agamben 2007, 159).

Co więcej, nowoczesne państwo, jak zauważa Agamben, jest również, jeśli podążymy za teologicznymi sygnaturami, wzorcem **piekła**. Rzeczywiście ta nieograniczona ciągłość *oikonomii* wraz z brakiem szans na zbawienie wyznaczały los potępionych w teologii chrześcijańskiej. Tak więc, czy odniesienie do „zarządzania rzeczami” jest znakiem, że również marksizmowi nie udało się umknąć przed biurokratycznym *ministerium*, po raz pierwszy opisanym w chrześcijańskiej angelologii, to znaczy, czy nosi on w sobie również hierarchiczny porządek piekła?

Jak zauważył Hal Draper, idea przejścia od rządów nad ludźmi do zarządzania rzeczami, która pojawiła się wraz z Saint-Simonem i często była cytowana zarówno przez anarchistów, jak i marksistów, z pewnością zwiastuje coś piekielnego: „zazwyczaj postrzega się to jako szlachetny sentyment oznaczający zniesienie rządu człowieka nad człowiekiem; jednakże wysoce despotyczne projekty Saint-Simona pokazują, że mówiąc o władzy, miał na myśli coś zupełnie innego: administrowanie ludźmi tak, jakby byli rzeczami” (Draper 1970, 282). I gdy Engels mówi, że w komunizmie „funkcje publiczne utracą swój polityczny charakter i przekształcą się w proste funkcje administracyjne, mające na celu ochronę rzeczywistych interesów społecznych” (Engels 1969, 343), można tu dosłyszeć echo Agambenowskiego *gubernatio dei*¹¹ czy charakterystyki *Polizeiwissenschaft* przeprowadzonej przez Foucaulta w znaczeniu „systemu regulacji całościowego sprawowania się obywateli, w którym wszystko byłoby kontrolowane, w takim stopniu, by sprawy toczyły się same, bez potrzeby jakiegokolwiek interwencji” (Foucault 2013, 308). Zanim jednak pospiesznie uznamy politykę komunistyczną za kolejną formę sekularyzacji, musimy rozważyć określony sposób, w jaki przeciwstawia się ona nie władzy suwerennej albo biurokratycznemu zarządzaniu, ale ekonomicznemu przymusowi kapitalistycznej akumulacji, czyli formie wartości. W tym sensie

11 Warto rozważyć przede wszystkim następujący fragment: „Rządzenie to zgoda na wytwarzanie szczególnych skutków towarzyszących ogólnej »ekonomii«, która sama w sobie pozostałaby zupełnie bezskuteczna, ale bez której żadna władza nie byłaby możliwa” (Agamben 2007, 160). Ciekawym byłoby rozważenie ekonomicznej idei Planu w tym kontekście...

warto rozważyć, w jaki sposób problem „zarządzania rzeczami” funkcjonuje nie jako zwyczajny przekażnik biurokratycznej substancji z korzeniami w chrześcijańskiej angelologii, lecz jako odpowiedź na fundamentalny problem polityczno-ekonomiczny: czym byłoby społeczeństwo (komunistyczne) poza abstrakcjami realnymi Kapitału i państwa? Innymi słowy, czym byłoby zorganizowanie społeczeństwa bez pieniądza jako miary i bez mechanizmu prywatyzacji i wywłaszczania władzy publicznej przez interes klasowy? To właśnie tu na pierwszy plan wysuwa się kluczowa kwestia „ekonomiczna”, kwestia równości. Zakończę zatem krótkim omówieniem marksistowskiego sproblematyzowania równości, by pokazać różnicę polityczną, która pojawia się wraz z myśleniem o naszym położeniu nie w kategoriach *oikonomii*, ale kapitalizmu, nie w kategoriach genealogii teologicznej, ale w kategoriach materializmu historycznego.

Tylko przez pryzmat wyjścia poza formy porządku społecznego i miary, które niosą ze sobą paradygmaty *oikonomii* i chrematystyki, możemy zrozumieć krytykę (politycznej i ekonomicznej) równości w obrębie myśli komunistycznej. Rozważmy *Krytykę programu gotajskiego* i komentarz do tej pracy w *Państwie a rewolucji* Lenina. Stawiając czoło prawdziwie ekonomicznej teorii sprawiedliwości (ideałowi socjaldemokratycznemu, forsowanemu przez Lasalle’a i jemu podobnych, gdzie równość oznacza „sprawiedliwy podział”, „równe prawo wszystkich do całkowitego produktu pracy”), Marks odpowiada, że pojęcie równości implikowane przez tę dystrybucjonistyczną wizję komunizmu jest wciąż zanurzone w tych samych abstrakcjach, które dominują w społeczeństwie burżuazyjnym pozostaje przywiązane do niestabilnej relacji między abstrakcyjną równością polityczną i nieograniczoną akumulacją pod egidą formy wartości, która decyduje o specyfice kapitalizmu. W rozważaniach nad społeczeństwem komunistycznym, które **narodzi się ze** społeczeństwa kapitalistycznego – i tym samym będzie nie tylko jego negacją, ale negacją **określoną** – Marks zauważa, że zniesienie wyzysku i zawłaszczania przez kapitalistów wartości dodatkowej wciąż jeszcze nie położy kresu formom nierówności, które generowane są przez dominację abstrakcji wartości nad stosunkami społecznymi. W rodzącym się społeczeństwie komunistycznym dystrybucją wciąż „kieruje [...] ta sama zasada, która reguluje wymianę towarów, dana suma pracy w jednej formie jest wymieniana na tę samą sumę w innej formie”. Innymi słowy, wciąż więzi nas swoista ekonomia, od której nie jest nas w stanie wybawić żadna genealogia ani archeologia.

Równość w tej zarodkowej, przejściowej fazie komunizmu wciąż pozostaje zadłużona w dominacji standardu – **pracy**, która sama w sobie przynosi nierówności w zakresie zdolności, wydajności, nasilenia i tym podobnych. Równość wobec prawa, tak beztrąsko przywoływana przez socjaldemokratów, jest więc „w swojej treści prawem nierówności, jak wszelkie prawo”, ponieważ „prawo z istoty swej polegać może jedynie na zastosowaniu równej miary” do **nierównych** jednostek. Innymi słowy, polityczne i filozoficzne rozumienie równości jako prawa ufundowanego na idei abstrakcyjnej

i uniwersalnej miary czy normy wciąż nosi ślady społecznej skali opartej na wartości pracy, na jej „ekonomii”. W głosie Lenina brzmi to następująco: „samo przejście środków produkcji na wspólną własność całego społeczeństwa [...] *nie usunę* braków podziału i nierówności »prawa burżuazyjnego«, które *nie przestaje panować*, ponieważ produkty rozdzielane są »według pracy«”. W świetle tych stwierdzeń możemy powiedzieć, że komunizm i jego horyzont „zarządzania” jest określoną, a nie zwykłą negacją kapitalizmu. Komunistyczny problem równości jest, cytując Lenina, problemem równości pozbawionej jakiegokolwiek normy prawnej – co oznacza równość, która nie utrwała nierówności zrodzonych z dominacji miar wartości, w szczególności normy pracy, nad stosunkami społecznymi przynależącymi do kapitalizmu. Taka „nie-normatywna” równość może być pomyślana jako wynik rewolucji i przejścia, które nie tylko zniosłyby kapitalistyczną twórczą destrukcję chrematystyczną, lecz także abstrakcyjne formy prawa i suwerenności warunkujące równość w społeczeństwie burżuazyjnym.

Czy jednak zrywając pakt między mierniczą niemierzalnością pieniądza i liberalnymi standardami abstrakcyjnych praw, wyrażanych przez konkretne naciski, perspektywa ta przekracza horyzont Agambenowskiej teo-ekonomicznej maszyny władzy? Oczywiście, zainteresowanie produkcją i pracą, rzeczami tak wstrętnymi Agambenowi, oznacza, że klasyczne myślenie komunistyczne, z całym swoim zainteresowaniem emancypacją czasu, a nawet zabawy, obce jest „sabatycznej” antropologii politycznej forsowanej przez Agambena. Istotą człowieka jako „całości stosunków społecznych” nie jest po prostu „bezczyność”, brak potencjału. Przez wzgląd na rzeczywiste potrzeby i materialne ograniczenia, jak również na opór natury, nie da się uciec – poza czysto religijnym horyzontem zbawienia od pewnej formy myślenia „ekonomicznego”, myślenia o rządzeniu, zarządzaniu i dystrybuowaniu zasobów. W tym sensie wymiar biurokracji – abstrahując od jej teologicznej genealogii – niekoniecznie zaś hierarchii, towarzyszy wszelkim wspólnym wysiłkom, mimo tego, że walka o mnogość stosunków społecznych ma na celu to, by zapobiec ich urzeczowieniu w porządku funkcji i specjalizacji. Istnieje szczególne marksistowskie rozumienie bezczynności, które stawia na pierwszym planie pytanie o równość, posiadające konkretną, jeśli nie utopijną siłę, której brak progowej i mesjanistycznej antropologii Agambena. Bezczyność jest tu procedurą, a nie istotą, praktyczną polityką, a nie tym, co leży po drugiej stronie katastrofalnego rozróżnienia na życie w i poza danym aparatem czy *dispositif*. Zamiast afirmować założoną równość ludzi czy też obiecywać ich ostateczne zrównanie, komunistyczna „równość” wymaga tworzenia stosunków społecznych, w których nierówności staną się bezczynne, nie będą już dłużej subsumowane jako nierówne pod równe miary czy normy prawa. Innymi słowy, wyzwaniem stojącym przed komunizmem jest wytworzenie polityki pozbawionej *arche*, która nie tylko nie byłaby formą władzy zdominowaną przez nieobecną zasadę i dzięki tej nieobecności

wypełnioną spektaklem chwały, jak sugeruje Agamben. Immanencja tej nowej formy politycznej nie byłaby już podkopywana przez nieobecnego Boga i jego tajemniczych ministrów. To inne zarządzanie ma sens jednak wyłącznie wtedy, gdy ominiemy miraż antropologii zbawienia na rzecz myślenia nie o ludowej suwerenności, ale o kolektywnej czy transindywidualnej mocy, przed czym powstrzymuje nas Heideggerowski zakaz nałożony przez Agambena na „metafizykę podmiotu” i „humanizm”.

Przełożyli Jakub Krzeski i Anna Piekarska

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TITLE: Divine Management: Critical Remarks on Giorgio Agamben’s *The Kingdom and the Glory*

ABSTRACT: This essay seeks to evaluate the methodological and theoretical relevance of Agamben’s *The Kingdom and the Glory* to a radical critique of contemporary politics and economics. In particular, it explores what is meant by the “theological genealogy of the economy and government” announced by the book’s subtitle. This involves subjecting to scrutiny Agamben’s reliance on a certain understanding of secularisation, of the kind that permits him to declare that modernity merely brings to completion the Christian “economy” of providence, or indeed that Marx’s notion of praxis “basically is only the secularisation of the theological conception of the being of creatures as divine operation.” The paper tries to show that Agamben’s work relies on a type of historical substantialism that clashes with his claim to be engaging in a genealogy. It also investigates the blindspots in Agamben’s treatments of the crucial themes of money and administration.

KEYWORDS: Agamben, economic theology of government, failed secularisation, method, Marx, chrematistics

THE SURREPTITIOUS DEFIANCE OF GIORGIO AGAMBEN

RAFAŁ ZAWISZA

Abstract: Many critics accuse Giorgio Agamben of an ahistoricism inherent to his thought. Recently, such criticism was put forward by Alberto Toscano, who formulated it referring to Hans Blumenberg's refusal of the secularisation thesis and his theory of epochal shifts. According to Toscano, due to the acceptance of the Schmittian notion of secularisation, based on a historical substantialism, Agamben is not only unfaithful to the Foucaultian methodology which he declaratively assumes, but he also tends to acknowledge the domination of theological notions as a source of the whole Western philosophical tradition and political institutions up until now. I am going to demonstrate that even somewhat superficial claims made by Agamben about secularisation find their compensation in his double effort. Firstly, even if he concedes the gravity of the theological legacy, at the same time he rebuts the primacy of religion as an indispensable grounding of ethics and politics. What is more, through his meticulous and condense studies on Christian theology he has already placed himself in the position of the most incisive contemporary critic of the Catholic church and any theological-political hybrids established on the abuse of power.

Keywords: economic theology, secularisation, Giorgio Agamben, Hans Blumenberg, Alberto Toscano

A predicament of secularisation

Il Regno e la gloria, published in 2007, marks a thematic shift in the whole Agambenian oeuvre, namely the involvement in a detailed analysis of Christian theology viewed from the perspective of its inner logic – the divine *oikonomia*¹. However, the text does not equate to a change of the political issues at stake in Agamben's theory. Rather, in his recent publications Agamben tries to complement his prolonged investigations by demonstrating how contemporary models of government depend on a peculiar *complexio oppositorum* laying at the centre of Christology and trinitarian theology. That is the problem of how to reconcile God's existence beyond time and space – his Being or eternal and unchangeable Essence – with his commitment to the economy (or the history) of salvation, which presuppose God's actions, decisions, and, at last, his incarnation into the form of the human-divine hybrid, Jesus Christ. When expressed in political terms, these dilemmas turn into a chiasmus, or binary coexistence, between sovereign decisionistic politics (transcendence) and the horizontal management of global economy (immanence). In other words, Agamben intends to explain the contemporary political realm – seen as the indivisible magma of life as such, and politics, mediated through management as the only active pseudo-political practice – by referring it to the theological debates of late antiquity concerning the Holy Trinity and the Incarnation of God. It may be that since the death of Hans Blumenberg we have not seen in the history of Western thought any theoretical framework comparable in its expanse and depth, except that offered by Agamben. The ambitious task of the latter confronts methodological constraints that must be always taken into account when one aspires to encompass two millennia within one horizon.

The Agambenian method of inquiry was criticized recently by Alberto Toscano, who employed Blumenberg's argumentation against the secularization theorem to accuse Agamben's approach of a double lapse that consists of "historical substantialism" and "reductivist idealism" (Toscano 2011, 126, 128). I feel tempted to scrutinize this intriguing polemic, because chances are that something important really happened when Agamben provided the appropriate key to the arcana of Christendom. What is ironic, and at the same time highly problematic for the purely secular flank, is that he did not need to break down the doors of the ecclesiastical archives, but opened them from within. For some critics this *faux*

1 I would like to express my gratitude to the Institute for Human Sciences in Vienna, where this text was written during my stay at the Józef Tischner Junior Visiting Fellowship, sponsored by the Institute for Human Sciences, Vienna, the Pope John Paul II Foundation, the Open Society Institute (Zug), and the Kosciuszko Foundation, Inc., New York. It was the hospitality and the friendliness of the people who make the IWM that gave me the chance to work freely on the topic "Hannah Arendt's Early Thought as a Response to the Political Theology", to which this paper contributes as a methodological preparation. Additional thanks go to the two anonymous reviewers and to the editors of *Theoretical Practice*, Joanna Bednarek and Mikołaj Ratajczak, for their perceptive comments.

pas is unpardonable, because it contravened the well-guarded division between secularity and religion, which delineates one of the most relevant achievements of modern Western civilisation and its political culture. Thus, Giorgio Agamben became the *enfant terrible* of the global Left.

A brief elucidation must be made to indicate the quarrel's kernel. According to Toscano, Agamben's recent writings are founded upon substantialist and idealist presuppositions, because the author passed off an important German debate around the meaning of the term "secularisation" which took place mainly in the 1960s and 1970s. It concerned the original character of Western modernity. As one of its participants, Hans Blumenberg was compelled to defend the unprecedentedness and the legitimate character of the modern age against interpretations proposed by Eric Voegelin, Karl Löwith, and Carl Schmitt, who regarded modernity and its political vocabulary as the by-product of some older theological matrix (Blumenberg 1983). The consequence of such thinking is a vision of history as a transmission of the same "contents" disguised in different "forms". In effect, the so-called secular epoch could not emancipate itself from its religious-theological heritage. According to the propagators of the secularisation schema, modernity's secular character is nothing more than flimsy varnish that overlies previous epochs (treated as real "substance" or "content") which are supposed to surreptitiously mastermind the secular age. Toscano claims that the "economic theology" elaborated by Agamben suffers from the same methodological inadequacies that Blumenberg detected in the historiographical schemas of those thinkers who used the notion of secularisation in order to delegitimise the development of post-religious civilisation in Western Europe. What is more, Toscano dismisses Agamben's conception of the "signatures" – projected to explain how some notions as well as vast paradigms of political thought survived from antiquity to the present day, accommodating slightly their meaning without the need for changing names – as reliant "on putative personal insight and analogical thinking" (Toscano 2011, 128)².

It is not disputable that Agamben sometimes takes the secularisation process for granted, especially when pointing to some religious antecedents and their "secularized" counterparts. For example, when he compares tourism to the pilgrimage movement (Agamben 2011a, 140) or when he has no reservations about calling the philosophy of history "an essentially Christian discipline" (Agamben 2012, 34)³. What must be genuinely harmful

2 Toscano refers to that methodological statement: "[i]f we are not able to perceive signatures and follow the displacements and movements they operate in the tradition of ideas, the mere history of concepts can, at times, end up being entirely insufficient" (Agamben 2011a, 4). In the original it sounds even more powerfully: "Se non si possiede la capacità di percepire le segnature e di seguire le dislocazioni e gli spostamenti che esse operano nella tradizione delle idee, la semplice storia dei concetti può, a volte, risultare del tutto insufficiente" (Agamben 2007a, 16).

3 The most intriguing is the statement that what we call today the "biological body" is a secularized notion of bare life (Agamben 2014, 267–268) – in *Il uso dei corpi* the author literally repeats some fragments

for a secular understanding of the world is the fact that for Agamben even the flagship representatives of non-religious thought – like Kantian ethics (Agamben 2013a, 122) and the Marxian conceptualisation of praxis (Agamben 2011a, 91) – might be seen as secularized forms that mimetically reflect some theological ideas. Thus, although the first set of examples does not go beyond conventional *bon mots*, the second one does not allow similar marginalisation, but rather resembles Schmitt’s “systematic structure” (Schmitt 1985, 36). Therefore, Toscano’s Blumenbergian scepticism towards Agamben’s “theological genealogy” (Toscano 2011, 129)⁴ was formulated not without reason. As overtly a- or anti-metaphysical philosophies, Kantianism and Marxism may be theologically structured. This is explicitly demonstrated in *Opus Dei* and *The Kingdom and the Glory*, and it implies a kind of transhistorical invariance. However, it would be an overstatement to decree substantialism on those grounds. Agambenian usage of structural analogies is “stronger” (in terms of historical continuity) than Blumenberg’s functionalism (and Foucault’s archaeology), although “weaker” than Schmitt’s, Löwith’s or Voegelin’s substantialism.

It also makes sense to point out the idealistic tone, sometimes evident in the writings of Agamben, who seems to believe in an almost autonomous life of the *dispositifs* he describes. In that perspective humans appear to be puppets without agency, whose efforts are reduced to the actualisation of some hidden patterns embedded in the structure of language:

It is all the more surprising that, in the 1977–1978 course [given by Michel Foucault – RZ], the notion of providence is never referred to. And yet the theories of Kepler, Galileo, Ray, and the Port-Royal circle that Foucault refers to do nothing other than to radicalize, as we shall see, the distinction between general and special providence into which the theologians had transposed, in their own way, the opposition between the Kingdom and the Government. The passage from ecclesiastical pastorate to political government, which Foucault tries to explain – in all truth, in not terribly convincing a way – by means of the emergence of a whole series of counterpractices that resist the pastorate, is far more comprehensible if it is seen as a secularization of the detailed phenomenology of first and second, proximate and distant, occasional

already written in 1993 in the text entitled *Forma-di-vita* (Agamben 2000, 7–8). It may imply that bare life, surrounded by Agamben with so much piety, is a life not totally deprived of transcendent connotation. Obviously, this uncanny ambiguity could be nothing more than a kind of gloriolae accompanying exceptional figures, like victims condemned to be killed. Seen through that prism, bare life is what remains after contact with transcendence, which brings about the kiss of death. Just for that reason, Agamben is looking for a “form-of-life” whose condition of being “unsavable” protects her once and for all from any romance with the divine. But is this a sufficient answer to the inner indecisiveness and excessiveness of life itself?

4 This undoubtedly malicious label serves Toscano for imputing that Agambenian “theological” writings keep their validity only within the Christian world view. The following cutting remark extends this hermeneutic stance: “it is the specifically *Christian* fate of *oikonomia*, as the anarchic immanence of a divine government tenuously articulated, via providence, with a transcendent God who ‘reigns but does not govern’, which justifies the theological character of this genealogical investigation” (Toscano 2011, 127; original emphasis).

and efficient causes, general and particular wills, mediated and immediate concourses, *ordinatio* and *executio*, by means of which the theoreticians of providence had tried to make the divine government of the world intelligible (Agamben 2011a, 112).

No wonder then that Toscano noticed a betrayal of the Foucaultian method. It is indeed analogous to Agamben's declaration that he intends to think starting from the frontiers reached but never crossed by Hannah Arendt. The same interpretative measure of absorption and abandonment was applied to Blumenberg's work. Agamben encounters Blumenberg as a reader of Jacob Taubes and this fact determines his stance. Like Taubes, Agamben works closely to Schmitt (even if he proceeds against him) and affirms the secularisation thesis. However, by doing this he aims just at overcoming the thesis and refuting any possible pretension formulated on its basis against "theological politics"⁵. Furthermore, Agamben's ambition is to abolish political theology, or at least to provide evidence that such a hybrid could not stem from Christianity. For that reason, he is not compelled to choose between Blumenberg and Schmitt, because he thinks he has found a vaster paradigm embracing them both. And not only them. Lastly, Jan Assmann, inspired by the cue made by Taubes in person, elaborated a thesis (which is partly a repetition of Ernst Kantorowicz's claim) which turns Schmitt's argumentation upside down: according to Assmann, Schmitt's famous dictum could be legitimately inverted and then one may, analogically, consider the main theological concepts as political ones at the bottom. Agamben comments:

More interesting than taking sides with one thesis or the other is, however, to try to understand the functional relationship that links the two principles. Glory is precisely the place at which this bilateral (or bi-univocal) character of the relation between theology and politics clearly emerges into the light (Agamben 2011a, 193).

What does this mean? First of all, that Agamben does not take Schmitt's side unreservedly. Further, that he, who himself put a lot of effort into being associated with the "I would prefer not to" position, *chose* a very risky path and *decided* to step onto theological ground to probe the endurance of the well-known conservative incantations about the fall of the West caused by the death of God and the diminishing role of religious authority. As we shall see, Agamben wants to show the one-sidedness of those claims by divesting them of their undeserved glory, that is – of their misleading force of persuasion. He intends to bypass current ideological conflicts between secular and religious forces without neutralising them. Using words that demand attention, in a speech delivered at the Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris on March 8th, 2009, Agamben seemed to reach for the crest: "I say the following with

5 I borrow this term from György Geréby (Geréby 2008).

words carefully weighed: nowhere on earth today is a legitimate power to be found; even the powerful are convinced of their own illegitimacy” (Agamben 2012, 40). The Catholic church included, no doubt. No one can escape from guilt. Only the passionate toughness of impartiality can save us: parrhesia against irony and cynicism.

That is why I am not persuaded by Toscano’s argument that “Agamben haughtily dismisses the theoretical significance of the secularisation debate” (Toscano 2011, 127). On the contrary, in my opinion, Agamben belongs to the group of a few leading contemporary thinkers who regard themselves as responsible for the new phase of this debate⁶. My intention is not to judge whether he is right or wrong; it would be a chutzpah to deal in one short commentary text with the enormously rich material that Agamben studied. I find it more fruitful to take a step backwards and draw up the possibilities and ambiguities provoked by the theological-economic enterprise. This does not mean that Blumenberg’s reservations are annulled. Instead, it will be more appropriate to speak about their provisional postponement⁷.

The sacrifice of theology vs. theological sacrifice

No one could pretend to conduct value-free research when secularisation is concerned. So when Toscano states, in the form of an objection, that “for Agamben, secularisation is a strategic gambit, not a historiographic thesis” (Toscano 2011, 127), that is the point. Agamben tends to concede that, all in all, any debate on secularisation, at least since Max Weber (and I would prefer to say that at least since Hegel) is inseparable from politics (Agamben 2009a, 76–77). (Suffice it to mention the seemingly stable – if seen from the angle of both jurisprudence and official theology – status of ecclesiastical properties in times when neoliberal expropriations take place on a large scale). The very fact that Toscano engaged the Blumenbergian project (which, to tell the truth, is not at all leftist) and his methodology against Agamben, is sufficient proof in favour of Agamben’s persuasion that the concept of secularisation “has performed a strategic function in modern culture” (Agamben 2011a, 3). It usually marks a political enemy⁸. That’s why Carl Schmitt could not agree with Blumenberg

6 What might be justly admitted is that Agamben disavows the significance of “secularisation” in favour of what he considers to be a broader frame, namely the theodicy of history, which is also called *oikonomia* or *complexio oppositorum*. Thus, he suspends, in a sense, an inclination to Blumenberg or Schmitt, taking a step further.

7 Which is a manoeuvre not so distant from what Hans Blumenberg himself accepted as a mode of moral conduct proper to the modern age, namely: *la morale provisoire* (Blumenberg 2010, 2).

8 Toscano’s reaction provoked by some Agambenian critical remarks towards Marxism is rather a sidestep than an attempt to challenge them. In contrast, Agamben seems to feel obliged, as an intellectual who acknowledges also his Marxian roots, to criticize totalitarian and bureaucratic abuses of power committed by the political regimes that called themselves “communist”. What is also important for Marxist studies, his

who tended to present his historiographical study on the threshold of modernity as politically neutral.

Although the references to Blumenberg in Agamben are sporadic, in *Il regno e la gloria* we can find some comments, which clearly show that the latter is not unconcerned about the stance of the former. In an opening passage Agamben expounds that for Schmitt,

theology continues to be present and active in an eminent way. This does not necessarily imply an identity of substance between theology and modernity, or a perfect identity of meaning between theological and political concepts; rather, it concerns a particular strategic relation that marks political concepts and refers them back to their theological origin (Agamben 2011a, 4).

There is no doubt that the phrase “identity of substance” evokes *Die Legitimität der Neuzeit*⁹. Like Blumenberg, Agamben is preoccupied with a refutation of Schmitt’s thesis. But, unlike Blumenberg, he cannot do so by defending modernity and its secular ethos.

Agamben considers modern politics to be theological, in other words, still reliant on the schemas elaborated as explanations of the divine government over the world. He reveals its “theological origin” without the intention to acknowledge (like Schmitt) that secular politics is impossible, *ergo* – that all political concepts remain delegitimised (Toscano 2011, 128) unless they return submissively to the *dictatus papae*. Conversely, to christen modern politics “theological” is to call for its stronger and more definitive profanation. In other words, politics that needs the extra-terrestrial to legitimize itself in fact delegitimises itself as theologically structured. As far back as 1995, when Agamben initiated an investigation of the ambiguous sacredness of the scapegoat¹⁰, he unequivocally declared that “the proximity between the sphere of sovereignty and the sphere of the sacred [...] is not simply the secularized residue of the originary religious character of every political power, nor merely the attempt to grant the latter a theological foundation” (Agamben 1998, 84–85).

In order to stem the Uroboros-like cycles of violence and to put an end to the economy of sacrifice, the very principle of division must be abolished. Theology, due to its obsession with theodicy, is one of the nodal points that keep this cruel machinery in motion¹¹, but it is not its ultimate ground. Additionally, Agamben posits that “the thesis

theological genealogy almost directly implies that what was originally used in the discussions on the Holy Trinity and predestination later become a basis for the reelaboration of dialectics in German philosophy.

9 See Blumenberg 1985, 16, 29, as well as the entire chapters 8. and 9., where Hans Blumenberg challenged Carl Schmitt’s political theology.

10 The term *homo sacer* appeared for the first time in Agamben’s writings in 1982 (Agamben 1991, 105; Agamben 1999, 136).

11 One of the thinkers to whom Agamben is mostly indebted, René Girard, stressed that theology had always served – in contrast to the unjustified pride expressed in the dictum *philosophia ancilla theologiae* – as the

according to which the economy could be a secularized theological paradigm acts retroactively on theology” (Agamben 2011a, 3). The concession given to Schmitt by emphasizing how important theology has been turns against the conservatism implicit in his theories¹², as well as against the exceptional character of theology. Agamben is convinced that ignorance with regard to the theological tradition not only indicates a “decline of philosophical culture” (Agamben 2011a, 5), but also strengthens this taboo-like status of theology. In contrast, what could finally make it inoperative is nothing other than studying it¹³. Studying uncovers the consequent layers of “tradition”, showing that all of them were failed attempts to keep the unnamed at distance¹⁴. For Agamben, archaeological inquiry focuses *simultaneously* on this empty centre *and* its historical articulations that overshadowed the emptiness of language building – upon, and thanks to, its arbitrariness – an illusion of the primary “origin”.

The Agambenian approach hesitates between the temptations of metaphorical and literal meaning. Thus, his “theological” description of biopolitics is affected by ambivalence. I will show two appropriate examples, starting from the following statement: “It is not necessary to share Schmitt’s thesis on secularization in order to affirm that political problems

universal mechanism of justification: “the sacrificial process requires a certain degree of misunderstanding. The celebrants do not and must not comprehend the true role of the sacrificial act. The theological basis of the sacrifice has a crucial role in fostering this misunderstanding. It is the god who supposedly demands the victims [...]. Interpreters who think they question the primacy of the divine sufficiently by declaring the whole affair ‘imaginary’ may well remain the prisoners of the theology they have not really analyzed” (Girard 1977, 7).

12 The same can be said about Agambenian “metabolisation” of Girard’s legacy. For further elaboration of this topic, see Fox 2007, Depoortere 2011, Dickinson 2011b, Sudlow 2012.

13 This may be seen as a betrayal of his own idea of profanation based on “negligence” (Agamben 2007b, 75), which was intended to secure from the aporia of transgression as an implicit confirmation of the *status quo*. Nonetheless, I am partial to another spin: that at first Agamben was collecting the elements of the paradigm he intended to destroy and in the end attained the level of such a condensation, that it allowed him to “abandon” this paradigm, when all was said and done. I would venture to say that by doing this he became the *homo sacer* of theory, because it was rather his duty, not pleasure, to be rapt in political consideration. This may throw light on the harsh criticism he received and also on his spiritual position on the map of contemporary thought. Suffice it to mention here only one, but incisive example. At the end of his article, one author used Jesus’ words, turning them towards Giorgio Agamben as a judgement passed on his messianism: “let the dead bury the dead” (Sharpe 2009, 40.16).

14 Hans Blumenberg initiated his *Work on Myth* from a magnificent anthropological narrative according to which the human being’s initial and formative challenge was “the absolutism of reality” – the cavernous vastness of space that was losing its tremendous hostility in the course of naming it. Naming means dividing, i.e. weakening the pressure of unpredictability and fear that could paralyse human life, endangered, because deprived of any natural niche. For Blumenberg “myth” and “dogma” are two different methods of coping with the aboriginal danger. “The stories that it is our purpose to discuss here – he writes – simply weren’t told in order to answer questions, but rather in order to dispel uneasiness and discontent, which have to be present in the beginning for questions to be able to form themselves. To prevent fear and uncertainty already means not to allow the questions about what awakens them and excites them to arise or to reach concrete form. In connection with this, the consciousness that one cannot, after all, answer such questions may enter in as an imponderable factor, as long as they cannot be averted, in an institutionalized milieu, or disparaged as hubris, or as in the milieu of modern science assigned to progress that has not yet occurred” (Blumenberg 1985, 184). So Blumenberg shares with Agamben initial intuitions about foundational negativity, but the former affirms the linguistic event that gave birth to humankind, while the latter expresses his great wariness of it.

become more intelligible and clear if they are related to theological paradigms” (Agamben 2011a, 229). In my view, here we still have the possibility of a metaphorical (that is to say Blumenbergian) reading of economic theology. In the case of the second example, things go differently, particularly if one takes into consideration that it is a quote from the already evoked speech that Giorgio Agamben gave at the Notre Dame Cathedral, so the place and circumstances enhance the resonance of this unique voice: “The crises – the states of permanent exception and emergency – that the governments of the world continually proclaim are in reality a secularized parody of the Church’s incessant deferral of the Last Judgement” (Agamben 2012, 40). Had it been a casual association, Agamben’s statement would not have judged the contemporary legal crisis as blasphemy. But what stands behind this claim can by no means be limited to a figure of speech, because according to Agamben, Christian theology of the first centuries struggled with the same ontological schemas that have been capturing the Western perception of life. Those schemas constitute a solid structure. What is more, by tracing theological (and ontological) thought back to its roots, Agamben not only intends to uncloak the structural analogies and the empty centre, but to indicate at something hidden beneath – the aliveness upon which the discourse about “life” was formed¹⁵. To treat the above-mentioned seriously, literally, one must acknowledge what is the subject of the politics of deferral. It is not a meaning or an abstract structure, but suffering life.

This leads directly to a question concerning the human condition and more specifically, a question about where lie the limes which make suffering caused by natural fatality almost indistinguishable from what befalls history. Even if Agamben would not agree with that, his divorcing from anthropocentrism does not exclude therefore some kind of anthropology, otherwise one could not explain his persistent obsession with anthropogenesis (Agamben 2004). Humanity means coming to terms with animality, or, to put it more precisely, an attitude of speaking beings toward the fact of their aliveness. Theology is only one of many speculative formations that responded to this challenge, but its response, especially in a moralistic explanation of the original sin, obscured the whole question,

15 This enigmatic aliveness, given as an experience and forced to become a notion, was what Hannah Arendt in her doctoral thesis from 1929 destined to pertain to “the pretheological sphere”, which in my opinion accentuated anthropology as a point of resistance to theology and every totalizing discourse; see Zawisza 2012. Aliveness was then elaborated quite differently through the biopolitical paradigm, among others by Agamben, but with an unreserved acceptance of the Heideggerian antihumanist vista, which undermines the consistency of any positive proposal. Biopolitics fails in its conceptualisation of the endless richness of life by excluding one form of its expressions, namely the peculiar unnatural character of the human condition. Thus, I am inclined to regard Agata Bielik-Robson’s messianic vitalism, which is deeply concerned with antinaturalistic humanism (Bielik-Robson 2012), as an unavoidable voice in the contemporary debate about “life”, dominated mostly by thinkers associated with the biopolitical paradigm. Bielik-Robson’s theory of life introduces a polemical alternative, which is more in tune with the intuitions embedded in Arendtian natalism. On her polemics with Agamben, see Bielik-Robson 2010, Bielik-Robson 2011a.

ascribing imperfection to humankind and thus ending any discussion¹⁶. For that reason, Agamben seeks a detheologized view of life – trying to think simultaneously of the initial threshold when *homo sapiens* appeared – rather than theological ground.

What Toscano's critique misses is nothing other than anthropology, which allows Agamben to gaze at the far-reaching historical horizon, even at the expense of loosening ties with Foucaultian skepsis, but without the intention of its total abandonment. It seems that Agamben mistrusted consequent relativism and he is trying now to cope with the question of why some modes of thought, like the sacrifices, survived through the ages intact. Toscano underestimates the gravity of this question, saying, "Nor does Agamben consider the possibility that the persistence of certain thought forms might be less relevant than their redeployment to radically different ends within incommensurable discursive formations" (Toscano 2011, 127)¹⁷. For Agamben it would still be a sidestep to equate "systematic structures" with simple transposition or the mysterious journey of philosophically conceived essences. Agamben speaks also about necessary "omissions" and exclusions that accompanied operations of transfer between theology and politics (Agamben 2011a, 272). Those omissions are unpredictable and in that sense contingent, nonetheless their incessant returns are necessary¹⁸ – due to the impossibility of the goal they are supposed to achieve,

16 Although, as I argued, both myth and dogma try to face the problem of questions without answers and for that reason both of them pretend to have sufficient answers, „[...] the myth satisfies the criterion of totality by leaving nothing unsaid. The myth allows one to see that there is nothing more there to say and there will never be more to say something that no theory can dare to assert" (Blumenberg 1985, 177). Instead of an overabundance of stories produced by myth to accommodate various inquietudes, dogma chooses one version and attempts to make it definitive: "[...] across the history of mankind's consciousness, questions have been posed and then answers have been attempted whose inadequacy exposed them to displacement by other answers to the same questions. Dogma appears as a defense against this process of displacement, as laying something down in a written form made definitive by an extraordinary sanction. It can be accomplished only by institutionalization, and that makes it clear how inimical to institutions myth is" (Blumenberg 1985, 184).

17 Additionally, Toscano writes that "it is not so much the continuity of the theological but the persistence of certain social relations and their imaginaries, which explains the insistence of certain ideas of government throughout such a *longue durée*" (Toscano 2011, 127). Although Agamben does not employ this second option often, the "bi-univocal" structure of the governmental machine envisages as part of its inner, fundamental reciprocity a mutual bolstering of materially embedded patterns (e.g. the Persian court's rules – an example used by Agamben and praised by Toscano) and their ideal, conceptually codified images. What is more, Agamben's Girardianism predisposes him to detect in "the persistence of certain social relations and their imaginaries" an indispensable trace of theological justification, which every religion (according to him, the capitalist one too) uses to obscure cruelty behind the fumes of glory. Neither politics, nor theology dominates – rivalry between them resembles twin animosities: what dominates is symmetry, because to speak about God and Kingdom the first Christian theologians adopted political concepts which later were maintained by references to theology.

18 The problem of how to approach Agambenian methods in relation to the history of ideas and the history of concepts reaches beyond the scope of this article. Nonetheless, Elías José Palti in his text about German debates concerning the relations between these two methodologies posed the questions which must be addressed also towards Agamben: "On the one hand, it is necessary to postulate the existence of an ineradicable remainder of facticity that prevents the logical closure of conceptual systems and opens them to temporality. Only this postulate may explain the openness of conceptual formations: why change is intrinsic to conceptual history. But, on the other hand, this postulate raises a number of new issues: how to approach this realm that resists symbolization according to the categories available in a given language, and that dislocates it. If this realm is not already invested with meaning, what is its ontological nature, and what are the ways by which it eventually enters the symbolic ambit and

namely to bridge the gap between word and flesh, between the speaking being and its aliveness.

Since Toscano did not take into account the deepest ground of Agambenian thought, he could graciously write that,

though Agamben does not straightforwardly embody the apologetic Christian purposes that Hans Blumenberg identifies in the discourse on secularisation – the idea that the conceptual patrimony of the Church was expropriated and misused – he does manifest one of the key aspects of that discourse, the idea of a substantial continuity (Toscano 2011, 128).

If we would need to indicate a candidate for “substance” in Agamben’s thought, it could only be “life as such” (or maybe: pure aliveness), however – as I mentioned earlier – even this concept was affected by historical mutations (inter alia related to secularisation) and always already captured by some structure of its articulation. On the other hand, the mysterious continuity of those structures might be explained thanks to the following hypothesis: although we are removed from late antiquity by many epochal changes, dogma has nonetheless remained preserved by ecclesiastical bodies – simply by repetition¹⁹. In turn, this repetition was effective enough so as to transmit the general conceptual framework that had been forming Western thought throughout history even after churches and synagogues had lost their power over political institutions and communities. Even if this would be an accurate historical reconstruction, Agamben will remain mostly preoccupied by the very condition that makes life subjected, namely “[...] this split in the experience of language that law and religion are born, both of which seek to tie speech to things and to bind, by means of curses and anathemas, speaking subjects to the veritative power of their speech, to their “oath” and to their declaration of faith (Agamben 2011b, 58).”

We see how the fact that Agamben dared to take a step out of the edifice of historicism provokes anathemas that were intended to call into question his fame as a critical theorist. Nevertheless, there is no need to worry about his reputation in that regard. One may have reservations towards the methodology applied by Agamben; however, he can by no

forces it to become reconfigured?” (Palti 2010, 198). What is more, another challenge for conceptual history – next to Agambenian polemics with constructivist approaches – could be a history redescribed according to the lines of personal idiosyncrasies of the author and scientific writing practiced as a form of life, which is still characteristic feature of Central and Eastern European intelligentsia, see Bielik-Robson 2011b, Majewski 2011, Ulicka 2007, Ulicka 2013.

¹⁹ Agamben, however, seems to be more concentrated on continuity than on conceptual swerves. This is his vice, especially in comparison with Blumenberg whose arabesque style made his writings incomparably more profound. His *Work on Myth* is ornamented with many peculiar, often very funny examples and anecdotes that play on self-contradictions to expose fruitful incongruences or forgotten paths, neglected by “tradition” which, without these idiosyncrasies, would have become a lumber room full of slogans and banalities.

means be enthroned, neither ironically nor seriously, as a Church Father. On the contrary, the manner in which he scrutinised ecclesiastical history bespeaks the most possible detachment.

Conclusion: religion as a side effect

To sum up, Agamben recognizes the impact that theology exerted over political theory and jurisprudence, but he balances it using the opposite perspective with the help of which one can ask about the political provenance of theological concepts. Following Girard's intransigence on searching for the original²⁰, Agamben treats theology as merely a reflexive, theoretical and *late* expression of what had been practised by older institutions, even if without justification comparable in density to that elaborated by Christian theologians. In *The Sacrament of Language: An Archaeology of the Oath* (Agamben 2011b) those older institutions were at the centre of the author's analysis: it turned out that religion, next to politics and law, had pullulated from the same, the oldest human institution, the oath. Oath illuminates the origin of language²¹, in turn marking a caesura when aliveness was alienated and abandoned by a creature who had begun to speak on its behalf. Life found itself under the stress of justification²². Reading *Il sacramento del linguaggio* (2008) through the lenses of *Il linguaggio e la morte* (1982), one may risk the hypothesis that, in order to speak, this particular animal, just while becoming a human animal, sacrifices itself, disassociating from aliveness and creating the first *homo sacer*, which became the model for every following act of inclusive exclusion. Viewed from that perspective, religion and theology seem to be derivative, not foundational.

Thus, Agamben deprived Schmittian political theology of its unjustified theological aura and the frightening seriousness that characterises "the ultimate". He pointed to an even more serious phenomenon, turning back to "a time before the separation"²³, meaning before politics and theology had diverged. This approach may compromise any more historically

20 "A unique generative force exists that we can only qualify as religious in a sense deeper than the theological one" (Girard 1977, 24).

21 Colby Dickinson even attempts to link the Agambenian quest for language with "the state of original sin", nonetheless he usually writes this term using quotation marks (Dickinson 2011a).

22 For that reason, the ruling classes often turned to theology, which was believed to represent a neutral, external authority: "In the same way that sacrificial victims must in principle meet the approval of the divinity before being offered as a sacrifice, the judicial system appeals to a theology as a guarantee of justice. Even when this theology disappears, as has happened in our culture, the transcendental quality of the system remains intact. Centuries can pass before men realize that there is no real difference between their principle of justice and the concept of revenge. Only the transcendental quality of the system, acknowledged by all, can assure the prevention or cure of violence" (Girard 1977, 23–24).

23 "For this reason, it does not make sense to oppose secularism and the general will to theology and its providential paradigm; what is needed is, rather, an archaeological operation like the one that we have attempted here, one that, by moving upstream to a time before the separation that took place and that turned the two poles into rival but inseparable brothers, undoes the entire economic-theological apparatus and renders it inoperative" (Agamben 2011a, 285).

oriented philosophical projects, like those conducted by Blumenberg and Foucault, nevertheless the Agambenian perspective also threatens the conservative tendency of conducting ahistorical analyses, or at least it blocks conservative interpretations of his own oeuvre. What can perhaps be estimated as the most promising opening of Agamben's "theological" writings is the chance given, once again, to speculative thought and the courage of posing truly ultimate questions about the human mode of being in the world.

At the same time, it is not nostalgia for dialectical synthesis that reigns in Agambenian thought, but its reversal. Agamben works like a patient watchmaker who, however, does not intend to repair a broken mechanism. His main task is to make a performance out of showing the interiors of this mechanism in their last detail, exposing how this precious toy functions and towards which aims it is used. Agamben's deconstruction of the Western tradition targets its most coherent and cumulative element, namely the transposition of Greek metaphysics into Christian, especially Catholic, theology. His recently published books seem to be the itemised commentaries to *Römischer Katholizismus und politische Form* (1923) written by Carl Schmitt, where he depicted the political genius of the Catholic Church built on the one sacrificial mechanism, namely *complexio oppositorum*. To put it in a framework alien to the Schmittian intention, but tethered to his conceptual language, this mechanism provided fertile ground for encompassing and overcoming every contradiction, which must have been very useful not only for theology, but also for papal policy as its power expanded and caused the physical or symbolic elimination of the Church's enemies, like Gnostic Christianity and other Gnostics, to only name a few²⁴.

Agamben disarmed this sacrificial mechanism, which was particularly active in Catholicism since this institution needed an ultimate justification both for theology (which resulted in the strive for theodicy) and for its "earthly" existence, to explain what would be the secular role of the Church after the Second Coming of Christ did not happen. While Schmitt was inclinable to affirm the whole history of Christianity, Agamben impugns every touchy element of its tradition, above all its political influence: from the titles attributed to Christ as the highest priest and, in consequence, the monopolization of spiritual power by the clergy, through the impossibility of canonical law on the basis of religion which abolished governance by law, to the controversial status of ecclesiastic property. There is no left here one stone upon another... An urgent question arises henceforth: how to put philosophy practised on rubble to good use?

24 What I can point to only marginally here is the fact that Agamben, despite his sympathy for heterodox and esoteric legacy – probably somehow inspired by Frances Yates who facilitated his stay at the Warburg Institute – remains mostly connected to Spinozian pantheism. That determines his misguided understanding of Gnosticism, which, in turn, affects his anthropology, miserably suspended in limbo between hope and hopelessness, between self-assertion and condemnation.

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TYTUŁ: Dyskretna przekora Giorgia Agambena

ABSTRAKT: Wielu krytyków zarzucało myśli Giorgia Agambena ahistoryczność. Ostatnio podobne oskarżenia wysunął Alberto Toscano, formułując je przez przywołanie krytyki Hansa Blumenberga względem tezy o sekularyzacji oraz jego teorii zmiany epokowej. Według Toscano, z powodu akceptacji dla Schmittiańskiego pojęcia sekularyzacji, bazującego na substancjalizmie historycznym, Agamben nie tylko sprzeniewierza się metodologii Michela Foucaulta – którą deklaratywnie przyjmuje – ale także ciąży ku uznaniu dominacji pojęć teologicznych jako źródła całej filozoficznej tradycji Zachodu oraz jego instytucji politycznych. Moim zamiarem jest pokazanie, że nawet poniekąd powierzchowne stwierdzenia Agambena na temat sekularyzacji są równoważone przez podjęte przez niego

podwójny wysilek. Po pierwsze, chociaż przyznaje on znaczenie dziedzictwu teologicznemu, to jednocześnie odrzuca pierwszeństwo religii jako niezbędnego fundamentu etyki i polityki. Co więcej, jego skrupulatne i bardzo gęste studia nad teologią chrześcijańską sytuują go na pozycji najbardziej przenikliwego ze współczesnych krytyków kościoła katolickiego oraz jakichkolwiek teologiczno-politycznych hybryd ukonstytuowanych poprzez nadużycie władzy.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: teologia ekonomiczna, sekularyzacja, Giorgio Agamben, Hans Blumenberg, Alberto Toscano

DIVINE MANAGEMENT OF WORLDLY MATTERS: AGAMBEN'S THEOLOGICAL GENEALOGY OF ECONOMY AS A POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY OF PRAXIS

MIKOŁAJ RATAJCZAK

Abstract: The aim of this paper is to provide an interpretation of Agamben's theological genealogy of economy that will show its significance for investigations in the field of political economy. The only way to connect the discourses of economic theology and political economy is to show that the former is not concerned with questions proper to the sphere of economics, but rather deals with a more general problem – the problem of human praxis. I will show that what is at stake in Agamben's endeavors is a critique of theological, that is metaphysical, presuppositions about the concept of human praxis, a critique which can only be carried out on the basis of a theological genealogy, in particular of the Trinitarian *oikonomia*. The text will focus on the notion of liturgy in Agamben's genealogical investigations as a theological paradigm for the capitalist management of human life (i.e. praxis) and will close with some initial remarks on the possible application of Agamben's theological genealogy of economy to a Marxist critique of political economy, especially to a critique of the distinction between productive and unproductive labor.

Keywords: economic theology, political theology, economy, glory, liturgy, praxis, labor, effectiveness, productivity, Giorgio Agamben, Karl Marx

The aim of this paper is to provide an interpretation of Agamben's theological genealogy of economy that will show its significance for investigations in the field of political economy. The only way to connect the discourses of economic theology and political economy is to show that the former is not concerned with the production and circulation of use value (goods) or exchange value (money) or with the peculiar commodity that is labor, but rather deals with a more general problem – the problem of human praxis. I will show that what is at stake in Agamben's endeavors is a critique of theological, that is metaphysical, presuppositions about the concept of human praxis, a critique which can only be carried out on the basis of a theological genealogy, in particular of the Trinitarian *oikonomia*. The text will focus on the notion of liturgy in Agamben's genealogical investigations as a theological paradigm for the capitalist management of human life (i.e. praxis) and will close with some initial remarks on the possible application of Agamben's theological genealogy of economy to a Marxist critique of political economy, especially to a critique of the distinction between productive and unproductive labor. Its aim is to show the need for a political philosophy of human praxis, which itself must be confronted with its theological roots in order to provide any critique of political economy. Agamben's theological genealogy of economy can help in elaborating a more philosophical background for a Marxist critique of political economy, first of all because of its focus on the problem of potentiality, which was also essential for Marx in his preparatory studies for *Capital*. Therefore I will link Agamben's genealogy of liturgy (both the liturgy of the monastic life and the liturgy of the ecclesiastical office) to *Results of the Immediate Production Process*, the unpublished sixth chapter of the first volume of *Capital*, in which Marx develops his understanding of the subsumption of labor under capital. It is my view that in Agamben's work we can find a broader paradigm of a *liturgical subsumption of praxis* that might prove useful for a research into the subsumption of life in the contemporary capitalist economy.

In a preface to his *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* Marx wrote, with a wit familiar to his readers, that anyone “who tries to hide his complete ignorance and intellectual poverty [...] has yet to furnish the first proof that besides his theological family affairs he has anything to contribute to a discussion of *worldly* matters” (Marx 1988, 14–15). The contemporary discourses on economic theology try nevertheless to show that the discussion of the worldly matters must at some point come to grips with the theological family affairs¹.

1 This article is a result of a research grant “Critique of the Politico-Economic Theology in the Philosophy of Giorgio Agamben” funded from the specified-user subsidiary for research projects conducted by doctoral students of the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of PAN.

Economic theology and political economy

The initial inspiration for this text came from a young Italian politician and philosopher², who formulated a thesis that the contemporary revival of economic theology in Italy is a form of conceptual smokescreen, or even an intellectual diversion, that allows for theoretical research into the problems of political economy – meaning of course Marxist political economy – without taking up the discourse of political economy itself. Although the thesis looks at first glance like a valid one, bearing some heuristic value, it provokes the question: why would such a smokescreen even be necessary? Leaving aside the problem of an ideological climate in contemporary Europe which might prevent a discourse based on Marxist economics from gaining recognition, the proliferation of academic analyses in the field of economic theology makes pressing a more general question: what is the relationship between a critique of economic theology, or a theological genealogy of economy, and political economy? Are they just two different discourses explicating the same problems from different perspectives, or is an analysis or genealogy of economic theology really able to deliver a theoretical insight into political economy that the latter is – at least to a certain extent – unable to provide on its own? The latest books on the subject by Roberto Esposito (2013) and Elettra Stimilli (2011; 2015) have shown that the economic-theological paradigm makes possible a very productive coupling of discourses which links contemporary governance by debt with the questions of the formation of subjectivity and contemporary forms of governmentality. One might argue about whether they really offer any theoretical added value to the research carried out by, among others, Maurizio Lazzarato (2012; 2015), but it is especially the critique of the dispositive of the person in Esposito's *Due* which proves that analysis of the paradigm of political and economic theology can widen the genealogy of contemporary subjectivity and refer it to the general context of the theory of law and politics. The question of subjectivity and praxis is central also to Stimilli's *Il debito del vivente* (2011), where the praxis of ascesis is being explored precisely in its *inoperational* character, which can be opposed to the operative character of both capitalism and religion.

Therefore, economic theology doesn't provide a simple smokescreen for Marxist research into political economy. Although one might refer to the famous "theological niceties" that appear at the end of the first chapter of *Capital* (Marx 1990, 163), the dialectic method used by Marx deals rather with the common dialectical roots of theological and economic thinking, than with a call for a theological genealogy with its own method or presuppositions. A theological genealogy of economy doesn't give us insight into the nature of value, the mode of capitalist production or the essence of money, but into a concept of

2 It was Michele Fiorillo from the Possibile party at the conference "Immunity and Modernity" held in 2015 in Leuven.

subjectivity and a notion of praxis that provide the core of modern forms of governance of capitalist societies. Therefore, as a genealogy and simultaneously a critique of the notion of human praxis, it constitutes a suitable conceptual tool with which to confront (neo)liberal economics, focused first of all on the rationality and action of human beings³. This is most evident in Giorgio Agamben's famous *Il regno e la gloria*, a second segment of the second volume (II.2) of the *Homo sacer* series⁴, which Agamben himself declares is a theological genealogy not of Marx's critique of political economy, but of Foucault's investigations into the governmentality of modern societies (Agamben 2011, xi). Foucault's late work constitutes the main point of reference for practically all attempts at a critique of economic theology in contemporary Italian political philosophy (Gentili 2015), as may be evidenced by the central role that is played in those endeavors by the notion of the *dispositif* (Agamben 2009; Esposito 2013, 4)⁵. Agamben not only traces the roots of the Latin term *dispositio* in the Greek *oikonomia*, but also translates it using Heidegger's notion of *Ge-stell* (Agamben 2011, 252)⁶, thus situating his theological genealogy of economy not only in the field of the archeology of power and the hermeneutics of the subject, but also in a horizon of the critique and dismantling of metaphysics. In *Opus Dei*, the last segment of the second volume of the series, dealing with the archeology of the office, Agamben develops further the significance of his investigations into economic theology for a "history of being":

One can ask to what extent this reconstruction of the determinate influence of Christian theology on the history of being is indebted to the privilege accorded to the creationist paradigm. It is by virtue of this model that Heidegger could think the essence of technology as production and disposition and the *Gestell* as the securing of the real in the mode of availability. But precisely for this reason he was not able to see

3 It is clearly visible in the overriding role praxeology plays in the classical works of neoliberal theory, especially in Ludwig von Mises' *Human Action: A Treatise on Economics* (von Mises 1949). The prevalence of the notions of subjectivity and action in neoliberalism is also present in Foucault's reconstruction of neoliberal biopolitics (Foucault 2010).

4 I put so much emphasis on the classification of *Il regno e la gloria* in Agamben's "sacred man" series since the numeration of volumes and segments is not a chronological, but a logical one. There exists, in my opinion, an organizing principle that explains not only the *dispositio* of the books in the series but also why only the second and the fourth volumes are divided into segments. To put it briefly: the first volume introduces the general problem of the series – the relation of life to power and the question of the division (e.g. between *dzoe* and *bios*) that accompanies the concept of power and politics in Western philosophy and political theory. The second volume deals with different dispositives of power (state of exception, glory, sacrament, oath, office, etc.), which explains its division into segments. The third volume (Agamben 2002) presents the most radical effect of the diagrammatic division of life into *bios* and *dzoe* in Western politics and therefore constitutes a sort of passage to the fourth volume, which tries to conceptualize a form-of-life, life beyond the division introduced by the dispositives of power.

5 For a critique of Agamben's use of the concept of *dispositif*, see Pasquinelli 2015.

6 Esposito performs the same conceptual operation, although from a different genealogical perspective (Esposito 2013, 20).

what has today become perfectly obvious, and that is that one cannot understand the metaphysics of technology if one understands it only in the form of production. It is just as much and above all governance and *oikonomia*, which in the last analysis can even provisionally put casual production between parentheses in the name of a more refined and diffuse form of management of human beings and of things (Agamben 2013a, 61).

A theological genealogy of economy can therefore be understood as a critique of metaphysics: not metaphysics of production, i.e. of making entities into a resource for industrialized production, but rather metaphysics of governance – which also means *organization* of the production process, or rather organization and management of the production and reproduction of life (a management of life that reduces it to its own production and reproduction). It still remains an open question whether Agamben accepts the reactionary Heidegger's stance towards the possibilities of technological development, and it may be the case that the interpretation of the above paragraph from *Opus Dei* will become the criterion for distinguishing the conservative and progressive interpretations of Agamben's thought in the future, but it is clear that the problem Agamben himself declares to be the stake of his investigations into economic theology is the *analysis of the metaphysical foundations of modern governmentality*⁷. A corollary thesis would be that only a theological genealogy gives insight into the metaphysical foundations of governance. However, this still leaves us with no answer to the question: what is the relation between the theological genealogy of economy – a critique of metaphysics of governance – and political economy?

Foucault's genealogical approach to power and subjectivity and Heidegger-inspired dismantling of metaphysics constitute the proper conceptual horizon for Agamben's theological genealogy of economy, since the Italian philosopher is first of all interested in the question of human praxis. Technically one should say that the proper stake is the notion of life which Agamben tries to free from the fundamental distinction between *dzōe* and *bios* (Agamben 1998), *vita* and *regula* (Agamben 2013b) or, finally, between *dynamis* and *energeia* (Agamben 2014). But this doesn't change the fact that every investigation Agamben has undertaken in the field of political philosophy, political theology and the theory of power was carried out from the perspective of the problem of human praxis. To put it briefly: the key to understanding the contemporary mechanisms of power, including forms of economic power,

⁷ Just as his whole philosophical project can be summarized as a genealogical investigation into the metaphysical presuppositions of politics: "ontology and politics correspond perfectly with each other" (Agamben 2014, 173).

lies, according to Agamben, in a properly philosophical research into the concept of human praxis⁸, which requires also an economical-theological genealogy.

This may also help us to understand why Agamben's investigations into the genealogy of economy have often been misinterpreted as applying directly to economic questions. A short review of some of these (mis)interpretations may also facilitate a further elaboration of the relation between economic theology and political economy, since they show exactly what is *not* the true problem of Agamben's work. The reference to the term "biopolitics" and Foucault's genealogy of biopower has placed his investigations in the context of research into contemporary forms of the (re)production of life which came to be defined as "biopolitical": that is, productive of *bios* itself (languages, affects, ideas, signs, information, relations, etc.)⁹. Hardt and Negri, the main theorists of biopolitical labor, have underlined the unproductive character of Agamben's concept of biopolitics: "Agamben transposes biopolitics in a theological-political key, claiming that the only possibility of rupture with biopower resides in 'inoperative' activity [...] completely incapable of constructing an alternative" (Hardt and Negri 2009, 58)¹⁰. Agamben's later work on economic theology has only strengthened his emphasis on the *inoperativity* of human life, making it clear that it is not the biopolitical labor, the productivity of life which exceeds any imposed capitalist measure or value form, but exactly the *unproductive* aspect of life that is the stake in his genealogy of *oikonomia*. The sphere of production, i.e. productivity of social life, and labor, cannot therefore be an object of his interest.

The question of labor is nevertheless closely related to the problem of praxis. Foucault, Hardt and Negri have pointed out that labor in Marx is first of all a production of man by man (Hardt and Negri 2009, 136), i.e. the praxis of man's self-production. Agamben targets this topic directly in *Il regno e la gloria*, where he writes:

When Marx [...] thinks the being of man as praxis, and praxis as the self-production of man, he is after all secularizing the theological idea of the being of creatures as divine operation. After having conceived of being as praxis, if we take God away and

8 There's no place in this text to compare Agamben's and Esposito's critiques of economic theology, but it might suffice as an initial contribution to such a comparison to state that, while Agamben focuses on the problem of human praxis as unfounded and unrelated metaphysically to the mechanisms of power, Esposito tries to formulate an ontology of *communitas* of living subjects. That is, while Agamben explicates life with the help of a notion of praxis (to be precise: use, *chresis*; see Agamben 2014), Esposito explicates social practices and structures through a notion of communal life, *communitas*.

9 Therefore the coupling of production and reproduction – biopolitical labor removes the distinction between the production and the reproduction of society; however, it does not cancel the distinction between the production and reproduction of capital as a social relation, since the latter is founded on the distinction between use and exchange value.

10 The unproductive character of Agamben's notion of biopolitics has been underlined earlier, also in reference to more orthodox interpretations of Foucault; see Lemke 2005.

put man in his place, we will consequently obtain the result that the essence of man is nothing other than praxis through which he incessantly produces himself (Agamben 2011, 91).

According to Agamben the concept of human subjectivity that constantly produces itself is a secularized concept of God whose *oikonomia*, i.e. activity and praxis, is completely separated from its being to the extent that God's economy constitutes his very being. But it nevertheless remains a *productive* practice that is aimed at a certain result, this result being in an extreme case its very self-production (in contrast to the inoperative contemplation and experiencing of man's own potentiality; see Agamben 2011, 250–251). Jessica Whyte has meticulously criticized Agamben's account of early Marx, focusing on the difference between a specific *capitalist* subsumption of labor that is the object of Marx's critique and a despotic domination over the slave's labor that was characteristic of the Aristotelian *oikos* (Whyte 2014, 180). Agamben's error, a result of his deconstruction of the Christian theology of will, supposedly consists in mistakenly taking the master-slave relation for a paradigm that can help us understand the situation of the capitalist laborer (Whyte 2014, 192). I don't think Whyte is right in her critique of Agamben, but what she manages to show is that we have to abandon the terrain of labor – in a manner similar to the one she proposes by referring to Althusser and his critique of the humanist notion of labor in early Marx (Althusser 2003) – and move to a more general sphere of praxis that cannot be reduced to any form of labor. Agamben's genealogy of economic theology, and liturgy in particular, has given us a more general diagram of the subsumption of praxis, one that might also be applicable to Marxist political economy.

A strong critique of Agamben's work on economic theology has been formulated by Alberto Toscano (2011). His argument is particularly important for the question of the relation between economic theology and political economy, since Toscano doesn't focus on Agamben's inability to explain contemporary changes in the labor and production processes, but instead shifts his critique towards the problems of division and distribution, i.e. the fundamental question of accumulation. Assuming an orthodox Marxist stance, Toscano claims that a theological genealogy of governance is incapable of explaining the unstable nature of capitalism which is the result of unlimited accumulation, a truly "anarchic" process, yet constitutive of the capitalistic organization of economy. Therefore Toscano stresses that it is not the problem of a genealogy of management, but of *chrematistics*, i.e. a science of the unlimited accumulation of money, that we have to undertake in order to carry out a critique of political economy (Toscano 2011, 130–131). Showing the importance of chrematistics both for Aristotle and for Marx, Toscano states that "Agamben's theological genealogy is incapable of providing much insight into the (value) forms that determine (dis)order of the

contemporary economy” (Toscano 2011, 132), or into the problem of the communist idea of the administration of things (Toscano 2011, 133).

Toscano is right that Agamben’s work is of no use when it comes to the absolutely fundamental question of Marxist political economy, that is, the value form. And although some of his remarks concerning Agamben’s method can be seen as simply malicious, his paper shows that it is also not to the sphere of distribution (or circulation) that we can relate a theological genealogy of economy. Although Agamben links the concept of a spontaneous order and the “invisible hand” of the market to the question of divine economy and providential machine (Agamben 2011, 261–287), his insight doesn’t get us nearer to the genealogy of the (neo)liberal concept of market than the works of, i.a., Foucault (2009; 2010), Harvey (2007) or Mirowski (2013).

It is then neither the analysis of production and reproduction, nor that of labor, nor that of distribution and circulation, and finally: nor that of the form of value to which the genealogy of economic theology can contribute. But it is the problem of praxis and the theological genealogy of the governance of human life, the *management of the effectiveness of human praxis*, that constitutes Agamben’s proper interest and is able to offer a contribution to a wider, philosophical research, extending to the field of contemporary political economy. The problem of the “divine management”, to use the formulation from the title of Toscano’s paper, remains therefore an important or even pressing one, but only if we consider it to be a management of “worldly matters”, that is, a theological genealogy not of divine management of the world or God’s *oikonomia*, but of a liturgical management of human praxis.

A theological genealogy

But why a *theological* genealogy? Why does the problem of human praxis require a philosophical explication within a conceptual horizon of the theology of Trinitarian economy and the theological question of divine providence? Agamben’s focus on theology, a result of his earlier investigations into the history of metaphysics, has found its fulfillment in the epilogue to the *Homo sacer* series with the introduction of the concept of *destituent power*. What in *State of Exception* Agamben described with reference to Benjamin’s concept of “studying” (Agamben 2005, 64), the result of which would be the deactivation of law, in the last volume of the series takes on the form of a power that “is capable of deposing every time the ontological-political relations by revealing the connection between their elements” (Agamben 2014, 344). Those elements, e.g. life and language, bare life and law, or constituent and constituted power, are related to each other by the logic of a metaphysical *arche*

that constitutes itself by splitting the factual experience [l'esperienza fattizia] and removing at the origin – that is excluding – one half that will later be rearticulated with the other one, included as the fundament. This is the way the city finds itself on the division of life between bare life and political life, human being defines itself on the basis of the exclusion-inclusion of the animal, the law on the basis of the *exceptio* of the anomaly, the government on the basis of the exclusion of the inoperativity and its capture in the form of glory (Agamben 2014, 336).

The same logical structure gives foundation both to the metaphysical discourse that relates human life to language, and the political philosophy that relates human life to law and economy:

Just as the tradition of metaphysics has always thought the human being in a form of an articulation of two elements (nature and *logos*, body and soul, animality and humanity), the occidental political philosophy has always thought the political in a figure of a relation between two figures that it was supposed to tie together: bare life and power, the house and the city, violence and the instituted order, anomaly (anarchy) and law, the multitude and the people (Agamben 2014, 344).

What makes theology (political and economic) a privileged field of investigation into both the metaphysical and the political *arche* is the fact that theology is a rational, philosophical discourse on the phenomenon of *revelation*. Agamben's early works on language and metaphysics deal precisely with the notion that the metaphysical presupposition of being as a sphere separated from individual entities, or the "world" as a sphere separated from worldly beings, is an effect of the revelation of language detached from the individual acts of linguistic utterance (Agamben 2006, 26). Language is the only being that always presupposes itself in every single enunciation, which makes it a logical model of the concept of God. In one of his earlier texts on language Agamben refers, probably for the first time, to the Trinitarian dogma in order to explicate this self-presupposing, metaphysical power of language:

From this perspective, the construction of Trinitarian theology appears as the most rigorous and coherent way to consider the paradox of the word's primordial status, which the prologue to the Gospel of John expresses in stating, *en arche ēn ho logos*, "In the beginning was the Word." The Trinitarian movement of God that has become familiar to us through the Nicene Creed [...] says nothing about worldly reality; it has no ontic context. Instead, it registers the new experience of the word that Christianity brought to the world. To use Wittgenstein's terms, it says nothing about *how* the world is, but rather reveals *that* the world is, that language exists. The word that is absolutely in the beginning, that is therefore the absolute presupposition, presupposes nothing if

not itself [...]; its Trinitarian structure is nothing other than the movement of its own self-revelation (Agamben 1999, 40–41).

God triune is the ultimate foundation of power, not because it's assumed to be all-powerful (which is a classically self-contradictory concept), but because it's a foundation that presupposes only itself¹¹. If political philosophy had always operated on the basis of the fundamental split, relating two elements by designating one the foundation of the other (e.g. bare life the foundation of the political life, anomy the foundation of the power of law), it was from the very beginning a political theology, i.e. a reflection on the foundation of praxis of the political animal endowed with language, a reflection, in the final instance, on the metaphysical self-foundation of language, i.e. the absolute divine power. The critique of metaphysics is at the same time a critique of political theology and a political philosophy of the animal that has language, whose praxis is always determined by the mode of its “having” of language¹².

It also means that a theological genealogy of power enables an investigation based on basic binary oppositions¹³. But while political philosophy is founded either on simple or dialectical oppositions (e.g. private/public, individual/general, civil/stately), the oppositions with which a theological genealogy of politics and economy is concerned are always subsumed to the above reconstructed logic of the division of the factual experience of praxis into two concepts, one subordinated to the other. The paradigmatic opposition is the one between *potestas* and *auctoritas* (Agamben 2005, 78–79): *potestas* is not an autonomous power, capable of acting on its own; it must be given legitimization by whomever or whatever is endowed with *auctoritas*. The *auctor* is the one who approves, affirms and ratifies the actions of the subject. The factual experience of one's *dynamis* is divided between pure potentiality on one hand and an external instance that allows for *energeia*, the actualization of the potentiality, on the other.

The relation between *auctoritas* and *potestas* assumes different political and institutional forms, from the ancient power of the *senatus* through the institutions of *iustitium*, *interregnum*, *hostis iudicatio*, *auctoritas principis* declared by Augustus, up to *Führertum* in which *auctoritas* assumed the form of an identity between the leader and the people (Agamben 2005, 84). The *auctoritas-potestas* division constitutes the internal logic of the governmental machine

11 Stefano Oliva (2015) summarizes this basic idea of Agamben's philosophy with the notion of the “presupposing apparatus”. I agree with him that the logic of metaphysical or theological presupposition is the key problem of the whole *Homo sacer* project.

12 One might argue that the main problem of Agamben's early works, especially *Il linguaggio e la morte*, is the destruction or deconstruction of metaphysics by explicating the meaning of the *echon* in Aristotle's definition of the human being. What does it mean to “have” language, Agamben asks, and answers: it is not language (logos) that we have, but “simply the trite words” (Agamben 2006, 94; see also Ratajczak 2013).

13 Which Agamben himself calls for explicitly in a reference to Hölderlin (Agamben 1998, 32–33).

that divides, captures and governs the praxis of men and women. In *Il regno e la gloria* Agamben writes that

[t]he double structure of the governmental machine, which in *State of Exception* appeared in the correlation between *auctoritas* and *potestas* here takes the form of the articulation between Kingdom and Government and, ultimately, interrogates the very relation – which initially was not considered – between *oikonomia* and Glory, between power as government and effective management, and power as ceremonial and liturgical regality (Agamben 2011, xi–xii).

The division between the power of acting (*potestas*) and the power that authorizes the action (*auctoritas*) is supplemented in the theological genealogy of economy with the division between Kingdom and Government and ultimately, which will interest us further, between economy and Glory. In order to explicate Agamben's philosophy of praxis we have to reconstruct the logic of *arche* that lays the metaphysical and theological fundamentals for the theology of economy which we will find in the theology of liturgy.

Oikonomia and Glory

The problem of the divine *oikonomia* of Trinitarian theology, in its political aspect, consists not in its opposition to “political theology”, as proclaimed by Carl Schmitt, but in its supplementation of it with another paradigm, that of governance. Although Agamben opens his book with the reconstruction of Erik Peterson's famous argument that political theology is possible only in pagan religions and in Judaism (especially in the latter since it is built on the idea of one God and one chosen nation), but not in Christian Trinitarian monotheism (Agamben 2011, 10), his meticulous reconstruction of Patristic debates on the Trinitarian dogma shows that the doctrine of the divine *oikonomia* opposes God's being and his actions (his *economy*) only to the extent that it subordinates the economy to the instance that regulates God's “pragmatics”. After the term *oikonomia* became *terminus technicus* in the writings of Hippolytus and Tertulian, it was conceived as a form of arrangement and disposition, being translated later in Latin as *dispositio*¹⁴. In order to make “economy” into a technical term, both Hippolytus and Tertulian reversed the Pauline phrase “the economy of the mystery”, signifying the unveiling of God's plan in the secular world, into the “mystery of the

14 And also *dispensatio*, that is, a suspension of canonical law that relieves one of law because of the *exceptio*, that is, the effect of the mysterious divine action (Agamben 2011, 49). Agamben formulates it even more strongly: “The paradigm of government and of the state of exception coincide in the idea of an *oikonomia*, an administrative praxis that governs the course of things, adapting at each turn, in its salvific intent, to the nature of the concrete situation against which it has to measure itself” (Agamben 2011, 50).

economy”; this now came to signify the true *mysterion* and *oikonomias sacramentum*, “which confers on economy all the semantic richness and ambiguity that means, at the same time, oath, consecration, and mystery” (Agamben 2011, 40). The “mysterious” aspect of God’s economy lies precisely in the very stake of the Patristic discourse on the Trinitarian dogma and its opposition to Gnosticism, that is, the reconciliation of God with the world. Therefore it shouldn’t be at all surprising that for Tertullian “divine monarchy now constitutively entails an economy, a governmental apparatus, which articulates and, at the same time, reveals its mystery” (Agamben 2011, 43)¹⁵. The true *mysterion* (or *arcanum imperii*) of every political (or economic) theology consists of articulating the two elements that were initially separated. When in *State of Exception* Agamben focused on the “empty space” of the state of exception that binds together law and violence, here he focuses on an activity “as such truly mysterious that articulates the divine being into a trinity and, at the same time, preserves and ‘harmonizes’ it into a unity” (Agamben 2011, 39).

In the Trinitarian dogma, therefore, its theological basis finds the doctrine of the *raison d’état*, a secular concept that articulated the governmental apparatus with the higher instance determining the aim and goal of the art of government (Foucault 2008). But it is also a theological formulation of the metaphysical division between substance and praxis (Agamben 2011, 53). According to the doctrine of *oikonomia*, God’s praxis, his economy, is not grounded on his being. Theology and ontology are separated from economy and pragmatics, which makes God’s will truly *anarchic*. It is not only, according to Agamben, the initial formulation of the metaphysics of will, which will resurface later in Schelling and Nietzsche and will be traced by Heidegger throughout Western philosophy. The separation of being and *oikonomia* (action) requires a distinction within the very concept of praxis. Peterson’s contribution to political theology lies precisely in formulating the theological counterpart of the liberal separation between Kingdom and Government, which takes on the form of the distinction between God’s *dynamis* (*Macht*) and God’s *arche* (*Gewalt*) (Agamben 2011, 73). *Le roi règne, mais il ne gouverne pas* is a political formulation of the theological paradigm that separates Kingdom (*arche, Gewalt*) and Government (*dynamis, Macht*), positing the latter as free (anarchic) praxis that must be nevertheless subordinated to the instance of power. This very separation, as Agamben underlines it, opens up “the possibility and necessity of government” (Agamben 2011, 66). The Kingdom-Government opposition therefore mirrors that of *auctoritas-potestas* – in each case praxis is always divided into the possibility of acting or action itself, and the instance that enables the action or governs it.

15 All the more emphatically does Agamben underline his astonishment at Peterson’s thesis on the impossibility of any political theology proper to Christian monotheism, even accusing him of conscious repression of the problem of monarchy in Patristic texts (Agamben 2011, 14).

The logic of economical “mystery”, that is, the articulation of transcendence and immanence, God and world, Kingdom and Government, is best seen in the metaphysical concept of order, *taxis*. Medieval ontology took this Aristotelian notion and transformed it according to the doctrine of the divine economy. The very concept of order in its Aristotelian formulation joined in itself the substance with its presentation in the world, which made it an aporetic articulation of substance and relation (measure, number etc.). If now the being of God is only his *oikonomia*, that is *ordinatio* and *dispositio*, “praxis of government and activity that arranges according to measure, number and weight” (Agamben 2011, 89), then the order of the world becomes the effect of God’s constant creative activity that arranges things in relations. The world is the effect of the praxis of government, but it is also God who becomes this very praxis, who “is no longer only substance or thought, but also and in the same measure *dispositio*, praxis” (Agamben 2011, 90).

The philosophical formulation of the distinction between Kingdom and Government is to be found in Aquinas’ concept of causes. In *Il regno e la gloria* Agamben reconstructs his theory of primal and secondary causes, which not only explicates the Aristotelian notion of *taxis* in the new Christian conceptual horizon, but also gives theoretical fundamentals to the doctrine of providence. The relations between things, elements of the world, are only secondary causes, according to Aquinas. Every secondary cause is also determined (we should probably say “overdetermined”) by the primal cause, which refers the worldly relations to the *order* of the divine *dispositio*. The problem that interests Agamben is “the way in which the first cause governs created things while remaining transcendent with regard to them” (Agamben 2011, 95). The distinction between primal causes and secondary causes enables the distinction between general providence and special providence (Agamben 2011, 94–95) and represents the scholastic attempt to articulate transcendence with immanence, the general with the particular. The praxis of governance is possible because it is separated from the Kingdom and at the same time subordinated to it, which amounts to the necessary articulation of the general providence (understood also as the history of salvation) with special providence (relations in the world), or in Foucault’s terms – *omnes et singulatim* (Agamben 2011, 114).

In *Opus Dei* Agamben returns to Aquinas’ philosophy of causes but approaches it from a different angle – from the point of view of the genealogy of sacramental effectiveness. In order to explicate the efficacy of the sacrament, Aquinas adds a fifth type of cause to the Aristotelian doctrine of four causes: the instrumental cause (Agamben 2013a, 52). An action is efficacious instrumentally only when it acts according to its nature *and* is moved by the principal agent (like the ax that is an instrument of the lumberjack cutting down a tree). Therefore the sacrament is effective not only because of the actions performed by the priest, but also because he acts as an instrument of God’s will. The concept of sacramental

effectiveness coincides with that of divine *oikonomia* and divine providence: the realization of God's economy within the world and history is subordinated to the immanent economy of the Trinity (which turns the two economies into one), the secondary causes constituting the special providence are subordinated to the general providence, and, according to the same logic, the actions of people in the world are truly effective only when considered as instruments of God (actions realizing the divine economy in the world).

The theological notion of *oikonomia* presents therefore an aporetic concept of praxis that is both unfounded *and* subordinated. The separation of God's being from his action – the separation of theology from economy and ontology from pragmatics – discloses the lack of a proper fundament for praxis, life and language, but at the same time captures them in the division between the special/immanent and general/transcendent, articulating the two dimensions in a manner unattainable for the subject of praxis. It is therefore the very logic of this articulation that constitutes the basis and grounding of praxis¹⁶. The articulation constitutes the proper *oikonomias sacramentum*, the sacramental and mysterious character of the concept of the unfounded, and hence free, praxis bequeathed to Western philosophy by the Trinitarian dogma. The political problem of divine *oikonomia* now consists precisely of envisioning a form of *worldly* praxis of men and women which would be the structural counterpart of God's *oikonomia*, subordinating the free actions to the divine economy.

The theological dispositive that articulates worldly actions with God's economy, subsuming therefore human praxis under the split between Kingdom and Government (but also between *auctoritas/potestas*), is Glory. The theology of Glory, i.e. *doxology*, is preoccupied with the problem of the rearticulation of the division, both between the persons within the immanent economy (Father-Son-Holy Spirit) and between God and the world. Glory is the term that signifies the basic, fundamental relation between transcendence and immanence:

As we have already seen with regard to the term "order", which means as much a transcendent relation with God (*ordo ad Deum*) as a property immanent in creatures (*ordo ad invicem*), so glory is at once an essential attribute of God and something that creatures owe to him and that expresses their relation to him. Moreover, in the same way that the dual meaning of the term "order" ultimately ends up befitting the very essence of God, so the ambiguity of the term "glory" makes of it the name that defines God's most intimate nature (Agamben 2011, 214).

16 This figure of articulation as (metaphysical) grounding appears for the first time in *Il linguaggio e la morte* (Agamben 2006) in the figure of mute Voice, which presents the negative grounding of the human disposition to speak.

The proper problem of economic theology, according to Agamben, is not so much Glory as glorification, the praxis of praising God and his economy. The difference between Glory as an attribute of God and glorification as a praxis of the creation is nevertheless inherent in the very theological concept of Glory, which reproduces the aporetic articulation present in the notion of divine *oikonomia*. Glory denotes a mode of God's existence and a mode of participation in God's existence, joining the two aspects to the extent that it comes to conceptualize the existence of God as dependent on the activity of glorification (Agamben 2011, 221). God exists only because the world he created praises him – and the world praises him because it was created by God. Glorification is at the same time concerned with ontology (“to be”) and ethics, understood here as having-to-be¹⁷: God has to be praised in order to be; the worldly creatures were created in order to uphold God in his existence through praise.

It becomes clear why Agamben analyzes Glory as a theological dispositive that captures the inoperative character of human praxis (Agamben 2011, 245). The distinctive character of human life is the absence of any work or task the fulfillment of which should be the aim and goal of politics or ethics proper to the animal that has language (Agamben 2007). The theological paradigm of divine economy is a paradigm of praxis that is free, ungrounded, but at the same time directed towards the realization of an abstract, empty task of glorifying the divine praxis of governing the world, i.e. God's economy. The distinction between Kingdom and Government isn't only a theological formulation of the liberal paradigm of governance, but is itself based on the idea of *oikonomia*, praxis that is free only insofar as it realizes and fulfills the *a priori* principle (general providence, immanent economy of the Trinity, history of salvation etc.).

The analogy with the liberal concept of the market is striking. The principle of Smith's “invisible hand” reproduces the articulation between “immanence” and “transcendence” that we have seen in the case of the concepts of order and providence. The theological genealogy of economy allowed Agamben to deconstruct the apparent opposition between “naturalism” and “providentialism” (an order based on the needs of the “stomach” in the first case and an order envisioned previously in God's “brain”) which drove discussions among supporters of the free market in the 18th century, and to relate the *natural order* of the market back to the governmental machine founded on the distinction between Kingdom and Government:

If it is probable that the Smithian image of the invisible hand is to be understood, in this sense, as the action of an immanent principle, our reconstruction of the bipolar machine of the theological *oikonomia* has shown that there is no conflict between

¹⁷ Agamben analyses this aporetic link between “to be” and “having-to-be” more precisely in *Opus Dei* (Agamben 2013, 118–125).

“providentialism” and “naturalism” within it, because the machine functions precisely by correlating a transcendent principle with an immanent order. Just as with the Kingdom and the Government, the intradivine trinity and the economic trinity, so the “brain” and the “stomach” are nothing but two sides of the same apparatus, of the same *oikonomia*, within which one of the two poles can, at each turn, dominate the other (Agamben 2011, 284–285)¹⁸.

But the deconstruction of the natural “order” of the market isn’t the only contribution that Agamben’s theological genealogy of economy can make to political economy¹⁹. The concept of *taxis*, “order”, is founded on the separation between Kingdom and Government, which we have already seen is a different formulation – in a theological-economical conceptual key – of the *potestas-auctoritas* division, between power to act and power that enables and legitimizes the act. We can say that this separation of *dynamis* from *arche* (or *Macht* from *Gewalt*) founds the very possibility of governing and managing the lives of men and women, the human praxis in all its forms – including labor. If so, capitalism as an economic regime that governs and regulates the labor of men and women in order to valorize capital – the true God of modern times – must be founded on its own version of this division – and the articulation of the divided elements: which constitutes its own logic of conditioning the effectiveness and legitimization of praxis. A change of perspective is necessary. In order to relate the theological genealogy of economy to political economy, we need to go beyond the concept of market and investigate the form of praxis that market presupposes. We already know that it is a free and subordinated praxis – but how is this subordination to be understood? What are the metaphysical conditions of the capitalist governance of labor and, generally speaking, life? In order to give preliminary responses to these questions, we have to include in our investigations the political theology of liturgy.

18 This passage from *Il regno e la gloria* is one of the most important of Agamben’s contributions to the genealogy of modern liberalism and its “biopolitics”. The spontaneity of the market is “natural” only insofar as the actions of the participants in the market follow one principle, which makes market a “governable” sphere of praxis. See also notes by Foucault: “If we take things up a bit further, if we see them up at their origin, you can see that what characterizes this new art of government I have spoken about would be much more a naturalism than liberalism, inasmuch as the freedom that the physiocrats and Adam Smith talk about is much more the spontaneity, the internal and intrinsic mechanics of economic processes than a juridical freedom of the individual recognized as such” (Foucault 2010, 61).

19 And it is also not the most important one. Investigations into the theological roots of Smith’s concept of the “invisible hand” have been an important field of research at least since the publication of the famous article by Jacob Viner *Adam Smith and laissez faire* (Viner 1927; see also Oslington 2012). Many researches (including also those of Benjamin M. Friedman, Peter Harrison and Emma Rothschild) have pointed towards stoicism, Scottish Calvinism, British Scientific Natural Theology and the concept of the Natural Law as possible theological influences on Smith’s thinking (see Oslington 2011, Rothschild 2002). Agamben’s contribution to these debates may nevertheless consist of referring Smith’s concept of natural order to the Trinitarian theology and also of a deeply philosophical reading of this theological tradition.

Liturgy and office

According to Peterson, liturgy is the proper Christian form of politics. In opposition to Schmitt, for whom political theology must be based on the power of Christian *imperium*, Peterson separates Augustine's two Kingdoms, leaving it up to the Church to join the celestial and worldly forms of power: "the cult of the celestial Church and, therefore, also the liturgy of the earthly Church that is bound to the celestial, have an originary relation with the world of politics" (Peterson 1994, 202; see also Agamben 2011, 145). This "originary relation" is theologically grounded on the doctrine of Glory: liturgy is a form of worldly, organized praxis aimed at the glorification of God. The political significance of liturgy consists of participating through the glorification of the creator in his Glory, thus creating a worldly public sphere for the members of the Church as a sphere of the communal praise. *Leitourgia*, after all, means a "work" (*ergon*), a service performed for the people (*laos*). The separation of Kingdom from Government excludes the possibility of any political theology in Schmitt's sense – of a direct, "miraculous", sovereign intervention in the realm of worldly politics. But it is the praise of the Kingdom, the principle of the general providence, that is in itself political, since it affirms the "order" in the world – but only the order that aims at the subordination of worldly relations (effects of the "free" will of people) to the divine economy (history of salvation). By exhorting *heis theos* [one God], the Church as a community submits to the transcendent instance and creates its own public sphere in the form of a ceremony (Agamben 2011, 168). The genealogy of the ceremonial aspect of power constitutes a significant part of Agamben's investigations into economic theology (see Agamben 2011, 167–196). Nevertheless, the aspect of liturgical action that interests us here is not so much ceremony as effectiveness:

The mystery of the liturgy is, in this sense, the mystery of effectiveness, and only if one understands this arcane secret is it possible to understand the enormous influence that this praxis, which is only apparently separate, has exercised on the way in which modernity has thought both its ontology and its ethics, its politics and its economy (Agamben 2013a, xii).

The "mystery" of the liturgy corresponds to the mystery of the divine economy, i.e. the articulation of the transcendent principle, presupposed as the aim and goal that enables the governance of the *taxis*, with the immanent order. An "effective" action in this sense is an action that joins the worldly order to the general principle of that order. The "effectiveness" of liturgy was thus perfect in the person of Jesus Christ – a worldly incarnation of God and simultaneously an element of the immanent economy of the Trinity – who, as the highest priest, was the subject of actions that were all perfectly effective. The mystery of Christ's

economical effectiveness was later transformed into the doctrine of the “ministry” of liturgy. With the translation of the Greek *mysterion* into Latin as *sacrament*, the effectiveness of liturgical practice, that is the subsumption of praxis of every member of the Church under the principle of God’s Kingdom, came to be formulated in the doctrine of sacramental effectiveness (Agamben 2013a, 16). In order to be effective, the liturgical action must articulate praxis *in* the world with the general instance *of* the worldly order.

The form of this liturgical “originary relation”, which we could also term “liturgical subsumption of praxis”, isn’t limited, according to Agamben, to the Church’s doctrine of the sacrament or praise (exhorting *heis theos* or singing hymns to the Glory of God). To put it otherwise, if the state of exception reduced any form of life to bare life, to the biological foundation of political or ethical life, the political theology of liturgy gives birth to many different forms of life, all nevertheless subordinated to participation in God’s Glory. In *Altissima povertà* Agamben traces the liturgical subsumption of praxis to the concept of *regula vitae* of the monastic life, according to which the monks were to “construct their life as a total and unceasing liturgy or Divine Office” (Agamben 2013b, xii). The separation of *regula* and *vita*, in the same manner as *auctoritas* was separated from *potestas* and Kingdom from Government, introduced a new concept of the governance of life, one based on the subsumption of life under the *a priori* formulated rule of conduct that encompasses all aspects of life in its entirety. Probably the best example of the liturgical subsumption of praxis in monastic life was the imperative of the incessant study of the text of the *regula* itself. The monk should spend as much time as possible in reading the text of the monastic rules or, should that be impossible, in meditating on the text and reciting it from memory (Agamben 2013b, 77–78). The reading or recitation of the text of the *regula*, which itself prescribes its own reading or recitation by the monk, is a form of perfectly self-referential and thus absolutely effective liturgical practice: just as with the aporetic articulation of “being” and “having-to-be” in the concept of Glory, the liturgy of monastic life is perfectly realized in a praxis of following the rule that prescribes only obedience to itself. The self-referential character of the rule that one must recite and read the rule is the most abstract form of the monastic praxis that illustrates the general structure of the liturgical subsumption of praxis under the *regula vitae*: the idea of making every moment of life and every form of action a realization of a rule and hence of liturgy:

As *meditatio* renders *lectio* potentially continuous, so every gesture of the monk, all the most humble manual activities become a spiritual work and acquire the liturgical status of an *opus Dei*. And precisely this continuous liturgy is the challenge and novelty of monasticism, which the Church was not slow to pick up on, seeking to introduce, albeit within certain limits, the totalitarian demand proper to the monastic cult into cathedral worship as well (Agamben 2013b, 83).

Hence the detailed rules concerning the monk's diet, clothing, and daily schedule; generally speaking: his habit, *habitus*. But it is precisely this liturgization of life and vivification of liturgy (Agamben 2013b, 82) that makes the monastic form of liturgy specific and different from the liturgy of the Church, although the latter had incessantly sought to reconcile the “two liturgies” – the liturgy of monastic life and the liturgy of the priestly ministry. Because of this difference Agamben penetrates the archives of *regulae vitae*, especially the Franciscan one, underlining the distinction between the two liturgies in order to delineate a possible concept of a *form-of-life*, a form of practice that would elude the liturgical subsumption of praxis. But in order to do that – and also in order to reconstruct his political philosophy of praxis – it isn't sufficient to just reverse somewhat the relation between *regula* and *vita*. It is also necessary to reconstruct the liturgical structure of effectiveness and move beyond the presupposed structures conditioning the effectiveness of human praxis.

The liturgical effectiveness of monastic life consisted in subordinating every aspect of the monk's life, every form of worldly action, to the rule that prescribed a specific way in which this action should be carried out. The action realized the liturgy of monastic life because it was carried out in a specific manner, according to the rule, and the rule existed only in the actions performed according to the rule. The monk who doesn't live according to a specific form of life is not a monk. By contrast, the priest realizes the ministry whose effectiveness is independent of the way he leads his life (Agamben 2013b, 84). The sacrament granted by the priest is effective because of the priestly *office*, because the priest is the *instrument* of God's will, i.e. his economy. According to the doctrine of the sacrament, the priest's action is divided into *opus operantis*, i.e. the very *worldly* action of the subject with its physical characteristics, and *opus operatum*, i.e. the effective, liturgical reality of the sacrament (Agamben 2013a, 21). Sacrament is the *mystical* (i.e. *sacramental*) unity of these two aspects of priestly action. In the ecclesiastic liturgy of the office, the division between *regula* and *vita*, the metaphysical basis for the liturgy of the monastic life, takes the form of the division between *opus operantis* and *opus operatum*. An action is effective only insofar as it is *also opus operatum*, that is, as it realizes God's economy in the world. The principle of the action's effectiveness is not an element of the subject's action and – as we have seen before in case of other oppositions traced by Agamben in his theological genealogy – the *mystical* articulation of *opus operantis* and *opus operatum* is unattainable for the subject of the action. The articulation of the two elements lies beyond the sphere of the subject's action, but still constitutes the fundament of its effectiveness.

The two liturgies present two different forms of the liturgical subsumption of praxis. The first form, the liturgy of the monastic life, concerns the way the action is carried out: it makes a certain form of praxis effective only insofar as it is performed according to the rule. It is a disciplinary form of governance of life, molding an individual's form of life in every

possible aspect. Today we can see this form of governance active in corporations or in books advocating the “entrepreneurship of the self” (Bröckling 2007) and issuing an endless list of rules of conduct in order to perform the liturgy of modern enterprise. The second form, the liturgy of the office, is not interested in the form of the action, that is, in the way it is performed, but subsumes praxis *as it is*, as *opera operantis*, under the principle that grants it effectiveness or confirms its effective character. It is not the question of the conduct, of *life*, but of the instance that grants life sacramental effectiveness. In the first liturgy the ethical and even physical aspects of the subject are taken into account in determining the effective character of monastic life. In the second liturgy the subject is just a carrier of the action, the effective character of which is decided according to the office.

The management of effectiveness and productivity

Emanuel Alloa stresses the fact that economic theology is first of all interested in the problem of diversity – and the management of this diversity (Alloa 2015, 300). The economy of the flow of glory between the persons in the Trinity (immanent economy) and between the Trinity and the world would set the paradigm of the management of life (in theological terms: the creation) and the *taxis* of the world. Our focus on the concept of liturgy is intended to show that it is not only the flow of glory, the *economy of glory*, but far more the liturgy, or as we call it “the liturgical subsumption of praxis”, that constitutes the theological paradigm for the management of the living. In the genealogy of the liturgical praxis – the praise of God’s name, the monastic *regula* or the ecclesiastic office – Agamben was able to reconstruct the paradigm of *effectiveness* that enables the management of the praxis of men and women. For how is it possible to manage the praxis of the multitude? The aim is not so much to govern all area of worldly praxis by taking into account the intentions of the subjects of praxis or their effects *in* the world alone, as to set an instance determining the effectiveness of the praxis independently of the actions themselves. What counts in the liturgical subsumption of praxis is the function of a given action in the service of God, i.e. as a realization of his *oikonomia* (Agamben 2013a, 25). The liturgical reality of praxis is, according to the Church’s doctrine of sacraments, its *effective reality*, its *Wirklichkeit*, a reality that is effective and that effectuates. For this reason Agamben states that the liturgy sets the paradigm for the ontology of effectiveness, in which “being is inseparable from its effects; it names being insofar as it is effective, produces certain effects, and at the same time is determined by them” (Agamben 2013a, 41).

But liturgy is not only an ontological paradigm; it is also a paradigm of praxis, including a model of the subject of praxis. Just as, according to the doctrine of glory, God is only his *oikonomia*, so the subject of liturgical praxis is only this praxis as *opus operatum*. But at

the same time, just as the concept of God's economy entails an aporetic relation between God and creation – in which the worldly creatures were created in order to praise God, that exists only because of this glorification – so the liturgical subsumption of praxis entails an aporetic articulation between *being* and *duty* (*having-to-be*) that “institutes a circular relation between *being* and *praxis*, by which the priest's *being* defines his *praxis* and his *praxis*, in turn, defines his *being*” (Agamben 2013a, 81). It is not a paradigm of praxis defining being (*existentia* that determines *essentia*), but a circular and aporetic articulation of praxis that realizes a being with a being that exists only as effectuated by a certain form of praxis. This is why the liturgical subsumption of praxis coincides with the notion of *taxis*, but also sets the paradigm for a market subjectivity: the subject of liturgical praxis is at the same time *being* and *relation*. Although this definition of the subject (as at the same time a being in relation and the relation itself) is generally true for the human being as the subject of language (Virno 2011, 33), in the case of the liturgical subsumption the subject of praxis is related, *in its being*, to a divine economy (the principle of order or the “invisible hand of the market”); that is, to the *instance of the worldly order and not to the world* or worldly beings. This is precisely the reason why the theological doctrine of economy and liturgy establishes the paradigm for the management of the living: by introducing the paradigm of effectiveness, it defines the multitude as beings that need to be effectuated by their praxis, the effectiveness of which is determined by an instance (in the case of the ecclesiastic liturgy – the Church)²⁰ that remains transcendent to this praxis. The liturgical subsumption includes the praxis (*life*) of men and women only to the extent that it excludes it (that is, includes it as an animate instrument of God's economy, but excludes it as a simple, worldly praxis).

This aporetic concept of liturgical effectiveness constitutes the most important difference between the monastic and ecclesiastical liturgies. The monastic liturgy, the vivification of liturgy in the monastic *regula*, reduces the effectiveness of praxis to the realization of the monastic rule. The aporetic articulation of being and having-to-be is in this case reduced to the introduction of the highest rule that prescribes the *lectio* or *meditatio* aimed at repeating (out loud or in the monk's head) the text of the *regula*. Just as the absolute performative, i.e. the sentence “I speak”, is always a felicitous performative (Virno 2015, 49), since it refers solely to its own linguistic reality, so does the reading and repeating of the text of the *regula* represent the maximum of liturgical effectiveness, since the aim of the monastic liturgy is to uphold the *regula* constituting the monastic *koinos bios*. In the terminology of

20 We might pose a question here about the extent to which Agamben's genealogy of liturgy contributes to the famous thesis by Max Weber that capitalism developed out of the protestant work ethic (Weber 2013), namely: to what extent was the development of the protestant work ethic only an institutional transformation of the paradigm of the liturgical subsumption of praxis – that is, a renunciation of the Church as the instance determining the effectiveness of praxis, but without the renunciation of the concept of liturgy as a proper form of Christian ethics and politics?

speech acts one can differentiate between the two liturgies on the basis of the possibility of felicity, i.e. effectiveness: while the monastic liturgy enables the felicity of the liturgical praxis – a realization, although not a *fulfillment*, of the rule, the liturgy of the sacrament is founded on the office of the priest, in which “the *opus operantis* can coincide with the *opus operatum* only on condition of being distinguished from it and can be distinguished from it only on condition of disappearing into it”: which means that “its felicity is its infelicity and its infelicity is its felicity” (Agamben 2013a, 25). In other words, the action of the priest can never be considered effective on its own merit alone. The self-referential character of the monastic *regula* (that prevents fulfillment but enables realization of the rule) is transposed here into an aporetic structure of the ecclesiastical office and the subjectivity of the priest. It is now because of the office – of a metaphysical quality or disposition of the subject – that praxis can be effective. In the concept of the priestly office, the Aristotelian separation of *dynamis* and *energeia* ceases to denote two different modes of being and becomes a diagram of effectiveness (Agamben 2013a, 91–92), whereby a certain disposition, a certain *dynamis*, determines that the actions of the priest are effective, but this very *dynamis* exists only insofar as it is being effectuated. It is therefore the ecclesiastical liturgy of the sacrament that sets the proper paradigm for the management of the living, subordinating the free praxis of the multitude to an instance that determines the effectiveness, i.e. felicity of its praxis. Which also means that it determines the political character of the life of the multitude.

Agamben’s genealogy of liturgy therefore prepares the ground for a truly political philosophy of praxis which should consist not only of analyzing different forms of praxis (e.g. communicative praxis, exchange, manual labor, care for others), but also of exploring the structural, institutional and metaphysical mechanisms determining these forms of praxis as belonging to a certain sphere (economy, politics, ethics, etc.) or as realizing certain processes aimed at producing certain effects. The liturgical subsumption of praxis sets, according to Agamben, a general paradigm of the “effectiveness” of praxis independently of the material qualities of the actions of the subjects of praxis. It is now becoming clear why Agamben has made the proper task of his philosophy to think the *inoperativity* of human life. For it is precisely this *inoperativity* that escapes the liturgical subsumption, and it is the inoperativity that constitutes a paradigm of a perfectly *worldly praxis*, not aimed at realizing any task, any work; or rather, not being effectuated *in order to fulfill a certain task*.

The question of a determination of praxis by a transcendent instance through effectuation is precisely the point at which Agamben’s political philosophy crosses paths with political economy. The theological genealogy of economy deals with the problem of metaphysical presuppositions of the management of praxis. These metaphysical presuppositions operate, as we’ve shown earlier, by dividing the factual praxis into two elements and setting one as the fundament for the other. The very engine of this

metaphysical operation was language, because of its pre-suppositional character which is paradigmatic for any concept of political theology and metaphysics (ontology). But there is an additional presupposing force in the modern world, no less divine than language – capital. The famous unpublished sixth chapter of the first volume of *Capital*, known more widely as *Results of the Direct Production Process*, is one of the best examples of Marx's deconstruction of the metaphysical fundamentals of capitalist societies (Marx 2009). Marx deals here not so much with the metaphysical appearance of commodity exchange, as with the metaphysical determination of labor as *productive* and *unproductive*. He describes, with perfect clarity, the self-presupposing power of capital, whereby the capitalist relationships of production not only result in the commodity form of the products, but presuppose the commodity form of all elements of the production process, and the wage relation as the only possible labor relation (Marx 2009, 22)²¹. Here is the very “mythic violence” (Benjamin 1996) of capital. And, in the same metaphysical manner, capitalist relations are founded on the fundamental division and the rearticulation of the divided elements: it is not only the commodity that is a sensible unity of the use and exchange value, but it is also the process of labor that is a unity of the process of labor (producing use value) and valorization (producing exchange value, valorizing capital) (Marx 2009, 70). The presupposing power of capital not only transforms all elements of the production process and the effects of previous labor (dead labor) into capital, establishing the process of circulation of commodities as the source of all being, but also makes the process of valorization into the *opus operatum* for every form of labor. The fundamental logic of the liturgical subsumption of praxis, i.e. the division between *opus operantis* and *opus operatum*, is reproduced in capitalism, as Marx presents it, in the division between *productive* and *unproductive labor*²². Marx introduces the discussion on the productivity of labor just after he finishes the analysis of the real subsumption of labor, i.e. the development of the *properly capitalistic* form of production, which has as one of its effects the tendency to transform all forms of labor into *productive labor*. A labor is productive *only insofar as it is an element of the process of valorization*. Marx formulates it bluntly in a manner that replicates the logic of the effectiveness of the liturgical praxis:

21 This metaphysical presupposing power of capital is probably best analyzed by different theorists working with the notion of primitive accumulation. The very violence, the “secret” of primitive accumulation is a necessary element in introducing the capitalist relations of production, since capital, according to its defining notion, has no beginning; it presupposes itself as its own source; see e.g. De Angelis 2001.

22 Marx discusses the concept of productivity of labor in a more historical manner in *Theories of the surplus value*, but it is first of all the texts of the *Results...* that present his understanding of the division between productive and unproductive labor in the wider, more systematic context of the development of capitalistic relations of production and the subsumption of labor under capital.

Only this worker is productive, whose process of labor is – to the productive process of the consumption of his potential to work [Arbeitsvermögens] – the bearer of this work [der Träger dieser Arbeit] – by the capital or a capitalist (Marx 2009, 123).

One of the effects of the subsumption of labor under capital is the transformation of the worker into a “bearer of work”, or better – the installment in his subjectivity of the disposition, the potentiality to work²³ (Ratajczak 2014). But he is only this bearer insofar as this capacity to work is effectuated *productively*, i.e. according to the *oikonomia* of capital (valorization of value) by the capitalist, the owner of the means of production or of financial capital. Marx stresses the fact that the *productive* character of labor is independent of its form, content, or even the wage relation (Marx 2009, 124–125): a worker can receive a wage for e.g. educating the children of the capitalist, but then he is not considered a *productive* worker, i.e. he is not directly valorizing capital. To put it otherwise, the productive labor is a (mystical) unity of *opus operantis* and *opus operatum*, a process of labor and a process of valorization. The instance that determines this mystical union is capital or a capitalist that uses, *actualizes* the worker’s potential. What follows is that only those workers have the capacity to work whose capacity can be effectuated productively by capital.

Productive labor and *productive laborer* are aporetic concepts, repeating almost without distinction the aporetic logic of the divine *oikonomia* and the liturgy of *officium*: the productive laborer must be effectuated by capital in order to be productive, and capital exists only because there are forms of praxis that can valorize it. A productive laborer has the potential to work productively, but only if it is effectuated *by capital* – he is therefore this abstract potential, but he also has to actualize it in order to be this potential. He is what he is, but also is the extent to which he is the relation between his potential (his being) and capital. The divine self-presupposing power of capital changes the multiple forms of social praxis in order to effectuate them productively: in order to become *productive*, a form of praxis must be made into a *potential to be actualized*, which also means measured, coded, compared, etc. and separated from other forms of praxis. It is precisely this installment of the relation to *actualize the capacity to work*, together with the appropriation of the means of work and subsistence, that constitutes the proper political power of capital as social relation. It sets the process of valorization as the fundament, as *opus operatum*, against which the forms of praxis are measured and determined. This political power becomes all the more evident with the development of cognitive and finance-driven capitalism, in which the accumulation of value is conducted *outside of the production process*, on the basis of the processes of circulation and

23 The word *Arbeitsvermögen* is of course a common noun in the German language, used by Marx as a synonym for *Arbeitskraft*, work force. But it shouldn’t be treated as a merely lexical question, since *Vermögen* means precisely capacity or even disposition. What’s more, in *Results...* Marx uses the classical philosophical distinction between *dynamis* and *energeia* abundantly to describe the properly capitalistic relations of production.

social reproduction (Marazzi 2011, 48), and of an increasing number of *dispositifs* to intercept the value created by social labor without transforming it into productive labor (which would mean, apart from other things, some form of income for the productive activity). It is a specific, economic state of exception, which operates on the *labor/valorization* division and defines the paradigmatic form of praxis as *productive labor* (unity of the process of labor and the process of valorization), but simultaneously excludes a growing portion of activities as *unproductive* (as simply labor, or rather simply *life*) – a matter of the *private* lives of the individuals (e.g. biological reproduction) or *public* matter (e.g. cultural or academic production) and creates new forms of life (e.g. the entrepreneurs of the self) on the basis of their potential to *actualize their productive potential*.

The unity of *labor* and the *valorization process* is becoming more and more questionable in contemporary capitalism, which creates processes of valorization independent of labor (e.g. high-frequency trading) and deprives more and more forms of labor of the quality of being “productive”. But the violence of capitalism, an effect of its divine, presupposing power, consists of maintaining its general framework despite the social and technological changes that make it dysfunctional. It is in this sense metaphysical, or even theological, since it is based on the paradigm of effectiveness that we have inherited from metaphysics and theology. Contemporary investigations into economic theology can therefore presuppose the grounds for thinking beyond the concept of subjectivity and praxis that are still present in the way we envision social relations in capitalist societies – the relation of debt, the productivity of labor, the ownership of oneself and one’s body, the development of “human capital”, etc. It is then not a matter of replacing political economy with economic theology, nor even of correcting research in the field of political economy from a theological point of view, but of rethinking the problem of praxis and subjectivity which is also present at the heart of political economy.

Agamben’s theological genealogy of economy can thus be perceived not only as a theological genealogy of the concept of market, but far more in terms of its elaboration of the political aspect of liturgy, as a theological genealogy of the concept of *productive labor*. It is a theological-economic concept (appearing already in the first concepts of modern political economy: in the physiocrats, Smith and Ricardo) that joins a certain form of praxis (certain forms of labor) with capital in a manner elaborated in the liturgical notion of the office, which joins the worldly praxis with God’s *oikonomia*. Capital is not only an accumulation of value, it is also an *actualization of productive labor* – which also means *the force that makes social labor productive* (“productive” in the sense analyzed and criticized by Marx). And productive labor is a form of praxis that valorizes capital – which also means a form of praxis that upholds the existence of capital, that requires capital in order to be effectuated, to exist. *Productive labor cannot exist without capital and capital cannot exist without productive labor* – both notions presuppose

each other in the aporetic and circular manner that we have seen operating in the concept of the liturgical subsumption of praxis. The “productive” character of labor is as much an issue of “economics” as an effect of social struggles (like the struggle for wages for housework; see Federici 2012) and a metaphysical problem of the “effectiveness” of being. The critique of “productivity” of labor should become the object not only of the contemporary critique of political economy and social transformation, as we can see it e.g. in Guy Standing’s critique of the distinction between (productive) labor and (unproductive) work (Standing 2014), but also of a philosophical critique of praxis, ethics and politics. The “productivity” of labor (or *life*, for that matter) in capitalism is just as much a metaphysical notion of a “form” of labor, as the value form is a metaphysical notion of wealth (or of the common), and should be criticized through notions and investigations that go beyond the vocabulary of political economy towards the critique of the metaphysical residue present in economic notions. Economic theology therefore constitutes a preliminary research field for a political philosophy of praxis that will be able to introduce a non-capitalistic form of praxis, one that goes beyond the “productive” (or “effective”) character of human – and also not human – life.

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TYTUŁ: Boskie zarządzanie świeckimi sprawami. Agambenowska teologiczna genealogia ekonomii jako polityczna filozofia praktyki

ABSTRAKT: Celem tego artykułu jest przedstawienie takiej interpretacji Agambenowskiej teologicznej genealogii ekonomii, która ukaże jej znaczenie dla badań w obszarze ekonomii politycznej. Jedynym sposobem na powiązanie dyskursów teologii ekonomicznej i ekonomii politycznej jest pokazanie, że teologia ekonomiczna nie zajmuje się kwestiami przynależnymi do sfery ekonomii, lecz podejmuje dużo bardziej ogólny problem – problem ludzkiej praktyki. Postaram się udowodnić, że stawką Agambenowskiej filozofii jest krytyka teologicznych, a więc metafizycznych, założeń koncepcji ludzkiej praktyki, którą to krytykę można przeprowadzić za pomocą teologicznej genealogii, w szczególności trynitarniej ekonomii. Artykuł skupia się na pojęciu liturgii i jego roli w Agambenowskich badaniach genealogicznych jako teologicznym paradygmacie kapitalistycznego zarządzania ludzkim życiem (czyli praktyką) i kończy się rozważaniami nad możliwą aplikacją Agambenowskiej teologicznej genealogii ekonomii do marksistowskiej krytyki ekonomii politycznej, przede wszystkim do krytyki podziału na pracę produkcyjną i nieprodukcyjną.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: teologia ekonomiczna, teologia polityczna, ekonomia, chwała, liturgia, praktyka, praca, efektywność, produktywność, Giorgio Agamben, Karol Marks

ECONOMIC THEOLOGY, GOVERNANCE AND NEOLIBERALISM: LESSONS OF *THE KINGDOM AND THE GLORY*

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Abstract: The aim of this paper is to examine Agamben's engagement with economic theology in order to underscore its relevance for the critique of contemporary neoliberal politics. In the first part, I offer a summary of the central arguments of *The Kingdom and the Glory*. In particular, I focus on both the treatment of the notion of *oikonomia* in the early Christian discussions on the divine trinity and its relation to the providential paradigm of government. I then show how this genealogy of *oikonomia* is useful for a political analysis of the present. In doing so, I respond to some of the criticisms leveled against Agamben's *The Kingdom and the Glory* by Alberto Toscano. Finally, I will conclude by showing how Agamben's work is of particular importance for the study of neoliberal political rationality.

Keywords: economic theology, *oikonomia*, neoliberalism, governance, Giorgio Agamben

In *The Kingdom and the Glory: For a Theological Genealogy of Economy and Government*, Agamben inquires into the reasons why, at least in the West, “power has assumed the form of *oikonomia*, that is, a government of men” (Agamben 2011, xi). Indeed, through an archaeological investigation into economic theology Agamben examines the articulation of the two different polarities that constitute what he calls the “governmental machine”: the transcendental pole of sovereignty and the immanent pole of the administration, the Kingdom and the Government. In contrast to the special focus Agamben had previously given to the juridical-institutional pole of sovereignty (Agamben 1998; Agamben 2005), the strong emphasis in this work on the economy highlights the immanent order over the transcendent norm, re-orienting sovereignty towards an understanding of government.

The world, writes Agamben, is “governed through the coordination of two principles, the *auctoritas* (that is, a power without actual execution) and the *potestas* (that is, a power that can be exercised); the Kingdom and the Government” (Agamben 2011, 103). This thesis, which is developed in *The Kingdom and the Glory*, signals a major shift in the treatment of power as a category of analysis in the *Homo sacer* series:

If it appears in *Homo Sacer I* that the double articulation of inside and outside produces power which then grounds the political, *The Kingdom and the Glory* radically modifies this claim by showing how government effectively produces the power which grounds it, making the kingdom (sovereign power) operative through the inoperability of the power of Glory (Walkin 2014, 211).

Agamben’s genealogy of economic theology highlights this complex bipolar structure of power that underpins the historical tensions between sovereignty and government, providing an insightful framework from which to understand the neoliberal political rationality and the emergence of governance as its primary administrative form. The aim of this paper is therefore to examine Agamben’s engagement with economic theology in order to underscore its relevance for the critique of contemporary neo-liberal politics.

In the first part of this work, I offer a summary of the central arguments of the first part of *The Kingdom and the Glory*. In particular I focus on both the treatment of the notion of *oikonomia* in the early Christian discussions on the divine trinity, and its relation to the providential paradigm of government. I then show how this genealogy of *oikonomia* is useful for a political analysis of the present. In doing so I also respond to some of the criticisms leveled against Agamben’s *The Kingdom and the Glory* by Alberto Toscano (2011). I conclude by showing how Agamben’s work is of particular importance for the study of the neoliberal political rationality.

A genealogy of economic theology: on the fracture between Being and Action

As Agamben notes, Foucault's historical investigations into the government of man and things "were only the shadow of his theoretical questioning of the present" (Agamben 2007, 1). In Agamben's case, this shadow is prolonged until it reaches the beginnings of Christian theology. While Agamben locates his own work on the governmental machine in "the wake of Michel Foucault's investigations into the genealogy of governmentality" (Agamben 2011, xi), he dislocates Foucault's work into a larger context by digging into a path that was not available to Foucault (cf. Dean 2013, 167). In *The Kingdom and the Glory* this path opens with the identification of two political paradigms – functionally related to one another but yet antinomical – derived from Christian theology:

Political theology, which founds the transcendence of sovereign power on the single God, and economic theology, which replaces this transcendence with the idea of an *oikonomia*, conceived as an immanent ordering – domestic and political in strict sense – of both divine and human life. Political philosophy and the modern theory of the sovereignty derive from the first paradigm; modern biopolitics up to the current triumph of economy and government over every other aspect of social life derive from the second paradigm (Agamben 2011, 1).

While modern political theorists, theologians and historians have focused on political theology, Agamben tries to bring to light the economic signature of government derived from the second paradigm. Indeed, Agamben starts his genealogy of the governmental machine from the crucial role that the Greek notion of *oikonomia* played in the theological debates of the first centuries concerning the doctrine of the trinity.

In its classical Greek connotation, *oikonomia* means administration of the "house" – *oikos* – understood not as the modern family house but rather as a "complex organism composed of heterogeneous relations, entwined with each other" (Agamben 2011, 17). More importantly Agamben, traces from Aristotle (Agamben 2011, 17–18) the idea that in the Greek philosophical tradition economy differs from politics just as the *oikos differs from polis – the city – that is to say, oikonomia is opposed to the "political"*, as the art of ruling and administering the city (Salzani 2012, 269). Furthermore, it is important to mention that *oikonomia* is not a science, but an administrative paradigm, a praxis that implies contextual measures and decisions that take place and can only be understood in relation to a particular problem (cf. Agamben 2011). Thus, commenting on Xenophon, Agamben writes:

Oikonomia is presented as a functional organization, an activity of management which is not bound to rules other than that of the orderly functioning of the house (or of the undertaking in question). It is this "managerial" paradigm that defines the semantic

sphere of the term *oikonomia* (as of the verb *oiknomein* and of the noun *oikonomos*) and determines its progressive analogical broadening outside its original meanings (Agamben 2011, 33).

As Agamben shows, this notion of *oikonomia* is crucial in the early Christians' discussions concerning the development of the doctrine of the Trinity. The point of departure is Paul's use of *oikonomia* as an administrative activity – an *oikonomia* of the mystery – in his letters to the Corinthians. For Agamben, in these letters the term refers to the task God assigned to Paul: the task of “announcing the mystery of redemption hidden in the will of God that has now come to completion” (Agamben 2011, 23). As Agamben shows, here *oikonomia* does not acquire a teleological or a political sense, as it remains of the domain of the administration, and thus the Christians are in this sense, the first proper economic man (cf. Agamben 2011, 24).

It is with the reversal of Paul's formula – “the *oikonomia* of the mystery” – into the “mystery of the *oikonomia*” that the term ceases to be a mere analogical transposition and becomes a technical term whose function is to articulate the entities of the Trinity. Indeed, with the intervention of Hippolytus and Tertullian the technicizing of *oikonomia* serves to combat the monotheism of the Monarchians by resolving the mystery of the Trinity, not in ontological terms, but on economic ones, reconciling the unity of God with the figures of divine life: the providential organization of the world (the Holy spirit), God's will (the Son) and the Father. As Agamben shows, the argument was that God, as far as his substance is concerned, is absolutely one, but that He is three in terms of his *oikonomia*, that is to say in the way in which He manages the divine house and life. In this sense, the articulation of the Trinity is conceived not in metaphysical terms, since the three divine figures are one and the same in status, *potestas*, and *substantia*. Rather, they differ only in form, so that the Trinity is itself a *dispensatio*, an *oikonomia* of the internal disposition of the divine substance:

The mystery of divinity reveals itself to be the mystery of administration, delegation and government. The articulation of the divine life's Trinity and the salvation of humanity are at the same time divided and inseparable. The *oikonomia* renders possible a reconciliation in which the transcendent God, at the same time one and Trinitarian, in order to remain transcendent, assumes an *oikonomic praxiology* and finds an immanence of government as praxis, where the mystery of sovereignty coincides with the history of humanity (Zartaloudis 2010, 65).

In short, Agamben shows that early Christian theologians used the term *oikonomia* in order to solve the problem posed by the presence of three divine figures, by locating the real mystery not in the Being of God but in its praxis, avoiding polytheism and strict monotheism. What is

mysterious then is the economy itself, which ultimately becomes nothing other than the mystery of freedom. The history of salvation and the mystery of the Trinity are shown to share the same functional relation to divine *oikonomia*, and in this sense are complementary rather than contradictory. However, in avoiding a split in the Being of God, the doctrine of divine *oikonomia* introduced a different division that shapes the very form of the modern governmental paradigm, the division between God's being and his action, between ontology and economy: "this is the secret dualism that the doctrine of *oikonomia* has introduced into Christianity, something like an original Gnostic germ, which does not concern the caesura between two divine figures, but rather that between God and his government of the world" (Agamben 2011, 53).

For Agamben, this rupture, which was not present in the classical world, marks the primacy of the will that characterises the history of Western metaphysics and gives birth to modern ethics. What is at the core of the debate is the character of Christ, the question of whether he is founded in the Father or, if like him, Christ is *anarchos*, that is to say, without principle, ungrounded (Agamben 2011, 57). The thesis that has finally prevailed is that Christ – the Son of God, and who represents His word and action and has "assumed the economy of salvation" (Agamben 2011, 58) – is unfounded in the Father, is *anarchos*, and himself constitutes a mystery. The fact that Christ has no foundation means, for Agamben, that "in the last instance, language and praxis do not have a foundation in being" (Agamben 2011, 59). Indeed, contrary to the Aristotelian unmoved mover, whose actions fully coincide with his being, Agamben shows that for the Christian forefathers God's actions are dissociated from his being, and thus not only ethics but also politics become problematic. This anarchic nature of the divine *oikonomia* grounded in the fracture between God's being and praxis, which makes intelligible the link that in the West unites anarchy and government, and therefore, "not only is something like a providential government of the world possible just because praxis does not have any foundation in being, but also this government – which has its paradigm in the Son and his *oikonomia* – is itself intimately anarchic" (Agamben 2011, 64).

Therefore, what is at stake in the split between being and action is the operation of the governmental machine, the division between kingdom and government produced by the Trinitarian *oikonomia*, which was planned to be resolved through the providential paradigm, i.e. providence being the paradigm through which the division between transcendent and immanent is intended to be reconciled, presenting a development of the Trinitarian doctrine which constitutes the epistemological core of the modern paradigm of government. The idea of providence refers to the way in which God governs the world, and how it functions, according to Agamben, as a bipolar machine. The persistent feature of the theological and philosophical reflection on providence is the claim that God does not govern the world in a direct fashion, that is, by controlling every single detail of earthly beings, but through

universal principles. These universal and transcendent laws – *ordinatio* – are complemented with a particular immanent providence entrusted to the angels – *executio* – forming the two poles of the divine government of the world. The activity of government is therefore both providential, in the transcendental sense, and fateful, in terms of the distribution and administration of the universal principles: “the governmental machine functions like an incessant theodicy, in which the Kingdom of providence legitimates and founds the Government of fate, and the later guarantees that the order of the former has established and renders it operative” (Agamben 2011, 129).

In other words, fate as a special providence, and universal principles as a general providence, constitute a bipolar system, which produces an “area of undecidability between what is general and what is particular, between what is calculated and what is non-wanted” (Agamben 2011, 141). Governance is possible only through the production of this zone of indistinction, which is why the ontology of an act of government is, for Agamben, “vicarious ontology, in the sense that, within the economical paradigm, every power has a vicarious character, deputizes for another [*fa le veci di un altro*]. This means that there is not a ‘substance’ of power but only an ‘economy’ of it” (Agamben 2011, 141).

This, then, is how Agamben proposes to read the maxim “The king reigns, but he does not govern”. That is to say, contrary to the Foucaultian call to “cut off the king’s head in political theory” and to the opposite reading from Schmittian political theology – which asserts the foundation of sovereign power – Agamben proposes to read it as a reaffirmation of the double structure of an act of government, the interaction between an always limited and impotent sovereignty with an anarchical *oikonomia*, being and praxis, transcendence and immanence. The *roi mebaignié*, the doctrine of the *rex inutilis* and the *fisher king* are paradigmatic cases of this structure, representing the mutilated, useless and absent king:

The transcendence of the King in his *persona ficta* (his sovereign body) entailed itself an internal fracture between being and praxis [...], the *persona ficta* of the King had no origin other than in the empty throne, the anarchic time-space of sovereignty, the image of a do-nothing King (Zartaloudis 2010, 95).

Even if the king’s head is cut off we will still have an empty throne, and the government of men is only possible if the kingdom and the government are imbricated. In this sense, as Zartaloudis writes, “from the inception of neoliberalism to the current dissolution of the nation state, what takes place is not a mere retreat of the State of sovereignty but the assumption of *oikonomic* practices and techniques of the whole political life while maintaining a functional relation to a transcendental righteousness” (Zartaloudis 2010, 168). The questions which remain unanswered then, are: What does this genealogy of economic

theology tell us about power? And how can we articulate Agamben's work into an analysis of neoliberalism and governance?

Neoliberalism, governance and divine management: the lessons of *The Kingdom and the Glory*

In a short article entitled *Divine Management: Critical Remarks on Giorgio Agamben's "The Kingdom and the Glory"* (2011), Alberto Toscano discarded Agamben's genealogy of economic theology as being mute about the "constitutively unmanageable economies (*chrematistic*) that management (*oikonomia*) seeks to govern" (Toscano 2011, 132). For him, Agamben's analysis is incapable of grasping the "anarchic order of capital accumulation" and provides no insight into "the (value) forms that determine the (dis)order of the contemporary economy" (Toscano 2011, 132). Although I will not respond directly to Toscano's Marxist critique of Agamben, I will refute the general coordinates of his work in the context of affirming the pertinence of *The Kingdom and the Glory* for a radical critique of contemporary politics and economics.

In a nutshell, Toscano's argument is that Agamben's genealogy of economic theology fails to incorporate chrematistics, that is, the science of "accumulation, circulation and interest that is opposed to the managerial stability of the paradigm of *oikonomia*" (Toscano 2011, 130), and hence it becomes incapable of a "total critique of the status quo" (Toscano 2011, 125). More importantly, however, according to Toscano Agamben's failure to register the logics of accumulation – chrematistics – into his genealogy reinforces the "tired idea" of presenting Marxism as the "secularization" of hidden theological concepts:

The signatures just aren't there. Neither capitalism nor Marx's theory thereof can be encompassed by the notion of *oikonomia* and its genealogies, theological or otherwise, and it does not suffice to combine political theology with economic theology to overcome the shortcomings of Agamben's work as a tool for politically thinking the present (Toscano 2011, 132).

Two things are striking here. In the first place, Toscano's reading of the notion of secularization does not do justice to Agamben's use of signatures as methodological tools. The signature of secularization does not merely show how economic theological concepts move and operate through, for instance, Marxism. Rather, as William Watkin has claimed, our current economic processes are accessible through their origins in the paradigm of economic theology only "inasmuch as these origins themselves are made accessible for the first time by our present situation" (Watkin 2014, 216). In other words, secularization founds its own foundations in a retrospective process, whereby "theological economy is possible

only as the origin of profane economy because profane economy allows this to be an operative structure of meaning” (Watkin 2014, 216).

Thus a signature is not a concept, nor the hidden content of a concept, but rather a process of transference whereby a concept or discourse is transposed from one domain to another “through a series of shifts, substitutions and displacements” (Fuggle 2009, 86). Signatures, contrary to Toscano’s reading of Agamben, do not respond to the logic of cause and effect, and they are not “the sources” of modern concepts. Hence, it would be pointless to accept Toscano’s invitation to consider “what an attention to their theological precursors would have to tell us about modern concepts of economic order – for instance Hayek’s notorious neoliberal ontology of spontaneous order” (Toscano 2011, 130).

Indeed, what Agamben has shown with the notion of secularization is that signatures also work backwards through time, and therefore “the thesis according to which the economy could be a secularized theological paradigm acts retrospectively on theology itself” (Agamben 2011, 3). In short, Toscano is defending Marxism from accusations he does not entirely understand. Agamben is certainly not trying to “perpetuate the tired idea of Marx’s thought as a secularization of some cloaked and damning theological content” (Toscano 2011, 132), for the simple reason that this is not how signatures work, thus for Agamben secularization does not reveal “an identity of substance between theology and modernity” (Agamben 2011, 4). Indeed, in *The Signature of All Things* Agamben makes it clear that in the debates between Hans Blumenberg, Karl Löwith and Carl Schmitt on the notion of the secularization of the 1960s, none of them realized that secularization was not a concept “in which the ‘structural identity’ between theological and political conceptuality (Schmitt’s thesis) or the discontinuity between Christian theology and modernity (this was Blumenberg’s thesis contra Löwith) was in question” (Agamben 2009, 77). Rather, Agamben treats this concept as a signature, as a “strategic operator that marked political concepts in order to make them refer to their theological origins” (Agamben 2009, 77)¹.

Secondly, by insisting on the relevance of chrematistics, Toscano is knocking at an open door. Indeed, Agamben would not deny the importance of capital accumulation, the logics of monetary circulation, capital flaws, or the anarchic regimens of interests for the understanding of the economic behaviour. Instead, the problem that concerns Agamben in *The Kingdom and the Glory* exceeds that of money as a real abstraction, however important

1 Needless to say, by the notion of “origin” Agamben is not referring to a chronological point but rather to a “moment of arising”. According to Agamben, the moment of arising is arguably another name for the *archē*. Foucault only uses this concept to refer to the notion of emergence in Nietzsche (*Entstehung*). In Agamben, the moment of arising is the moment when the solidarity between historical inquiry and genealogy finds its maximum expression. The *archē* is nothing other than the moment when the historical gaze reveals the “origin” of a discursive formation allowing for the dispelling of the myth of the origin itself. Generally put then, the *archē* reveals the “deep-seated structures of Western thought as problematic, profoundly contingent and so surmountable” (Watkin 2014, 29).

that might be for an understanding of the economy. Indeed, Agamben's project is primarily concerned with the question: "Why is power split?" (Agamben 2011, 100), i.e. with the dual structure of the governmental machine and the vicarious character of an act of government. Thus in order to truly undermine Agamben's project, Toscano would need to demonstrate that the economic paradigm of chrematistics has influenced – or at least tells us something new about – the operativity of power as a signature in the West, besides its obvious importance for the understanding of the functioning of the economy in itself.

Mitchell Dean has also pointed out that the theme of chrematistics appears to have escaped Agamben, but far from reading this omission as a refutation of Agamben's genealogy of *oikonomia*, Dean's analysis of financialization is presented as a corroboration of Agamben's project². Indeed, according to Dean, while Agamben recognizes the anarchic character of the economic order and its permanent cross-referencing to a constitutive foundation, he also "neglects the role of money and transformations of finance which, if they do not do so entirely, provide significant challenges for economic management" (Dean 2013, 219). However, Dean goes on to state that it is precisely the effects of chrematistics what "make the economic-governmental axis operable" (Dean 2013, 220). The central claim is that whereas Marxism regards financial crises as evidence of the necessary destruction of non-economic social relations, "our societies display a remarkable capacity for retroversion, reactivation and reinvention of quasi-transcendentals in the face of the crisis" (Dean 2013, 221). As Agamben has put it, "crisis has become an instrument of rule. It serves to legitimize political and economic decisions that in fact dispossess citizens and deprive them of any possibility of decision" (Agamben 2013, 1). In short, although chrematistics constantly challenges the attempts to stabilize the economic management of societies, these challenges do not undermine, but rather reinforce, the immanent ordering derived from the paradigm of *oikonomia*.

Moreover, it is the paradigm of *oikonomia*, and not the model of chrematistics, which, as we have seen in the first part of this paper, defines and explains the threshold between transcendental sovereignty and governmentality. If today, as Thanos Zartaloudis has shown, the "old-European model of law and of politics as an immobile, sovereign, transcendence-suffused grounding of social and political life has been effectively replaced by a contingent-driven, crisis-managing form of governing as managerialism or administration" (Zartaloudis 2010, 51), then Agamben's genealogy of economic theology not only locates the moment of

2 Maurizio Lazzarato has also highlighted the role of financialization in terms of the neoliberal transformations, showing that for Marxism, social relations, which are "neither purely economic or juridical are remnants that the capitalist machine is bound to destroy. Yet, in reality what is supposedly destined to disappear keeps returning to haunt a theory that in unable to foresee this" (Lazzarato 2009, 131).

arising of this managerial and anarchical form of power but, more importantly, in doing makes it a tool for politically thinking the current articulations of the two axes of power.

Crucially, what the fracture between Being and Action and the genealogy of *oikonomia* demonstrate is that regardless of the historical configurations of the two polarities of the governmental machine, the two registers of power need to be present. Even if “the real problem, the central mystery of politics is not sovereignty, but government” (Agamben 2011, 276), we should keep in mind that for Agamben it is only through the irreconcilable scission and yet mutual exposure of the two poles of the governmental machine that power becomes operative. Thus what the paradigm of economic theology helps to elucidate is that government is not a straightforward implementation of sovereign decisions. Indeed, as Agamben has spelt out, “the ambiguity that seems to settle the problem of government by presenting it as the mere execution of a general will and law has weighed negatively not only upon the theory, but also upon the history of modern democracy” (Agamben 2011, 276).

In highlighting the economic theological paradigm Agamben is not simply repeating the call to cut off the king’s head. *The Kingdom and the Glory* does not reinforce pure “immanentism”, since an account of power that fails to articulate the transcendent registers of sovereign power would be incapable of thinking the antinomian inheritance of Christian theology. However, as Mitchel Dean has clearly shown the problem with some of the eminently immanent understandings of power is not that they undermine sovereign power, but rather that they are “drawn against a political and theological imaginary of a divine or worldly sovereignty as all-powerful” (Dean 2013, 167).

Agamben, on the contrary, examines how, even under the consolidation of a managerial paradigm of government, the empty throne of sovereignty needs to be articulated for government to be possible. Thus Agamben is certainly not giving normative or analytical pre-eminence to either pole of the governmental machine. What Agamben shows is that although both political and economic theology remain functionally related, it is only through a genealogy of the paradigm of *oikonomia* that the Christian inheritance become intelligible. Crucially, Agamben should be taken *à la lettre* when, in the very preface of *The Kingdom and the Glory*, he writes that “locating government in its theological locus in the Trinitarian *oikonomia* does not mean to explain it by means of a hierarchy of causes, as if a more primordial generic rank would necessarily pertain to theology” (Agamben 2011, xi). Instead, he insists that Trinitarian *oikonomia* constitutes only a privileged “laboratory” for the analysis of the governmental machine.

We can now return to Toscano’s critique of *The Kingdom and the Glory* to respond to its underlying question: “[B]y what right does Agamben pass from the insistence of certain conceptual constellations and semantic kernels across different epochs and discursive formations to the overarching conviction that such an archeological inquiry is of urgent

political significance?” (Toscano 2011, 127). As a response, I will briefly mention three concrete reasons why Agamben’s analysis constitutes a significant contribution to the understanding of our contemporary situation.

First, by reaching beyond the chronological limits of Foucault’s genealogy of governmentality, Agamben is able to shed light on the self-referential constitution of political power. Indeed, *The Kingdom and the Glory* unveils this dynamic whereby the power that is founded as legitimate founds its own foundations. Thanos Zartaloudis, following Agamben, calls these particular formations of power “foundational mythologemes” and their recognition and scrutiny in *The Kingdom and the Glory* constitutes a vital contribution to political and juridical thinking:

The historical, political and theoretical celebration of such mythologemes and their continued transmission is highly problematic since it misleads thought from considering the fact that it is the founded power or concepts that project the so-called founding referent (as their metaphysical –transcendental principle). In other words it is the act of founding (search for the origin or essence of authority and power, and the need to render them stable, infallible and ordered), which presupposes not only the particular form of the founded power, but also the source of its justification as if from an outside, higher realm that is to be rendered sacred, concealed, absolute and allegedly just and more powerful. Whether it is sovereignty (in despotic understandings of power) or the People (for instance, in democratic understandings of power) that are claimed as the original foundation of power, it is instead the act of their specific manner of presupposition by what they allegedly found and justify (government-administration-police) that projects their imaginary transcendence, absolution and perfection (Zartaloudis 2010, 185).

One of the lessons to be learned from Agamben, then, is that government produces the power that founds it, or to put it in a paradoxical form, that it is the founded element what founds its own foundations. Needless to say, it is not only that government constantly actualizes the founding fiction, but also government itself is “allowed to occur because of a held-in-common foundation” (Watkin 2014, xi). Secondly, as has already been mentioned, Agamben’s genealogy of *oikonomia* calls into question the common assumption of Western political thought – and more precisely of modern democratic theory – which conceives of government as mere executive power. Modern democracy, for Agamben, can be seen as attempt to coordinate the two anarchical poles of the governmental machine within a stable structure, which is why it has been lost in abstractions and mythologemes: “always exhilarating between a lack and an excess of government, always looking for a holy spirit or a charismatic principle that would be able to hold together the anarchic powers that it has inherited from Christian theology” (Agamben 2007, 1). *The Kingdom and the Glory* is the first rigorous study

that brings together the problematic bipolar structure of power without reducing government to execution or celebrating it as a simple retreat of sovereign power.

This leads us to Foucault. For Maurizio Lazzarato the most striking limitation of Foucault's lectures – specifically of *The Birth of Biopolitics* – is that “they take for granted that liberalism and liberal techniques of government exist or have existed in opposition or as an alternative to the strategies of the state” (Lazzarato 2015, 92). Indeed, for Lazzarato, Foucault's genealogy of governmentality is unable to capture the articulation between sovereignty and the techniques of governmentality, thus demonstrating that “the supposedly immanent functioning of production and the market has always depended on the intervention of sovereignty” (Lazzarato 2015, 92). For Lazzarato, the analysis of governmentality should therefore focus on “the alliance between the state and capital (between the state and the market, as economist would say) and, therefore, on state capitalism” (Lazzarato 2015, 93). As has been demonstrated, Agamben's theological genealogy of *oikonomia* allows for an analysis of power in terms of the articulation, alliance, and mutual dependency of both sovereignty and government, or more specifically, of the strategies of the state and the liberal techniques of government.

And finally, part of the significance of Agamben's theological genealogy of economy and government lies in the fact that it opens up a theoretical terrain from which to rethink neoliberalism as a political rationality that re-articulates, in a novel way, the two axes of power. Indeed, most of the Foucaultian studies of neoliberalism have focused on the modes of subjectification and the different technologies of governing that constitute this political rationality which renders inoperative the juridico-institutional understanding of sovereignty. They inquire into the patterns, the strategies, and the techniques of government that allow the extension of a market rationality into different domains of social, political and even biological life. Less attention has been given to the transcendent registers of sovereignty that are reconstituted through acts of government under neoliberalism. However, what has taken place with the rise of neoliberal governmentality is not a mere retreat of the State of sovereignty, but the assumption of economic “practices and techniques of the whole political life while maintaining a functional relation to a transcendental narrative” (Zartaloudis 2010, 168).

When analysed through the filter of the governmental machine, neoliberalism can be located within a larger spectrum of the political shifts and configurations of sovereignty and government. The genealogy of *oikonomia* provides a robust framework for understanding the reasons why, under neoliberalism, governance “re-conceives the political as a field of management or administration” (Brown 2015, 127). Yet Agamben's investigation reminds us that neoliberalism does not merely operate through an immanent administration, but that government, even when it is suffused with governance, effectively produces the power which

grounds it (Watkin 2014, 210), creating at points the illusion of transcendent registers or simply presenting itself as its own justification.

Crucially, the distinction between sovereign legislative power and governmental executive power, through which the state inherits the dual structure of the governmental machine, mutates into a new form under neoliberalism. *The Kingdom and the Glory* becomes decisive precisely for its understanding of the particular articulation of *oikonomia* and political theology that neoliberalism keeps in motion. What Agamben helps us elucidate is that government under neoliberalism is only possible as a twofold machine, so even if the economic managerial pole of the governmental machine – governance – reaches a higher degree of pre-eminence, sovereign registers still need to be articulated in the acts of government. In short, neoliberalism can be understood as new configuration of the relationship between sovereignty and governmentality, as representing “a new stage in the union of capital and the state, of sovereignty and the market, whose realization can be seen in the management of the current crisis” (Lazzarato 2015, 94).

Without contesting the triumph of divine management or giving analytical priority to the law, Agamben’s genealogy of *oikonomia* provides a different angle for the study of neoliberalism, one that highlights the existence, in the background, of the headless king, a king who reigns but does not govern, and to whom the acts of government keep referring. In particular, what appears perhaps more clearly in Agamben’s genealogy of governmentality than in Foucault’s is that the state and the law cannot be reduced to “historical residues masking the real operation of the new powers, archaic leftovers of feudalism and absolutism and the struggles around them” (Dean 2013, 68). Indeed, if the law and the claim to sovereign transcendence of the state were nothing more than a complex set of techniques of government, if they were totally governmentalized, then why, even under neoliberalism, would “local, immanent exercise of power keep referring to the state as a source of its authority and legitimacy, and why does it need to wrap itself in the symbols, traditions, hierarchies and topologies of the law?” (Dean 2013, 68).

Neoliberal government, as Lazzarato shows, “centralizes and multiplies authoritarian government techniques, rivaling the policies of so-called totalitarian or ‘planning’ states” (Lazzarato 2015, 95). Moreover, as the economic crisis of 2007 demonstrates, neoliberalism is not only compatible with, but relies upon, a strong state, and it relies as well on sovereign interventions. For Lazzarato, the crisis has made clear that the capitalist apparatus “has no reason to replace the state”. The problem is rather how to integrate the state’s sovereignty, administrative and legal functions into a new governmentality whose administration it is not entirely responsible for (Lazzarato 2015, 127).

The same could be said of what Foucault describes as liberal governmentality, so that rather than consisting of “the maximum limitation of the forms and domains of

government action” (Foucault 2008, 21), liberalism has always relied upon much more than an invisible hand. Indeed, the crisis “has largely undercut the notion that the problem of liberalism is ‘governing too much’, and that critique should focus on ‘the irrationality peculiar to excessive government’ and that, as a consequence, one must govern as little as possible” (Lazzarato 2015, 105). So to put it in Agambenian terms, even if liberalism represents a tendency that pushes to an extreme the supremacy of the pole of the “immanent order-government-stomach” the pole of the “transcendent God-Kingdom-brain” is still present in an empty form, and so “the economy that is derived from it will not thereby have emancipated itself from its providential paradigm” (Agamben 2011, 285):

The two planes remain correlated in the alleged mode in which the first founds, legitimates and makes possible the second (as its condition of possibility); and in turn the second realizes concretely the causes and effects of the general (sovereign) decisions of the divine will. The government of the world is this mythologeme of functional correlation (Zartaloudis 2010, 81–82).

The turn from liberalism to neoliberal governmentality has intensified the process whereby the state is suffused with an economic logic, but rather than presenting a conflict between the immanent anarchical pole of government and the transcendent suffused pole of sovereignty, neoliberalism has effectively integrated them. This is clear, for instance, in the “convergence between finance, as the expression of the power of capital, as the politics of capital, and money, as the expression of the sovereign power of the state” (Lazzarato 2015, 116). In order to fully understand the neoliberal arrangement of sovereignty and government, neoliberalism should not be interpreted according to an opposition of politics, the juridico-institutional apparatus of the state and the economy, but rather in light of the constant need for their articulation, even when one pole clearly dominates the other. More importantly, this is also true for liberal governmentality, even though liberalism has presented itself in terms of the conflict between the state and political economy. For Agamben, this is evident in the metaphor of the invisible hand. Indeed, Smith’s image of the invisible hand should be understood as

[...] the action of an immanent principle, our reconstruction of the bipolar machine of the theological *oikonomia* has shown that there is no conflict between providentialism and naturalism within it, because the machine functions precisely by correlating a transcendence principle with an immanent order. Just as with the Kingdom and the Government, the intradivine trinity and the economic trinity, so the brain and the stomach are nothing but two sides of the same apparatus, of the same *oikonomia*, within which one of the two poles can, at each turn, dominate the other (Agamben 2011, 284).

In short, modernity – and with it, liberalism – by removing God from the world has not only “failed to leave theology behind, but in some ways has done nothing than lead the project of the providential *oikonomia* to completion” (Agamben 2011, 287). And if we see under neoliberalism the reappearance of the state through, for instance, the constant need for legal intervention in the market and the management of public debt, this only unveils the fact that from the beginning economic liberalism, from which neoliberalism has emerged, could not have been consolidated in direct opposition to the techniques of governmentality and the strategies of the state. *The Kingdom and the Glory* provides a genealogy of political power that articulates the political theological paradigm of sovereignty and the managerial-providential paradigm of economic theology, capturing the bipolar character of the governmental machine.

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TYTUŁ: Teologia ekonomiczna, rządzenie i neoliberalizm. Lekcje z *Królestwa i Chwały*

ABSTRAKT: Celem artykułu jest sprawdzenie Agambenowskich badań w obszarze teologii ekonomicznej w celu podkreślenia ich znaczenia dla krytyki współczesnej polityki neoliberalnej. W pierwszej części autor przedstawia podsumowanie głównych tez zawartych w książce *Królestwo i chwala*. W szczególności skupia się zarówno na ujęciu *oikonomii* we wczesnochrześcijańskich debatach na boską trójcę, jak i jej związku z providencjalnym paradygmatem rządzenia. Następnie pokazuje, jak ta genealogia *oikonomii* może być przydatna dla politycznej analizy teraźniejszości. Stanowi to jednocześnie odpowiedź na niektóre z zarzutów postawionych *Królestwu i chwale* przez Alberta Toscano. W końcowej części autor podsumowuje swoje rozważania, pokazując szczególne znaczenie prac Agambena dla badań nad polityczną racjonalnością neoliberalizmu.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: teologia ekonomiczna, *oikonomia*, neoliberalizm, rządzenie, Giorgio Agamben

WITH WHICH POLITICAL THEOLOGY ARE WE DEALING? REASSESSING THE GENEALOGY OF POLITICAL THEOLOGY AND LOOKING TOWARD ITS FUTURE

COLBY DICKINSON

Abstract: In this essay, I examine Michel Foucault's political contrast between the theological domains of the pastoral and the mystical, in order to note his focus on how necessity and providence are founding and legitimizing concepts of the State. Through this process I develop an analysis of how Foucault, in his critique of the historical uses of theology as a tool of pastoral power, actually points toward another form of political theology than Carl Schmitt's. My contention is that we begin to see another "type" of political theology appear in the writings of Giorgio Agamben, who follows Christian traditions much more closely than Foucault. The re-formulation of political theology within Agamben's work, I argue, has tremendous significance for the field as a whole and is much in need of further elaboration, a task toward which this essay only points.

Keywords: Michel Foucault, Giorgio Agamben, governmentality, pastoral, mystical

In this essay, I want to examine Michel Foucault's political contrast between the theological domains of the pastoral and the mystical, the manner in which he links the pastoral, his conceptualization of governmentality and his development of the care of the self (e.g. as demonstrated in the examination of conscience, among other religious practices), as well as the historical tensions between pastoral power and asceticism. In looking at these various historical phenomena, I try to move closer toward his focus on how necessity and providence are founding and legitimizing concepts of the State, a move which enables us to consider the relationship between sedition and heresy in an entirely new light. The historical contexts with which such an analysis deals – here following Foucault's genealogical accounts closely – tell us a good deal about how the western world has developed an operative political theology (in the Schmittian sense); yet they tell us little about how theology might develop its own political self-awareness which would allow it to perform its tasks otherwise than as history has often dictated. It is this theological strand of possibility that I want to uncover through an examination of what follows.

What I want to develop through this analysis, more specifically, is a platform for understanding how Foucault, in his critique of the historical uses of theology as a tool of pastoral power, actually points toward *another* form of political theology than the one that Carl Schmitt had once envisioned, a field that perhaps has not yet been fully developed beyond its limited theological-scholarly guild¹. My contention in this essay is that we begin to see another “type” of political theology appear – one that has yet to be more clearly identified and discussed – in the writings of Giorgio Agamben. The re-formulation of political theology within his work, I argue, has tremendous significance for the field as a whole and is much in need of further elaboration, a work toward which this essay only points.

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To begin with, Michel Foucault, in his lectures from 1977–1978, which were titled *Security, Territory, Population*, outlines the basic coordinates of the state and its foundational logic, which, we find, is inherently grounded in a pseudo-theological foundation. Just as theological argumentation, for centuries, had defined God as a being that existed out of “necessity”, so too does Foucault isolate this essential condition of political foundations – their origins in “necessity”, as all states will appear to have been grounded – as its own inherent theological

1 The field of “political theology”, theologically speaking, is rather eclectic and broad-ranging; from Carl Schmitt's early use of the term to Ernst H. Kantorowicz's *The King's Two Bodies* (Kantorowicz 1957), the term has often been rooted in political-theoretical discussions. In terms of theological discourse, it has been developed in the works of Johann Baptist Metz, Jürgen Moltmann, and, even more recently, Stanley Hauerwas and John Howard Yoder. For an introductory account, see Scott and Cavanaugh 2006. In its more recent philosophical manifestations, see, among others, Critchley 2012, Crockett 2011, and Žižek, Santner, and Reinhard 2005.

justification. Quite simply, and as will be the case historically for many theologies, “[p]olitics is concerned with necessity”, from the state’s origins to its sovereign decisions (Foucault 2007, 263). In general, politics bases its rationale for existence, as well as its operational ethos, on the necessity of taking action, and its “greatest” leaders, we might add, are typically those who engage in decisive and seemingly “necessary” action.

It is in this sense that we might come to understand the 20th century German political theorist Carl Schmitt’s determination of politics as inextricably concerned with a form of decisionism that establishes its foundations, and that implies a certain theological sense of predestination or necessity. According to Schmitt, the sovereign is the figure who makes the final and governing decisions, an action that serves to legitimate their role in society (Schmitt 2005, 5). The exercise of such an action is what then, in turn, gives the political coordinates within a specific state their predetermined character as it were. The state and its accompanying laws are retroactively legitimated, as if by necessity, as the way things “have to be”.

What Foucault isolates within this sovereign logic, or logic of sovereignty, is a “philosophical” law of “necessity”, one that rightly mirrors certain historical theological legitimations for God’s necessary existence, but which also serves to obfuscate the lack of any true justification for the right of the sovereign to rule. It is this “mystical” foundation, as theorists from Pierre Bourdieu to Jacques Derrida have termed it, that underlies all normative legal measures within a state’s provenance (Bourdieu 1991; Derrida 2002). In Foucault’s survey of the literature written in defense of such a state, we can see the necessity for the state’s existence trumping the rule of law, which is also inextricably bound up with the state’s existence:

There is then a necessity that is over and above the law. Or rather, the law of this reason peculiar to the state, and which is called *raison d’État*, is that the state’s salvation must prevail over any other law. This fundamental law of necessity, which at bottom is not a law, thus goes beyond all natural law, positive law, and even the law of God’s commandments, which the theorists dare not call exactly divine law, but call instead “philosophical”, so as to mask things a little (Foucault 2007, 262–263).

Existing in such a manner, the state rests upon its own right to exist, that which truly has no foundation, a genuinely immanent moment of self-creation, if you will. Above every legal norm, it is the existence of the state itself that must be preserved at all costs, even if that means reinforcing the state’s existence in extra-judicial instances. As Schmitt had already made clear, it is precisely the sovereign’s ability to declare a “state of exception” to the rule of law that defines the sovereign’s power (Schmitt 2005, 5).

As Foucault will later discern, the world is governed according to an “economy of salvation” that seeks in some sense only to preserve itself (Foucault 2007, 235)². Any violent action that is taken as a “pastoral” measure in order to ensure the survival of the state – something he explicitly links to a rise in Christian discourse concerning the “governing” or “shepherding” of souls in Christendom – is one carried out in the interests of saving the state. Political necessity exercised through often violent means thereby becomes inseparably linked to pastoral methods of exclusion for the greater “health” of the whole.

The usual, habitual exercise of *raison d'État* is not violent precisely because it readily avails itself of laws as its framework and form. But when necessity demands it, *raison d'État* becomes *comp d'État*, and then it is violent. This means that it is obliged to sacrifice, to sever, cause harm, and it is led to be unjust and murderous. As you know, this principle is completely at variance with the pastoral theme that the salvation of each is the salvation of all, and the salvation of all is the salvation of each. We now have a *raison d'État* for which the pastoral will be one of selection and exclusion, of the sacrifice of some for the whole, of some for the state (Foucault 2007, 263).

The performance, or theater, of the state, as he will put it, is one played out against the backdrop of a rigorously formed, Christian conceptualization of pastoral power, one that is mobilized theoretically on behalf of the state in order to maintain the “peace” or normative adherence to law that comes after one accepts its necessity, much as believers had accepted God’s law as the inevitable condition of their right to life. Citizens of the state, much like believers who undergo ascetic practices in order to deepen their faith, are therefore willing to endure – and indeed in some sense themselves to bring about – a certain level of violence to the social body so that the state might survive. This constitutes its own peculiar, secularized form of salvation, a formulation that signals the state’s implicit theological origins (Foucault 2007, 266–267).

What Foucault “uncovers” in this genealogy of the state in the Western world is a consistent and underlying dialectic between obedience and sedition – the latter arising from a general state of discontent, the former from a certain acceptance of the state’s right to exist – that mirrors, with great precision, the dialectic found within ecclesial structures set up antagonistically between the orthodox and the heretical. His contention is that the dialectic, no matter what location it is found in, is actually internal to a state, or Church for that matter, that cannot ultimately justify its reason for existence, its *raison d'État*. As such, he will conclude that “[...] sedition should not be seen as extraordinary so much as an entirely

2 Foucault’s formulation of an “economy of salvation” that seeks only to preserve itself can be discerned at work in Agamben’s articulation of such a theological economy in relation to the political governance of our world; see Agamben 2011, 47.

normal, natural phenomenon, immanent as it were to the life of the *res publica*, of the republic”, though it is more likely to be treated as anything but a part of its normative identity (Foucault 2007, 267). In most instances, the legitimacy of the sovereign rests upon its ability to act, again, “decisively” against any such mobilized moments of sedition, revolt, “heresy”, antinomianism or the like. There is no doubt that such “seditious” movements are often “bad” for the general health and welfare of the state, but it is also the case, as Foucault makes clear – and as Agamben will later second with renewed force – that these movements arise from within the rule of sovereign power and not as an external threat to its rule.

This tension is likewise played out *within* the Church, and, as Foucault spends a fair amount of time exploring, between the pastorate which “shepherds” the flock, and its mystical elements which promise an immediate communion with the presence of God (Foucault 2007, 213). This tension between the pastoral and the mystical is the ongoing dialectic that will place mysticism and a variety of movements inspired by the Holy Spirit under intense scrutiny throughout the Middle Ages, and even, one might wager, up to this very day³. Such movements were certainly active throughout the Reformation, a situation captured quite succinctly in his estimation that such movements include “[...] a particle, a fragment, a spark of the Holy Spirit in each of the faithful and so they will no longer need a shepherd” (Foucault 2007, 214)⁴. It is this framework for tensions within the Church which will play itself out on occasion in the domain of scriptural interpretation – who has access to it, who has the right or authority to interpret it – and which will become heightened throughout the Reformation as a tension between competing ecclesial authorities.

Throughout his assessment, however, Foucault will make clear that the organization of the pastorate, and its accompanying power, lies fundamentally at the heart of Christianity: “[...] Christianity in its real pastoral organization is not an ascetic religion, it is not a religion of the community, it is not a mystical religion, it is not a religion of Scripture, and, of course, it is not an eschatological religion” (Foucault 2007, 214). Each of these “anti-pastoral” tactics (or forms of “counter-conduct”), as Foucault labels them, which are *also* somehow a part of the Christian tradition – although this dual identity is not clearly sketched out in detail – are actually “border-elements” established as counter-practices to the pastoral core of Christianity: that which, he will claim, establishes the foundations of modern governmentality. To what degree they are not simply “border-elements” but actually

3 See the analysis given to the role of the Holy Spirit in ecclesial reform in Congar 2011. The Franciscan order, which will prove exemplary to Agamben, was likewise subjected to numerous tests in order to discern whether it fell under the heading of any seditious “Holy Spirit” movement that threatened the established, hierarchical order of the Catholic Church at the time of the order’s founding.

4 The search for an inner truth (confession) that resides in tension with a more lasting and final illumination (mysticism) is what will eventually prompt, in Foucault’s estimation, the separation of confession from faith; see Foucault 2014, 134.

constituent of the Christian tradition, however, is not a topic that Foucault will discuss at length in this context, although it is a point I want to return to in a moment when I will briefly take up Giorgio Agamben's implicit expansion (and subtle critique) of Foucault on just this point.

What Foucault does pick up and develop, and in great depth as it will underpin a good deal of his analysis throughout his later lectures at the Collège de France, is how his genealogy of pastoral power lays the foundations for the birth of the state as it is "situated within a more general history of governmentality", which also evolved to combat any form of disorder within its "system" (Foucault 2007, 247, 196). Again, re-affirming the initial connection made between God and the sovereign, Foucault measures out the relationship not only between these two crucial figures, but also between pastoral power and governmentality. To do so, first, he establishes the nature of sovereign logic in relation to its theological foundations, but also its distance from the actual pastorate: "[...] God does not 'govern' the world; he does not govern it in the pastoral sense. He reigns over the world in a sovereign manner through principles" (Foucault 2007, 235). The imagined close proximity of the divine to our world – a foundational principle of many traditional western religious worldviews – is revealed as a completely mistaken proposition in terms of how the omnipotence of God is actually perceived. God, as the ultimate transcendent sovereign, reigns over our world from a great distance, one that cannot be easily bridged, at least not by traditional theological accounts. Once this revelation of God's distance is critically introduced, it is only a short step toward the establishment of another way of perceiving God through the role of Jesus Christ, the shepherd who governs the flocks, the one who reintroduces the pastoral paradigm, for, in Foucault's words, "[t]he Western sovereign is Caesar, not Christ; the Western pastor is not Caesar, but Christ" (Foucault 2007, 156).

Foucault's essential development here is that it is the series of everyday, bureaucratic practices he terms "governmentality", rather than the sovereign's exercise of ruling power, as in the case of a monarch, for example, that generates the daily activity of the state and therefore is an essential component of the state's identity. As such, it does not come to exist as a self-legitimizing construct, like the sovereign who rules solely through claiming the right to rule as it were, but rather is formed through what Foucault calls a relation of self to self (Foucault 2005, 252) – that is of the "apparatus (*dispositif*) of subjectivity" which aligns the "subject's knowledge (*connaissance*) of himself and of the subject's obedience to the law" (Foucault 2005, 319). Governmentality is thereby concerned with the formation of subjectivity, the relating of self to self through everyday life, within the boundaries of a given state. It is precisely then the construction of subjects in relation to law which becomes manifest for Foucault in the exercise of pastoral (and ecclesial) power through certain disciplinary apparatuses that come to shape the Western subject as we know it, from

confession to the examination of conscience, and from certain meditative practices to spiritual direction, among others (Foucault 2014, 266)⁵. It is in this way that, in his lectures from 1974–1975, he will link the practice of confession, for example, to the social regulation of the “abnormal” (Foucault 2003, 169). In terms of governmentality, these religious practices will soon give way in the modern period to more “secularized” practices of selves relating to selves, such as through police interrogation, prisons, medical and psychological practices and so forth – analyzed themes that would come to dominate his published genealogical studies.

In his lectures *On the Government of the Living* two years later, from 1979–1980, Foucault continues to expound upon these connections, but also to deepen the scope of his analysis in pursuit of the link “[...] between the government of men, the manifestation of the truth in the form of subjectivity, and the salvation of each and all” (Foucault 2014, 75). In his genealogical examination, he privileges the “truth act itself” rather than the beliefs or dogmas of the believers (Foucault 2014, 83), and turns to the history of the practice of confession, or the revelation of a truth deep within oneself that one is not even fully cognizant of, and which is the basis of many other Christian practices, such as baptism, that also serve to reveal the hidden “mysteries of the heart” found within believers (Foucault 2014, 103, 106). Acts such as confession become the basic practices that strive to assist the believer in “becoming the truth”, or that which becomes the condition of subjectivity: “[...] avowal and faith come together again in [a type] of truth act in which adherence to the dogmatic content has the same form as the relation of self to self in subjectivity exploring itself” (Foucault 2014, 85). The establishment of the subject, whether in religious or political terms, becomes effective through such practices of confession as are aimed at bringing the subject into existence.

Despite this arrival of the self at the truth it seeks to become through such everyday practices, there remains yet, for Foucault, a fundamental anxiety about whether or not one has actually achieved this state of “salvation”, a precarious identification that keeps one uneasily within the domain of pastoral influence. In his words, “[i]f one wants to have faith, one must never be certain about what one is oneself” (Foucault 2014, 127). This fundamental anxiety, in turn, gives rise directly to a Protestant, even Calvinist, formulation of the self that continuously strives to find guarantees of its anticipated salvation. As Foucault notes, this baseline of anxiety and insecurity historically brings about a new form of fear that coincides, in a sense, with the rise of the modern nation-state, or that which appeared to offer humanity more security than religion was capable of providing in material terms⁶. It is in this

5 See also Foucault 2003, 175–180, and Carrette 2000.

6 It would be interesting in this regard to read the establishment of the Treaty of Westphalia (1648), which defined “internal” political boundaries within the Western world, and which recognized Calvinism as a legitimate tradition, as mirroring this struggle for “self” identity that Foucault isolates in this context.

later formulation of a justification for state apparatuses that we will see subjects formed through a fundamental anxious wish for security to be granted by the state, a parallel, incessant but also always incomplete motion toward alleviating one's anxiety for a salvation that can never truly be attained during one's lifetime. His reading too, from this point of view, is a significant piece of political theology in that it reveals how the modern turn from religion to the nation-state, and so from theology to politics, is one that yet maintains the same religious practices for the formation of political, "secularized" subjects.

In this overlap between the exercises of both pastoral power and state governance, there is also a specific dispossession of the self that is symbolically captured by the Christian call to embrace the death of one's self, or the "mortification" of the self, but which is also, as Foucault rightly identifies, what lies at the heart of early Christian rites of exorcism (Foucault 2014, 151). What is actually encountered in such rites, which essentially posit that a soul is "possessed" by another spirit, one wholly foreign to it, is the presence of an "otherness" *within* the self. Both exorcism and the state's conditioning of the subject are as such "[...] thought on the basis of the problem of the other, of the other as that which has seized power in us" (Foucault 2014, 160). It is this otherness at the core of the believer that, in turn, actually motivates one's acceptance of the presence of God (or the sovereign who rules the land): "What one knows is God or the divine in oneself, or what enables you to know the divine itself" (Foucault 2014, 254). In this fashion, the self in whom God resides as a form of otherness and, in parallel, the sovereign who does likewise for the citizen are cemented as identical formulations, and in such a way as to guarantee the obedience of the "masses" as it were.

Foucault's creative, if somewhat one-sided, reading of Christian adherence to an "economy of salvation" outside the confines of the law – a basic reading that has sustained not only centuries of opposition to Judaic Law and even anti-Semitism, but also its emphasis on a grace or mercy beyond all law – is what will lead him to the "standard" (mis)reading of Christian supersessionism:

It is in this opposition between the Old Testament as book of the law and the New Testament as book of salvation that a whole line of Christian thought developed, of which Saint Paul, of course, was the first representative to whom one always referred afterwards, a line internal to Christianity for making Christianity a religion not of the law, but of salvation (Foucault 2014, 183–184).

Foucault acknowledges that such a stance outside the law can lead to Christian claims being taken to the extremes of both asceticism and antinomianism, but also that such stances inherently flow outward from this basic position taken with regard to the Law. The dynamic tension between normativity (law) and a push to go beyond such measures (something like

“grace”) would seem to be entirely constitutive of Christian identity, with any possible danger to the *status quo* and revolutionary tendencies both included.

What he is more concerned with at the moment, however, is not a re-reading of Christianity that would call into question such a rigid division between the law and grace, which has been the general direction of theology over the last half-century or so, but rather to utilize this perceived division in order to isolate and mobilize the “truth” of the dispossessed subject who lives under a certain pastoral power exercised in the modern (secular) world as a form of governmentality. What was effectively developed in a post-Reformation, Western context was a subject “freed from its own truth” precisely through its subjection to a logic of governmentality (Foucault 2014, 227). This “manifestation of the truth” that “de-identified” the subject ended up being the very logic by which the “self” was transformed into a citizen-subject (Foucault 2014, 226).

These various strands of interlocked thought will coalesce in his *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, the title of his lectures from 1981–1982, on the examination of conscience and the care of self. In general, Foucault seems here to be setting up an alternative to the “economy of salvation” that functions within the domain of pastoral power. In its stead, salvation is rather re-presented as a personal measure utilized in order to save oneself alone, something he finds active within ancient philosophical practices that ran counter to later Christianized ones. Hence, in this context, he inspects monastic traditions in relation to ancient philosophical schools of thought, rather than perceiving monastic life itself as a counter-measure to pastoral power. As such, he is able to draw up his own counter-force to pastoral power, that which is located in the ancient, Greek care of the self and the courage to truth (*parrhēsia*), a major concept within Foucault’s later work.

He begins this re-defining of salvation by first re-contextualizing it vis-à-vis Greek traditions: “Salvation is a completely traditional term. You find it in fact in Plato, where it is associated with the problem of care of the self and care of others. One must be saved, one must save oneself, in order to save others” (Foucault 2005, 180). In the Christian tradition, which Foucault takes up in this context specifically in order to provide a foil to ancient philosophical uses of the term, salvation becomes a complex event that sometimes involves one saving oneself, in a sense, or, more directly, being saved by someone else (i.e. Jesus Christ, God, etc.). The sense of the terms that Foucault is seeking to recover from their Greek usage, however, is one wherein salvation is

[...] an activity, the subject’s constant action on himself, which finds its reward in a certain relationship of the subject to himself when he has become inaccessible to external disorders and finds a satisfaction in himself, needing nothing but himself. In a word, let’s say that salvation is the vigilant, continuous, and completed form of the relationship to self closed in on itself (Foucault 2005, 184–185).

What he discovers is a form of Hellenistic and Roman salvation in which “[o]ne saves oneself for the self, one is saved by the self, one saves oneself in order to arrive at nothing other than oneself” (Foucault 2005, 185). The “otherness” that had so permeated the self, and which had to be, at times, exorcised from the self in a religious rite of dis-possession, is no longer the primary way of defining the self. Moreover, in this formulation of things, there is no “binary” system of dividing the self at all, understood as an act of self-renunciation, within this ancient scheme of relations (Foucault 2005, 185).

The error, according to this ancient line of inquiry on caring for the self, is not, following Christianity, to fail to renounce the self, but simply to forget to care about oneself in order to care, first and foremost, for someone else above one’s own self (Foucault 2005, 198). Paying attention to otherness, from this angle, is *the* problem for Foucault above all else. *This*, he is suggesting, is the “error” that Christianity seems to fall into, with its apparent death of the self and through its call to love others ‘more than’ one’s own life. As he will render it, “[a] fundamental element of Christian conversion is renunciation of oneself, dying to oneself, and being reborn in a different self and a new form which, as it were, no longer has anything to do with the earlier self in its being, its mode of being, in its habits or its *ethos*” (Foucault 2005, 211; see also 250). It is in fact a “dying to death” in order to be reborn (Foucault 2014, 214). In the ancient line of thought he is pursuing, and in opposition to the Christian “death to the self”, there is no radical discontinuity with the self, as one is turning directly *toward* this self, the final “goal” toward which one is advancing.

Ancient ascetic practices within certain philosophical schools of thought – early forerunners of Christian monasticism, a counter-practice he does not fully take up directly⁷ – were not geared toward the renunciation of the self, but invested in a “return to the self” that sought to bind one to the truth as it were. This is not a form of conversion understood in a later Christian sense as *metanoia*, or a conversion based on repentance, but rather, following Pierre Hadot’s work, an awakening to the self (*epistrophe*) and an embracing of the self (Foucault 2005, 215). Foucault’s later remarks on a form of speaking the truth, *parrhesia*, will be bound up with this subject who seeks to express the self in as fully a manner as possible (Foucault 2014, 130–131)⁸. In his words, “[w]hat authenticates the fact that I tell you the truth is that as subject of my conduct I really am, absolutely, integrally, and totally identical to the subject of enunciation I am wherein I tell you what I tell you. Here, I think, we are at the heart of *parrhesia*” (Foucault 2005, 407).

Christianity, as opposed to ancient Greek practices of *parrhesia*, will propose to transfer such courageous truth-telling onto God and not onto human beings. As Foucault

7 See his comments on monasticism, in Foucault 2014, 195, 258–264.

8 See also Foucault 2011.

will elaborate in his last lectures from 1983–1984, for humanity, there will be only a fundamental mistrust of the self in relation to God, one that leads to a form of obedience to God as the only way to access such truth-telling (Foucault 2011, 334). To be sure, Christianity would eventually, even “paradoxically” as Foucault renders it, take up some forms of ancient practice aimed at knowing the self, such as the examination of conscience, but it did so by grafting something “foreign” onto itself (Foucault 2005, 422–424)⁹. What the ancient Greek philosophical schools he examines were after was a *forma vitae*, or “form of life” that lives beyond the rules of society, entrusting its members to a radical care of the self (Foucault 2005, 424).

Perhaps one could make an argument that there is little difference between the ancient model’s stress upon how the care of the self “becomes coextensive with life” (Foucault 2005, 86) and those many Christians who have historically made their faith likewise “coextensive with life”, one which Jesus himself proclaims to be the “way, truth and the life”¹⁰. Yet there would still remain a crucial difference that Foucault himself notes, for the Christian sense of the fullness of life has often been rooted in a life *beyond* this life, a clear distinction from the ancient Greek conceptualization: “[...] in Christian asceticism there is of course a relation to the other world (*l’autre monde*), and not to the world which is other” (Foucault 2011, 319).

Though it is perhaps not as clear how or why the Christian “rebirth” of the self differs so dramatically from an ancient model of caring for the self which also recognized that the self was to “become again what we never were”, or, more precisely, “become again what we should have been but never were” (Foucault 2005, 95), Foucault’s quest to seek after a “form of life” lived outside the law does bear a certain similarity to the Christian quest to search for a similar “form of life”. It is Foucault’s insistence on an alternative path which is mirrored rather precisely by permanent tensions within certain Christian monastic and religious orders throughout the centuries – a point that Giorgio Agamben has taken up directly in his study of monastic and Franciscan practices and principles, which I will explore in a moment. As I now intend to demonstrate, Foucault’s perhaps overstated claim that Christianity divorces knowledge of God from knowledge of the self likewise seems to step beyond what many theologians would consider to be *the* domain of Christian practices of the self (Foucault 2014, 310).

9 See also his remarks on the role of “examination” in general, and insofar as it is explicitly linked to his commentary on pastoral power here, in Foucault 1977, 184–194.

10 See John 14.6.

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In her *Torture and Truth*, Page duBois takes up a line of inquiry that in many ways runs parallel to Foucault's, especially in that she seeks to discern the manner in which truth is "extracted" from the bodies of those who supposedly "know" it, which can be an often violent, even torturous affair. This is a resonance we can still hear echoing in the word "confession", which certainly has connotations in the world of police and military affairs no less than in the Church (duBois 1991). Any difference between these two worlds, however, lies in the way in which the religious confession still holds something in reserve, as Karmen MacKendrick has put it in a theological paradigm, something that cannot be fully disclosed and which perhaps seduces us still further toward and into its mystery (MacKendrick 2013, 50–51).

What I want to briefly argue is that, despite his rigorous genealogy of the modern subject, Foucault yet fails to take up a certain significant and alternative methodological consideration in his genealogy of the self, one that might alternatively posit how Christianity contains within itself a sort of "negative dialectic" that exceeds the standard juxtaposition of the pastoral against the mystical, or even the orthodox against the heretical. That is: perhaps the Christian subject does not fully manifest the truth hidden or concealed within it, but retains something of a mystery beyond itself, which constantly and consistently *undoes* the subject. To gain a glimpse of how one might work with, but also beyond, Foucault, we might turn to the writings of Giorgio Agamben who gives us such an account and, to do so, has adapted Foucault's insights *within* a specific Christian (Pauline) formulation of the self.

What is most obvious about Agamben's incorporation of Foucaultian insight can be gleaned quite readily from his genealogical study of an "economy of glory" that is framed by his analysis of the rise of Western governmentality, which he takes up explicitly in his *The Kingdom and the Glory*. Like Foucault, Agamben is concerned with halting the assimilation of a more fundamental human essence – humanity's "pure potentiality" which is at times described as our essential tendency toward rendering the state's apparatuses of subjectivity "inoperative" – rather than promoting a form of actuality in league with that which is "operative". In his words, "[...] the governmental apparatus functions because it has captured in its empty center the inoperativity of the human essence", an essence he is determined to liberate (Agamben 2011, 246). As such, Agamben isolates those religious traditions that in fact resisted inscription into the practices of governmentality, that have sought to liberate something like a human essence that is all-too-often contorted and inscribed into the apparatuses of governmentality. What Agamben seeks to do, however, is to find such resources within the Christian tradition rather than in ancient Greek traditions.

Though this empty space of inoperativity at the center of governmentality coincides with the inoperativity of the "messianic operation" which suspends normative measures like the rule of law (Agamben 2011, 249), it yet differs from it in that the suspension offered by

the messianic is assimilated within the economy of glory in order to legitimate the latter's movement away from our pure potentiality and toward a form of actuality (or *necessity*, as Foucault had earlier called it), or, by definition then, the formation of government itself. Agamben elaborates on how governmentality sublimates the messianic suspension thus: "In accordance with an apparatus that has by now become familiar to us, a doctrine of glorious life that isolates eternal life and its inoperativity in a separate sphere comes to substitute that of the messianic life. Life, which rendered all forms inoperative, itself becomes a form in glory" (Agamben 2011, 249). The "formlessness" of the messianic, or life itself, in all its myriad existence, is given "concrete" (representative) form through the apparatuses that in effect give shape to "whatever being", as he will suggest in one context (Agamben 1993); they construct the "human being" itself, as he will take up the idea in another (Agamben 2004). Agamben's entire corpus of work, it would seem, is geared toward dismantling such representations and offering to us an alternative, albeit vague ("whatever"), "originary" being, exposed to the world in its nudity. Indeed, there is a complex rethinking of the subject that issues forth from Agamben's work, one that pivots on a reconceptualization of the subject who is rendered "inoperative", but thereby more authentically itself: "[...] it is only through the contemplation of power, which renders all specific *energeia* inoperative, that something like an experience of one's 'own' and a 'self' becomes possible. 'Self', subjectivity, is what opens itself as a central inoperativity in every operation, like the live-*ability* of every life" (Agamben 2011, 251). Though this may be a highly paradoxical formulation, it is the path toward our truest selves – our "whatever" being – that Agamben resolutely steers us toward.

As if recognizing Foucault's earlier elaboration on the "apparatuses of subjectivity" in the Western governmental construction of the self, Agamben will nonetheless push past the point where Foucault left off, intending to arrive at a new understanding of the self that seeks to escape from its indebtedness to the machinery ("apparatuses") of Western governmentality and theological (pastoral) power, for, as he too recognizes, "[...] from the perspective of theological *oikonomia* [...] nothing is more urgent than to incorporate inoperativity within its own apparatuses" (Agamben 2011, 251). It is in response to this "urgent" task which he wishes to see brought to a standstill that Agamben counter-proposes another one: rendering such apparatuses themselves inoperative through a "messianic" suspension of their economy. In suggesting this, he points toward something like poetry, which manages, entirely within the coordinates of language, to suspend the normal economy of language, its "economic and biological operations" and to point through this suspension toward a "new, possible use" of language for the human being (Agamben 2011, 252).

We should recognize in this formulation of calling a halt to the operations of the governmental apparatus something like *another* reading of the Christian subject, one that takes up something akin to the monastic "form-of-life" (*forma vitae*) that Foucault was likewise after,

but which also is to be distinguished from the pastorally constituted Christian subject. Envisioning this “new” form of subjectivity beyond what we have hitherto known takes the trajectory, for Agamben – and here the contrast with Foucault’s reading of Paul as the one who focused more on salvation than on the law is striking – of something like a Pauline death to the self that is also a death to such standard dialectical, representative formulations¹¹. This is precisely what Agamben will take up in his reading of Saint Paul on one’s (non)identity conceived through the “division of division itself”, which to his mind constitutes an entirely different approach to understanding the formation of the Western Christian subject (Agamben 2005). Such a reading converges exactly, moreover, with the theologian Jürgen Moltmann’s attempt to isolate the nucleus of Christian identity as the “negation of negation”, something he takes up following both Hegel and Theodor Adorno’s development of a “negative dialectics” (Moltmann 1993, 254; Adorno 1973). What both thinkers propose is a movement beyond the historical tensions Foucault identifies, and the alleged favoring of grace over law, but also a step backward, closer to the Pauline proclamation that all identities, all social divisions as it were, were themselves subject to another division, one into spirit and flesh, that served to undermine any strong representational claims¹².

In seeing this movement of non-identity as it were, we might notice as well how the fundamental anxiety that Foucault identified as constitutive of Christian identity is actually dispelled by the self that recognizes its own fractured identity, and does this as the means by which it is “saved” so to speak. This movement toward a poverty of the self is not anxious about whether it has achieved something permanent, but rather is “helped” by the knowledge that it is not a permanent, monolithic self. And this is perceived to be the case not in another world, either yet to come or permanently “elsewhere”, but firmly *within* this world – a work of “absolute immanence” that characterizes Agamben’s work from its inception (Agamben 2000).

Beyond this implicit critique and refinement of Foucault’s position, Agamben, for his part, seems to have in some sense defied Foucault’s criticisms of Christianity by taking up the history of monasticism, and more precisely, the Franciscans, *in order to* demonstrate how it has been at times the most prominent attempt to establish a “form-of-life” lived beyond the confines of both the Church and society, beyond the “laws” of both. In his *The Highest Poverty: Monastic Rules and Form-of-Life*, for example, Agamben takes up the history of monastic rule and of the Franciscan relationship to possession and use in order to establish a “form-of-life” potentially lived outside the law, that which seeks access to the “thing itself” as the person or presence standing before us. His short study of the permanent tensions between

11 See, e.g., Romans 6.

12 See Romans 7–8 and Galatians 3.28, among others, as well as Agamben’s commentary on this division (Agamben 2005, 49).

life and liturgy in these early Christian communities yields the Franciscan “solution” to this problematic equating of life and rule: the “highest poverty”, or an attempt to live “extraneous” to the law – making use of something while not actually possessing it (Agamben 2013, 122). What results from such a reinterpretation of Christian life (rather than doctrine) is that, in Agamben’s words,

[...] [t]he specific eschatological character of the Franciscan message is not expressed in a new doctrine, but in a form of life through which the very life of Christ is made newly present in the world to bring to completion, not the historical meaning of the “person” in the economy of salvation, so much as his life as such (Agamben 2013, 143).

It is only as such that the Franciscans are able to step “outside” the Church while yet remaining fully within it. This is, moreover, another way to present us with the “messianic” life, which is really just *life* itself and therefore “absolutely” immanent: that which we have such trouble recognizing in its precarious vulnerability, much like the nudity of our own bodies that we seek to clothe and hide, though our bodies nonetheless still do exist and persist underneath their many-layered veils (Agamben 2010).

The “ontology of poverty” that Agamben unfolds through his analysis of the Franciscan ideal, I would argue, becomes that which “undoes” the standard reading of the Christian subject as one bound up and complicit with pastoral power: he identifies a “more fundamental” essence of the Christian self that would be more in line with Foucault’s “counter practices” of the Christian self. What Agamben seeks to usher in is no less than a death to the modern “self” which was conceived on the basis of the Western paradigm of governmentality (again in agreement with Foucault). There is a poverty of the self that he detects at work in Franciscan thought and it is one that seems to be a more authentic bearer of the messianic principle at the heart of the Christian narrative. In this counter-proposition to the governmental manufacturing of selves, the Pauline “division” of the subject becomes a pouring out, or *poverty*, of the self that brings about, not just the death of the subject, but a political challenge to *all* political subjects: “The ‘highest poverty’, with its use of things, is the form-of-life that begins when all the West’s forms of life have reached their historical consummation” (Agamben 2013, 143). Hence he can suggest, in the end, that “[t]he Franciscan form of life is, in this sense, the end of all lives (*finis omnium vitarum*)” as we have consistently represented life in the West (Agamben 2013, 143). To suggest as much is certainly not to suggest that human “life” comes to an end – the various “apocalyptic” scenarios that some of Agamben’s critics might have felt he was moving closer toward – but rather to point toward an end to the ways in which we have represented human life, and opening us up to new senses of being human than we have perhaps ever conceived.

As Paul himself once conjectured, in the death one dies with the Messiah (whom he took to be the historical person of Jesus Christ), there is yet another life possible, though one that may appear as the opposite of the reality that an individual had previously known and lived out. What Agamben seems to be telling us is that this manifest proclamation may not have been entirely forgotten after Paul's death, but may have survived in various "forms-of-life" lived in faithfulness to this particular messianic suspension of (human, religious, political, economic, or just *all*) identity as we had known it. Such "forms-of-life" in fact may have been thriving around us all along, unnoticed but crying out for a radically different access to the vital *life* we all were already always living. Though Agamben's recent research has only pointed toward a series of somewhat marginalized Christian traditions and practices as countermeasures to the Church's more dominant hegemonic narrative, rather than offering us a fuller scale along which to revise the methods of theological inquiry itself, there is yet enough critical and historical interpretation on offer in his claims to present a bold re-envisioning of political theology as a whole, one very much in need of further elaboration.

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TYTUŁ: Z którą teologią polityczną mamy do czynienia? Oceniając genealogię teologii politycznej i wypatrując jej przyszłości

ABSTRAKT: W niniejszym tekście przyglądam się dostrzeżonemu przez Michela Foucaulta przeciwieństwu między teologicznymi obszarami władzy pastoralnej oraz mistycznej, by wskazać na nacisk, jaki filozof kładł na konieczność i opatrność jako pojęcia założycielskie i legitymizujące Państwo. Dzięki temu rozwijam analizę tego, jak Foucault, krytykując historyczne wykorzystania teologii w roli narzędzia władzy pastoralnej, faktycznie wskazuje na rodzaj teologii politycznej odmiennej od tej stworzonej przez Carla Schmitta. Twierdę, że zaczynamy zauważać odmienny „typ” teologii politycznej w pismach Giorgia Agambena, który podąża za tradycjami chrześcijańskimi znacznie bardziej niż Foucault. Moim zdaniem przeformułowanie teologii politycznej w dziele Agambena ma kolosalne znaczenie dla całego pola badawczego jako całości i pilnie domaga się dalszego opracowania, na co niniejszy esej zaledwie wskazuje.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: Michel Foucault, Giorgio Agamben, rządomyślność, władza pastoralna, mistycyzm

DIAGNOSIS WITHOUT SOLUTION: AGAMBEN AND ESPOSITO

MATEUSZ BURZYK

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

ALLEGORIES OF THE INVISIBLE. OR, HOW TO ESTRANGE ECONOMY (THEOLOGICALLY)?

MATEUSZ PIOTROWSKI

Abstract: The paper tries to once again bring into play the classical ideas of the Marxian critique of political economy and to demonstrate how these ideas can be reactivated by an injection of theology. Special attention will be dedicated to the theologically intensified notion of *alienation*, treated not only as a subject but also as a method of criticism. The aim of such an estranging method is to make visible the “transcendental plane” of the capitalist historical a priori. This will be done through the production of *allegories*, that is figurations of the infinite movement of the capitalist totality. Starting with a critique of the disenchanted Euhemerism of Hardt and Negri, who want to demythologise political economy as nothing but relations between people, I attempt to show the limits of their approach, by exposing the constitution of capital as the creation of an inverted reality. In this process, hypostasis of human labour (i.e. capital) gets the upper hand over human beings, not only in imagination, but also in reality, making a clear-cut distinction between real and imagined entities questionable. Through the analysis of the focal points of this process, I will attempt to demonstrate a complex interplay of subsequent disenchantments and miraculations, which establish capital as something more than human, while simultaneously naturalising its phantasmic becoming as the very core of the reality principle. Alienation as method tries to break the simultaneity of miraculation/dischantment by dividing apparently unitary semblance – *fetish* – into distinct and potentially conflicted layers. Potential for this conflict is produced by two estrangement effects. Firstly, by juxtaposing a finite human subject with the infinite process of capital. Secondly, by thinking of conversion, which – becoming the highest point of alienation – could enable the human being to establish itself as an autonomous subject against the gods of this world and its own worldly self.

Keywords: political economy, theology, fetishism, enstrangement effects, allegory

I EXPOSITION

Political economy and the invisible

“We need to stop confusing politics with theology”, write Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt, beginning the last part of their trilogy with “a repudiation of an apocalyptic tone adopted recently in philosophy” (Hardt and Negri 2009, 5). According to the authors of *Commonwealth*, many critiques of capitalism resemble “those medieval European renditions of hell: people burning in a river of fire, others being torn limb from limb, and in the centre a great devil engorging their bodies whole” (Hardt and Negri 2009, 3). But, Negri and Hardt argue, there is no great Satan. We are dealing with the powers of capital and law, both entirely of this world. What is needed is not political theology (or demonology), but rather something they call Euhemerism. Just like the ancient critic Euhemerus had explained that myths about gods are nothing but exaggerated narratives about divinised kings, a new political Euhemerism should demonstrate that what seems to be transcendent, otherworldly Power is in reality *nothing but* relations between people.

The present research shares Hardt and Negri’s conviction that in order to understand the powers that be of our time, we have to engage in a critical enquiry into the entanglement of socio-economic-political relations, which the Marxian tradition used to call political economy. The notion of critique here should be understood in its strict sense, i.e. as an exposition of the *a priori* conditions of experience and appearance. These *historical a priori* conditions (or rather incessant conditioning) constitute a transcendental plane, which “occupies a position not wholly in the immediate, immanent facts of experience but not wholly outside them either” (Hardt and Negri 2009, 6).

According to the Italian-American philosophical duo, the capitalist transcendental plane, which shapes the conditions of the possibility of social life, is established in and through our everyday practices. And these practices are mundane, micrological, capillary etc. However, Hardt and Negri add another adjective, which should make us think twice before we fully embrace their proposal to get rid of all theology in analysing capitalism. They say that the socio-economic powers conditioning our experience are *invisible*. On the one hand power structures are so deeply embedded in our everyday lives, in the movements of our bodies, in our consciousness and unconsciousness, in our subjective and infra-subjective behaviour – every time we go to work, every time we go shopping – that they have become unperceivable. On the other hand, the movement of an abstract self-valorising value incessantly circulating at enormous speed in the heavens of financialised speculative capitalism seems to be

ungraspable by a finite human mind. As if capital was at the same time too small and too big to be perceived.

Alienation as method

What is needed here is a conceptual and figurative device which could make the transcendental plane of capital – in the immediacy and abstractness of which we are all immersed – visible. In order to construct such a device I would like to turn to the somehow dusty and outmoded notion of *alienation*. It will not only be the object of our study but also its method. Alienation as method is aimed at producing *estrangement effects*, suddenly exposing the normal world, where everything is as it is, as something much more enchanted than we tend to think. That is why theology – that is a science which deals with the invisible – might be of some use for the analysis of capital.

Estrangement effects created by a juxtaposition of theological imagery with political economy could enable us to step out of an undifferentiated movement, to grasp an invisible monster, which has no measurements and escapes definitions – to finally grasp it as a historical *a priori* which is always almost present as the unrepresentable condition of all appearances. Or, to use the language of Paul of Tarsus: it could help to expose the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the invisible atmosphere, the very air we are breathing as an alien power which stands against us (see: Ephesians 2:2, Colossians 2:14).

What is the position of a human subject (say, a reader or the author of this text) in this process of estrangement? What is his position towards the protagonists of our moral play: capital, the capitalist and the worker?

For what else is he if not the brother of the characters, caught in the spontaneous myths of ideology, in its illusions and privileged forms, as much as they are? If he is kept at a distance from the play itself, it is not to spare him or set him apart as a Judge – on the contrary, it is to take him and enlist him in this apparent distance, in this “estrangement” – to make him into this distance itself, the distance which is simply an active and living critique (Althusser, 1962).

Critique brings the process to a stand-still. When the infinite movement suddenly stops, exposed as something alien, a certain distance is produced. Powers – confronting me from the outside as the alienated fruit of my own work, and from the inside as “another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner” (Romans

7:23)¹ – these powers could be therefore grasped as something non-identical with me. Even though they do co-constitute the very fabric of myself and the actual conditions of the process of subjectification, I can alienate myself from them. The human subject abstracts itself from the totalising *socius* and from its own self in the gesture of self-alienation, coming to a Paulinian conclusion that: “if I do not will, this I do, it is no longer I that work it out, but sin that dwells in me” (Romans 7: 17). Alienation as a method could make us step out from the Heraclitean river of capital’s becoming, and achieve at least partial, conceptual mastery over its totality.

Blockage of figuration

Putting an infinite process into definitions, especially if chaos and fragmentation seem to be its very principles, seems ridiculous. The finite human subject and its subjective opinion appears to be comically incommensurable with capital’s measureless becoming. Much of contemporary thought relies on this incommensurability, ridiculing any attempt to master this *chaosmos*. Dominant *doxa* claims that the will to construct a mental totalisation must lead to totalitarian theory and, ultimately, to totalitarian practice. Or at best it has to remain nothing more than pathetic *hubris*: the pride of limited human reason confronted with powers infinitely exceeding it.

Let there be no misunderstanding. Those who advocate the superiority of these processes are definitely right; nonnegotiable facts stand behind them. Nevertheless, we will risk the stupidity of reasoning, which tries to grasp the air surrounding us and is always left empty-handed.

Here we are confronted with the problem of invisibility once again. It can be traced back to the text which shaped popular beliefs on classical economy: Adam Smith’s famous fragment on “the invisible hand” (Smith 1976, 456). While analysing this expression it is important to give equal value to both elements of this figurative concept. That is, to take into consideration both the idea of the rational providence evoked by the action of the “hand” – and its “invisibility”. The order, the rational pattern is there, however it remains ungraspable by the human eye and incomprehensible for the human reason of an actor embedded in economic reality; be it a worker, a merchant or a political sovereign. As Michel Foucault (Foucault 2008, 278–286) rightly noted in his reading of this text, non-transparency, or the objective blindness of agents engaged in economic action is constitutive for the rationality of the process. Human subjects act rationally if they are trying to predict ultimately

1 All quotations from the Bible are taken from the New International Version.

unpredictable movements of the mighty hand. In contrast, any attempts to contradict the unfathomable verdicts of the economic reason, any attempts to intervene in the operations of the market, disturb the rational course of events – must lead to catastrophe. The human subject, be it individual or social, cannot posit itself on the level of the sovereign who sees the process and thus is able to shape its *a priori* conditions. Or at least that is what the economic *Biblia pauperum* teaches us.

However, it would be overhasty to state, as Foucault does, that imposition of the economic reason makes the very idea of totality impossible, establishing economy as a fully immanent, atheistic domain, where there is no place for invisible Providence². Totality is there, constituting the interrelation of independent agents, and guaranteeing harmonious coincidence. Thanks to this strange coincidence the pursuit of the maximisation of an individual profit is claimed to lead necessarily to general benefit and a just, rational allocation of resources (see Foucault 2005; Marx 1990, 280; Vogl 2015). The totality exists precisely as invisible. It remains at the threshold of the subject's consciousness. As when we wake up every morning disquieted, trying to remind ourselves in vain of what it was that we did not do yesterday.

Allegories of totality

We have said that the concept-image of the invisible hand keeps the totality an almost-present, tacit precondition and the unsurpassable horizon of reasoning. It cannot step-over the point of figuration and conceptualisation, after which it could become an object of critique. A strange mixture of visible and invisible, sensuous and super-sensuous confronts us not only on the macro-level of totality, but also on the micro-level where we meet the cellular form of capitalist society – commodity. Commodity appears as something unitary: an unbreakable atom of socio-economic physics. Capitalist fetishism creates something that Marx calls “an indissoluble fusion” (Marx 1990, 983) of the sensuous and the super-sensuous. And this fusion proves to be strangely resistant to analysis.

The social whole does not give itself to our cognition in any transparent symbol. There is no object of experience which could work as its *pars totalis*, a monad, in which totality is simply present. A statement that tries to pin down totality cannot be anything more than an example: a shadow, which precedes the body, a figure, which comes before the real

2 To make Foucault's strong claim more questionable one could recall the strange similarity of the supposedly atheist Smithian invisible hand described in Foucault's *Birth of Biopolitics* to the beatific vision of the divine, cosmic necessity to which the Stoic sage has to adjust himself, which we encounter in his *Hermeneutics of the Subject* (Foucault 2008, 283–285). This of course tells us something not only about Adam Smith or Seneca, but also about Foucault's own position, after the fall of the revolutionary wave of the sixties.

thing (Hebrews 1:10, see also de Lubac 1988). As Marx warns us, whoever simply identifies capital with a material, visible thing, falls into fetishism. Fetish is no-thing (1 Corinthians 10:19–20), even if it uses a material body as its bearer. That is why, instead of seeing totality in any particular, concrete symbol we need to satisfy ourselves with what Paul of Tarsus baptised as *allegories* (Galatians 4:24–26). Allegories, in contrast to symbols, are necessarily partial and incomplete (Benjamin 2003, Jameson 2008). The allegorical gaze always requires an interpretative or political act: a decision on the part of the subject, be it individual or collective. The subject has to recognise a figure in a cloud, to draw the lines between dispersed dots in order to see the movement of totality in a concrete moment for the first time.

The object of analysis: the production process

This might all sound too poetic. However, as Bertolt Brecht teaches us, in certain circumstances an intensified poetical estrangement effect can work as an instrument of scientific cognisance. What I want to prove in my paper is that this figurative operation we call estrangement can be treated as an actual method of Marxian *analysis*, in its literal sense. Analysis dissects and discerns. What is, what gets dissected in *Capital*? I would like to argue that it is firstly and most importantly *fetish*, that is, as we have said, a very peculiar indissoluble amalgamate of the sensuous and the super-sensuous.

The vast majority of commentators recalls the concept of fetish solely in the context of the opening chapters of *Das Kapital*, where Marx deals with so called “simple circulation”. Thus fetishism is usually analysed as a problem emerging in the sphere of exchange and eventually, consumption (with important consequences for the reconstruction of Marxian thought). In my reading I try to take into consideration fetishist “equivocation”, a phantasmic becoming, which takes place not only in exchange, but also at the heart of the *production* process.

Thanks to such an analysis, rather than being confronted with a unitary block of totality on the one hand and the unbreakable atom of commodity on the other, we could see them as incoherent and temporary production processes. What is more, under an estranging gaze the production process itself falls apart, exposing the coincidence of two very different realities: *the labour process* and *the valorisation process*. In the actual reality (or rather: in the reality as conditioned by capitalist *a priori* conditioning) these two processes merge, appearing as a unitary semblance: fetish. The analysis of fetishes tries to dissolve it, by breaking it into distinct and potentially – but only potentially – conflicted layers. The task of a critique of

fetishes is to alienate the poles, which constitute this semblance, to polarise them and to turn one against the other.

Inside the fetishist visual field social objects and subjects are presented as something *unitary*: as “commodity”, “labour” or “capital” pure and simple. Things and actions (the commodity on a supermarket shelf, the act of buying this commodity for money, the act of earning this money for producing other commodities) appear “at first sight an extremely obvious, trivial thing”. Only “analysis” exposes it as something “abounding in metaphysical subtleties and theological niceties” (Marx 1990, 163). The analysis of fetishes tries to arrest the indivisible movement of the capitalisation of labour, in order to dissect it and expose its strangely twofold character. To understand how this process works, it is necessary to make it stand still, as if by using a slow-motion camera, separating moments and movements, which in capitalist reality exist in the eternal present of *creatio continua* of incessant production-distribution-exchange-consumption-production. The method applied here tries to produce such a chemical solution which will make elements of fetishist “indissoluble amalgamation” precipitate.

II ANALYSIS OF PRODUCTION

Inversion, or why is disenchanting critique not enough?

These are, however, still promises without sufficient grounding. Let us come back to Hardt and Negri to see better – in contrast to their optimistic, secular, enlightened Euhemerism – how theological estrangement works. Hardt and Negri’s attack on political theology recalls the rhetorical pathos of young Marx’s critique of religion (stop looking for sovereignty in the heavens and recognise the structures of power on earth!). The aim of such a critique is to present things as they really are. Young Marx’s “irreligious criticism” is based on an assumption that “*Man makes religion, religion does not make man*” (Marx 1992, 244). Religious inversion, which pictures the producer (man) as conditioned by his product (god) is something in the imagination only, but in truth and reality nothing.

For young Marx and his mentor, Ludwig Feuerbach, the main subject of criticism, the arch-enemy, who managed to prolong the existence of religion by dressing it up as philosophy was, of course, G.W.F. Hegel. According to the young radicals, Hegel, a theologian undercover, a bookish idealist, an apologist of the Prussian authoritarian state, in an all too Christian manner replaced the concrete, sensual, living human subjectivity, a man of flesh and blood, a man with a body (and a stomach!) with a theoretical, abstract hypostasis called the Idea. In his critique of Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right* Marx condemns the Hegelian Idea

– the supposedly self-positioning Subject – as nothing but an inversion of real relations. He finds Hegel guilty of a “logical, pantheistic mysticism” (Marx 1992, 61), which conceives human beings to be mere moments of the process of the actualisation of the Idea. Describing how social positions really are distributed in the modern state and how the division of labour operates in modern society, young Marx writes:

The real relationship is “that the assignment of the material of the state to any given individual is mediated by circumstances, his caprice and his personal choice of his station in life”. This fact, this real relationship is described by speculative philosophy as appearance, as phenomenon. [...] The family and civil society are the preconditions of the state; they are the true agents; but in speculative philosophy it is the reverse. When the Idea is subjectivized the real subjects – civil society, the family, “circumstances, caprice etc.” – are all transformed into unreal, objective moments of the Idea [...] the condition is posited as the conditioned, the determinant as the determined, the producer as the product (Marx 1992, 60–63).

We find here a sharp contrast between “the real” and its inversion in speculation. Inside this critical framework capital cannot be conceptualised otherwise, than as a merely imaginative hypostasis of the actions of individuals and their families; as nothing but a semblance.

But, for some reason, workers find this illusion real enough to make them work. How does capital succeed in changing individuals into *nothing but* living elements of a collective machine producing profit? Is capital a real thing or a phantasmagoria? If we could really speak of a rupture between the rhetoric of the young and the mature Marx, it does not happen with the abandonment of the “religious myth” of alienation. “Rupture” (or rather the reconfiguration of the elements of thought, a regrouping forced by the blockage encountered) is produced by the attempt to conceptualise the strangely sensuous-super-sensuous, real-phantasmagorical character of capital. The problem of alienation was persistently and stubbornly present in the writings of Marx (see Marx 1990, 989–990, 1002–1003)³. As we will see, for the mature Marx alienation is above all a matter of the *results of production* under a specific social formation. Criticism of religion, defined as the fundament of all criticism in his early writings, remains. But in the *Grundrisse* and *Das Kapital* it does not operate in the mode of a Euhemerist denunciation of the misty creations of religion as merely inexistent hypostases. “Irreligion” returns as a practical critique of fetishes. Capital as fetish, far from being something in the imagination only, is immersed in material practices and produces real effects. It organises the division of the social field and the division of social labour:

3 In these writings Marx explicitly discusses religious alienation in the context of the capitalist relations of production, using both the terms “alienation” (*Entfremdung*) and “fetish”.

Capital is the lifeblood that flows through/in the body politic of all those societies we call capitalists [...]. It is thanks to this flow that we, who live under capitalism, acquire our daily bread, as well as our houses, cars, cell phones, shirts, shoes and all the other goods we need to support our daily life. By way of these flows the wealth is created from which the many services that support, entertain, educate, resuscitate or cleanse us are provided. By taxing this flow states augment their power, their military might and their capacity to ensure an adequate standard of life for their citizens. Interrupt, slow down or, even worse, suspend the flow and we encounter a crisis of capitalism in which daily life can no longer go on in the style to which we have become accustomed (Harvey 2010, vi).

Participation in and dependence on capital flows can be more or less direct. Our income which gives us access to the means of subsistence and makes our existence possible does not have to be acquired in the form of the wage. It can be the gain of a speculator, the pension of a pensioner, the benefit of a benefiter or the share of income transferred from a wage-labourer to his wife for her reproductive labour. In any case, it seems that the means of subsistence *ultimately* comes from a single source – capital. It *appears* – and here I ask the reader to keep in mind the uncertainty of this word – that in this world capital is the breathable air, the invisible being in which human beings live and move and have their being.

What will the markets say about this? Are the markets happy with the new government? The hypostases of our own activity, the products of our own labour appear as a natural-divine precondition of labour, as a quasi-cause of the social process and as a self-begotten being. In the *Realprozess* of capital, like in the movement of the Hegelian Idea, capital posits and presents itself as a presupposition of labour, changing its precondition into something conditioned. Real, concrete, finite human beings are subsumed under capital to serve the infinite process of valorisation of abstract value, which has become the final goal of production. Human life is contingent, and becomes more and more precarious, whereas abstract markets attain ontological solidity. Capital posits the laws of its own reproduction as necessary, whereas the epiphenomenal existence of this or that particular human individual becomes perfectly unnecessary in the very moment that it ceases to play the role of a bearer of the valorisation process. The phantasy, which conceives the human subject to be “a moment of the inner imaginary activity” (Marx 1992, 62) of the Capital-Idea – this phantasy is made real in the actual production process whenever capital succeeds in turning living labour into a moment of its own becoming. The means of production, the products of labour, represented and personified by the capitalist, rule over living labour as an *alien power*. This produces an inverted world, which cannot be fathomed by flat, two-dimensional, disenchanted Euhemerist discourses.

Sphere of tension: semblance/appearance

Before we can penetrate this strange world (where dancing tables animated by the movement of exchange go about their own business and dead labour spiritualised as capital employs and commands living labour), we have to devote some time to the exegesis of the opening sentence of *Capital*. Or, to be more precise, to the exegesis of a single notion used in this sentence. A notion, which plays a crucial role in understanding the Marxian idea of sensuous–super-sensuous social objectivity.

Marx begins his *opus magnum* with the following statement: “The wealth of societies in which the capitalist mode of production prevails appears [*erscheint*] as an »immense collection of commodities«; the individual commodity appears as its elementary form” (Marx 1990, 125). Marx picks his words very carefully here, and for good reason. He does not say that wealth simply *is* an immense collection of commodities. He says that under capitalism things *appear* as commodities. The meaning of the word *Erscheinung* used in this sentence is usually explained as “a necessary mode of expression” or “objective appearance”. It is often compared and contrasted with another closely connected, and at times overlapping term – *Schein*, which in this context is translated as “semblance” or “illusion” (see Bellofiore 2009). In the writings of the mature Marx there is an incessant ambivalence, a constant oscillation between *Schein* and *Erscheinung*, between *appearance* and *semblance*: between capital understood as an objective and necessary form of social mediation, and capital understood as something illusory, lacking any power, apart from the power extracted and expropriated from living labour. The same ambiguity lies at the heart of the Marxian idea of human subjectivity. The meaning of “the subject” in *Das Kapital* is notoriously undetermined and unstable. It is simultaneously a surface effect of the underlying forces of capital and a genuine power of the self-determination latently present in the “residual subjectivity” (Arthur 2004, 53) of workers resisting and fighting capital.

I will try to prove that this ambiguity is not a matter of Marx’s inability to distinguish clearly between the different meanings of words, but rather an expression of real ambivalences inherent to a specific social process. “Appearance” recurs in innumerable passages of *Capital* in the most decisive moments. It is used not only when Marx defines the “elementary form” of capitalist society (i.e. commodity) but also when he speaks of capitalist production, which transforms dead labour into capital. Under capitalism things appear as commodities, living labour predominantly acquires the form of wage-labour and the means of production present themselves as being capital by nature. Thus, a specific social relation appears as something intrinsic to the thing-hood [*dingliche Qualität*] of a thing,

Under certain circumstances a chair with four legs and a velvet covering may be used as a *throne*. But the same chair, a thing for sitting on, does not become a throne by virtue of its use-value. The most essential factor in the labour process is the worker himself, and in antiquity the worker was a slave. But this does not imply that the worker is a *slave* by nature [...] any more than spindles and cotton are *capital* by nature just because they are consumed nowadays by the wage-labourer in the labour process. The folly of identifying a specific *social relation of production* with the thing-like [*dingliche*] qualities of certain articles simply because it represents itself in terms of certain articles is what strikes us most forcibly when we open any textbook on economics and see on the first page how the elements of the process of production, reduced to their basic form, turn out to be land, *capital* and labour. One might just as well say that they were *landed property*, knives, scissors, spindles, cotton, grain, in short, the *materials* and *means of labour*, and *wage-labour* (Marx 1990, 998, original emphasis).

This “equivocation”, which produces an apparently indissoluble fusion of historically specific social forms and things (scissors-capital-spindles-wage-labour-grain-landed-property) is precisely what Marx calls fetishism. If it was only a matter of some logical error made by economists due to their lack of information or diligence it could easily be corrected simply by providing more information or by introducing a more adequate scientific paradigm. The problem is that “this illusion is one that springs out from the very nature of capitalist production itself” (Marx 1990, 998). If it is a folly, it is a generalised social folly. Fetishist appearance does not posit itself merely in the consciousness or imagination of actors on the market, but becomes the *medium of appearance* of all subjects and objects – constantly turning one into the other. It becomes a socially valid form of mediation: an objective thought form. This form of mediation is not established by a kind of social contract (as when all the participants consciously agree to treat a certain thing as a symbol of wealth). Rather it is posited through constant repetition. That is: in the actual acts of exchange and production. Value and capital are social practices. If capitalism is a religion it is above all else a cultic religion, a religion of everyday life, which makes the human subject kneel down, in following everybody around, while “faith” follows. And even if one does not believe fully in capitalist dogmas or is not fully conscious of them, one has to participate in the rituals of capitalist exchange and production in order to get access to goods and services. One has to take part, directly or indirectly, in the generation and realisation of value to get the means of subsistence.

This socially objective basis of fetishism is produced and reproduced not only in market exchange, when the abstract quality of exchangeability is attributed to materially different commodities, but also in the actual process of capitalist production. The capitalist buys commodities on the market, in order to employ them in production. He buys the means

of production, raw materials, machines and “labour”⁴. His money is now transformed into these commodities, they all belong to him and now they *represent (vorstell)* his capital. The means of production appears as capital, since it is in fact put to work producing profit for the capitalist. Abstract capital represents itself in concrete use-values. It incorporates living labour, acquiring a body that can work for it. For an appointed time this body belongs to the capitalist just as all the other elements, just as the process itself, and just as the results of this process.

As Marx tirelessly repeats: in capitalism *it is capital that employs and commands labour– not the other way around*. The capitalist and his supervisors subjects who are in charge of the production process have the ability to command labour, by the sole (social) virtue of owning and representing capital. “Even this relation in its simplicity is a personification of things and a reification of persons. [...] the objective conditions of labour, do not appear as subsumed under the worker; rather, he appears as subsumed under them” (Marx 1990, 1054). In capitalism it appears – with the whole power of socially objective appearance – that it is capital that *gives jobs to the worker*. It seems that objects (the means of production) by their very nature have the ability to employ and control living labour. Capital is effectively posited as a necessary form of the appearance of things, processes and human agents.

Breaking the process 1: labour and valorisation

Fetishist equivocation identifies a specific social form (an arrangement constituted of the relation between wage-labour and capital) with its thinghood (the fact that it exists as a means of production, as stuff for making other stuff). Marx tries to separate this arrangement by distinguishing *the labour process* from *the valorisation process*. The labour process transforms its material into something socially useful: concrete labour produces concrete use-values which form social wealth. The valorisation process creates abstract value, expressed in money. People under different social regimes of production have always worked to produce products, which will be *socially*⁵ useful for them, whereas in capitalism workers work under the control of the capitalist to produce commodities, in order to valorise value and to generate profit for the capitalist. The labour process is the trans-historical condition of the

4 The unitary notion of “labour” is also a fetishist appearance. Yet an analysis of the crucial doubling inside this notion – a doubling that makes possible the movement of differentiation and identification, which constitutes surplus-value, and thus capital – is outside of the scope of this paper.

5 We should not forget that for Marx use-value is neither simply “natural”, nor does the labour process take place in the realm of pure nature, since its product is always pre-determined by human needs/desires, which are themselves historical creations/social products, see Marx 1990, 287.

metabolism of human beings and nature. The valorisation process is a social form, which has become dominant under capitalism.

The labour process as such is “independent of every form [...], or rather common to all forms of society in which human beings live” (Marx 1990, 290). The notion of the labour process is thus a trans-historical, theoretical *generalisation*⁶. It cannot appear directly in a pure state, because it is always already immersed in a definite set of the social relations of production, being only a moment of a historically specific whole. Thus it necessarily presents itself in specific, historically determined social forms of appearance, which are the modes of its existence. The capitalist valorisation (in production)⁷ is also materialised in a particular labour process. Although for value it is a matter of indifference if the surplus is generated by the production of flowers or guns, the abstract value in the production process has to be valorised in and through *a* concrete form of labour – thorough dressmaking, computer programming, spinning etc.

Since labour creates value solely in a particular useful form, and since every specific useful kind of labour requires material and means of labour which possess a specific use value, [...] the labour can only be absorbed in so far as capital takes on the shape of the specific means of production required for particular labour processes, and only in this shape can capital absorb living labour. Here, therefore, one sees why the material elements of the labour process are seen as capital on account of their material characteristics by the capitalist, the worker and the political economist, the last-mentioned being capable of thinking of the labour process only as a labour process appropriated by capital. One also sees why the political economist is incapable of separating their material existence, as simply factors of the labour process, from the social quality attaching to them, which makes them into capital. He cannot do this because in reality the same identical labour process which the means of production serve through their material characteristics as mere means of subsistence of labour, *converts* those means of production into mere means for the absorption of labour. The worker makes use of the means of production in the labour process, considered in *isolation*. But in the labour process which is at the same time a capitalist production process the means of production make use of the worker, with the result that labour appears only as a means whereby a certain amount of value, hence a certain amount of objectified labour, absorbs living labour in order to preserve and

6 Such a general notion is of course related to but not identical with *real abstraction*, which has become effective under specific historical conditions. Real abstraction of “abstract labour” is not simply a trans-historical generalisation, but a real (cognitive and material) process of abstracting from the concrete, useful character of particular type of labour in capitalist exchange and production.

7 We have to restrain ourselves from analysing processes in which abstract capital appears as not mediated by any direct relation to material objects. Analysis of the “autoerotic” relation of Money to More Money (M–M') in finance and the way in which finance falls back upon production is a matter of the highest importance, requiring further investigation.

increase itself. Thus the labour process appears as a process of the self-valorisation of objectified labour by means of living labour (Marx 2015)⁸.

Marx, takes pains to analytically distinguish (“isolate”) the labour process from the valorisation process, by showing that the valorising process is a historical and thus not absolutely necessary form acquired by the labour process. In production, the valorisation process has to be embodied by a concrete labour process. But the reverse does not hold.

For the spinning process as such, for example, it is a matter of indifference that the cotton and the spindles represent the money of the capitalist, hence – capital, that the money expended is determined as capital. Cotton and spindles become the material and means of labour in the hands of the working spinner alone, and they become these things because he spins, not because he turns cotton belonging to another person into yarn for the same person by spinning with a spindle belonging to the same person (Marx 2015).

The labour process does not have to acquire the capitalist form in order to produce use-values: it is possible to recall or imagine that labour is done under other social regimes than capitalist valorisation. The capitalist form is neither eternal nor absolute. This enables us to abstract the trans-historical *fundamentum* of the labour process from capitalist reality.

What is more, the distinction between the labour process and the valorisation process exposes the inversion that I have tried to describe in previous sections. We can think of historical examples of societies in which social reproduction was *not* subordinated to the infinite production of abstract value. We can even recall such societies in which the imperative of the ever-increasing production of material wealth was not self-evident. In such societies “[...] the typical reaction to economic good times, even among urban craftspeople and most of the protobourgeoisie, was to take more days off” (Graeber 2012, 302). Many workers, having the opportunity to work more, preferred instead to celebrate what they called Saint Monday (see also Thompson 1993). By comparing our society to the communities in which it was by no means obvious to choose more money over more free time we could produce an estranging distance towards our presence.

8 Here I use Ben Fowkes’ translation of Marx’s *Results of the Direct Production Process* available here: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1864/economic/>, since it is more precise than the one that can be found in Marx 1990, p 1054.

Fetishist production

In the actual process of capitalist production, however, the incessant “conversion” of the means of production utilised and controlled by living labour into means for controlling and exploiting living labour, make the two processes merge, creating an indissoluble amalgamate. Concrete labour (here: spinning) uses specific raw materials (cotton) and means of production (spindles) to produce concrete products (yarn); a use-value which contributes to social wealth. If we take the standpoint of the *pure* labour process – abstracted from capitalist actuality – it might seem that it is the worker who is in charge, making use of the instruments of labour in order to transform raw materials into a desired product. Nevertheless, both the cotton and the machines exist as commodities owned by capitalists. The potential labour of the cotton spinner was also available on the market as a commodity bought by the capitalist, in order to valorise value. Finally, the spinner herself was actually put to work to produce surplus. The labour was *not* done twice: once to produce concrete use-value and later to generate abstract value. Inside the capitalist framework, the same movement of the body and mind produces products and valorises value. In the movement of labour there is yet another overlapping movement, which creates capital. The labour process and the valorisation process are phenomenologically coextensive. They are made identical, since the worker is made to work for the capitalist.

Identification of the means of production with capital produces two apparently opposed effects. On the one hand, the ability of capital to yield profit is attributed to the technical function of capital as means of production. It seems that profit is only a revenue for the technical function of the means of production in the labour process itself. Social phenomena (the generation of profit constituting capital) seem to derive directly and necessarily from technical phenomena. The capitalist can be thus presented as somebody who simply gets a fair share for his effort of managing creatively these means of production, rather than as a shareholder, who gets his due even if he has no idea what it is that is being produced in a factory a thousand miles away⁹. On the other hand, fetishism produces the reversed but symmetrical effect of deriving technical phenomena directly from their social form. For instance, the power to increase the productivity of labour (to produce more “wealth”) is attributed to capital, as in the theory of the productivity of capital (see Rubin 1972). Therefore, the development of the means of production appears “as a direct act and achievement of the capitalist who functions here as the personification of the social character

9 What is more, with the growing importance of the financial sector, even this detachment from concrete production, the sublime indifference towards concrete labour and supposedly absolute, abstract fluidity is presented as another skill of the capitalist who, as a pure intelligence, hovers over the formless surface of the production process, decides to invest here and then suddenly takes his money to another continent. We will return to this question while analysing the problem of fluidity and abstract labour.

of labour, of the workshop as a whole” (Marx 1990 1053). That is why, e.g. technological innovations are attributed to the figures of genius individuals, who – like Steve Jobs or Bill Gates – represent and appropriate individually the work and creativity of various collectives, which have made these breakthroughs possible (for a detailed case-study of this process see Mazzucato 2013). Dominant ideology effaces the traces of the social character of the innovation processes (including the crucial role of public funding and the cooperation of diverse research teams). These ideological effects, however, are made possible thanks to a specific social relation, rooted in the actual historical process of technological progress. Capitalist alienation and the rapid development of the social means of production were and are simultaneous and coextensive. As Marx says: “the productive forces of social labour, came into being historically only with the advent of the specifically capitalist mode of production. That is to say, they appeared as something intrinsic to the relations of capitalism and inseparable of them” (Marx 1990, 1052). As we can see, Marx conceptualises alienation under capitalism not as the estrangement of a somehow fully developed, pre-existent substance, but as a historical process in which the social forces of production are developed precisely as alienated, expanding in an alienated form.

The products of labour (machines) owned by capitalists appear and act in the labour process as integral elements of capital. When an individual worker enters the workshop the technical and organisational framework, the cooperation in the workplace, the very sociality of labour itself act as something alien or even hostile to him – as means for disciplining and mobilising him to work. Science, organisation and the tempo dictated by machinery are actually means for extracting surplus-labour from the worker. On the level of socially objective appearance, the labour process in the capitalist company *works as* the valorisation process.

Subsumption of worker under capital¹⁰

We have said that under capitalism the production process appears as an indivisible fusion of the labour process and the valorisation process. This unity is, however, an unequal one. The bearer of the valorisation process is *subsumed* under it¹¹. Here is where the inversion takes place. In the labour process the worker uses the means of production to produce a product. She treats the materials and instruments of labour as means to her ends. When the labour process is subsumed under the valorisation process, it is no longer the worker who uses the means of production, but an animated means of production that employs and uses the worker to valorise value. The production of goods and services, together with circulation and consumption, is only a moment in the total process of the production of surplus-value. It is an illusion that capital produces things to satisfy human needs. It produces things in order to produce more capital. Things are produced as commodities in order to be sold with profit. Capitalist production is – first and foremost – the production of augmented value. The production of “stuff”, of material and immaterial social use-values, is only a means to the ultimate end, which is the infinite process of the valorisation of capital. To prove this, suffice it to think of the mass needs that are *not* satisfied, as in the case of the masses of workers and in the case of the people excluded even from the relation of wage-labour, whose demands are not capitalised due to the lack of an *effective* demand on their side. In other words: their needs and desires – even such as basic as food or healthcare – are irrelevant since they do not dispose of enough exchange value (money) to realise them.

The labour process serves only as a bearer, in the same manner as use-value serves as a “material substratum” (Marx 1990, 293) of exchange-value. The worker, in turn, serves as a carrier of the movement of the production of capital, which aims at unachievable abstract absolute wealth. The labour process is thus only a material presupposition of the valorisation

10 I ask my reader to note that we are not dealing here with the idea of „real subsumption of life under capital”, but much more modestly, with subsumption of the wage-labourer under capital in the production process. The idea of real subsumption of life under capital, made popular by Antonio Negri and his followers, assumes that after achieving the stage of real subsumption, life as such – including language and affects – simply became totally identical with labour. This implies a very stadial and Eurocentric concept of history (let us just think of the places where the language of the workers is explicitly excluded from the direct production process: as happens in Chinese factories or in warehouses of Sports Direct in Nottingham, where workers are fined and can even be fired for talking to each other at work; see Annanikova 2014). What is more, the Negrian idea of subsumption of life under capital implies that the notion of alienation of the subject from its labour can no longer be operative: if one’s life is simply, totally identical with one’s work there is nothing to be alienated from. In the section dedicated to the question of „human capital” I will try to prove that this approach – although it brings some important insights – is simplified and over-general.

11 Chris Arthur assumes that the category of subsumption was taken by Marx from Schelling’s theosophy “where it signifies the absorption of the finite by the infinite” (Arthur 2009, 156).

process, just as the body of a product serves only as a presupposition of the value of a commodity.

Breaking the process 2: source and presupposition

At this point an important distinction has to be introduced. As we have seen, Marx distinguishes use-value from value, the labour process from the valorisation process and the means of production from capital. Although productive forces *appear* in a specific socio-economical form, they *cannot be* simply *identified* with it. Economical categories (such as value or capital) cannot be derived directly from the natural properties of products or from the means of production. The means of production are not capital by nature and labour does not intrinsically and necessarily have to take the form of capitalist wage-labour. Marx exposes this lack of continuity (“not an atom of matter enters into the objectivity of value”). Value cannot be derived directly from use-value, money from the technical properties of gold, and capital from the technical productivity of the means of production. As Isaac Illich Rubin¹² has written in his groundbreaking *Essay on Marx's theory of value*, use-value is the *presupposition* but not the *source* of value. This distinction, although it might sound technical, is actually crucial for understanding the Marxian method. Marxism is often pictured (also by many Marxist, and at times by Marx himself) as based on a fundamental reduction. The “social” superstructure is reduced to its “material” basis. Here we can see a different Marxism. Its difference, in comparison to classical economy, lies precisely in the constant exposition of the non-reducibility of social relations to things and *vice versa*:

In order to discover the content of these social forms, the Classical Economists reduced complex forms to simple (abstract) forms in their analyses, and in this way they finally arrived at the material-technical bases of the process of production. By means of such analysis they discovered labor in value, means of production in capital, means of workers' subsistence in wages, surplus products [...] in profit. [...] Afterwards, when the given social-economic forms are finally reduced to their material-technical content, the Classical Economists consider their task complete. But precisely where they stop their analysis is where Marx continues. Since he was not restricted by the horizon of the capitalist economy, and since he saw it as only one of past and possible social forms of economy, Marx asked: why does the material-technical content of the labor process at a given level

12 Rubin was an activist of the Bund and Menshevik Parties and a scholar in David Riazanov's Marx-Engels Institute. He was persecuted and finally executed during the Great Purge. As Stalinist philosopher, Rosenthal wrote, “The followers of Rubin and the Menshevizing Idealists treated Marx's revolutionary method in the spirit of Hegelianism. The Communist Party has smashed these trends alien to Marxism” (Rubin 1979, 1).

of development of productive forces assume a particular, given social form? Marx's methodological formulation of the problem runs approximately as follows: why does labor assume the form of value, means of production the form of capital, means of workers' subsistence the form of wages, increased productivity of labor the form of increased surplus value? [...] Starting with the social forms as given, the Classical Economists tried to reduce complex forms to simpler forms by means of analysis in order finally to discover their *material-technical* basis or *content*. However, Marx, starting from a given condition of the material process of production, from a given level of productive forces, tried to explain the origin and character of social *forms* which are assumed by the material process of production (Rubin 1972).

Thus, Marxian thought can be defined literally as a theory of *social formations*. While the fetishism of economists identifies things with their social form and takes them at face value as unproblematic, impenetrable, non-intelligible ultimate conditions¹³, Marx tries to problematise precisely the process of the formation of social forms. Classical economists were able to describe how subjects conform to apparently pre-given *a priori* conditions (how these conditions inform the motivations of the universal *homo oeconomicus*, how s/he adjusts to competition, how s/he innovates inside this framework etc.). Marx wants to show that these material conditions are *social relations materialised*: social relations, which manifest themselves in things and through things. He wants to grasp both the formation of individuals by the social forms they possess (possessing capital makes one a capitalist) and the emergence of social forms from the relations between people (the relation between labourers deprived of the means of production and the capitalist who possess this means is materialised in the means of production functioning *as* capital).

Inside the visual field of bourgeois economy capitalist production “in which the process of production has a mastery over man, instead of the opposite” appears “to be as much self-evident and nature-imposed necessity as productive labour itself” (Marx 1990, 175). The two-fold character of the production process is therefore invisible. Capital is reduced to its physical “material substratum” to “means of production (raw materials, auxiliary materials, means of labour, tools, buildings, machines)” (Marx 1990, 981), it is treated as a thing “among other things” (Marx 1990, 998). These things, however, miraculously seem to possess the right and the power to hire and control labour. The fetishism of political economists reduces the process of valorisation to the process of labour, concealing the opposite movement of practical reduction, in which labour matters and *counts* – in literal, economic sense – only when it participates in the valorisation process generating surplus-value.

13 “We cannot pursue the question of what the particular elements of our system ‘are’ and why they are as they are, right up to their ‘ultimate grounds’. We take them as given” (Schumpeter, cited in: Backhaus 1992, 61).

Capital beyond true and false

According to Feuerbach, the proponent of the critique of religion who we met in the previous chapter, religious imaginative inversion “stands in most glaring contradiction to our fire- and life-insurance companies, our railroads and steam engines, our picture galleries, our military and industrial schools, our theatres and scientific museums” (Feuerbach 1957, XIX). In the writings of the mature Marx this apparently sober world of modern society, technology and economy is exposed to be far more enchanted. What is enchanting us is not, however, some pre-modern dark remnants of pre-capitalist social systems, which have not yet been fully modernised. Enchantment, or myth, lies at the very heart of capitalist reality. The strange inversion which subsumes living human beings under the movement of valorisation is naturalised and secularised. It is treated as something absolutely normal, as the very core of a sober, disenchanting reality in principle.

“The market” presents itself as the best source of information, as the principle of selection and generation of the most rational/economic actions and decisions. Capital aims at defining the very standards of what is real or realistic, by placing itself as the ultimate rationale of social production and as the model of rationality, to which human subjects must adjust their behaviour.

If one does not succeed, it only proves that s/he was unable to internalise these contingent but always necessary (and thus: rational) judgements. If I am unemployed, it only proves that I was unable to predict what skills the market will demand in the future. And I am the only one to blame. Revelation of the unknown law is identical with its trespassing and with punishment. Each result of the interplay of market forces – however irrational and unpredictable it might have been – is retrospectively rationalised as the expression of the power of economic reason. Capital’s theodicy justifies itself, positing itself as “neither true or false but simply real” (Jameson 2014, 26) in the sphere of the indiscernible, where the reality principle and capital’s phantasmic becoming – merge. *It is as it is*: an ultimate rationale resonating with the tautological power of incantation.

For the dominant *doxa* it is perfectly natural that capital employs and commands labour. It finds nothing extraordinary in the fact that millions of people, in order to get their means of subsistence, wake up every day to go to work for other people, who happen to own/represent the means of production. This is repeated every day, so we have time to get used to it, since we practically take part in it (as producers) every day we work, and (as consumers) every day we go shopping. It is almost impossible to see anything strange in the fact that the worker does not work for himself, but for capital represented by the capitalist,

and thus *miraculation*, in which human beings are turned into mere moments of the becoming of abstract capital's becoming, goes unnoticed. The “mystical result” of the process is *disenchanted*.

Miraculation and disenchantment form the structure of fetishism: both elements simultaneously constitute each other and can be distinguished only analytically. Disenchantment (which conceals, effaces and justifies the quasi-theological status of capital) reduces it to pure use-value. The miraculous power of things employing living labourers, presents itself as *nothing more* than an attribute of things *qua* things, as brute fact. Let us now see how the conditions for this are made.

The making of the real existing capitalism

The conditions are already set from the beginning, and *the worker is always late*. Capital reproduces itself by reproducing the very social relation, the conditions which make it possible. This implies reproducing wage-labour on the one hand, and capital on the other. It also implies making the encounter between these two as unavoidable as possible. As Fredric Jameson rightly notes on *ex re* “primitive” accumulation,

This type of social evolution takes place [...] not by virtue of some disembodied Hegelian essence called capitalism or the market, nor either by some psychological drive rooted in human nature, but rather by a systematic negation of everything which might have permitted an alternative to them” (Jameson 2014, 86).

This happens with so called “continuous primitive accumulation” (De Angelis 1999). Attempts to make a living, conducted e.g. in 16th century England or 21st century Ghana, by the members of rural communities are systematically blocked by capitalists and state officials, who privatise and appropriate natural resources, which were previously held in common. This produces not only conditions for the capitalist accumulation of resources, but also a surplus-population – and thus a potential workforce. Access to land and resources makes possible the very existence of these populaces. When it is limited, members of these groups are forced to enter into a productive relation to capital on unfavourable terms in order to survive, accepting low-wages and hard working conditions.

These examples, which could be multiplied by recalling the process of dismantling the welfare model and building the “workfare” model in its place in First and Second World

countries¹⁴, show that “the actually existing capitalism” (Wacquant 2012) is something very different from “the free-market economy”, as pictured by the free-trader *vulgaris*. Rather than being based on the principle of non-intervention, it operates by means of continual political intervention on behalf of capital.

The worker is made to work for a capitalist, since access to goods and services is necessarily mediated by capital as capitalists already own the means of production. And since the materials, instruments and the productive time of the worker herself belong to the capitalist, thus when the worker objectifies her labour, she objectifies it as something belonging to someone else. Capital is established as the precondition of wage-labour deprived of the means of production (I have no capital that is why I have to sell my labour-power to a capitalist to keep on living). At the same time capital is the result of each act of labour (my product, when objectified, constitutes capital confronting me). This is how it tries to establish itself as *historical necessity*. That is a contingent event, an encounter, which reproduces itself by conditioning the conditions of possibility and impossibility of the social process. Or to use the Paulinian idiom: as *eon-archon*, the basic principle of this world under which we are sold (Galatians 4:3, Romans 7:14).

A man-made god

Our daily gestures could thus be exposed as something utterly strange: ritual acts building a monstrous “god” above us. It is a god who, in being created, is established as the quasi-cause of the social – a god who, being produced is grafted onto production as its organising principle – a god who realises and actualises himself in the human acts of production, circulation and consumption – a Hildegardian god who has no other hands or heads than ours. Being an inhuman Entity, not “trans-historical and knowing” but “historically determined and blind” (Postone 1996, 76–77), it cannot act and think otherwise than through the acts and thoughts of its human bearers. It is a structure established in human practices, which structures human consciousness and unconsciousness, but itself has no self-consciousness and no ego.

Its theological character is therefore purely social, not metaphysical. It could be described as “meta-physical” or “super-natural”, but only in a very specific, literal sense of these words. That is: as something that edifies itself over-nature, over the bodies of things

14 Legislation implemented in Hungary gives an instructive example of this tendency in almost all the European countries. See Agence France-Presse 2014, *Orban trumpets harsh Hungarian ‘workfare’ scheme* <http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/afp/140309/orban-trumpets-harsh-hungarian-workfare-scheme>. For a theoretical account of this problem see Lazzarato 2012.

and people, which serve as its presuppositions. Finite human beings and finite things, from which capital abstracts itself, are its *conditio sine qua non*. The actual becomes phenomenon, but the Idea has no other content than this phenomenon, as young Marx notes *ex re* Hegelian post-metaphysical notion of the Spirit (see Marx 1992, 62). There is nothing but an interrelation of man to man, nothing but human inter-subjectivity that is the sole god – as Feuerbach says.

The result of such a disenchantment, however, remains strange and does not resemble the dreams of harmony, love and equality derived from the equation *god = man + man* by Feuerbach and other “gentlemen humanists, atheists, socialists and democrats” (Gombrowicz 1989, 69). In the relation of man to man, “in this other church made of people” certain surplus meaning and power is exuded: “a by-product of thousands of impulses [...] a play of creative forces [...] a deity, [...] born of people, ‘superior’ to me but only by an inch” (Gombrowicz 1989, 73–74), an incessant interplay of seduction and domination. In Gombrowicz’s description this surplus was transferred onto a divinised tyrant (“Hitler” who became a monstrous collective body that overwhelmed the flesh and blood Adolf Hitler himself). In capitalist production “the constant transposition” (Marx 1990, 1057) of energy, power and meaning is more omnipresent and less visible, since the totality of *socius* – which appears to be identical with the incessant production of production-distribution-consumption – cannot be identified with anybody. Be it the corpus of a king, a concrete capitalist, a corporation or even the total stock of material wealth.

Irony of the spirit¹⁵

Whoever finds this evaluation of the power of capital exaggerated should perform a simple thought experiment, which Adorno recommended to absolute skeptics. All those who believe that now god is dead, that in postmodernism everything is permitted, that everything that is solid, melts into air should try to stop going to work for some time and see what happens. At the end of the day, the bottom line is the bottom line.

It would be wrong, however, to neglect the power of the irony of the relativist. Something real and objective speaks through it. Yet what speaks is not so much the human ironic subject, but the process of capital’s self-valorisation of itself. It is not this or that individual, nor is it his or her individual thinking process that has the power to relativise everything except itself. In this case, the irony of the human subject reflects the irony of

15 In the matter of interrelations of irony and system, see a remarkable analysis in Olesik 2014, to which the present study owes a debt.

infinite movement. Self-irony works here as violence of the individual against her/himself exercised in the name of the objective, collective process. Like a class clown derives some pleasure from participating in collective fun – even if he violently ridicules himself – the ironist derives some satisfaction from participating in the objective irony of the spirit of capital. I mock myself in order to anticipate mockery. Not only the mockery of the group but also the objective ridiculousness of my individual existence in confrontation with the total process. The internalisation of the relativising movement of capital (which makes the distinctions between the “spirit of lightness” and the “spirit of heaviness” or between “open” and “closed” systems irrelevant) takes place not only in thoughts. One tries to imitate and integrate the incessant movement of valorisation in the movement of one’s body (Quantified Self movement, aimed at measuring one’s performance by means of trackers and other electronic devices and the comparison of one’s result and status via social media, being a radical but telling example). The human subject tries to get moving, to “join the movement”,¹⁶ to go with the flow of capital before the wave sweeps him or her away.

Fetish of human capital

The line of 1) abstract labour (indifferent to the particular, concrete shape of this and that job), and the line of 2) concrete labour (with which the worker identifies him/herself as for example “tele-marketer” or “junior brand manager”) are forced to coincide. Ironic non-identification with one’s social position is proclaimed a virtue of flexibility, coinciding with the compulsion to identify with each and every menial and temporal position. Mobilisation has to be spelled out in every motivational letter and acted out during consequent job interviews¹⁷. The estrangement effect works as shock therapy, which forces the subject to adjust itself to a changing market. Fusion of abstract and concrete neutralises the potential

16 See e.g. an add by vivosmart: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CRymY6Qz-os>

17 Since one coincides with one’s human-capital, one is simply “selling oneself”, to use an expression proclaimed by the dominant powers with shameless innocence, proving how explicitly commodity has become its own ideology. For a good example of a show which condenses, exposes and sells the compulsion of competition and necessity of selling one’s labour-power, see Dragon’s Den. Edycja polska (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZvwyXA0iCig>) especially from 7:43 to 8:00 (knowing Polish is not necessary, it is enough to focus on expressions of domination and self-domination inscribed on bodies and faces). It is important to note that in certain branches, where the alienating pressure exceeds the possibility of being tamed by pharmaceutical means, alienation itself is openly proclaimed as the solution. A worker for a head-hunting agency, interviewed by me, reported that the management asks the employees not to identify themselves with their occupation („use only your operational self when you’re at work”, as my friend has heard her boss say). This perhaps gives a useful methodological hint, which should make us wonder whether companies always try to achieve higher productivity by promoting conscious emotional identification with the job.

alienation effects by introducing the figure of *human capital*, in which human subject and capital merge. The position of the *entrepreneur of self* is produced by identification of one's labour-power (capacities of one's own body and mind which one is selling on the market for a wage) with one's own human capital (treated as a personal source of income), creating an indissoluble fusion of human-capital, a phantasy on "capitalism without alienation" (Foucault 2008). The basic distinction of Marxian political economy – the class distinction between capital and labour, elaborated through the analysis of fetishist unitary appearance – disappears since the worker's workforce is proclaimed to be identical with *his/her* capital.

It is claimed that alienation is suspended but an inner doubling remains. One is accountable before "one's own" capital. The human subject is trained to justify his or her behaviour before this inner tribunal, proving to others and to the self that the behaviour was *productive enough*. And this can never happen, since capital aims at immeasurable absolute wealth; hence there is no natural upper limit of exploitation (see Marx 1990, 252–253). The finite subject has been infused with the infinity of the movement of capital, and now can never be sure if s/he has made absolutely effective use of the time given. No work can fulfil the infinite law of capital's accumulation.

One has to "invest in oneself" in order to achieve profits. Lack of success in such an investment only proves that one was unable to internalise the contingent but always necessary and thus rational judgements of the market. "There is nothing permanent except change" – as an expert from ManPower temporary work recruitment agency once said to the author of this text, with a matter-of-factness characteristic of this hylemorphic religion. Capital's power comes not only from the fact that subjects are unaware of capital's domination over their lives. Rather the sheer exposition of this domination, the pure power of facticity, which needs no other justification than its own power – works as a justification. It is as it is.

Working by breaking

Thus, certain doubts can be raised concerning the narrative strategy of intensified estrangement employed here. The analytical method of our research was aimed at abstracting the labour process from the valorisation process. The labourer was thus confronted with the infinite movement of capital and presented as subsumed under it. The effect of sublimity emerges from the incommensurability of the human subject and the alienated mass of social forces, which infinitely overwhelm any finite body. This juxtaposition was supposed to de-naturalise and de-rationalise the "reality" to which we are all too well-accustomed.

But the possible result of such a shock can simply be paralysis. The subject confronted with "the total system" might end up frozen and mesmerised, contemplating

passively the processes of his/her own disappearance or even deriving certain pleasure from his/her own subjective disintegration (Jameson 2008). The concept of the death of the subject finds here its socio-economic basis and is not without practical, daily life correlations. As when overwhelmed by pressure to concentrate yourself on multi-tasking projects at work, you come back home, too tired to think and you start to scroll Facebook walls or surf TV channels in order to distract yourself to the ultimate limit where you are finally tired enough to unplug and fall asleep. So doing you enter the spheres where the intensities of labour and subjective fragmentation exist in continuum, not in contradiction¹⁸, entering

Those quicksands where a tree changes into nothing
Into an anti-tree, where no borderline
Separates a shape from a shape [...]
King of centuries, ungraspable Movement
Now we have become equal to the gods
Knowing in you, that we do not exist.
(Miłosz 2001, 132–133).

A mediocre archon

Neither the demonological figuration, however, nor the recalling of the heroic persona of great tyrants should make this description too sublime. The image of sublime evil can be misleading, since it still contains too many remnants of romantic grandeur (like in the case of Thomas Mann's demonisation of Nazism in *Doctor Faustus*, which might be read as a therapeutic narrative helping Germans to experience their history as something of at least negative greatness). One could say that the devil of our time is much more trivial, resembling less a fallen angel than a reasonable, mediocre, middle-age gentleman, who once paid a visit to Ivan Karamazov, declaring to be a non-entirely-non-existent "sort of phantom in life who has lost all beginning and end, and who has even forgotten his own name" (Dostoyevsky

18 Here we find one of the most significant shortcomings of the theory of a hidden but important protagonist of this research, Polish Kantian/Marxian/Nietzschean/Catholic philosopher, Stanislaw Brzozowski who believed that "Only that which exists for the sake of labour really does exist. Everything else might just be a dreamlike semblance" (Brzozowski 1990, 173 [my translation – MP]). The blind spot of Brzozowski's thought was the hallucinatory and narcotic nature of intensified labour itself. However, the suppressed affinity of dream and frenetic labour was from time to time brought to the surface of his texts by the dynamic of his modernist hypertrophic figurations.

2015, 1350)¹⁹. The dreariness and obtuseness of our everyday “Antichrist diluted” (to use the acute term created to express the nature of inertial power in the progressively non-ideological and technocratic times of the convergence between Eastern and Western Blocs, see Konwicky 1999, 158), the “unfinishness” of his bad infinity – an infinite cue to a doctor or a supermarket until, an infinitely postponed deadline – only makes its suffocating weight heavier.

III INSTEAD OF A CONCLUSION, OR SOME PRELIMINARY NOTES TOWARDS A WORKING ETHICS OF GRACE

We have encountered some limits of our figurative strategy. Let me allow myself now to invite my reader to share some of my doubts and partake in some indecisive investigations. It seems that neither a sheer presentation of the demonised, totalising movement of capital, nor the effects of alienation produced by the juxtaposition of the infinite and finite, is sufficient. What is more, this kind of presentation does not give the real picture, since “the system” is far from being totally functional. It works by breaking the human subject, and itself it works as broken. However it would be one-sided to comfortably assume that the task of critique is simply to bring chaos into order, since, as old Deleuze quite rightly notes, social arrangements under capitalism “continuously generate attrition and loss, exclusion and dysfunction; [...] always contain potholes, tracts of wasteland, stagnant ponds of unproductiveness” (Deleuze 1996, 235, cited in Vogl 2015, 103). It is perhaps true that the Whole contains holes, but to say that is not to say much. Breakdowns do not have to lead automatically to an overcoming of “the system”. They may perfectly well end up simply exhausting the subject, as when the self-disciplining pressure to be productive and successful reaches its limit, or cannot even achieve the point of mobilization, which makes the subject get out of bed. Thus the pressure implodes into a reactive de-pression, which takes the burden of responsibility and self-mastery off the subject’s shoulders, opening the vast field of the boredom of unproductiveness and of the miseries of non-work.

Yet it seems that it would be equally wrong to assume that all the moments of dysfunctionality are nothing but functional elements of “the system” itself. Rather than overestimating the cleverness of capitalist unreason, it might be more fruitful to think of its ambivalences and blockages as things that have to be actively brought to the point of

19 A much more subtle and in-depth reading of this fragment in the post-Hegelian context, can be found in Aleksander Temkin’s unpublished book on Dostoyevsky, excerpts of which have been published in *Kronos*, see Temkin 2014.

consistency, where the figuration of estranged dead works could reach the stage of actual *conversion*, turning towards liberation.

What does this mean when applied to our field of interest? And does it imply abandoning the analytical method which abstracts the labour process and the valorisation process? If we want to get nearer to the answer, we have to go back to our basic question: what is the relation of the “matter” of the labour process to the capitalist “form” of valorisation? Is the capitalist “formation” merely an *exterior* obstacle for the creative labour of the multitude, something that is only an artificial shackle, which is not embedded in labour itself, and thus can easily be shaken off?

I am writing this text inside a certain “framework”. If I will not publish texts in reviewed scientific magazines I will not get parametrised points, which measure my productivity. And if I fail to gain them, I will probably not get a studentship or a grant. Thus my attempts to make a living by being a researcher in the social sciences will be seriously threatened. It would be naïve to think that all this has no impact on my work. This “framework” or rather the fundamental *Stimmung* of capitalist social ontology, the generalised mood, the atmosphere of precarity and competition, definitely have some influence not only on the final product of my work, but also on the way I work. While writing this text, I had all of the above mentioned factors (deadlines, points, competition, the entire “publish-or-perish” thing) in mind.

Is it then right to say that all this ultimately makes capital the *source* of the text you are reading? Do people write texts of this kind solely to get points? And will the production of knowledge stop or diminish if lean production Toyotism will not be implemented in academia? Does the labour process have to be subordinated to the imperative of the valorisation of value? And if not, how can the distinction between the two be made *in practice*?

The queen of sausages and concrete labour

In *The measure of a man*, (*La Loi du marché*, Brizé 2015), a story of an everyman trying to make a living, we are situated in the familiar landscape of our everyday, mediocre archons. We meet a middle age ex-industrial worker, who gets a job in a supermarket. If we were to be lost among supermarket shelves in another film on the impotence of a “Kafkian” character destroyed by the omnipresent but impenetrable laws of the market, there would not be much sense in talking about it here. What makes the film highly original, in comparison to many anti-productivist social dramas, is the scene of a farewell party organised for Gisele, who is retiring after thirty or so years of work in the supermarket. Her fellow workers and members of management sing for her a rather clumsy nursery-rhymes farewell song. We can easily

imagine how this celebration could be portrayed as another humiliating, obligatory team-building exercise. However, in *The measure of man* there is a glimpse of something altogether different. Both Gisele and the main character really are moved by the celebration. And when Gisele's supervisor says that, although he is her boss, he could actually learn a lot from her about how the shop works it is something more than mere corporate bubble-talk. Of course, the brutal pressure to achieve profit is still there. Later we witness how the supervisor, who is probably personally a really nice guy, tries to "lean production", firing another worker, who was caught stealing from the store, which ultimately leads to her suicide. But the fact that the film allowed this moment of the celebration of the dignity of labour – which is neither a "creative" profession like, say, that of an artist or a hacker, nor is it like the occupation of a miner, which still has some kind of gravity of the working-class ethos, but the least socially prestigious and most alienating supermarket job – the fact that this scene was allowed to enter into the picture is an act of revolutionary courage. It would not be very hard to ridicule the emotions of Gisele and of the main protagonist as naïveté which does not see the actual state of affairs, but forgets for a moment about the fact of alienation and acts as if there was no exploitation. However, this act of conscious forgetting might take us further than we expect. Let us come back to Marx. He writes that when we

[...] proceed directly to the *immediate process of production*, we find that it is primarily a *labour process*. In the labour process the worker enters as worker into a normal active relationship with the means of production determined by the nature and the purpose of production itself. He takes possession of means of production, the way they hold fast of their independence and display the mind of their own, their separation from labour – all this is now *abolished* [*aufgehoben*] in practice (Marx 1990, 1007).

This moment when the worker gives himself fully to his activity, *in practice* forgetting about the capitalist, is possible only "if we consider the production process just as a labour process" (Marx 1990, 107). The act of abstraction, which does not see that the worker in practice must work for a capitalist, is definitely an element of the "mystification of capital" (Marx 1990, 1052). This mystification, in the times of human capital, is aimed at making self-exploitation operative. That is, activating "the boss option" inside the worker himself. The worker is convinced by HR pundits, the managerial board and the authors of self-help manuals that he does work for himself, in order to realise himself. At the same time he is incessantly reminded (by the very course and tempo of the process and by the excessive pleasure derived by his bosses from the sheer manifestations of power, however petty they might be) that, yes, there is a boss over him, and that the mystification of capital is only a semblance.

Sometimes, however, the workers take this "essential formality" of capital (Marx 1990, 1064) more seriously than capital takes it, itself. They start to act as if they really did not

need a capitalist to work²⁰. Thus they try to decapitate “the alien head”, the *caput* of capital. Companionship, identification with one’s workplace and the will to fight for it were already there, when they were working, before the conflict with the capitalist burst. All of this was there as the basis of potential autonomy, as the author of this text noticed in participating in the organisation of the protests of school kitchen workers in Warsaw in 2012. The workers gave value to their jobs and used this self-valorisation as an argument for the media, parents and local authorities, stressing that at work they feed and take care of children, not being motivated in the first instance by profit; in contrast to private catering companies, which were about to replace the local government as their new employers. Thus, identification with one’s occupation and one’s position as members of “the caring classes” – taking the promise of a meaningful job more seriously than capital takes it – was an extremely important factor in the workers’ mobilisation²¹.

The dignity of labour is worth considering not only as a potential point of confrontation with the capitalists and its delegates, but also in itself – as something which on a daily basis binds people at work together and produces the interwoven worlds in which we all live. Perhaps we can push this thought even further. I am tempted to say (however non-revolutionary and un-Marxian it might sound), that perhaps the value of these living-worlds lies not only in their potential autonomy in confrontation with capital, but precisely in the fact, that fortunately they cannot just be reduced to the point of resistance, nor to their creative, productive potential. That in the end, it is not all about capital and class struggles.

Gena the Crocodile and abstract labour of the precariat

Now let us see how the operation of taking capital more seriously than it takes itself could work with abstract labour. In order to do so, I would like to turn to a much greater artwork: a classic Soviet cartoon *Gena the Crocodile* (Kachanov, Uspensky 1971)²². The fact that it takes place in the country of Stakhanov speedup and labour competition, which is reflected in the overwhelming melancholy of the cartoon, should make us suspicious towards all the idyllic

20 The focus on the necessity of building the workers movement as a movement of people who are able to work freely, without compulsion (that is: able not work *compulsively*) remains a true achievement of the late Stanisław Brzozowski, leading him beyond the limits of his productivism. See especially his essay on Charles Lamb (Brzozowski 2007).

21 One could even say that the workers were using the traditional, patriarchal archetype of “The Polish Mother”, which in the context of their actions produced very different effects. For an analysis of the use of gendered roles in women workers’ struggles in communist Poland see Kenney 1997.

22 I would like to thank Aleksander Szostakowski for this idea.

images of labour. However, we find here an idea worth considering if we are to construct a distance with our work, which will be something more than mere self-irony.

The film begins when a salesman (although this is not a very accurate description, since nobody in the cartoon uses money) finds a little creature, Cheburashka in a box of oranges. Not knowing what to do with her, he takes her to the Zoo. He brings her to a security guard, who leads Cheburashka inside to see if they will be able to find a home for her there. The guard enters the zoo, and the former “salesman” takes his gun, happy to replace him on guard, until he is back with Cheburashka. This scene can be read not only as a metaphor of the absolute indifference towards the individual in an ideal totalitarian state, but also as the exposition of an important feature of the market economy: *flexibility*. Labour in capitalism becomes more *abstract*, that is: it abstracts from this or that concrete feature of labour, from the particular character of a concrete occupation (Marx 1990, 1013). Capital treats labour only as its presupposition and it is not bound to its concrete shape, thus it can be invested otherwise. The only condition is bringing profit. We all witness this with the brutal imposition of labour flexibility, which forces workers to adjust themselves to the fluctuations of the labour market.

This feature, however, – if estranged to a certain limit – can also work otherwise. The idea of being able to freely change one’s occupation alludes ultimately to the idea of the abolition of the strict division of labour. What is more, flexibility can be contradicted with the obstacles to flexibility produced by capitalism itself. Although flexibility is proclaimed a virtue, the highly competitive labour market with its big reserve army of the unemployed, makes people in many sectors cling to their occupation; however unsatisfactory it might be. Workers become less willing to change jobs and start something afresh (as a popular saying among workers in a middle-size Polish city goes, “Stick to your job, because if you lose a job in Lublin you will never get it back”). It might therefore be useful to show that flexibility itself is a term, which can be *polarised* and divided along class lines. Flexibility for the capitalists means iron laws for the workers. Flexibility for the workers (that is a real, legally enshrined and politically guarded possibility to take more days off or to go on maternity leave without increasing your colleagues’ workloads) relies on building stable jobs, shortening the working week and reinforcing safety nets provided by the state. Showing that the imposition of the capitalist interpretation of flexibility fails to provide its proclaimed results, leading to an actual *decrease* in productivity (which has been noted even by mainstream/popular organisational science magazines, see Santorski 2015) can be a step towards this²³.

23 A *possible* contradiction between the capitalist imperative of ever-increasing productivity and the conditions posited by capital itself, is ever more evident in the sphere of knowledge production. As Aronowitz and Difazio already noted more than twenty years ago, there is a tension between capitalist growth based on

The workers could therefore demand to be flexible on their own terms, but this means contradicting capitalist flexibility. This seems to be necessary if we are to have at least as much autonomy in our job as Cheburashka's friend, Gena, who, in spite of simply being a crocodile is not identical with his position, all the while working at the zoo *as a* crocodile [*работает в зоопарке - крокодиллом*], leaving his cage early every afternoon, dropping the key at the reception and simply going home.

Moreover, it is precisely flexibility, produced by the abstract character of labour, which grounds the condition of the possibility of solidarity among workers beyond the narrow limits and boundaries of particular branches and trades. The abstractness of flexibility returns now with great power in the concept of *the precariat*. It is however necessary to face the truth that it remains a *negative* notion. A possible alliance between this abstract, negative universality and the embedded concreteness of identification with one's job, remains a matter of political construction²⁴.

Perhaps the same could be done with other concepts, which we treat as unredeemable, such as creativity or even entrepreneurship. Of course those who say that we should not repeat them light-heartedly are definitely right. These kinds of words are by no

scientific innovations and the rules of the game imposed on academia by capital itself. When the US government withdrew its direct participation in research, claiming that it will be replaced by knowledge-hungry bio-tech companies, funding for basic research in this field was reduced by almost two thirds (Aronowitz and Difazio 2012, 390). But the problem lies not only in the fact that private enterprises are mainly interested in short-term gains, which preclude far-reaching (and thus not immediately profitable) research. "For the plain truth is that overfunding and *useless* knowledge is the key to discovery" (Aronowitz and Difazio 2012, 267). Science, as Marx foresaw in his *Grundrisse*, becomes a direct productive force but "the subordination of knowledge to the imperative of technical innovation undermines one of the central presuppositions of innovation: *unfettered* free time for knowledge producers. In recent years this contradiction has been at play at universities, even the first-tier institutions, which place increasing administrative burdens on faculty; the second tier impose, in addition, heavier teaching loads. Under impact of economic constraints we have entered a new era of academic cost cutting and of surveillance whose intended as well as unintended effects are to discourage independent intellectual work" (Aronowitz and Difazio 2012, 369). This kind of situation can be a point of departure for an organised action, which could turn mere dysfunctionality into a proper (=politicised) contradiction.

24 This would mean above all else building an alliance between the organised workers, still having relatively stable job contracts and the precariat working on the basis of temporary contracts. However, the generalised fear of precarity does not have to lead automatically to this kind of coalition. The angst and resentment of increasingly precarious labourers can be simply turned against the unionised workers still having such "privileges" as regulated working hours or minimal wage (for an example of such "race to the bottom logic" in the context of the recent miners' strike in Poland see Pitla 2015). Thus the construction of such a coalition would require 1) picturing stable occupations not only as anchors stabilising the labour market or bastions of the good old days, but also as the bridgeheads of quality jobs: quality which should be further generalised to other sectors 2) creating links between public sector workers and the recipients of public services. In the case of teachers or health-workers, the success of such an alliance relies on showing how intensified workloads lead to the worsening of services (e.g. leaner schools = more kids in each class-room = worse learning conditions for students). This could lead to the mobilisation of parents and patients around the postulates of "the caring classes" reformulated in such a communal context. For an instructive example of bringing together workers and their community see Ontario Health Coalition <http://www.ontariohealthcoalition.ca>

means innocent or neutral. Being deeply immersed in capitalist newspeak, they refer to the whole set of implicitly invoked premises and presuppositions, which should not be unconsciously reproduced²⁵. But maybe the awful lot of work, expended everyday by workers, is too easily wasted when critics see in the expenditure of workers' energy nothing but participation in a fallen "system"? Perhaps we could try a different experiment. An experiment which would make an attempt to see in the energy of the workers, and even in the energy of their supervisors and bosses, a kind of pure entrepreneurship. Perhaps, a *purified* entrepreneurship which could be abstracted from actual capitalist production, by an estranging gaze is something worthy of being saved?

Discerning spirits

We have just encountered the old opposition between exchange value (mutated into the interchangeability of abstract labours) and use-value (disguised as concrete labour). And now we are forced to test it - one last time, in this text. Use-value is a strange concept indeed, resonating with utopian and erotic overtones, promising sensual satisfaction through contact with things in the act of consumption or in the act of labour. It is always at risk of sliding back into certain Edenic naturalism; it is easy to picture it as an urge to return to a beatific epoch, when unmediated objects were supposedly fully present and directly achievable. As such, it is probably one of the most vulnerable points under the conceptual armour of both Marx and some of his romantic followers (especially the young Lukacs). This vulnerable - i.e. both weak and intimate - point has become the object of many critiques. And one of the most influential critiques of "use-value" in recent years is obviously that of Jacques Derrida.

Marxian conceptual machinery was programmed to safeguard itself against possible critiques of this kind. The author of *Das Kapital* did not forget to emphasise that neither is use-value simply "natural" nor does the labour process take place in the realm of pure nature, since its product is always pre-determined by human needs/desires, which are themselves historical creations/social products. He also acknowledged that modes of usage cannot be fixed, and that its historical modulations transform the very inner "objective nature" of both the object of use and of its user²⁶.

25 Let us just think of Antonio Negri's uncritical use of the idea of "the productive nature of the multitude", which re-establishes the good old Stalinist and capitalist imperative of being always active and productive.

26 "Firstly, the object is not an object in general, but a specific object which must be consumed in a specific manner, to be mediated in its turn by production itself. Hunger is hunger, but the hunger gratified by cooked meat eaten with a knife and fork is a different hunger from that which bolts down raw meat with the aid of hand, nail and tooth. Production thus produces not only the object but also the manner of

But since the objective of this work should not be to “defend Marx” against his “critics”, we have to ask: is his counterargument sufficient? The answer is crucial because what is being questioned here is the legitimacy of Marx’s supposed ideal: the ideal of a fully enlightened society, a society without fetishes. Or, if we agree on the terms towards which Derrida pushes the question, the legitimacy of the ideal of society without the spirits (of the past and future), a fully contemporary society, a society entirely of this time and of this world. It is precisely what is at stake in our enquiry all the way long: the possibility of the existence of secular thought and the status of the “spectral” and of the “spiritual” in the critical theology we are trying to sketch out here.

To avoid repeating unsatisfactory indefinite accusations and equally indefinite justifications let us first state that the question is not: whether Marx wished to come back to a simpler past, and if he believed that in the societies long gone use-value was fully accessible, self-transparent, and denuded of any ideology. (He certainly did not believe in the possibility of such a return to the past and it is dubious if he believed that such a society ever existed in the first place. He certainly did conceive of the former social formations, in which exploitation was not bound to the dominance of capitalist value-form as mystified and repressive.) But that is not the right question. Just as the answer is not that the true use-value simply lies somewhere in the future of socialist society. To say so, as Fredric does in his commentary on *Spectres of Marx* (Derrida et al. 2008, 54–55), is simply to defer the pressing problem ad infinitum.

The questions of past social formations and their relations to capitalism and the question of the possible events coming from the future will necessarily arise. But the conditions of asking them will be reformulated. By modulating their presuppositions I will try to repeat Derrida’s questions without repeating his answers, which I find unsatisfactory. The main reason for this dissatisfaction lies in his lack of discernment: in Derrida’s eyes all the spirits seem to, ultimately, melt together. What I propose here is training in a certain discipline of discernment. As it is said: “do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits” (1 John 4:1).

We will start by introducing possible distinctions in the genealogy of the present age, while trying to avoid the identification of the spirit of capitalism with the spirit (culture, value etc.) *tout court*, and to avoid identification of all actual and possible past social formations as nothing but steps leading necessarily to capitalism. Then, we will proceed towards specifying the terms, which could help us question the future, without simply satisfying oneself with putting our trust indifferently in the abstract mysticism of “openness”.

consumption, not only objectively but also subjectively. Production thus creates the consumer.” (Marx 1973, 92)

When thinking about the past (that is, about the genealogy of present-day capitalism) Derrida – as many others – seems to take on board too much teleology by identifying all of the past spirits as the wannabe spirits of capital. When he says, “The ‘mystical character’ of the commodity is inscribed before being inscribed” (Derrida 2006, 202) he is certainly right, up to a determinant point. He is right in describing the fact that, in a *pure* market society every use-value is already being determined by the context of the dominance of capitalist value. Or, to express the same in temporal terms, Derrida describes the fact, or facticity of being “thrown” into the market. The fact that, as we tried to show in this text, “there is no original labour-week”, there is no first day of labour and one is always late when measured against capital which is always-already there. That is an *effect* (but only an effect), an incessantly produced effect, of the “absolute contemporaneity” of capitalist society, an effect of incessant eternalisation (*Verewigung*, see: Balibar, 272) of the conditions of its social reproduction. However - and here is where teleology, too much teleology – enters Derrida adds that not only capitalism eternalises itself but it actually is eternal, it truly was there *all the time*, as a necessary possibility, actualising itself in the course of history :

Just as there is no pure use, there is no use-value which the possibility of exchange and commerce (by whatever name one calls it, meaning itself, value, culture, spirit [!], signification, the world, the relation to the other, and first of all the simple form and trace of the other) has not in advance inscribed in an out-of-use excessive signification that cannot be reduced to the useless. A culture began before culture and humanity. Capitalization also. [my emphasis – MP] (p. 200–201)

Here Derrida not only identifies spirit with exchange-commerce-valorisation (which might be right, following Levinas’ dictum that: “Economic life is the ontological space wherein creature is transformed into spirit...”²⁷) but also pictures all the possible economical exchanges, all the excesses of valorisation, which go beyond simple use as - *in potentia* and necessarily - capitalistic. The global market is there *in nuce*, already in the barter-exchange of shells between primitive fishermen. The teleology implied here is the following: there was exchange in every historical, human society - thus every society is potentially-necessarily capitalistic.

To make things clear: I am not accusing such a subtle thinker as Derrida of being simply wrong at this point. The position he stands for is defensible as long as it says that -

27 “...or, if we may use a terminology that has become suggestive, it is the space wherein flesh is opened up to the Word. (...) every relation is a transaction, that the relation with the Other can be brought about only to the extent that it engages us materially in some way or other, and that consequently everything must be done with justice. [...]” (Levinas 1997, 126).

retroactively speaking, when we look back at history from the present point of view, and we see this point as the peak of history - all past societies present themselves as always having been haunted by the possibility of becoming capitalistic. It is undeniable that capital does truly incessantly work in order to establish itself as the final aim of the past. That is why all past societies now seem to have been weighing secretly towards capitalism. The problem lies in the specification of this possibility, which in the hands of Derrida (despite his efforts to delimit his position from the vulgar ontology of success exemplified by Fukuyama) becomes necessity. When this is done, the story of the genealogy of capitalism, untold in the *Spectres of Marx*, but present there as an unarticulated presupposition, inevitably goes as follows. All past cultures - by mere fact of having been culture at all, by virtue of valorising things beyond utility - were always inhabited by the virus, and that virus was capital. When the immunological system of these societies, aimed at expelling usury as sin, that is at exorcising the possibility of making money for the sake of making money (which, in this narrative, is immediately identified with the faculty of valorising values, with every possible kind of autotelic, non-directly-useful or non-directly-consumable action), when this immunology has been weakened the ever-present virus attacked and prevailed. When blockages and obstacles were taken down, exchange immediately matured into capitalist exchange (which, in truth, it has always been), realising its ever present potential. The only condition for the emergence of capitalism was “negative”; once the obstacles had been removed, the natural (or cultural or eternal or spiritual) tendency to give value to the abstract, to exchange, was liberated.

The problem here (let us repeat) is not that such a description is simply wrong. Since capitalism succeeds in reproducing itself, it really does succeed in establishing itself - not only in portraying itself, but also in establishing itself - as the final destination of all past history. Just as it often succeeds in establishing the valorisation of capitalistically understood value as the invisible centre towards which every action, now conceived as investment in oneself, should gravitate. The problem lies not in stating that capital has indeed succeeded and still succeeds in establishing itself as necessity (to negate that would be equal to negating the real load weighing on us), but in forgetting that it is a merely *historical* necessity. Historical means here: a very peculiar, complicated and “positively” constructed way of managing this “out-of-use excess”, which human beings carry inside themselves.²⁸

Whatever way of dealing with this excess (or lack thereof) that we choose, it seems much more fruitful to analyse capitalism not as an ever-present eternal-natural-cultural

28 An excess which we tacitly accept when we epitomise it as the “metaphysical” possibility of a worker to produce more than is necessary for his reproduction (as in Henry 1983), or as the power of ascesis, which enables human beings to engage in an activity without an external purpose (as in Stimilli 2011), or finally – if we are more skeptical towards natural theology or agnostic asceticism than the two authors mentioned above – as the original surplus/debt producing and produced by the law of death.

potential, which was simply liberated from its feudal shackles with the advent of modernity when the negative barriers disappeared, but rather as a very specific *positivity*. A positivity which had to be laboriously and often violently constructed - both consciously, “unconsciously”, purposefully and accidentally. Basing on historical work on the origins of capitalism of such authors as Ellen Meiksins Wood (Wood 2002, 11-50) and the philosophical insights of Foucault (Foucault 1990) as well as of the late Althusser (Althusser 2014), this approach could show that there was nothing natural in the weird set of events, which in a specific historical conjuncture produced the set of political struggles, decisions, processes etc., that created the conditions for a very specific type of social organisation we call capitalism. But why did e.g. well-developed technology and commerce in 15th century China not bring about capitalism, or why did the presence of densely populated cities, an appropriate legal framework and even some free-labourers not produce capitalism in the Greco-Roman world? These seemingly obvious questions will be countered by another question, namely: why, and by set of what aleatory “causes” did such a strange thing as capitalism emerge? It will be then much less self-evident to speak of homogeneous pre-*capitalist* societies (as if they were all the time necessarily heading towards capitalism) or about “*failed* transitions to capitalism”. To say so, is *not* to say that the mentioned social formations were necessarily “better” than capitalist societies²⁹. To put it shortly and dogmatically, the indeterminacy and openness of history exists. But this openness does not give any place for hope by the mere fact of being open. There were many social formations and there are many social formations possible. Capitalism itself as a social formation can mutate in different directions. For example, it can mutate towards the greater importance of unfree or serf-labour, which - as its suppressed history shows - is by no means incompatible with the supposed “essence” of capitalism.

This is how we have arrived at the promised question of the historical “openness” of the future. Much caution is needed if we are not to fall prey to the “need for hope”. This urge, which was expressed by Derrida, was shared even by his most critical polemicists. Want of hope is psychologically understandable, especially if we remind ourselves of the historical time when *Spectres...* were written. This was a time when triumphant neoliberalism seemed to be unconquerable, and when counting on the fickle future seemed like the only chance to save the light of messianic promise from going out. This is all understandable, but the

29 It is then *not* to say that e.g. the extraction of surplus from the peasantry in absolutist France by state officials was by nature better than the exploitation of workers by the English agrarian capitalists of the same period. Not to mention that to make such over-all comparisons between totalised “social systems” possible, we will have to first spend a good deal of time not only on analysing, say, the “standards of living” and the degree of political freedoms (for an interesting example of such a comparison concerning English popular classes before and after the Industrial Revolution see: Thompson 1988, 347-385), but also on elaborating at least a preliminary transhistorical set of “common measures” against which the “the progress of morals” could be measured in the first instance.

question remains: does this kind of trust, put in the indefinite future, not reproduce a reified opposition between the stable bourgeois cosmos and creative destruction, destabilisation or desynchronisation seen as necessarily *good*? This hope in “an unnamable and neutral power” (Derrida 2006, 211) of the abstract future, this faith put in “the messianic”, which “denudes itself in view of responding to that which must be absolute hospitality, the ‘yes’ to the arrivant(e), the ‘come’ to the future that cannot be anticipated, which must not be the ‘anything whatsoever’ (Derrida 2006, 217), does not this kind of indefinite hope fuel the hope that the Left puts in the *crisis* of capitalism? As if the very fact of destabilisation had to automatically bring change for good and not just more of the same, as we are witnessing now. Has not Derrida (and most of his opponents) underestimated the degree to which destabilisation can become a tool of *crisis management* of the economical system working as broken?

So, what can we do if we want something less indeterminate, something more determinant than the Derridian “messianic”? We could counterpose it with a more concretely, *materially* determined tradition – a tradition necessarily incarnated in institutional bodies: churches, parties and trade unions, in the bodies of dogmas and programs - as e.g. Terry Eagleton, a good Catholic-Marxist proposes in his polemic with Derrida’s anti-institutional mysticism (Derrida et al. 2008, 85-88). That is not a bad idea in itself. But, what I will try to briefly sketch here is not only a different content of tradition but a different formal conceptual matrix - a matrix that perhaps can also be used by the people outside this tradition - for thinking politics. This proposition will try to distance itself from Derrida’s, but only for an inch. Firstly, it takes on board Derrida’s conviction, expressed also by Étienne Balibar, in the matter of distinguishing ideological spectres from “real” reality:

[...] active 'appearing' (both *Schein* and *Erscheinung*, i.e. both illusion and phenomenon) constitutes a mediation or necessary function without which, in given historical conditions the life of society would be quite simply impossible. To suppress the appearance would be to abolish social relations. (Balibar 2007, 61)

To affirm this is to say, yes, it is impossible to delimit *Schein* from *Erscheinung*, to delimit ideology from truth, to discern spirits as long as we remain inside the social. “Social *sive* supra-sensible”, “social *sive* ideological”, social appearance-semblance as a necessary condition of visibility of the invisible and invisibility of many things visible as we know it. But only “as *we* know it”. Here is the point where we have to rely ultimately on *the extra-social*. Is this extra-social element truly as indeterminate and ungraspable, as Derrida seems to suggest in his almost entirely apophatic theology, which so recklessly gives us into the hands of indiscernible spirits? Out of the lack of space and time, and out of my own lack of understanding I can only point in the direction of something/someone more determined.

A Spirit made Flesh, but a Spirit which is not a pure invisible remainder, or an ever present (im)potential, safe-guarding itself by escaping at the right moment from its historical incarnation, but a Spirit made into concrete Flesh singularly and irrevocably, up to the very last limit and beyond. Speaking once again in the Marxian terms of our discussion, this would really be a Value-Flesh beyond use and exchange: a body that is used and consumed every day, transforming its consumers, but situating itself beyond both usefulness and exchangeability. Here is where Derrida seems to be on the right track³⁰, but ultimately fails to think about Grace incarnated, killed and resurrected first in the concrete body of Jesus of Nazareth and then “repeated” every day in the piece of bread broken during Holy Communion - a very different short circuit between the historical and extra-historical of divine history. Test the spirits. “Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come *in the flesh* is from God” (1 John 4:2).

Allegories of freedom

Let us sum up. We have seen how capital operates as a self-positioning semblance [*Schein*]. That is as a phantasm which makes itself real; a spirit which takes holds of heterogeneous elements and changes it into its organs, making a body for itself. This phantasmic becoming happens not only on the level of ideology, when all previous history is pictured as capital’s prehistory. More importantly it happens in the production process itself, when that, which preceded capital as its precondition – i.e. nature and labour – is turned into something derivative, something which appears to be a product of capital itself.

Yet capital’s opposite, freedom which fights against it, also operates in a strikingly similar manner. That is: by intervening at the level of historical *a priori* and positioning conditions for itself. It tries to condition the conditions of its social being, reclaiming for the human individual and human communities the dignity of a true cause, in a world of supposedly extra-human and supposedly necessary results. This happens not only when a political demos (like the Greek people in the latest referendum, which was so easily and ironically overturned) aims at making a decision in the matters of political economy³¹. It can

30 “One could say as much, moreover, if we were venturing into another context, for exchange-value: it is likewise inscribed and exceeded by a promise of gift beyond exchange. In a certain way, market equivalence arrests or mechanizes the dance that it seemed to initiate. Only beyond value itself, use-value and exchange-value, the value of technics and of the market, is grace [so far, so good, but test the end of the sentence... – M.P] promised, if not given, but never rendered or given back to the dance.”

31 Nothing is more alien and abhorrent to the dominant *doxa* than the idea of such democratic sovereignty: “there can be no democratic choice against the European treaties”, “the major threat to the stability of the Eurozone is the existence of the democratic system in the member states” – as bankers and eurocrats have univocally stated, commenting on *the* negotiations between the representatives of the Greek

also take place on the mundane subjective level, when we manage to stand above the entanglements of our everyday compulsive cults, which keep us in bondage.

This happens by means of alienation, which “penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; judging thoughts” (Hebrews 4:12), leading to conversion. Conversion starts when we discover “another law at work in our bodies”, an alien power indwelling us. We can now tear ourselves apart, establish a distance and actually see our sins for the first time; and see that we are not identical with them. We are not tethered to our sins, and we do not have to drown with them. Now it becomes possible to turn away from them and to turn towards a point of alienation of myself from my self and from this world.

The point of all this is to make a different kind of freedom possible. A kind of freedom, which has to be snatched from both the social (W)hole and the individuality, made in its image and likeness. Since we cannot be certain of our autonomy, and since the very idea of individuality might be a surface effect, a by-product of the workings of the rulers of this world, it is not enough to simply state “I think therefore I am!”. That would only reaffirm the malicious substance-becoming-Subject. Therefore in order to go beyond the gesture of simple self-assertion – in which the struggle for individual autonomy coincides with the drive of the capitalist *socius* – it might be better to treat our autonomy precisely as an allegory.

Although the method of the operation of freedom seems to resemble that of capital, it is ultimately contradictory and incomparable. To tell this story in the Paulinian allegorical images of Jacob and Esau, Isaac and Ismael: the son of slavery and the son of freedom are brothers, but the covenant of slavery oppresses and fights against the covenant of freedom – and it is impossible for them to inherit together (Galatians 4: 21-31, Romans 9:10). The new law of freedom is based on promise, which breaks the lineages of inheritance, breaking with the laws of this world.

The law of capitalist accumulation, as we have seen, works as broken. Not only because it produces dysfunction and loss, but, more importantly, because it cannot be fulfilled. No finite, human work can do justice to its infinite obligation. The finite subject can never be sure if s/he used the time given to him/her *productively enough*. The desire to justify oneself through work puts the subject to work, which cannot come to an end. The worker wants to reduce the productive tension created by precarity, to let steam off by working – and this is precisely the engine of accumulation. The impossibility of fulfilling this infinite demand by the finite deed of a finite subject is both its motor and its limit. No one can be saved by one’s work.

demos and representatives of the apparent “objective necessities”. See Juncker 2015, and a comment on mBank’s twitter: https://twitter.com/mbank_research/status/559430820952563712.

The covenant of freedom overturns this order, positing itself as the new principle of free praxis. It does not put the subject to infinite labour because it knows that this will end up increasing guilt, indebtedness and precarity. Under the new law of freedom, therefore, the divine justification which abolishes all debts –grace, that is – precedes action as its infinite source. First we believe, taking hold of this far-reached position, which exceeds our own capabilities, and then we mature towards it. Work becomes an expression and effect of grace. An explication of the work of grace exceeds the limits of this text. Let us then make a provisional ending, by stating that the new law establishes each act of freedom as an allegory of things not yet visible.

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TYTUŁ: Alegorie niewidzialnego. Albo, jak (teologicznie) wyalienować ekonomię?

ABSTRAKT: Tekst usiłuje raz jeszcze wprowadzić w życie klasyczne idee Marksowskiej krytyki ekonomii politycznej oraz pokazać, jak można je aktywować dzięki teologii. Szczególna uwaga skupi się na teologicznie uwydatnionym pojęciu alienacji, traktowanym nie tylko jako przedmiot, ale i metoda krytyki. Celem owej metody wyobcowującej jest to, by ujawnić „transcendentalny plan” historycznego *a priori* kapitalizmu. Dokona się to poprzez produkcję alegorii, to znaczy figuracje nieskończonego ruchu kapitalistycznej totalności. Zaczynając od krytyki odczarowanego euhemeryzmu Hardta i Negriego, którzy chcą zdemitologizować ekonomię polityczną jako nic więcej, jak tylko relacje między ludźmi, zamierzam pokazać ograniczenia ich podejścia, eksponując ustanowienie kapitału jako stworzenie rzeczywistości odwróconej. W tym procesie hipostaza pracy ludzkiej (tj. kapitał) zdobywa przewagę nad istotami ludzkimi nie tylko w wyobraźni, ale także realnie, podważając jasność podziału na byt realny i wyobrażony. Analizując centralne punkty tego procesu,

zamierzam wskazać na złożoną zależność kolejnych odczarowań i zaczarowań, które ustanawiają kapitał jako coś ponadludzkiego, jednocześnie naturalizując jego fantazmatyczne stawanie się do postaci samego rdzenia zasady rzeczywistości. Alienacja jako metoda próbuje przełamać jednoczesność zaczarowania/odczarowania, dzieląc rzekomo spójny pozór – fetysz – na oddzielne i potencjalnie skonfliktowane warstwy. Potencjał dla tego konfliktu wywoływany jest przez dwa efekty obcości. Po pierwsze, przez zestawienie skończonego podmiotu ludzkiego z nieskończonym procesem kapitału. Po drugie, poprzez myślenie o nawróceniu, które – stając się szczytem alienacji – uzdolniłoby istotę ludzką do ukonstytuowania się jako podmiot autonomiczny, przeciwstawiony bogom tego świata oraz swojej własnej, ziemskiej jaźni.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: ekonomia polityczna, teologia, fetyszyzm, efekty obcości, alegoria

Reviews

PHILOSOPHY AND THE MACHINE OF POLITICAL THEOLOGY

REVIEW OF *DUE. LA MACCHINA DELLA TEOLOGIA POLITICA E IL POSTO
DEL PENSIERO*

MIKOŁAJ RATAJCZAK

Abstract: In his review of the book by Roberto Esposito *Due. La macchina della teologia politica e il posto del pensiero* Ratajczak tries to reconstruct and evaluate Esposito's attempt to reinterpretate the legacy of Western political theology by introducing the concept of the "machine of political theology". He focuses first of all on the use Esposito makes of the notion of person in reconstructing the common matrix of both political and economic theology. In the end the author proposes to expand Esposito's reference to the philosophical tradition of impersonal thought in order to search in philosophy not only a different paradigm of community, but also a different paradigm of the subject of production.

Keywords: political theology, economic theology, dispositive of person, philosophy, Roberto Esposito

In a recently published essay Mario Tronti argues for an actuality of political theology by paraphrasing Carl Schmitt's famous *dictum*: "All significant conducts of the modern political life are secularised religious conducts" (Cacciari, Tronti 2007, 31). Modern democracy, with its institutions, rites and relations between leaders and followers, seems for Tronti to be nothing else than a religious form of contemporary life. And, at the same time, this passage from the secularised concepts of a doctrine of the State to secularised religious rites and practices, from theory to praxis, constitutes according to Tronti the very end of the 20th century – a century marked by a structural and intimate relationship between political theory and political theology, materialized in works by such figures as, among many others, Carl Schmitt, Walter Benjamin, Franz Rosenzweig, György Lukács, Ernst Bloch, Alexandre Kojève and Jacob Taubes. The end of the era of political theology means therefore a shift from the theology of the State to a theology of the political practice. But one should simultaneously also add that this also signifies a shift toward the theology of governmental and economical practice.

Tronti receives support on the part of another major political theologian in Italy, Massimo Cacciari, who approaches the discourse of political theology as the effect of an eschatological reserve. This he perceives to be an undertaking meant to postpone the declared end of time, a deeply anti-messianic discourse (Cacciari, Tronti 2007, 46–47), but the only one, according to Cacciari, that can prolong communal life in modern societies. Political theology is thus in its very nature katechontic, conceiving of the modern State as the most important figure of a secular *katechon*. But is political theology still just a doctrine of the State? Both Tronti and Cacciari, although far from locating the sphere of politics beyond (or before) the State, refer to the discourse of political theology not only to revive the philosophy or the theory of the State, but to regain the conceptual wealth of political theology. From the early ages of Christianity to the dawn of the modern age to the post-war reflection on the legitimacy of modern political notions, political theology was able to juxtapose the individual, existential experience of time (which is never linear) and its messianic impulses with the question of power that is always divided (between Rome and Jerusalem, Empire and the Church, *potestas* and *auctoritas* etc.). In his treatise on the political theology of *katechon* Cacciari defines the main problems of (Christian) political theology as follows:

The values that are to assume the category of the decision – the idea of *novitas* against every conservatory strength, the breaking of the link, "ontological" in ancient Rome, between *potestas*

and *auctoritas* – are the cardinal elements of the Christian theological symbol, *determined* for the political dimension of the Eternal, which opens with that symbol (Cacciari 2013, 16).

The idea of *novitas* and the end of the “ontological” link between *potestas* and *auctoritas* are precisely the necessary preconditions for the emergence of a strong subjective experience of time that leads to a political decision *against* the existing order and *for* the future community, not (yet) of this world (Cacciari 2013, 15). Political theology is born together with this fundamental scission between the past and the future, the subjective and the objective, the worldly and the other-worldly, *civitas terrana* and *civitas Dei*. In effect, as a discourse articulating the elements that emerged in result of this fundamental division, political theology is not only a secularised theology of God’s power (in relation to the world, the congregation, the chosen people etc.), but a theoretical dispositive articulating politics and life, a sort of metaphysics of community.

Thus the *decision* to assume a political-theological perspective is a fundamental one, since it is tantamount to interweaving the discourse of political philosophy with that of metaphysics (which, in its Christian theo-ontological version, was born roughly in the same time as the Trinitarian dogma). And no less fundamental is the decision whether to strengthen the katechontic principle of political theology in order to search for a new possible, modern articulation of *potestas* and *auctoritas*, or to perform a critique of the political-theological dispositive and go beyond the oppositions operating within. Whichever choice one makes, it is a fundamental *metaphysical decision* that determines the general horizon of thinking about the political and politics (this might be a different interpretation of what Schmitt referred to when he was writing about a “metaphysical image that a definite epoch forges of the world”, Schmitt 1985, 46).

A recently published book by another Italian philosopher, Roberto Esposito, is one of the most radical attempts to assume the political-theological perspective only in order to finally situate a possible political philosophy beyond its bounds. *Due. La macchina della teologia politica e il posto del pensiero* [*Two. The Machine of Political Theology and the Place of Thought*¹] is at the same time a logical continuation of Esposito’s earlier work and an innovative breakthrough, which provides a new perspective both on his thought on community and on political theology itself. Here Esposito focuses on the function and genealogy of the notion of

¹ While writing this review I was using the Italian original version. In the meantime the English translation was published, see Esposito 2015.

“person”. Person is a dispositive that reveals political theology as a direct opposition to community. Whereas any form of subjectivity arises within the dialectic between *communitas* and *immunitas* as an immunitary reaction to the communal *munus*, political theology imposes a transcendent idea of a “person” on the communal production of subjectivity, just as it imposes a sovereign form of power on social relations.

Esposito’s focus on the notion of the person allows him to do two things, both being innovative theoretical gestures in analysing the discourse of political theology. First of all, the notion of person joins the lexicon of Roman law with the language of theology (Esposito 2013, 91–102). *Persona* as the invention of Trinitarian theology appears for the first time in Tertullian’s *Adversus Praxeam*. It came to be an indispensable conceptual tool to explicate an ontological relation alien to the ancient world, that between the three “persons” of the Trinity and the divine substance. As the source of the first theological heresies of Christianity which either gave substantial meaning to the persons and risked being deemed polytheistic or, on the contrary, saw person only as a modality of divine being, refusing to accept the theological innovation of Trinitarian *oikonomia* and perceiving God as an undivided unity (labelled by the orthodoxy as “Monarchianism”). The concept of person served to articulate the ontological plane with the economic one, that is the unity of God’s being with the internal division between the “persons”. The economic plane, the plane of the Trinitarian *oikonomia*, refers to God’s action and praxis, to the relation of God’s being to the created world and its history. It is no surprise then that the notion of person reappears in Christological discourse as a theological explication of the incarnated being of the second person of the Trinity. Instead of *una substantia, tres personae* that characterised the Trinity, Christ’s dual, both divine and historical being, is explicated as *una persona, duae substantiae* (Esposito 2013, 96). In any case, the theological function of the person is to articulate both the unity and the division.

The brunt of Esposito’s genealogy and critique of political theology consists of showing the same logic articulating the unity and division present in the secular tradition of the person as a juridical notion, one stemming from Roman law. He focuses on the institution of slavery in ancient Rome, essential to understand the status of the free person which was *sui iuris* only in a negative relation with the slave who was *alieni iuris*. The dispositive of the person functions within the system of law in order to refer these two fundamental social statuses to each other. In this sense the division introduced by the notion

of the free person, “is not what definitely separates diverse classes, but what articulates them in an unity constituted by the two asymmetrical parts, one subjugated under another, tending in this way to coincide with the whole” (Esposito 2013, 99). What interests Esposito is the historical and conceptual junction of the theological and juridical notion of the person. Whereas the theology of Trinity and Incarnation developed a nexus of unity and separation (between *substantia* and *persona*), Roman law elaborated on the division between the individual and his or her social status as a person. The effect of this junction, as analysed by Esposito, was the ongoing division *within* the human being between the instance of reason or soul (that gives the human being the metaphysical, social and political *status*) and the animal substance, what Esposito perceives as the retroactive influence of juridical categories on philosophical reasoning (Esposito 2013, 112).

The second theoretical outcome of Esposito’s focus in his genealogical investigations of political theology on the dispositive of the person lies in his new positioning of the very problem of economic theology. Since the publication of *The Kingdom and the Glory*, where Agamben famously declared the theology of the Trinity to be a theological paradigm of governmentality (Agamben 2011, xi), the problem of economic theology has been more and more widely picked up by various scholars, including many contemporary Italian philosophers (Cacciari’s work on *katechon* might also be considered an example of such an investigation). Esposito’s contribution to this debate and his proposition to remodel the use that is being made of economic theology lies precisely in showing the economic significance of the dispositive of the person, theological in its roots. The reference to the ancient institution of *nexum*, through which debtors placed their bodies and their lives in the hands of the creditors, can be treated as Esposito’s attempt to supplement the famous figure of *homo sacer* as the biopolitical grounding of sovereign power with a notion that shows economic biopower exercised on the living body itself. By placing his own body in the hands of the creditor, the debtor ascribed to this body an economic value. Therefore, while in public law he remained a person, in private law he became a thing, a property of the creditor. The literal economic value given to the body in the institution of the *nexum* is verified by historical accounts of the vengeance of creditors who could not only sell the insolvent debtor as a slave, but even tear his body into pieces if he was in debt to more than one person (Esposito 2013, 151). In the case of the *nexum* Esposito is able to show the complicated logic of the juridical dispositive of the person in Roman law, which operated on the division between

public and private, freemen and slaves, persons and things, but only to the extent that the introduction of one element of the binary relation meant excluding the second element of the relation and its simultaneous subordination to the first one – what also denoted the possibility of moving individuals from one sphere (e.g. “persons”) to the other (e.g. “things”).

Esposito’s closing remarks, in the last passage of the book, on the debt relation in contemporary societies should only be treated as the initial outline of an economic-theological investigations based on the concept of the person. Nevertheless, the significance of Esposito’s perspective is clear. In order to show the internal matrix of both political and economic theology, one can refer to the person as both the subject of the decision and as the status one is given through the debt relation. The creditor–debtor relation is truly a metaphysical relation that endures the changes of the subject, its health and mental capacities, its desires and social situation, giving him or her a permanent *status*. For example, Esposito notes that the number one reason for personal bankruptcies in the USA are loans necessary for medical care. Further, also in the USA, it is almost impossible to discharge student debt. To give an example from Europe, the number of mortgage credits in Poland is close to 2 million with far more than half of them taken out for at least 20 (in some cases even 30) years. These facts clearly show that this metaphysical debt relation still has a biopolitical character since we fall into debt to provide the necessary conditions for our lives.

Esposito’s answer to this crisis – both in the sense of the persisting economic crisis that started as a subprime mortgage crisis and the general crisis of the modern State-form that has turned from the *welfare State* into the *debtfare State* (Soederberg 2014) – is unfortunately bleakly formulated, although it bears a strong philosophical potential. In the situation of a generalization of the debt relation, Esposito proposes to push this generalization to its limit and acknowledge the communal *munus* precisely as a principle of the community of debt, understood as obligation and duty towards others (Esposito 2013, 228). This philosophical postulate of going beyond an economic-theological notion of debt towards an ontological concept of debt constitutes the most direct reference to his earlier works on the problems of community and immunity. Debt as an ontological relation might be therefore one possible formulation of community beyond the modern immunization paradigm (Esposito 2008, 51).

Due can end with such a general philosophical project of community based on mutual, ontological debt since it presents a concept of political theology that goes far beyond a theory of the State, a secularized version of God’s sovereign power, and even beyond a

theory of contemporary religious forms of political life. Just like Tronti, Esposito initially poses a question: What is the reason for the contemporary actuality of political theology? He answers this question by revoking Heidegger and his concept of *Gestell*, translated into English as “positionality” (Heidegger 2012). It is because of our belonging to the paradigm of political theology, which still regulates our understanding of politics and ethics that we have failed to gain enough distance from it and leave it behind us – just as according to Heidegger *Gestell* regulates our understanding of being. Referring Heidegger’s *Gestell* to Foucault and Deleuze’s notion of dispositive Esposito (2013, 18–19) recalls similar operations performed recently by Giorgio Agamben, but it is not Esposito’s use of the notion of *Gestell* or “dispositif” that constitutes his most important contribution in *Due*. Far more important is his reference to Heidegger’s notion of “machination” (*Machenschaft*) as a proper paradigm to understand the functioning of political theology that makes *Due* an important work on the genealogy of political theology.

Esposito reconstructs Heidegger’s “machination” in a manner that allows him to equate the logic of this process with his earlier philosophical reconstruction of the immunization process as the exclusionary inclusion (Esposito 2002, 10). Political theology is thus a “machine” (similar in its internal structure and function to Agamben’s anthropological, sovereign or governmental machine), that proceeds by imposing the initial division and then reuniting the divided elements in unity on the basis of the subordination of one element to the other. Esposito reworks this mechanism on the basis of the notion of person. His reconstruction of the 20th century discussions in the field of political theology – from Kantorowicz and Schmitt to Peterson, Bataille, Taubes and Assman – focuses therefore on the role that the dispositive of the person played in these discourses. Although this reconstruction does not provide us with new historical material and, as Adam Kotsko points out (Kotsko 2016), is limited to the canon of western thought, it does serve to cast a light on the internal coherence of 20th century political theology.

But this reconstruction, centred on the dispositive of the person, also allows Esposito to read modern philosophical notions of the person – including the contemporary utilitarian standpoints of Peter Singer and Hugo Tristram Engelhardt (Esposito 2013, 141–148) – as belonging to the same political-theological key. Just as long the social relations of power are based on the logic of ascribing a status to individual living beings in a manner that necessarily excludes other individuals as not deserving the status of the person, we remain,

according to Esposito, on the theological-political grounds. This deeply philosophical genealogy and critique of political theology is at the same time practical and all-too-encompassing, thus risking the objection that Esposito's interest lies not so much in political theology but in philosophy. But this is probably precisely the case: Esposito needs political theology as a field of genealogical investigation into the notion of person, but it is not a field on which he wishes to remain.

The third part of the book confirms this assumption as it is devoted entirely to the alternative philosophical tradition – from Averroes to Bruno, from Spinoza, Schelling and Bergson to Deleuze – which is characterized by a non-personal concept of thinking. Surprisingly enough, Esposito sees in philosophy a paradigm that can present an alternative to the machine of political theology since it is in philosophy, at least in some of its strains, that person vanishes in the process of impersonal or transpersonal thought. While theology is interested mostly, as Agamben shows, in the problem of the subject of action and its effectiveness (Agamben 2013), law focuses on the problems of property and appropriation (Esposito 2002, 25–61). Philosophy, on the other hand, is first of all an image, theory or performance of thought and therefore seems privileged to go beyond the paradigm centred on the dispositive of the person. This part of *Due* presents investigations that build what probably constitutes Esposito's most intriguing philosophical project, namely the philosophy of the impersonal (Esposito 2007). But introducing in *Due* questions of economic theology and of the crisis of contemporary economy allows us to draw even further going conclusions. Philosophy, and especially philosophy based on the notion of impersonal thought, can be perceived as a model for intellectual production in general, the productivity of “general intellect”, which is never reducible to the productivity of a single individual. Although philosophy has always been a product of single individuals, it was philosophy's ability to self-understand, as Esposito shows, that could potentially enable it to see itself as the effect of transindividual relations – of a passive, general intellect, a divine intellect that joins individual entities and the totality of the world, the impersonality of the mind, etc. It may be the case that the philosophical tradition which sees thought as the effect of a separate, impersonal intellect can provide a general conceptual framework to grasp the production relations in contemporary cognitive capitalism. Esposito does not elaborate on that concept, but his idea of a community based on the communal *munus* must not only do away with the dispositive of the person as the basis for the debt relations in the contemporary world, but also come up

with a new notion of the subjectivity of communal, creative and cognitive production. Why not look for this notion in philosophy?

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TYTUŁ: Filozofia i maszyna teologii politycznej. Recenzja *Due. Macchina della teologia politica e il posto del pensiero* Roberta Esposito.

ABSTRAKT: W swojej recenzji książki Roberta Esposito *Due. La macchina della teologia politica e il posto del pensiero* Ratajczak stara się zrekonstruować i poddać ewaluacji podjętą przez Esposito probe reinterpretacji dziedzictwa zachodniej teologii politycznej przez wprowadzenie koncepcji „maszyny teologii politycznej”. Skupia się przede wszystkim na użytku, jaki Esposito robi z pojęcia osoby w swojej rekonstrukcji wspólnej matrycy teologii politycznej i ekonomicznej. Pod koniec recenzji proponuje rozszerzyć obecne w książce Esposito odwołanie do filozoficznej tradycji bezosobowego myślenia w celu szukania w tej

tradycji nie tylko innego paradygmatu wspólnoty, ale także innego paradygmatu podmiotu produkcji.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: teologia polityczna, teologia ekonomiczna, dyspozytyw osoby, filozofia, Roberto Esposito

BEYOND THE PRINCIPLE OF PROPERTY

REVIEW OF *DIFFERENZE ITALIANE. POLITICA E FILOSOFIA: MAPPE E SCONFINAMENTI*, EDS. DARIO GENTILI, ELETTRA STIMILLI

PIOTR SADZIK

Abstract: A review of the volume edited by Dario Gentili and Elettra Stimilli *Differenze italiane. Politica e filosofia: mappe e sconfinamenti*. It explores the validity of speaking about “Italian Theory” or “Italian Thought” and reconstructs the main characteristics of contemporary Italian political philosophy based on the reviewed volume and other publications by i.a. Roberto Esposito. In the end the author formulates critical remarks about the role the French philosophy, especially Derrida’s deconstruction, assumes in works by some Italian philosophers.

Keywords: Italian philosophy, Italian difference, living thought, biopolitics, political theology, deconstruction, Roberto Esposito

Italian Theory, Italian Difference, Radical Thought (Esposito 2010; Esposito 2015; Hardt and Virno 1996) – regardless of the label which could serve to describe the vast contemporary movement in Italian philosophy, its suppleness and vigour calls not only to re-examine, but even to reject the memorable thesis by Deleuze and Guattari about the supposed lack of a proper “milieu for philosophy” in Italy (Deleuze and Guattari 1994). It’s hard to imagine the contemporary intellectual landscape without references to the notions developed by such thinkers as Giorgio Agamben, Roberto Esposito or Antonio Negri. The recent volume published in Rome – *Differenze italiane. Politica e filosofia: mappe e sconfinamenti* [Italian Differences. Politics and Philosophy: Maps and Border-crossings] – edited by Dario Gentili and Elettra Stimilli shows that the list of names that call for our attention is much longer.

Since the turn of the century, along with the dissipation of the impetus of post-structuralism it’s been Italian philosophy that has provided some of the most important contributions to the debates at the intersection of philosophy, politics and aesthetics. We could consider the vast reception of Agamben’s “homo sacer” project (published since 1995 and translated into English for the first time in 1998) and Hardt’s and Negri’s *Empire* (2000) as the beginning of this stunning career of Italian Thought. The rising flood of monographs issued by many important academic reviews (e.g. *Angelaki*, *SubStance*, two volumes of *Diacritics* in 2009), as well as regularly organized conferences (including the massive one at Cornell University in 2010) have led to the establishment of the theoretical language and concepts of Italian Theory within the English-speaking academic community.

The first question that comes to mind when it comes to consider the phenomenon of Italian political philosophy is whether it is possible to find any characteristics common to the various heterogeneous thinkers, who sometimes appear so disunited and disparate with each other. Or is it a question of the “Italian Theory” filling the gap after the death of the main members of the so-called “French Theory”, thus only confirms our need for an intellectual collective? Can we speak of an attempt to name some existing community of thought, or is it just our will to create one? In other words, is it possible in this case to speak of a community of intellectuals conducting research in similar fields and devoting their attention to the same set of problems?

Whereas the question of “Italianness” could suggest an introduction to the problems of identity and property, “Italian Theory” attempts in reality to break with these notions in order to delineate possible ways for thought to go beyond the horizons and frontiers which place limits on them. This going-beyond (*le fuoriuscita*) and border-crossings, a kind of Deleuzian *lignes de fuite*, constitutes one of the main and privileged operations in domain of the Italian Thought. Such a vital transgression does away with fixed frontiers of identitarian possessiveness and property, putting a positive accent not on the commodity or property, but rather on that which exceeds it and goes always beyond. In any case, Italian

Thought works against stability understood as a form of possible appropriation and possession. It is in some way significant that the impulse that brought this volume to life came from the outside, namely from Paris, where in January of 2014 a conference was held titled “Does Italian Theory Exist?” (*L’Italian Theory esiste-t-elle?*). The book is also supplemented by papers presented at another conference: *Italian Theory. Categorie e problemi della filosofia Italiana contemporanea*, which was held in Naples in the same year. “Beyondness” is confirmed also by the resonance which this mode of thinking generates outside of Italy. The participation of scholars from various parts of the globe (including a member of *Praktyka Teoretyczna*, Mikołaj Ratajczak, together with Mateusz Burzyk from Poland) testify that we are not dealing here with any form of particularity, but rather with such conceptual tools that seem to be one of the most valuable when we attempt to rethink the essential assumptions of modern global economic-political systems.

Border-crossing also constitutes – as is pointed out by Roberto Esposito in the opening essay – the crucial experience for the main currents of post-war European philosophy, which was always undergoing “a sort of dislocation which *threw it out of itself*” (Gentili and Stimilli 2015, 9), as reflected in the forced emigration of the members of the Frankfurt School to the USA and the transplantation of French poststructuralism into American universities. In addition, abandonment of the lingual matrix has had as its effect on transformation of the very conceptual structure of thought. This migration of ideas, this movement of thought beyond the language in which it was elaborated, the loss of proper frames, are all linked with accompanying deformations of original ideas, which makes room for mutations, but which also paradoxically leads to some reactivation of thought which otherwise could simply congeals. It is as if only by losing its own property philosophy could be revitalized. The juxtaposition of German Philosophy, French Theory and Italian Thought allows Esposito to explicate that this (strictly immanent) “beyondness” and “outsideness” are the main values of the latter. Therefore, perhaps the most crucial notion of this *pensiero vivente* would be disuniting, getting outside of the control of stable identity and property. It is not “unity” and “agreement”, but rather “antagonism” and “discordance” which are being positively appraised here. Thus, one is able to describe the plane of “Italianity” not so much by a geographical criterion as by tensions, contrasts, conflicts and, more precisely, differences. Antagonism is vital because it makes a promise of political change, transformation of the implemented order, a *too actual* order. In consequence, Italian Theory claims that where there is difference, there is resistance. It’s a zone of unstable heterogeneity, which paradoxically could be reduced and eliminated by the very label “Italian Theory”. The main aim of “Italians” isn’t, as a matter of fact, a theory which could neutralize antagonisms, but rather a practice which will inflame them in the name of “life”, which seems to be a central category for the contemporary Italian political philosophy. Italian philosophical culture “from its

origins was directed toward historical and political life” (Esposito 2015, 13). It was many centuries ago that Italian Thought had already discovered “life” as a principle of any philosophical reflexion and made a specific turn, an “epochal transition that has at its centre the question of *bios*” (Esposito and Hanafi 2009, 56). There isn’t any separate “philosophy of life” in Italy, because the “whole Italian thought was the thinking about life in its tension with politics and history” (Esposito 2015, 13). And if we wish to search for the problem which is undoubtedly common for the majority of contemporary Italian political philosophers, it would be the question of the relation between life, politics and history. This triad forms a conceptual framework which offers them a language to interpret contemporary political, social and economic relations.

It is this historical feature that sets Italian philosophy outside the transcendental horizon which was shared by a great part of the dominant currents of European thought. Instead Italian thinkers were always focused not so much on epistemology or metaphysics, but rather on political philosophy and the question of the economical-political formation of life. As a result, from the very beginning Italian thought – starting with the works of its classics such as Dante, Machiavelli, Vico and Leopardi – has been concentrated on notions that seem neglected in the non-Italian intellectual traditions. “In this sense we can speak of Italian thought as an impure, or bastard, thought” because of its interest in what “exceeds the philosophical lexicon”. This makes it “a thought of life in its tension with politics and history” (Esposito and Hanafi 2009, 56).

However, the privileged position of the relationship between these three concepts is clearly visible as a mark of Foucault’s legacy, as well as of other traditions that influence and enrich the theoretical language of Italian thought: Deleuze’s materialistic philosophy of immanence, the political readings of Spinoza, different strains of Italian Marxism, etc. Political (and philosophical) antagonism seems here, more than in other philosophical traditions, literally a question of life and death. It was always the political reflection which was compulsively situated beyond the structures of institutions of the nation state and outside national boundaries (unlike many other hegemonic philosophical cultures). Consequently Italian Thought was to become a thought outside the state, without the state, and against the state. In the core of Italian philosophy there is some “immanency of antagonism” expressed in a constantly antagonistic position towards power. Among the most important Italian thinkers, many have created their philosophical concepts in opposition to the centres of power; thereby Italian thought had to become one of a resistance, not one of legitimizing the position of the one who reigns (as Esposito clearly claimed elsewhere: “Italian philosophy is a philosophy of resistance”, see Esposito and Hanafi 2009, 58). Many of the main Italian thinkers have sacrificed their lives for the insubordination of their thought. The roots of that uncompromising stance can be found as far as back as in the Middle Ages and Renaissance.

Over the ages, in Italian history we find authors condemned to be outcasts (Dante, Machiavelli), burned at the stake (Bruno, Vanini), and risking imprisonment or being imprisoned (Galileo, Campanella). Thus, Italian Thought was born from constraints imposed by political authorities.

For this reason, Italian Thought takes care to reanimate the idea of “negativity” understood as a way of emancipating life from power, an idea of the practice of exteriority both as a form and a content of thought. If we recognize “negativity” as a mechanism that would shatter the false unity that always expresses a will to manage life, then we’ll apprehend the equal sign placed here between “life” and “differences”. Such form of “negativity” isn’t in fact pure negation, but a factor which leads to the “affirmation” of life through the potential of antagonism. “To live” means “to differ”, to negatively transform oneself into something other (which isn’t the capitalistic praise of heterogeneity as a way of concealing social differences, but rather a plural multitude). The notion of “negativity” is understood here as a main condition of political change, and even as the Political itself. Accordingly, the identity of Italian Theory is a non-identity (if by “identity” we meant “unity”) of “living thought”. As a matter of fact, the very notion of “Italian Theory” may be highly misleading, and it will be so for the sake of both of its components, not only through the problematic nature of “Italianness” (which for this reason, as Esposito emphasises, should remain only “a provisory expression”). Unlike “German Philosophy” and “French Theory”, in case of which the first step was pursued by establishing an academic school or methodology, in the case of “Italian Thought” intellectual movement was preceded by political practice. And if we want to track its “Italianness”, we could discern its label above all in the specificity of the political and class struggles in Italy of the 1960s and 1970s. The central point around which political philosophy in Italy came to constitute itself was the question of the capitalist power, which had started to control the totality of social life. Readings of Marx performed the function of a critique of the nascent neoliberalism and globalism, as well as an aid to the (sometimes violent) political struggle (in the tradition of *operaismo* and *postoperaismo*). The basic level and primal scene was situated here in the “space of essentially conflictive political practice” (Esposito 2015, 12). It should be noted that this necessity of conflict, which is claimed as a *sine qua non* of a thought of the Political, is much older and should be traced back to Machiavelli. Because of this, Italian Thought ties thinking together with practice, with the latter always preceding the former. It’s not the “thought of practice” (and for this reason some kind of “theory”) but rather the “practice of thought” which, for Esposito, plays an essential role in Italian philosophy across history. (I underscore Esposito’s statements so strongly, because it is he, together with Agamben, whose participation in this intellectual movement is so much more complex and whose work seems to constitute the basic reference points for the majority of

authors in the volume). Hence Italian Thought is “neither philosophy nor theory, but an interval, a milieu with shifting boundaries, reciprocities, and allegiances” (Campbell 2009, 3).

One of the most important theoretical achievements of this movement would be the recognition of hidden, theological-political foundations of modern bio-power and economical violence. Precise analyses of the intersections between “politics” and “theology” can provide elaborate conceptual tools which could serve to set the neoliberal economy into a state of inoperativity. As Esposito makes clear elsewhere (Esposito 2013), the invisible jointure which binds together into One category two such extremely contrasted elements, is something more than an archaic term from the dusty dictionaries of juridical thought. At the very bottom it isn't a term at all. It's rather a century-old machine, the effects of which are still at work today and which constitute the very “way of thinking about order in the West” (Esposito 2015, 16). This theological-political machine is aimed at taking control over a subjected life by eliminating its heterogeneity (and thus the possibility of relation and togetherness) and reducing it to Oneness. This theological *reductio ad unum* unifies not only “theology” and “politics”, but above all the various forms of life, turning them into nothing more than passive objects of governance, or rather management. Original conflicts and irreducible differences are extinguished, pacified and replaced by an obedient *stasis*. The unifying apparatus of “political theology” has become, after many modifications and metamorphoses of its classical model, “a sort of machine which works, separating our life from itself [...]. Born at the intersection between Christian theology and Roman law, it was present over ages in diverse forms but all of them were assigned to the apparatus of the exclusive inclusion” (Esposito 2015, 16). For this reason the main aim which stands both before and in the very heart of contemporary philosophy is “to yield to exceed ‘political theology’” (Esposito 2015, 17). To search for the way out of it is to project a new model of the Political, distinct from that which we've inherited from impassive hierarchical machines which seek to arbitrarily dispose of our lives. Obviously, this is a difficult task, especially considering that “political theology” has appropriated from our conceptual language even such seemingly unfettered notions as “secularisation” and “profanation”. Nevertheless, Italian Thought has developed (which is clearly visible also in the volume edited by Gentili and Stimilli) an unmistakable style, absent in the majority of authors who attempt to rethink such questions as global capitalism, neoliberalism, or economic violence. These authors delve into the rich theological vocabulary (especially that of Paul of Tarsus: *eschaton*, *katechon*, *anomia*), seeking there some overlooked premises which constitute the very framework in which the dominant economical-political paradigm of today still functions (and which, in the works of Carl Schmitt and Walter Benjamin, constitute privileged reference points that Italian Thought curiously re-elaborates). Their judgments are extremely far from unity, but many among them one could repeat the already famous claim of Agamben: “I would suggest to

anyone who really wants to understand what is happening today not to neglect theology” (Agamben and Sacco 2005). It suffices to compare the complementary and opposing statements (as well as the passionate discussion) of Massimo Cacciari and Mario Tronti with the stance of Esposito (of course there are also other debates present in Italian Thought: Negri with Agamben, Virno with Negri, Cavarero with Esposito, etc.). Notwithstanding, the multitude of “Italian” conceptualisations of the “theological” frames of modern capitalism, we can see here also some undisputed community of language. Whether we accept Tronti’s conviction that “political theology” is “a power of governing the crisis”; or that of Cacciari that managing is at the edge of “political theology” since there’s no more any *katechon*; or Esposito’s postulate that “economic theology” is an internal apparatus of “political theology”, only incarnated in another form in which it governs today; in every case we find ourselves in the midst of fascinating debates devoted to rethinking the conditions of the very possibility of possibility or, to put it differently, of potentiality. From this point of view “negativity” can be seen as a tool which “possibilizes” the very possibility of transformation of every too solid political-economic organism. Thus, for some authors (Virno or Esposito) it is considered to be a “condition *sine qua non* of politics” (Ratajczak and Burzyk 2015, 205).

In addition to “life” (as well as “conflict”, “proper”, “affirmation”, “immanence”, and “biopolitics”) we can also point out some other notions strictly tied to Italian political philosophy: 1) “community” (*communitas/communità*) and “the common”, confronted with “immunity” (*immunitas/immunità*) and “the immune”; 2) “potentiality” (*potenza*) confronted with “power” (*potere*); 3) potentiality of *potenza* confronted with actuality/necessity of *potere*.

While the notion of “the common” – which has been appropriated by right-wing movements and was absent (forgotten or ignored) elsewhere – since the works of Maurice Blanchot and Jean-Luc Nancy has been regaining its significance in contemporary philosophy, it was Italian Theory that has made it the central point of its reflections. The task for contemporary philosophy should be, to rethink “the common” and make it one of the cores of the modern Political. In order to make this possible, one has to re-appropriate practice and break the paralysis of political action, disabled within the ideological frames of neoliberalism. Another task would thus be to enable the very creativity, to “potentialize” the very potentiality. But if the traditional model is based on a direct passage from potentiality to act, what is at stake here is a “potentiality non-activated, not destined to activation and not resolved in itself” (Esposito 2015, 18), the potentiality of not-being in the act: “creative ability to constitute something which could never jam definitively, without a loss of its vital energy” (Esposito 2015, 19), and thus the “potentiality of life” (*potenza della vita*) is confronted with the “power over life” (*potere sulla vita*) (Chignola 2015, 35). Subjectivity as a form of *potenza* breaks through the order of necessary properties which belong to the lexicon of the immunological regime of biopolitics as economic theology. The latter has become one of

the intrusive “symptoms of our time” (Esposito 2015, 18), attempting to strip life of its very possibility: “potentiality is situated in the zone opposite to that of necessity. The possible (*il possibile*) means that something can exist in another way. Or can also not exist. And because of that it isn’t necessary” (Esposito 2015, 19). In this view, “the common” needs to be understood as a form of political resistance against the essential value of “immunity”: the necessity of property.

Such statements are obviously rooted in Foucault’s analyses from *On the Government of the Living*, where the philosopher claims that contemporary power has the biopolitical nature of an overseer who keeps guard over the forms of subjectivization and the constitution of the social, but only since the key works of Italian Theory have been published has this thread been tied with an attempt to deconstruct the metaphysical frames of the Political (expressed in the division: actuality-potentiality).

One of the most problematic issues of the Italian Thought, and also of the volume *Differenze italiane*, is however its attitude towards the French legacy. The widespread conviction that French poststructuralism was oppressively enclosed within an impassable “textual” horizon, which in consequence disabled any political activity, one should find as a dangerous and poorly reasoned prejudice. This ritual gesture of various incarnations of “new politics” neglects the fact that also many members of the so-called “French Theory” attempted to tie the notion of language with that of life, history and politics into their complex relationship. One could say that it prefigured what “Italian Thought” is doing today. When Esposito claims that the constitutive category of our time is life and no longer language, that we should stop analysing the linguistic order – which could only cloud political issues and doesn’t permit one to reach conceptually the life itself – then he uses a too naive distinction between the (supposedly theoretical) lingual sphere and (supposedly practical) life. Moreover, the notion of life is not only not absent, but stands in the very heart of the works of many French intellectuals, especially in the late phase of their thinking. It was a central category for such various thinkers (the variety of which is totally erased in their violent hyperbolization as “French Theory”) as Deleuze, Foucault or Derrida. In each case we can deal with the category of “life”, although perhaps in each case one could point towards *another* “life”. But if this is so, then it’s hard to accept the supposed exclusivity of the affirmative and vital nature of Italian Thought. Repetitive incantations which attribute to French poststructuralism a disability to take a stand, the absence of both negation and affirmation, neither “yes”, nor “no” – are founded on a reconstruction which is unfair and extremely far from being acceptable. Attributing to those thinkers the category of “neutralization” and extending Blanchot’s “neutrum” to the whole of that intellectual current is also a very doubtful strategy. One could easily point out that some of them, e.g. Derrida, visibly neglected in *Differenze italiane*, have analysed conflicts without any form of

neutralization. The claim that deconstruction is unable to be politically active is a poorly established, if not entirely unjustified, conviction, motivated only by an obsessive will to separate French thinkers from the Italians, and in consequence it leads to some serious misunderstandings. It's hard to accept claims about the absence, in "French deconstruction" (sic!), of analyses of "biopolitics" and "life". The late works of Derrida contain not only discussion about political theology and strategies of a political framing of life (see for example *Force de loi*, *Spectres de Marx* or *La bête et le souverain*) but also many other supposedly "Italian" themes, including deconstruction of the proper, or deactivated potentiality. Also in deconstruction we can easily find some attempt to establish another thinking about the very notion of "the Political" (rooted here in quasi-ethical politics and "infinite demand of justice", identified by Derrida with the deconstruction as such). When we take those affinities into consideration, it then perhaps becomes possible to create a specific chiasmus where "becoming of Italian Theory the French one is linked with [...] becoming of French Theory the Italian one" (Baldissone 2015, 107).

Despite these objections, we should treat the volume *Differenze italiane* as a genuine opening up of a space for discussion and an outlining of a map of keynotes and landmarks. It enables us to become acquainted with diversity of contemporary Italian political philosophy, which begins to resonate far beyond its original context and appears to be one of the most intriguing places of debates on possible acts of resistance against modern apparatuses of biopolitics. Without a doubt, today Deleuze wouldn't be able to talk about an absence of a "milieu for philosophy" in Italy, and would be content of these attempts to think the restoration of the very possibility of a non-appropriated life, of the possibility of life.

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TYTUŁ: Poza zasadą własności. Recenzja tomu *Differenze italiane. Politica e filosofia: mappe e sconfinamenti* pod redakcją Dario Gentilego i Elettry Stimilli.

ABSTRAKT: Tekst ten jest recenzją tomu pod redakcją Dario Gentilego i Elettry Stimilli pt. *Różnice włoskie. Polityka i filozofia: mapy i przekroczenia granic*. Dyskutuje on zasadność mówienia o “Italian Theory” lub “myśli włoskiej” oraz rekonstruuje najważniejsze cechy charakterystyczny współczesnej włoskiej filozofii politycznej w oparciu o recenzowany tom oraz inne publikacje m.in. Roberta Esposito. Pod koniec recenzji autor formułuje także krytyczne uwagi pod adresem roli, jaką w pismach wielu włoskich filozofów odgrywa filozofia francuska, zwłaszcza dekonstrukcja Jacques’a Derridy.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: filozofia włoska, włoska różnica, myśl żywa, biopolityka, teologia polityczna, dekonstrukcja, Roberto Esposito

RELIGIA, Z KTÓRĄ MOŻNA ZROBIĆ, CO SIĘ CHCE

RECENZJA KSIĄŻKI *FINIS CHRISTIANISMI: WYBÓR PISM* FRANZA
OVERBECKA

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Abstrakt: Celem tej recenzji jest analiza problemu wiary i historii w wybranych pismach Franza Overbecka. Overbeck (1837–1905), niemiecki teolog-agnostyk, historyk chrześcijaństwa, przyjaciel Fryderyka Nietzschego, opisuje w swoich pracach eschatologiczny i kontrkulturowy wymiar pierwotnego chrześcijaństwa. Dzieje Kościoła opierają się według niego na powolnym wypieraniu eschatologii oraz zastąpieniu jej konserwatywnym projektem podtrzymywania i stabilizowania zachodniej kultury i cywilizacji. Z tego powodu Overbeck – broniąc integralności chrześcijaństwa jako kulturowego fenomenu oraz jego uniwersalistycznego dziedzictwa – krytykuje zarówno współczesny mu protestantyzm kulturowy (A. Harnack) jak i postchrześcijańskie i nacjonalistyczne alternatywy (D.F. Strauss, P. Lagarde). W artykule wskazuję na aktualność Overbeckowskich zastrzeżeń wobec wszelkiej – tradycjonalistycznej, liberalnej i lewicowej – teologii politycznej z punktu widzenia chrześcijaństwa zorientowanego na eschatologię. Analizuję również dwie ścieżki recepcji myśli Overbecka w dwudziestowiecznych Niemczech: próbę odnowienia protestantyzmu jako religii stanu wyjątkowego (K. Barth) oraz krytykę teologii i sceptyczno-ironiczne pożegnanie z chrześcijaństwem (H. Blumenberg).

Słowa kluczowe: Franz Overbeck, Hans Blumenberg, Karl Barth, *finis Christianismi*, teologia polityczna, eschatologia, protestantyzm kulturowy

Od kilkunastu lat polski czytelnik ma coraz szerszy dostęp do dwudziestowiecznych niemieckich debat poświęconych ukrytemu oddziaływaniu teologii chrześcijańskiej w życiu zeświecczonych nowoczesnych społeczeństw: w ich strukturach władzy oraz w świeckich narracjach historiozoficznych, politycznych i ekonomicznych. Patronami tych historyczno-filozoficznych rozpoznaniań, angażujących od lat dwudziestych zeszłego wieku lewicę i prawicę, są Walter Benjamin i Carl Schmitt, a rozgałęziające się linie powracających motywów i argumentów wiodą od sporu o nowoczesność i sekularyzację toczonego w latach pięćdziesiątych i sześćdziesiątych (w którym uczestniczyli m.in. Karl Löwith, Hans Blumenberg czy Jacob Taubes) do niedawnych dyskusji o teologii politycznej monoteizmu (Jan Assmann, Peter Sloterdijk) czy społeczeństwie postsekularnym (Jürgen Habermas). Szkicując mapy intelektualnych oddziaływań i szukając źródeł niemieckich sporów o dziedzictwo chrześcijańskie w świecie nowoczesnym, znajdziemy miejsce dla Franza Overbecka (1837–1905), nieco zapomnianego teologa-agnostyka, historyka chrześcijaństwa i przyjaciela Fryderyka Nietzschego, którego wybór pism pt. *Finis Christianismi* został wydany w języku polskim w 2014 roku.

Ślady lektury Overbecka, rzecznika apokaliptycznego wymiaru pierwotnego chrześcijaństwa i proroka jego kresu, znaleźć można bowiem u kilku wspomnianych wyżej autorów¹. Rozpoznali w nim oni istotną postać przełomu wieków, „myśliciela epoki przejściowej” – jak pisze o nim Carl Albrecht Bernoulli (Nabrings 2013, 40) – zamykającego epokę niemieckiego mieszczaństwa i jego szlachetną tradycję *république de lettres* (Walter Benjamin zakończył swoją – zredagowaną pod pseudonimem Detlef Holz i wydaną w przededniu II wojny światowej – antologię listów prezentujących opozycyjny wobec faszyzmu świat niemieckiego mieszczaństwa listem Overbecka do Nietzschego, zob. Holz 1936, 112–116). Szczególną rangę przypisał mu Karl Löwith, poświęcając Overbeckowi ostatni rozdział swojej monumentalnej pracy *Od Hegla do Nietzschego*. Według Löwitha Franz Overbeck „postawił [...] jasno problem tego, czym jest dla nas chrześcijaństwo, i na reprezentatywnym przykładzie wieku dziewiętnastego zarysował rozdzźwięk pomiędzy nim a nami” (Löwith 2001, 467). Aby lepiej zrozumieć, „czym jest dla nas chrześcijaństwo”, do Overbecka sięgał zarówno Karl Barth, anektując go w 1920 roku na rzecz swojej teologii kryzysu (Barth 1920), jak i powojenny obrońca nowoczesności Hans Blumenberg (Blumenberg 1988, 55–56, 132–133) czy głoszący „nędzę teologii” pozytywista Hans Albert (Albert 1979, 42). Skłonny do przesady Jacob Taubes już w połowie lat sześćdziesiątych, wyprzedzając pojawienie się kilku monografii i wydanie dziewięciotomowego zbioru dzieł wybranych, twierdził że „w ostatnich dekadach nad nazwiskiem Overbecka unosi się nimb sławy” (Taubes 2013, 203).

1 Przegląd recepcji Overbecka w dwudziestowiecznej myśli niemieckiej znaleźć można w Henry 2007.

Finis Christianismi, wydany w serii *Klasyki filozofii niemieckiej* magazynu *Kronos*, stanowi reprezentatywny wybór pism Overbecka. Znajdziemy w nim jego wykłady historyczne, dwie wpływowe prace skierowane przeciw ówczesnej teologii protestanckiej: *O chrześcijaństwie naszej dzisiejszej teologii* (1873) i *Leksykon kościelny* (znacząco zredagowany i wydany pośmiertnie w 1919 roku jako *Chrześcijaństwo i kultura*), oraz intrygujące uwagi autobiograficzne i notatki poświęcone przyjaźni z Fryderykiem Nietzsche (znane już w Polsce z dziełka *Nietzsche. Zapiski przyjaciela* – Overbeck 2008). Książka zaopatrzona jest w kompetentne wprowadzenie tłumacza, a jako uzupełnienie służyć może poświęcony Overbeckowi numer kwartalnika *Kronos* (nr 4/2013) zawierający cenne eseje współczesnych znawców jego prac, m.in. Martina Henry'ego i Andreasa Ursa Sommera (Henry 2013; Sommer 2013). Książkę oraz wymienione artykuły przełożył znakomicie Tadeusz Zatorski, którego liczne tłumaczenia i komentarze (m.in. do prac Goethego, Lichtenberga i Heinego) tworzą już dziś swoistą antologię niemieckiej tradycji oświeceniowej – krytycznej i ironicznej wobec wszelkiego religijnego i filozoficznego dogmatyzmu.

Franz Overbeck wydaje się być dziedzicem dwojakiej oświeceniowej tradycji – zarówno osiemnastowiecznego oświecenia Kantowskiego, które stawia sobie za cel rozumowy „Sąd Ostateczny nad rzeczami”, jak i sceptycznego, dziewiętnastowiecznego oświecenia historycznego. Nerwem Overbeckowskich rozważań – które spróbuję tu skrótowo zrekonstruować – jest nie tylko pytanie o *Glauben und Wissen*, o wiarę i wiedzę, lecz przede wszystkim pytanie o *Glauben und Geschichte*, o relację wiary i historii. Chrześcijańska wiara staje według niego przed dwojakimi historycznymi zagadnieniami, które wciągają ją w wir teoretycznych trudności i stawiają pod znakiem zapytania jej dalszą przyszłość. Po pierwsze, chrześcijaństwo konfrontowane jest z wynikami szczegółowych badań nauk historycznych podważającymi dotychczasowe wyobrażenia o jego źródłach, po drugie zaś, wobec rozwijającej się samoświadomości historycznej staje ono przed zadaniem dokonania nowej interpretacji swoich własnych dziejów, musząc znaleźć wyjaśnienie i usprawiedliwienie dla gruntownych przemian doktrynalnych i instytucjonalnych, którym podlegało. Pytania te, choć stanowią wyzwanie przede wszystkim dla ludzi wierzących i wspólnot religijnych, są istotne także z perspektywy pozakonfesyjnej. Nie jest bez znaczenia, co stanie się z chrześcijańskim dziedzictwem – jaką formę życia zainspiruje i jakim politycznym celom będzie służyć.

W pierwszym kontekście – pytań o źródła chrześcijaństwa – Overbeck wpisuje się w tradycję historyczno-krytycznych badań w teologii protestanckiej i w bibliстыce dziewiętnastego wieku, które postawiły pytania o historyczną wiarygodność i spójność poszczególnych pism Nowego Testamentu oraz ukazały rozwój doktryny religijnej w pierwszych wiekach istnienia Kościoła. Jest więc częścią badawczej rewolucji, której wyniki, jak pisze jeden ze współczesnych polskich autorów, „stały się traumatycznym przeżyciem

teologii i wielu teologów, po części jawnym, w większej części jednak ukrytym, ale z tego powodu wcale nie mniej silnie oddziałującym na rozwój myśli teologicznej” (Węclawski 2008, 33). Szczególna ranga studiów Overbecka opiera się na pionierskim charakterze jego uwag o eschatologicznym wymiarze nauczania Jezusa². Ich istotą – opartą przede wszystkim na analizie tekstów Nowego Testamentu o bliskim „Królestwie Bożym” – jest teza o apokaliptycznym horyzoncie nauczania samego Jezusa oraz jego pierwszych wyznawców. Uczniowie mieli być przekonani o rychłym, mającym miejsce za ich życia, drugim przyjściu Chrystusa. Podstawową orientacją wczesnego chrześcijaństwa byłoby w takim razie nie tyle głoszenie aktywnej miłości bliźniego, co przede wszystkim odwrót od świata dojrzałego do upadku i pasywne oczekiwanie na jego koniec. Sam przekaz moralny Ewangelii mógłby być wytłumaczony nawet jako specyficzna etyka stanu wyjątkowego; radykalna, bo obliczona tylko na krótki czas.

Tak określona wizja prachrześcijaństwa staje się miarą dla oceny jego dalszych losów – ich wnikliwa interpretacja to drugi wielki obszar badań Overbecka. Najistotniejszym znamieniem dziejów chrześcijaństwa jest według niemieckiego historyka i teologa powolne wypieranie ze świadomości zawiedzionej nadziei na Paruzję. Nienadchodzący kres wymógł powstanie pełniące funkcje apologetyczne teologii oraz instytucjonalnego Kościoła, budującego trwale miejsce dla religii w odrzuconym przez nią świecie. Chrześcijaństwo musiało odnaleźć swoje miejsce w dziejach, których koniec samo wieszczyło. Ceną za przetrwanie stało się powolne zapoznawanie podstawowego budulca chrześcijańskiej tożsamości, czyli jego antyświatowej i pozaświatowej orientacji. Próba zachowania pierwotnego ukierunkowania pozostały według Overbecka jedynie męczeństwo oraz ascetyczny monastycyzm. Choć odnosi się on z ciekawością do radykalizmu tej tradycji, to w swoim wykładzie *O początkach monastycyzmu* (1867) celnie zarysowuje paradoksy monastycznej formy życia z późnego antyku, charakterystyczne także dla niektórych nowożytnych chrześcijańskich formacji. Odwrót od świata stoi w niej w sprzeczności z wezwaniem do aktywnej miłości wobec innych ludzi; kodyfikacja szczegółowej reguły klasztornej niweczy postulat przewyżczenia Prawa; początkowe wyzwolenie pustelników od politycznej władzy kończy się na stworzeniu zhierarchizowanej struktury, w której naczelną cnotą jest posłuszeństwo, a rzeczywistą konsekwencją – dążenie do „fanatycznego unicestwienia człowieka” (Overbeck 2014, 28). Losy ruchu monastycznego, których zwieńczeniem według Overbecka jest powstanie zhierarchizowanego, podporządkowanego

2 Wśród poprzedników Overbecka wymienia się Hermanna Samuela Reimarus, który pod koniec osiemnastego wieku jako prekursor poszukiwań „Jezusa historycznego” wskazał na kluczową rolę eschatologii w naukach Jezusa. Na przełomie dziewiętnastego i dwudziestego wieku temat ten spopularyzowali – prawdopodobnie niezależnie od Overbecka – Johannes Weiss w pracy *Die Predigt Jesu vom Reiche Gottes* (1892) oraz Albert Schweitzer w *Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung* (1906), za: Zatorski 2014a, XXVI–XXVII.

papiestwu i politycznie zaangażowanego zakonu jezuitów, są symbolem procesów uświatowienia czy sekularyzacji, które naznaczają całą historię chrześcijaństwa.

Overbeck w sposób nowatorski podkreśla bowiem, że wyparcie oczekiwania na Paruzję z centrum chrześcijańskiej nowiny oznacza rozpoczęcie procesu jej sekularyzacji. Sekularyzacja nie jest zatem wyłącznie zjawiskiem nowożytnym czy nowoczesnym, lecz znajduje się u początków chrześcijaństwa i dokonuje się wraz z rozwojem instytucjonalnym Kościoła i jego splotem z rzymską państwowością. Mimo nawracających nastrojów chiliastycznych oraz tworzonych wciąż wizji Sądu i zaświatów, chrześcijaństwo staje się współtwórcą i gwarantem cywilizacji oraz porządku władzy, „eliksirem życia” (Overbeck 2014, 230) podtrzymującym świat, o którego kres modlili się jego pierwsi wyznawcy.

Zalążkiem procesu zeświecczenia chrześcijaństwa było również powstanie legitymizującej wylaniający się porządek polityczny teologii, która wyrosła przede wszystkim ze spotkania z myślą grecką. To właśnie teologia, a nie samo chrześcijaństwo, jest przedmiotem szczególnie zjadliwych ataków Overbecka. Formulowana przez niego krytyka wydaje się mieć dwojaki charakter. Po pierwsze, Overbeck w nieco pietystycznym duchu przeciwstawia zdecydowanie religijną **wiarę** i teologię jako **naukę** o Objawieniu. Teologia jest zjawiskiem hybrydycznym. Przynależąc do fakultetów uniwersyteckich, nie spełnia kryteriów naukowości, choć stroi się w szaty nauki. Dla chrześcijaństwa jest ciałem obcym, a przez skłonność do dyskursywizacji każdego zjawiska, które religia pozostawia w cieniu i otacza woalem tajemnicy, nieświadomie prowadzi do osłabienia jego „mitotwórczych sił”. Po drugie i ważniejsze, Overbeck dostrzega w teologii narzędzie do niemal nieskończonej asymilacji i dostosowywania religii do zmieniającego się kontekstu historyczno-społeczno-politycznego. W konsekwencji chrześcijaństwo stało się „religią, z którą można zrobić, co się chce” (Overbeck 2014, 102).

Dowodem na to według Overbecka jest współczesna mu dziwiętnastowieczna formacja niemieckiego *Kulturprotestantismus*, w której protestanckie chrześcijaństwo stało się sojusznikiem swoich czasów, mieszczańskiej formacji polityczno-kulturowej i odrodzonego niemieckiego państwa. W rozprawie *O chrześcijańskości naszej dzisiejszej teologii* (1873) dokonuje on rozrachunku ze współczesnymi sobie nurtami teologii protestanckiej. Konserwatywnym apologetom religii zarzuca karkołomne i nieprzekonujące wyszukiwanie historycznych i przyrodniczych dowodów na rzecz chrześcijaństwa (sama potrzeba znajdowania uzasadnienia treści religijnych w nauce świadczy o słabości doktryny), liberalom zaś zerwanie więzi z dotychczasową tradycją chrześcijańską. O ile teologia apologetyczna miałaby zachować pozbawioną jądra łuskę rzeczy, to teologia liberalna – w dowolności podchodzenia do dogmatów chrześcijańskich – wraz z jądrem miałaby odrzucić także łuski chrześcijaństwa. Obie te formacje miałyby przede wszystkim dokonywać afirmacji mieszczańskiej współczesności: „trudno się tu oprzeć wrażeniu, że jak dawniej pokusy do czynienia ze

słowami Pisma, co tylko im się podobało, dostarczała teologom wiara w Chrystusa, tak teraz dostarcza im jej wiara w kulturę” (Overbeck 2014, 90). Zapoznali oni w ten sposób, że „chrześcijaństwo nigdy naprawdę nie wspierało się wśród ludzi na fundamencie innym niż nieszczęsna dola świata” (Overbeck 2014, 95). Teologom zarzuca także fatalny styl i skłonność do sentymentalnej afektacji. Chcieliby naśladować Pascala – największego dla Overbecka nowożytnego apologetę chrześcijaństwa, który potrafił uchwycić ascetyczny rdzeń chrześcijaństwa – ale potrafią od niego jedynie „odpisać”. Z czasem symbolem kulturowego protestantyzmu stanie się dla Overbecka „dworski teolog” Adolf Harnack, któremu nie szczędzi cierpkich uwag w swoich notatkach³.

Uzupełniając kontekst historyczny jego wystąpienia, warto wskazać również na wyłożony w tej samej rozprawie sceptycyzm Overbecka wobec postchrześcijańskich alternatyw formułowanych w ówczesnych Niemczech, często zabarwionych rozwijającym się nacjonalizmem. Polemizuje on bezpośrednio ze sławnymi wówczas krytykami chrześcijaństwa: Davidem Friedrichem Straussem i Paulem de Lagardem. Wskazuje na elementy nacjonalistyczne w propozycjach Straussa, widząc w chrześcijańskim uniwersalizmie przynajmniej bezsilny znak sprzeciwu wobec narastających animozji między narodami: „Jest przecież rzeczą o nieocenionej wartości, że ponad całym tym nieszczęsnym rozpadem unosi się przynajmniej imię chrześcijaństwa jako rodzaj kategorycznego imperatywu, głoszącego potępienie tego rozpadu” (Overbeck 2014, 127). W podobny sposób odnosi się Overbeck do propozycji Lagarde’a i jego wizji religii niemieckiej, w której powstanie miałyby zaangażować się zreformowane wydziały teologiczne niemieckich uczelni. Overbeck odrzuca ją, po pierwsze będąc przekonanym o pierwotnych siłach mitycznych religii, które nie mogą być wytworzone *ad hoc* przez żadną teologię, a po drugie z powodu zdecydowanej niechęci i poczucia zagrożenia płynącego z wszelkiego politycznego użytku z religii⁴.

3 Słynna praca Harnacka *Istota chrześcijaństwa* winna według Overbecka nosić tytuł *Nieistotność chrześcijaństwa*, a autor ten to dlań „elocwentny mętlnik i konfuzjonista” (Overbeck 2014, 310, 396). Krytycznie odnosił się on również do jego politycznego zaangażowania. Już po śmierci Overbecka Harnack zdecydowanie wspierał politykę cesarza Wilhelma. W sierpniu 1914 roku pomógł Kaiserowi w przygotowaniu mowy wojennej, a w następnych miesiącach – wraz z innymi teologami – podpisał list dziewięćdziesięciu trzech uczonych z poparciem dla działań militarnych Niemiec. Dokument zawierał znamienne zdanie: „uwierzcie nam, uwierzcie, że powinniśmy toczyć tę walkę do samego końca, jako naród kulturalny, dla którego dziedzictwo Goethego, Beethovena czy Kanta jest równie święte, jak rodzinna ziemia i płomień domowego ogniska”. Zaangażowanie wojenne teologów liberalnych wywołało na początku lat dwudziestych sprzeciw m.in. Karla Bartha. O politycznej roli teologii liberalnej w Rzeszy Wilhelmińskiej i Manifeście 93 zob. Lilla 2009, 238–258.

4 W liście do swojego przyjaciela z lat młodości, Heinricha von Treitschkego, który będąc niemal urzędowym historykiem Rzeszy Bismarckowskiej, rozniecał motywowane religijnie antysemityczne spory, Overbeck pisał: „jeśli jest jakaś jedna kwestia, w której chrześcijaństwo skrzywdziło ludzkość, to są nią wszelkie możliwe związki, w jakie chrześcijaństwo wchodzi z polityką. Nie wątpię też, że jest to ta kwestia, za sprawą której pewnego dnia chrześcijaństwo zostanie wzgardzone, jeśli ta dziedzina nie będzie utrzymywana w czystości”, za: Taubes 2013, 211.

Posługując się miarą radykalizmu pierwotnego chrześcijaństwa, Overbeck oponuje bowiem przeciw łączeniu współczesnego chrześcijaństwa z mieszczańskim samozadowoleniem i z nacjonalizmem. Warto zwrócić uwagę na aktualność wątpliwości podniesionych przez Overbecka. Pozostają one wyzwaniem zarówno dla konserwatywnych, jak i dla progresywnych sympatyków politycznego zaangażowania religii. Jego krytyka dotyczyć może wszak zarówno liberalnych teologów (w Polsce sympatyków tzw. Kościoła otwartego) zorientowanych na łagodne pogodzenie się z nowoczesnością, jak i zwolenników nurtów tradycjonalistycznych, uznających chrześcijaństwo za fundament „narodowego bytu” czy „cywilizacji opartej na wartościach (judeo)chrześcijańskich”. Oponuje on także przeciw zrównywaniu chrześcijaństwa z „kwestią społeczną”, co dziś odpowiadałoby teologii wyzwolenia⁵. Wszystkim tym nurtom w świetle analiz Overbecka zarzucić można zerwanie ze źródłową antyświatową orientacją chrześcijaństwa i arbitralne sięganie po pojedyncze nitki jego religijnej tradycji czy nawet włączanie pod szyld chrześcijaństwa treści radykalnie mu obcych. Jedno z pytań stawianych przez Overbecka może brzmieć następująco: co jest rdzeniem chrześcijańskiej tożsamości? Jakie są granice jego akomodacji do historyczno-politycznego kontekstu? Czy ceną za dziejowe przetrwanie chrześcijaństwa nie stało się już porzucenie własnej tożsamości? Kluczowym przykładem pozostaje dla Overbecka porzucenie przez chrześcijaństwo pierwotnej wizji czasu – kto z chrześcijan rzeczywiście oczekuje na Paruzję?

Z jakiej pozycji i po co Overbeck, wykładowca historii Kościoła i agnostyk, formułuje swoje pytania o chrześcijańskie dziedzictwo? W *O chrześcijańskości...* Overbeck przeciwstawia teologii liberalnej i apologetycznej własną propozycję „teologii krytycznej”, której cele powinny być nie tyle religijne, co raczej służyć zrozumieniu chrześcijaństwa i jego tożsamości. Teologia krytyczna miałaby „bronić chrześcijaństwa przed wszystkimi innymi teologiami” (Overbeck 2014, 120), a solidaryzując się z „chrześcijańską wizją życia”, nie pozwolić na całkowite usunięcie jej z historycznej pamięci. W godnej zachowania chrześcijańskiej *Lebensbetrachtung* Overbeck odkrywa wycucie kruchości człowieka, gotowość do wyrzeczeń, świadomość ograniczeń ludzkiej kondycji, stojące w opozycji do tromtadrackich postaw swojej epoki. Wbrew rozpowszechnionym w oświeceniowej tradycji opiniom, Overbeck dostrzega humanitaryzm chrześcijańskiej refleksji o śmierci, doceniając obecny w niej niekiedy klimat rezygnacji i pokoju oraz pogodzenia z ludzką skończonością.

5 Zarzut Overbecka wobec dwudziestowiecznej emancypacyjnej myśli teologicznej Jacoba Taubesa i Ernsta Blocha oraz latynoamerykańskiej teologii wyzwolenia mógłby być następujący: istotą eschatologicznego przesłania chrześcijaństwa jest raczej bierne oczekiwanie na Koniec i modlitewne przyzywanie Pana niż „branie spraw w swoje ręce” i tworzenie zaczynu dla Królestwa Bożego na ziemi. Dla Overbecka wczesne chrześcijaństwo nie może służyć za zarys jakiegokolwiek politycznego programu; eschatologiczny klimat u źródeł tej religii powinien skutkować raczej politycznym paraliżem, a nie aktywnym działaniem na rzecz przemiany świata. Religijna legitymizacja projektów rewolucji społecznej byłaby pewnie dla Overbecka jeszcze jednym przykładem, że z „chrześcijaństwem można zrobić, co się chce”.

Jednakże w późniejszych notatkach z *Leksykonu kościelnego* Overbeck radykalizuje stanowisko. Otwarcie wieszczy *finis Christianismi*, zastanawiając się, czy chrześcijaństwo nie przetrwało już wyłącznie jako „dawna ruina”, dla teologów rezerwując zaś rolę jego „grabarzy” (Overbeck 2014, 229, 311). Zachowuje on jednakże swoją pierwotną intencję historyczną, dopominając się o pamięć o eschatologicznej tożsamości chrześcijaństwa, oraz intencję egzystencjalną, realizującą się we współodczuwaniu z chrześcijańską ascetyczną wizją życia. Jednocześnie należy zauważyć, że inaczej niż np. Kierkegaard nie krytykuje współczesnego sobie chrześcijaństwa, aby na powrót sięgnąć do podstawowego momentu chrześcijaństwa pierwotnego i dzisiejsze chrześcijaństwo zreformować. Taki „skok” ponad dziejami wydaje się Overbeckowi zupełnie niemożliwy do dokonania, niewspółmierny do sposobu życia i świadomości historycznej człowieka nowoczesnego. Postawa Overbecka to obrona resztek godności chrześcijaństwa, zjawiska kształtującego Europę przez kilkanaście wieków, wobec powszechnych interpretacyjnych nadużyć. Wynika ona – jak się zdaje – z troski o integralność tego historycznego fenomenu oraz z rozpoznania własnej sytuacji dziejowej – życia w świecie odchodzącym od religii, a zwracającym się w stronę rosnącego w siłę nacjonalizmu. Overbeck nie podejmuje jeszcze jednej próby wskazania aktualnych treści w chrześcijaństwie, lecz chciałby niejako zamknąć i podsumować jego historię. Jedynie w ten sposób – pozwalając powoli odejść tej religijnej tradycji – można by ją obronić przed wykorzystywaniem do legitymizacji politycznego szowinizmu.

Warto zauważyć na marginesie, że wyczucie własnej pozycji historycznej u Overbecka nie pozwala też na próbę prostego pominięcia dziejów chrześcijaństwa i bezpośrednie sięgnięcie do greckich czy archaicznych źródeł. Wydaje się go to odróżniać od innych myślicieli kręgu bazylejskiego (obok Overbecka to Nietzsche, Bachofen czy Burckhardt, zob. Gossman 2000); podobnie zresztą jak pogodniejsze nastawienie do świata nowoczesnego. Choć jego prace nie są wolne od krytyki kultury, skierowanej przeciw kultowi państwa, atomizacji społeczeństwa oraz dyktatowi opinii publicznej, to jednocześnie daleko mu do pesymistycznej „późnej mądrości starego Europejczyka” – jak o Jacobie Burckhardcie pisał Karl Löwith⁶. Sympatyzuje on nie z „sędziwą mądrością [dziewiętnastego – MJ] stulecia”, lecz z jego młodzieńczym „pędem do wolności” (Overbeck 2014, 409). Dostrzega w swojej epoce moment zawieszenia, w którym kończy się stary świat uformowany przez chrześcijaństwo, a świat nowy jeszcze się nie wyłonił.

Intrygująca w stosunku Overbecka do chrześcijaństwa jest jego dwuznaczność: z jednej strony żegna się on chrześcijaństwem, z drugiej upomina się o pojedyncze wątki jego

⁶ Löwith opisuje wizję chrześcijaństwa u Burckhardta jako zbliżoną w niektórych punktach do diagnozy Overbecka. Burckhardt również surowo krytykuje i niemal ośmiesza współczesny protestantyzm, odwołując się do zapoznanych wymiarów chrześcijańskiej tradycji: ascezy i samouniżenia oraz profetycznego sprzeciwu wobec *saeculum*. Diagnoza ta wydaje się jednak podporządkowana ostrej krytyce nowoczesnego świata, a nie opisowi pogłębiającego się kryzysu religii; zob. Löwith 2002, 29–33.

dziedzictwa. Podważenie historycznych fundamentów chrześcijaństwa stworzyło klimat, w którym Overbeck zdiagnozował dekadencję chrześcijańskiej tradycji, polegającą nie tylko na odpływie wiernych z kościołów, co na trudniej uchwytnej utracie sił witalnych i czysto receptywnym czy wręcz pasożytniczym stosunku teologii do nowych prądów filozoficznych i naukowych. Znaczącym chrześcijaństwa – do których zalicza się sam Overbeck – przewidział on rolę prowadzenia „misji dobrych usług”, wyjaśnienia pogłębiających się zjawisk sekularyzacyjnych i spokojnego złożenia chrześcijaństwa do grobu. Jednocześnie próbuje on zachować niektóre momenty tego religijnego doświadczenia – uniwersalizm i wyczucie ludzkiej kruchości.

Dwudziestowieczna recepcja sugeruje, że Overbeck może być inspirujący dla dwóch odrębnych postaw. Wzorem pierwszej będzie teologia kryzysu Karla Bartha, dla którego Overbeck był jednym z kilku autorów „budzących z dogmatycznej drzemki”. Barth spróbuje przekornie dokonać tego, co dla Overbecka było niemożliwe – na powrót uczynić chrześcijaństwo religią stanu wyjątkowego, poszukując łączności z antyświatowym i kontrkulturowym nastawieniem Nowego Testamentu. Jego naśladowcy odkryć mogą w Overbecku pobudkę dla głębokiej, eschatologicznej przemiany swojej wyobraźni religijnej. Wzorem drugiej postawy mogą być zaś oświeceniowo-sceptyczne propozycje Hansa Blumenberga, któremu niemiecki teolog posłużył do rozbudowanej obrony prawomocności nowożytnego świata rozstającego się z chrześcijaństwem. Overbeckowskie odkrycia skupiające się w formule *finis Christianismi*, choć nieprzekonujące jako socjologiczna diagnoza, służą mogą krytyce teologicznych roszczeń do symbolicznego panowania nad świeckim porządkiem moralnym i politycznym. Overbeck mistrzowsko i niejako od środka ukazuje jednak rozmaite trudności, paradoksy i zerwania w łonie chrześcijańskiej teologii. Dla obu tych – zupełnie odmiennych od siebie – formacji znaleźć można w polskiej literaturze filozoficzno-religijnej interesujących przedstawicieli (Tichy 2011/2012; Zatorski 2014b)⁷.

Siła oddziaływania Overbecka polega być może na umiejętności stworzenia – przekraczającej tradycyjną historiografię – oryginalnej i uzasadnionej opowieści o dziejach chrześcijaństwa: od jego początków po oczekiwany kres. Historia ta – podkreślając nieciągłość i odejście od pierwotnych inspiracji oraz ciągle podejmowane próby asymilacji do

⁷ Ponownego przyswojenia myśli apokaliptyczno-mesjańskiej na gruncie polskiej prawicy katolickiej próbuje dokonać m.in. Rafał Tichy. W swojej szerokiej historyczno-filozoficznej perspektywie odwołuje się do analiz uważnych czytelników i komentatorów Overbecka – Karla Löwitha i Jacoba Taubesa, a także do wielkich filozofów i teologów rosyjskich (Mikołaj Bierdiajew, Paul Evdokimov) oraz poszukiwań włoskiego myśliciela Sergia Quinzio. Krytykując chrześcijaństwo konserwujące zastany porządek (katechoniczne), dopomina się o przywrócenie w centrum wiary horyzontu eschatologicznego (Tichy 2011/2012, 4–71). Linie sceptyczno-oświeceniową reprezentować może Tadeusz Zatorski, który w swoich esejach zadaje teologii – inspirowane często tłumaczonymi przez siebie pracami Overbecka i Blumenberga – kłopotliwe pytania (Zatorski 2014b, 34–43).

zmieniającego się kontekstu kulturowego – umożliwia sąd nad losem tej tradycji religijnej. Dla samego Overbecka werdyktem stało się pożegnanie z chrześcijaństwem.

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TITLE: Religion which can be used to everything. A review of Franz Overbeck's *Finis Christianismi*

ABSTRACT: The aim of an article is to analyse a problem of belief and history in Franz Overbeck's selected writings. Overbeck (1837–1905), a German theologian-agnostic and historian of Christianity, known also in regard to his close friendship with Friedrich Nietzsche, describes in his works the eschatological and countercultural dimension of an origin Christianity. During the history of the Church eschatology was slowly replaced by a conservative project with its aim to maintain and to stabilize the Western culture and civilization. For this reason Overbeck – defending Christianity as an integral cultural phenomenon and referring to its universalist heritage – criticizes representatives of the “cultural Protestantism” (A. Harnack) and post-Christian and nationalistic alternatives (P. Lagarde, D.F. Strauss). In my paper I argue that from the perspective of eschatological Christianity Overbeck's remarks against traditionalistic, liberal and leftist political theology remain valid. I present also two separate ways of Overbeck's reception in 20th-century German thought – a revival of Protestantism as a “state of exception” religion (K. Barth) and a critique of theology and a skeptical-ironic farewell to Christianity (H. Blumenberg).

KEYWORDS: Franz Overbeck, Hans Blumenberg, Karl Barth, *finis Christianismi*, political theology, eschatology, cultural Protestantism