Destitution and Creation:
Agamben's Messianic Gesture

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Abstract

This article offers an account of the basic movement of Giorgio Agamben's ethical philosophy. The ethical gesture is stretched between two forms of messianism, a "paralysed messianism" associated with life under permanent state of exception, and the "perfected" nihilism of messianic fulfilment, which Agamben associates with the movement of revocation or "destitution". I argue that Agamben's concept of destitution cannot be accurately treated as a synonym for negation or destruction, as it envelops irreducibly creative elements. At the same time, the creation at issue here is of a peculiar sort, since it is modelled not on the act of production but rather on the restoration of a creative potential within sensibility. Special emphasis is here placed on Agamben's retrieval of the work of a relatively obscure French linguist, Gustav Guillaume, whose theory of "operative time" allows his messianism to subvert the extrinsic opposition between the suspended time of revolt's divine violence and the historical time of everyday life.

Keywords: Giorgio Agamben, Gustave Guillaume, Messianism, Destituent Power, Ethics

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The aim of this article is to describe, in a provisional and restricted manner, the movement of messianic destitution as an ethical and gnoseological strategy for neutralizing the mutilating "ban relation" that permeates lived experience under the current reigning order, without resubstantialising political subjectivity. Agamben's theory of destitution is neither nihilistic, nor can it be accurately summarized as a synonym for negation or destruction; in fact, the irreducibly creative movement it envelops is motivated precisely by an effort to overcome the paralyzing nihilism of our time. At the most general level, the wager of destituent ethics lies not in a search for new social or hegemonic grounds with which to reinvigorate or replace the withering political subjectivities of the 20th century, but rather in the effort to leverage and "fulfil" the an-archic, desubjectifying, and anonymous dimensions of contemporary life by converting them into new premises for experiencing and collectively inhabiting shared sensible worlds oriented around non-economic ideas of happiness. In this, Agamben's work

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contributes a new philosophical starting point for thinking communism in the 21st century. Obstacles to this process — the myriad mechanisms of capture, separation, and articulation Agamben groups together under the logic of the ban — issue not only from within the political and economic theology that underpin today's dominant order, but also permeate much of the 20th century revolutionary and avant-garde traditions that sought to jettison it.[1] As a result, while his political commitments are unwaveringly aligned with the revolutionary currents of his time, Agamben's effort, beginning roughly in 1999, to develop a positive concept of destituent power is motivated by an urgent search for new schemas of transformative creation, a new "image of thought" as Deleuze might have said, which is always also a schema for seizing upon lived experience and its unthought historical potentialities. Such an image will be modelled neither on the act of production, wherein an extant capacity for action is realized in an end or product, nor on managerial democratic paradigms that reinforce the metaphysical fiction of a *sui generis* subject of consent, but on the earthbound, vital, and sensible connection between perception, gesture, and time.

My argument unfolds in two main parts, moving from diagnosis to intervention. Part I outlines Agamben's reading of contemporary governance as a form of "imperfect nihilism", a term that encompasses both a post-political paradigm of rule as well as the characteristic form of desubjectivation that it engenders. Part II then shows how this nihilism assumes an inverse yet symmetrical expression in a "prophetic apparatus" into which the 20th century revolutionary project often sank. The critique of prophecy serves as the entry point into Agamben's theory of destitution, which, in my view, cannot easily be grasped apart from it. I argue that this theory gains its philosophical traction from the genetic conception of subjectivity in which it is anchored, allowing Agamben to re-situate the ethical tension within the hiatus between the fragmentary time of perception and the discursive representation of time. Special emphasis is placed on his retrieval of the work of a relatively obscure French linguist, Gustav Guillaume, whose importance for Agamben has, to my knowledge, remained largely overlooked. In spite of the former's undeniable influence upon every corner of his thought, in the final analysis it is neither Heidegger nor Benjamin who most directly enables Agamben to circumvent the limits encountered by the 20th century theory of the event. Rather, it is his mobilization of Guillaume's theory of "operative time", a time which subverts the extrinsic opposition between

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[1] I address the presence of the ban structure within the logic of revolt in Aarons (2019: 1018–46).

the suspended time of revolt's divine violence and the historical time of everyday life.

I. Paralysed Messianism

Agamben's concept of messianism has two valences. Life under permanent state of exception is what he will refer to as a 'petrified or paralysed' messianism, the 'imperfect nihilism' of a ruling order that *cannot finish finishing,* which has nullified the law but 'maintains the Nothing in a perpetual and infinitely deferred state of validity' (1999: 171).[2] The "Nothing" at issue here is no obscure metaphysical element, but a mode of experiencing the world in which events 'happen without happening', a paradoxical relation of non-relation that causes time to slip from our grasp, and in which 'every gesture becomes unrealizable' (1999: 169, 174). Imperfect nihilism is the effect of a mode of governance that aims to ensure that (the) *Nothing* happens, *rather than the world*. Against such epochal paralysis, Agamben will oppose not the positivity of a non-alienated or integral form of subjectivity preserved from the destruction of experience, nor a retrieval of originary experience from the ruins of metaphysics, but the 'perfected' nihilism of messianic fulfilment, which achieves redemption by an 'overturning of the Nothing' of our time.[3] However, since the latter is nothing other than the reduction of the former, i.e. a way of inhabiting and repopulating the fringe of desubjectivation it installs in our relation to the world, the interpretive challenge consists in understanding how destitution can 'create' a new relation simply by exhibiting and neutralizing an absence. What does it mean to fulfil the Nothing of our age, to return Nothing to nothing, by exhibiting its emptiness? In what sense can 'exhibition' alone constitute a mode of creation? What is the relation between messianic time and the Nothing that our age guards at its centre? In order to answer these questions, we must better grasp the petrified nihilism that constitutes our present.

The state of exception and the "days of the messiah"

In its religious connotation, the 'days of the Messiah' refer to the period after the resurrection, yet prior to the abolition of history. Although earthly law remains "in force", the messianic event has left it in a state of suspension: 'the time under

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[2] All authorless in-text citations refer to Agamben's works.

[3] On the impossibility of retrieving an "originary beginning", see Agamben, 2015b: 266.

the Law is over, and yet the Messiah has not yet come' (1999: 168). If Agamben sees in this an analogy to contemporary life under the permanent state of exception, this is because, from the moment that the juridical order 'grounds' itself directly in the emergency, not only does the law divest itself of any transcendent authority, but the very framework of prescription and proscription lose their meaning *tout court.* Like the 'original form of the Torah' in the Kabbalistic tradition, which is composed of a 'medley of letters without any order; that is, *without meaning'* — yet which, for the same reason, can be said to 'contain all possible meaning' — the self-derogation of law in the exception reduces the pronouncements of law to a senseless jumble of words, a 'commandment that commands nothing' (1999: 165–167; 1998: 52).

If life under the state of exception may be characterized as a "petrified" or "paralyzed" messianism, an "imperfect" nihilism, then this is first of all because, since the end of the First World War, Western societies have become constitutively incapable of even imagining, never mind actually working toward, a future that could look any different from the present. After its 'pure and simple relinquishment of all historical tasks', politics has been reduced to 'simple functions of internal or international policing in the name of the triumph of the economy', i.e., to the disordered and tautological administration of a social and economic order that has emptied itself of any positive reason for being, yet which continues an-archically to persist, 'without why' (2002a: 76).

Contrary to appearances, the depoliticization of law does not signal its disappearance but merely a shift in its way of exerting power over a subject. That it no longer speaks to us of prohibitions does not weaken, but in fact intensifies its hold over us. As Jessica Whyte observes, as soon as 'no act can be understood to be in accordance with the law', it follows that 'no space can safely be assumed to be outside its grasp' (Whyte 2013: 103). Once it has become *a priori* impossible to distinguish transgression from observance, the legality of an act becomes fundamentally undecidable. From the militarization of public space to the complete surveillance of the smallest minutia of private life, today everything conspires to remind us that the most innocent gesture can be criminalized at any moment, that inside the most harmless of citizens there lurks an anonymous potentiality for terroristic violence.[4] As Agamben distils it, 'the unspoken principle which rules our society can be stated like this: every citizen is a potential

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[4] Agamben, 2009a: 22–23. See also 1998: 57: '[A] person who goes for a walk during the curfew is not transgressing the law any more than the soldier who kills him is executing it'.

terrorist'.[5] In actual fact, this lawless potentiality projected by securitarian logic into the life of every citizen must be seen as the symmetrical image of that groundless violence to which the reigning order subjects us.[6] To live under a permanent state of exception is to be perpetually "abandoned" to an unlocalizable authority whose jurisdiction is unlimited, yet whose demands are inscrutable (2005a: 38–39). Sovereign violence hovers like an indeterminate element over its subjects, a powerfully present absence that acts upon them no longer by means of delegation and interdiction but by *exposure:* to be governed today is to experience a graduated spectrum of vulnerability to a non-localizable potentiality for violence suspended over us, punishment becoming a mere afterthought, and perhaps even a relief, the confession of guilt having become the only way to bring our endless trial to its conclusion.

This petrified nihilism of our age generates a stalled or aporetic experience of time: a radical *futurelessness* in which all that is left to do is *wait*. However, unlike during the First World War, which, as Furio Jesi writes, for four years 'suspended the usual rhythm of life' by transforming 'every hour [into] an hour of waiting — waiting for the next move (one's own or the enemy's)', all of which 'were instants in a greater wait, the wait for victory', the current paradigm of global civil war waged through sovereign policing has no horizon of triumph or victory other than its own reproduction (Jesi, 2014: 46).[7] In the absence of any such *telos* or justification, the holding pattern of historical time gathers itself only through the *deferral* of its own imminent dissolution. If our society can be said to resemble a world that, having deposed the law, now expends every effort to delay the arrival of the Kingdom, this is because, after abjuring all relation to transcendence, it can no longer imagine its end as the end of *a* world, but only as the end of "*the* World" per se. The temporality of such decadence assumes the form of an endless end, or, in the words of Günter Anders, an 'apocalypse without kingdom': a world that cannot imagine itself carrying on, and yet for this reason is all the more incapable of having done with anything.[8]

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[5] For a deeper elaboration of this point, see Agamben, 2016.

[6] 'We are not, and will never be terrorists; but what you seem to designate by the word "terrorist", that we are' (2009b).

[7] On the terms 'global civil war' and 'sovereign policing', see Agamben (2015a: 1–3), and (1996: 103-107). As Agamben puts it, governance today 'aims at nothing other than its own replication' (2009a: 22).

[8] 'We are the first to expect not the kingdom of God after the end, but nothing at all'. See Anders (2019).

Desubjectivation and the administration of absence

In the Preface to his *De Cive,* Hobbes describes the 'state of nature' as an analytic principle that is revealed when the State is 'considered as if it were dissolved' (*ut tanquam dissoluta consideretur*) (Hobbes, 1998: 10).[9] If Agamben often characterizes our contemporary situation as one of 'global civil war', this is because, in the state of exception, any formal "togetherness" that might once have been associated with the notions of civil society or the state is today lived *as if* dissolved (2015a: 24). By administering all relations between human beings *as if* our lives lacked any internal form, as if we were nothing but surviving machines — bundles of self-interest surrounded by a void of relation — economic governance presides over the reproduction of a 'bare life that has been separated from its context' (1998: 100). Only once beings have been wrenched from their worlds, stripped of all lived attachments, can the political task of re-assembling the atomized particles make sense. What economy separates, classical politics serves to re-gather, only *as separate*.

If contemporary governance can operate in the mode of a *katechōn*, working tirelessly to conceal and 'delay the unveiling of the "mystery of [its own] lawlessness"', by rendering its subjects' 'every gesture unrealizable' (1999: 169; 2005b: 111), its day-to-day reproduction is only possible thanks to an immense administration of phenomenality intervening at every level of the subject's entrance into the "Open". Today, the entire surface through which subjects enter into contact with reality has been front-loaded with desubjectivizing apparatuses designed to attenuate ethical intensities, to suspend all decisive contact with the world, and to preempt any effort to desert the 'colossal parody' of our inert social tissue by capturing our 'all-too-human desire for happiness' and transporting it into a realm beyond our reach — e.g. the iPhone as a 'sophisticated absence outfit' (2009a: 16, 20-24; Invisible Committee, 2014: 31).

As Reinhart Koselleck's work helps us to see, this flooding of our lives with apparatuses in fact only completes the long process of depoliticization in which

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[9] Translation modified to accord with that of Agamben (1998: 36).

the modern state found its point of departure.[10] With its final passage, in the twentieth century, away from the rule of law and toward a 'pure activity of governance' came the neutralization of the great political antagonisms that shaped the first half of the 20th century (2009a: 22; cf. 2007a). The 'real identities' that once defined the field of political polarization (Workers, Bourgeoisie, Subaltern, Pan-African)[11] have all inwardly collapsed, ceding their place to that 'docile and cowardly' citizen of post-industrial democracy that *Tiqqun* and Agamben have dubbed the *Bloom* (2009a: 22–23).[12]

The peculiar mode of alienation to which the concept of the Bloom points is important, as it forms the "subjective" premise of Agamben's destituent messianism. Bloom is the last man: the final outcome of capitalism's vast

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[10] See Koselleck (1988: 1-40). There is an inner link between statecraft as a technique of ethical neutralization and the rise of *moralism,* the latter being understood as a sphere of "inner conscience" stripped in advance of any relation to external action. In its effort to immunize the space of the political from the local ethical hostilities of vernacular and spiritual life, Koselleck shows how the modern state introduces a "break" within the ethical subject that dissociates it from its lived worlds. In this, he allows us to understand the historical genesis of the contemporary liberal subject, the impotent indignation of the "engaged citizen". If liberal moralism presupposes the neutralization of all ethical attachment, this is because in order to "denounce", we must first *exempt* ourselves. Liberal "critique" is inseparable from a gesture of ethical self-parenthesis.

[11] '[T]he society of the Spectacle […] [is] one in which all social identities have dissolved' (Agamben, 1996: 87–88, 110). On the one hand, it is legitimate to be concerned about Agamben's neglect of questions of race, gender, queer identity, and the variegated forms that suffering takes in the modern world. On the other hand, if he is right that the various social contradictions and oppressions that, in the mid-twentieth century, managed to harden into antagonistic points of political subjectivation can no longer crystalize into counter-subjectivations in the ways they once did, then what they primarily serve to mark off is the intensity and quality in which a generalized void of law expresses itself according to this or that social positionality. There are, we might say, many "imperfect nihilisms" depending on the complex grammar of negativity that structures different identities. However, since messianism begins *from where one already is*, and deposes social conditions without founding a new identity, it arguably does not need to *first* address this difference in order to offer a logical schema for undoing the Nothing, even if it remains the case that its implementation will look different across different experiences. This point is, admittedly, a sticky one. Some preliminary considerations of this problem — beginning from the side of critical race theory, and working backwards to Agamben — have been proposed in Aarons (2016).

[12] *See also* Tiqqun (2012), *passim*. On several occasions, Agamben has publicly acknowledged his involvement in both volumes of the journal, as well as in the revisions of the 2008 edition. See Agamben (2004: 120). As a matter of historical reference, it will be recalled that the second of the lecture series that became *The Time that Remains* was delivered at the University of Verona in the winter of 1998–99, while Volume 1 of *Tiqqun* was first published in Venice (an hour's drive away) in January 1999. In the Luria Kabbala, the word *Tikkun* means "messianic restoration" or the "mending of the world". See Agamben (2004: 120), and (2001, *passim*).

campaign of social violence directed against any immediately shareable experience of the world, the war of annihilation it waged against what Ivan Illich calls 'vernacular communities'.[13] He is the self-fulfilling prophecy of the modern state form, which, through four centuries of colonization, forced migration, slavery and exile, has finally managed to perfect in practice the atomization it always presupposed in theory, by stamping out all non-marketized forms of collective belonging. As such, Bloom is not an identity, but a way of giving a name to the paradigmatic *Stimmung* of the age of petrified nihilism: the experience of no longer coming from anywhere, of being a foreigner everywhere, 'a guest in one's own family' (Invisible Committee, 2008: 29–43). In phenomenological terms, it describes the experience of inhabiting a body whose mutilated corporeal schema immunizes it from all meaningful attachments to the people, places, and beings around us. It signals less the absence of all taste or inclination, than a 'taste for absence', an *inclination* to nothingness, a way of abstracting or exempting ourselves from any decision on our lived situation (Tiqqun, 2010: 19). It is akin to what Arendt calls 'the desert': a habit of becoming spectators of our own experience, of relating to the world *as if* we did not belong to it, as if we were not *party* to it — 'spectators who look at the time that flies by without any time left, continually missing themselves' (2005b: 68).[14] In this, Bloom sets the stakes for what messianic destitution must "fulfil".

Agamben offers an important distillation of the concept, which simultaneously points in the direction of its overturning: Bloom, he writes, is the name for 'the new anonymous subject, these "whatever singularities" that are emptied out, open for anything, which can diffuse themselves everywhere and yet remain ungraspable, without identity, but re-identifiable at each instant' (2004: 120). It is decisive to note that the anonymity of this contemporary man without content is not defined by an absence of identity *per se*, but by the presence of a destabilizing *nothingness* that insinuates itself between the subject and each of its

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[13] From the sharing of traditional knowledges such as medicine, contraception and child-rearing, to collective forms of reproduction such as commoning and informal exchange, Ivan Illich shows how the emergence of capitalism implied a ruthless war on any material and linguistic complicity or cooperation that proved incompatible with the wage relation. This entailed a shattering of experience, a replacement of 'sustenance derived from reciprocity patterns embedded in every aspect of life [with a] sustenance that comes [exclusively] from exchange or from vertical distribution' (Illich 2013, Ch. 1).For Agamben's remarks on Illich, see Agamben (2014: 73).

[14] As Arendt observes, the true "political crisis" of our time lies in our inability to even *feel* the depoliticized desert to which we have been consigned, 'the modern growth of worldlessness, the withering away of everything *between* us' (Arendt 2005: 201–204).

factical-juridical predicates or qualities. This Nothing is not reducible to a biographical or sociological epiphenomenon, for it touches all who live in our time to greater or lesser degrees. It is the introjected mirror of the anarchic groundlessness of an age in which all the hegemonic fantasies that once stabilized the economy of presence have either withered or been systematically trampled-out. As Reiner Schürmann observes, 'the rallying point of moderns, their home and focal point — the "I think" — undergoes displacements somewhat in the manner of [...] a childhood memory wandering off in a conversation, continuing, in the new site, but no longer going without saying' (Schürmann, 2013: 562).[15] The contemporary colonization of interiority by the Spectacle shatters the coherence of the "I" through its incessant proliferation of artificial and abstract (*viz.* uninhabitable) images of selfhood. The emptier these ascriptive socio-institutional predicates become, the more we are pressured to 'identify' with them, to the detriment of our own singular reading of the situation. However, at the same time as it empties identities of their historical substance, Bloom's nothingness allows the subject to be *re*-identified at each moment. It is precisely because our dis-located interiority forces us to remain continually on the lookout for schemas of identification that we harbour the potential for a different mode of reattachment, a different mode of relation: new ways of sharing gestures, of moving together, new practices that would permit us to once again inhabit the spectral world into which we have been born. Bloom does not spell the end of identity *tout court*, but the opening up of a newly non-substantial and purely contextual-strategic relationship to it.

The question posed by contemporary desubjectivation is certainly not "how can we breathe new life into the great political subjectivities of yesteryear?" As Marcello Tarì reminds us, 'the exhaustion of the possibilities of this world also includes the forms of political action that accompanied it' (Tarì, 2016: 7–8, own translation). The sad Trotskyists hocking their century-old workerist newspapers outside Whole Foods offer a routine reminder that, 'unless we wish to persist in the mode of the undead, as zombies, a political identity that (like this world) has exhausted every possibility can only be laid to rest' (ibid). Of the mask that revolutionary militancy once was, only fragments and ruins remain. While its courageous legacy is deserving of our respect and admiration, it is Agamben's

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[15] On this point, see Stephanie Wakefield, 'Reiner Schürmann's Faultline Topology and the Anthropocene', in Blumenfeld (2013), Ch. 10: 'When the great sheet of constellations that fix things in constant presence folds up, closes in on itself, the principial reference still exists, we still have the sense of identity of self with self, but it is dislocated, plurified and decaying'.

view that its operative premises — its historical tasks, but also its image of life and happiness — can no longer be our own.

Our question must be different: how can we imagine a politics that would not be grounded in a pre–existing subject?[16] As Agamben observes, 'what is often lacking, also [in today's] movements, is […] the awareness that every time one takes on an identity one is also subjugated. Obviously this is also complicated by the fact that modern apparatuses not only entail the creation of a subjectivity but also and equally processes of desubjectivation' (2007a). The real problem is how to *intervene* in this process so as to redirect it toward an increase in our power of thinking, sensing, and acting: 'what, in the processes whereby a subject somehow becomes attached to a subjective identity, leads to a change, an increase or decrease of his/her power to act'? (ibid). How, without resubstantialising the subject by means of yet another new-fangled mythologeme, can our anonymity make the 'leap beyond itself' that would allow it to be converted into a 'zone of communal life' that maintains its own non-coincidence with itself, abiding in the 'no-man's-land' between identity and non-identity (2004: 120). How can the anonymous desubjectivation to which we have been reduced recover a common power that is nonetheless singularly its own? How, *without re-constituting subjectivity*, can we deactivate the fixed vocations to which our social situations consign us, opening them to an anonymous and common *use*? If messianic life describes the experience of a subjectivity 'only within the framework of a strategy or tactic', then what is this strategy, and on what gestures does it depend? (2004: 117)[17]

II. Against the end of the world

> The coup d'état is a nothingness against which we must oppose our own nothingness.
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> Maurice Blanchot[18]

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[16] 'Political theories were always built on the premise that there was a subject bearing some sort of meaning, with certain needs and certain desires connected to them. [Today] it seems very important to me to attempt to re-think political action without the anthropological reference to a subject', Agamben (2009b). On this point, see also Agamben (2004: 116).

[17] See also (Agamben, 2007a): [T]he outcome of conflicts depends on this: on the power to act and intervene upon processes of subjectivation, in order to reach that stage that I would call a point of ungovernability.'

[18] *Autour du Groupe de la rue Saint-Benoît de 1942 à 1962,* cited in Blanchot (2010: 182 fn.28).

> Winning the struggle between the time of the
> end and the end of time is *the* task allotted to
> us today and to all who come after us.
>
> Günter Anders[19]

If the archaeological significance of messianism consists in its having brought to light for the first time the *arcanum imperii* of the law, its ethical significance lies in the response to it which it enables, the disposition by which it takes up its condition. The fulfilment that characterizes 'perfected messianism' has nothing to do with a theological-metaphysical conceit concerning the existence of the Divine.[20] Agamben is not a theological thinker. What is at stake, rather, is the search for an ethical and epistemological schema by which a deactivation of the sovereign exception can be enacted from *within* historical time. The Messiah is 'the figure through which religion confronts the problem of the Law, decisively reckoning with it' (1999: 163; 1998: 56). What Agamben is after is a non-dialectical schema for confronting and annulling the destructive "emptiness" of the state of exception, of which Bloom's ethical nullity constitutes the subjective expression. At issue is not the foundation of a new law, but a *mode of relation* to the groundlessness of law under which we already live: messianism relates to the nullity of law through the lens of its "passing-away". Against the managed disorder of the state of exception and its diffuse ethical paralysis, 'fulfilled' or destituent messianism responds by introducing a clarifying disposition that experiences its contact with the world as a call to *decision.*

Prophecy, eschatology, transition

From the earliest phase of his work, Agamben's theorization of revolutionary violence has centred on the internal form through which it transforms the experience of time (1993: 91). Revolutionary violence, in his view, must not simply usher in but *coincide* with a new temporalization of experience. We should therefore not be surprised to see him claim that the essence of messianic community can only be grasped in terms of the 'internal form of the time [that Paul] defines as *ho nym Kairos'* or now-time, the latter being importantly understood as a 'paradigm of *historical* time' (2005b: 3).

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[19] Anders (2019).

[20] 'I believe the messianic is always profane, never religious' (2004, 120).

A false alternative has long organized the temporality of the revolutionary theory of action: do we intervene now and accelerate the coming collapse (activism, voluntarism), or must we refuse all separations between ourselves and "the working class" and wait for the masses to act on their own (objectivism, historicism)? Vanguardism, or mass movement? The Great Evening, or the process? Or else do we hedge our bets, by regarding our interventions here and now as positive or negative "prefigurations" of the ideals and practices that will shape the world we wish to see emerge "after" the collapse, in the hopes that our little oases of radical culture will function like seeds that germinate and generalize when the time is ripe, or at least leave us a little better prepared?[21] At bottom, the debate is theological in origin: do we wait for the coming of the Messiah, and remain in the post God has assigned to us, or do we hasten the second coming, the *eschaton*?[22] In either case, the arrival of the Kingdom is construed as an exceptional event; redemption coincides with a sudden and cataclysmic bisection of history by an intransitive and intransigent *other* time that either breaks it in half, or abolishes it.

The Pauline *klēsis* or "calling" responds by dividing this division. In contrast to the polarization of "normal time / suspended time" of the sort one finds not only in Furio Jesi's *Spartakus,* but likewise in Agamben's own early account of class violence published the same year, *The Time that Remains* seeks to show that there is another experience of historical time in which its linear or historio-graphical representation of life is, in a certain respect, already "suspended" (although this term will ultimately prove inadequate, as we shall see below).[23] Importantly, if it is already suspended, it is so not *extraneously*, as occurs when the quasi-eternity of revolt deactivates or "mutes" the progressive time of history, but rather *internally* at every moment. Historical time envelops a remainder, a 'remnant' that divides the opposition between chronology and "the end of time", thereby allowing time to be seized upon and brought to an end. As I will argue, the decisive originality of *The Time that Remains* resides in the fact that the division between messianic time and historical time does not assume the exceptional character of a sudden

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[21] For a positive take on prefiguration, see Milstein (2010); on 'negative prefiguration', see Bernes (2012); for the hardline objectivist position, see Dupont (2009).

[22] On this point, see The Accused of Tarnac, 'Live Communism, Spread Anarchy', in Blumenfeld (2013: 277).

[23] On Jesi's theorization of the suspension of historical time, see Aarons (2019b). On Agamben's early formulation of revolutionary class violence, written the same year as Jesi's *Spartakus,* see Agamben (2009c).

interruption, nor is it a fact to be instigated or anticipated, but *already* has an existence. If the Kingdom is already here among us, then the apostolic calling is neither the projection of an event to come, nor the effort to instigate one by *fiat* (with the attendant dangers of "technicisation"), but assumes the character of a *response*.[24]

To what is the calling a response? And what is the nature of this response, what is the messianic vocation?

In *The Courage of Truth*, Foucault reminds us that prophetic epistemology and temporality are marked by a double extraneity, affecting both their relation to speech and their temporal logic. Unable to speak in his or her own name, the prophet's 'mouth serves as intermediary for a voice which speaks from elsewhere. […] He does not reveal without being obscure, and he does not disclose without enveloping what he says in the form of the riddle' (Foucault, 2011: 15). On the one hand, the prophet announces a message that *originates* elsewhere ("thus speaks Yahweh"); on the other, the message itself *anticipates* an event located elsewhere, in the future, in a time still-to-come. Although he (or she) may insist on having an immediate relation to the spirit of God from whom the message arrives, the prophet 'receives a word that does not belong to him' (2002c: 1). Like Rimbaud, who declares in the 'Drunken Boat' that he has '*seen* what other men believe they have seen', the prophet *evokes* a truth that cannot itself be presented.[25] Prophetic truth arrives in the mode of withdrawal: it is unrealizable in the present, suspended at a distance from us in an "other" world from which it descends. Prophetic time stretches us toward a "coming" time whose reality remains inaccessible, and which nothing in the actual situation could ever suffice to break open. The prophesized event will come *soon,* and we are invited to make use of historical time to prepare ourselves for it. Ultimately, though, what we must do is *wait*.

The "prophetic apparatus" is defined by the twofold condition of mythic "evocation" and temporal deferral. Not unlike the floating indeterminacy of the law's being-in-force — which is likewise predicated on a ground it can only "evoke" but never present — the vital significance of prophecy lies in its power to position us in relation to a truth we cannot properly *assume*. It allows only two

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[24] On the concept of 'technicised myth', see Aarons (2019a), and Andrea Cavalletti's introduction to Jesi (2014). On the limitations of Jesi's concept of revolt, see Aarons (2019b).

[25] …*j'ai vu quelquefois ce que l'homme a cru voir!* 'The Drunken Boat', in Rimbaud (2001, 127). On the prophetic character of this formulation, and the mythological machine upon which it relies, see Jesi (2019).

questions in response: "has the prophet seen the truth?" (i.e. is the mythological machine full or empty?); and, if the prophet speaks the truth, "how long must we wait?" (2005: 2).

In the same lecture course, Foucault distinguishes the *prophet* — who speaks not in his own name, but in the name of an ulterior future — from the *parrhesiastes,* who has the courage to say what is true today in his own name (Foucault, 2011: 15). Whereas Foucault did not regard them as fundamentally separable figures, Agamben prises them apart, identifying his own messianic politics exclusively with the latter (2004: 120).[26] The motivation for this separation is less ontological than historical, and serves to highlight a key political dimension of his messianism. There is, Agamben argues, an intimate link between the disappearance of the figure of the Prophet in our contemporary epoch and the exhaustion of a revolutionary politics premised on programmes (or ends) and the Party-form:

> The figure of the prophet was that of the political leader until fifty years ago. It has completely disappeared. But, at the same time, it seems to me that *it is no longer possible to think a discourse addressing the future.* It's the messianic actuality, the *kairos*, the now-time that must be thought. […] Benjamin writes somewhere that Marx secularized messianic time in the classless society. This is completely true. But at the same time, with all the aporias this engenders — the transitions, etc. — it is a type of snag on which the Revolution failed. We don't have a model of time available that permits us to think this. (2004: 120, my emphasis)

Agamben's reading of Paul responds to this exhaustion of futurity by separating the messianic deposition of law from eschatological and transitional logic. The Pauline calling is neither a 'perpetually deferred' *eschaton* (the liberal interpretations of Scholem and Derrida, which only mirror the imperfect nihilism of our time) nor is it a 'transitional time' situated between two epochs, one from which it departs, the other it strives to fulfil (the "dictatorship" phase of Marxism-Leninism). In the end, both approaches lead to the same impasse: neither can *deliver* or seize hold of the actuality of the experience on which they are nevertheless premised. Either we perpetually delay the decisive moment, or we bend our idea of happiness toward an 'end' that seems designed to place it out of reach: 'every transition tends to be prolonged into infinity and to render

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[26] The claim that Foucault did not fully separate the two figures of the prophet and the parrhesiast is Agamben's. While it is perhaps debatable, I will not enter into it here.

unreachable the end that it supposedly produces' (2005b: 70). There is no greater misunderstanding of messianism than to equate the time that "remains" with a waiting, an anticipation of what is to come at some *later* time (2005b: 62).[27]

To refuse the schema of prophecy means that there is no *preliminary* to communism. Taken to its logical conclusions, this implies that whatever we mean by communism, it clearly cannot refer to a new institutional schema for the distribution of wealth, the organization of labour, or the representational management of society. Strictly speaking, it cannot be an ideal or ideology at all, since this too would have to await its realization in a state of things. A thorough refusal of preliminaries only leaves us with two options: either we renounce the communist project entirely, or else we understand it as an *ethical disposition*, a way of entering into contact with, and being affected by, a common potentiality that is communicated in what is taking place (2015b: 232, 237, 211).[28] For those who adopt the latter approach, the exigency to which the term 'communism' responds can only be situated within the occurring of the present, in the concrete situation in which we find ourselves. By contrast, if the time of "transition" leaves it suspended and unreachable, this is because it continues to be understood as a transition *toward* an end. For Agamben, the problem of communism has nothing to do with a future society; it names an ethical process that proceeds from sparks or fragmentary potentials already operative in the present. It is transitional, but not "toward" anything else — it is *pure transition,* the accomplishing of shared worlds in the process of their own construction, and never a *fait accompli.*

From apocalypticism to operative time

Paul is not a prophet, but an apostle. For him, the Messiah has already arrived; the age of the prophets is over. To live in the days of the Messiah, is to live *ho nyn kairos*, in the time of the now. Yet if the prophecy has been concluded, if the decisive event is now behind us, are we not at the end of history? Is time concluded? How can we distinguish the Pauline calling from the apocalyptic announcement of the eschaton?

To live in the apostolic calling is, Agamben tells us, to experience not the 'end of time, but the time of the end' (2002c: 2; 2005b: 62–64). It is 'not the instant in which time ends, but the time that contracts itself and begins to end […] [i.e.]

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[27] In spite of its many merits, this is the mistake that frequently unravels Jessica Whyte's otherwise insightful study of Agamben. See Whyte (2013).

[28] See also footnote 56 below.

the time that remains between time and its end' (2005b: 62). What does it mean for time to have *not yet* concluded, but to have *already* "begun to end"?

Messianic time is not a time anticipated, but one that is "seized" and "contracted", grasped and rendered *habitable.* It is 'a bit of time taken from the profane that, all of a sudden, is transformed' (2005b: 120). Since revolutionary violence is bound up for Agamben with the transformation of time, quite a lot rides on the difference between the eschatological concept of the "end" and the messianic "event". Moreover, the Pauline *hōs mē* (deactivation, revocation) offers the most fleshed-out positive example of destituent power in the 'Epilogue' to *The Use of Bodies.* Hence, if 'it is because messianic *klēsis* caught up in operational time that it can take on the form of the *as not*, the constant revocation of every vocation', then it is no exaggeration to say that Agamben's entire conception of destitution hangs on this distinction (2005b: 68). In what follows, I will therefore attempt to work through the argument in detail, before drawing some provisional conclusions in the final section.

As Bergson highlighted already a century ago, the attempt to think time often involves a troublesome reliance on spatial schemata: time is figured as a line, one end of which is represented by the past, the other by the future, with the present forming a caesura down the middle [p—— /$_{pr}$——f]. If we rely on such a schema, the messianic event will be forced to appear either as one punctual occurrence or "point" among others in the chronological sequence of historical time, or else as the abstract contemplation of the *last* day (the day of Wrath) on which the series is finally abolished (the "end of the line", as it were). As Agamben observes, this appears to be the alternative presented by the apocalyptic Jewish rabbinic tradition, which associates the distinction of two worlds (*olamin*) with that of two temporal orders (*aiones*). On the one hand, there is the *olam hazzeh,* the chronological time extending from the creation of the world to its conclusion (*aion touto, ho kosmos outos*: this world, this time); on the other, the *olam habba,* the next world to come, the *eschaton* that abolishes the series (*ho aion mellon*) (2005b: 62; 2002c: 2–3). While both *olamin* appear in Paul's writings, Agamben is insistent that the time to which the apostolic calling responds is neither that of a point on a sequential line, nor that of a world subsequent to history's conclusion. In neither case could the event, strictly speaking, be *experienced.* The deeper meaning of messianic time is precisely to call into question 'the very possibility of drawing a clear distinction between the two *olamin'* (2002c: 3). If it cannot be represented either as a line, point, or "end" of time, this is because the time of the remnant, holds itself out *between* the two.

Still, even if it is neither a point nor an end-point, the "betweenness" of Messianic time would, at face value anyway, still appear to imply a progressive development. For example, in its religious connotation, the idea of "arrival" can easily lend itself to a tripartite division: (t^1) the profane time of *chronos* extends in linear fashion until the event of the resurrection, whereupon (t^2) time 'contracts itself and begins to finish'; henceforth, it "remains" in the *ho nyn kairos* until the *parousia* (t^3), or the full presence of the Messiah at the end of time. To represent this schema on a line, we would present a straight line which, broken by a caesura, continues in contracted form until it breaks off:

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profane time   Event   contracted time
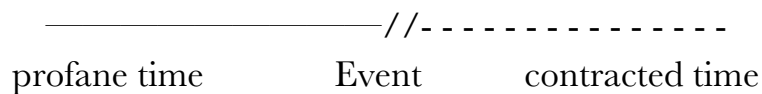
Given this schema, messianic time could be conceived of as the contracted space "between" the broken points. The *ho nyn kairos* would here refer not simply to the transitional chronological span that falls "after" the resurrection and "before" the *parousia*, but to the mutation of chronological time itself that the event introduces. There is a sense in which Agamben accepts this schema; or rather, he thinks it gets at something essential, namely, that messianic time is 'not exterior to chronological time' but is a *portion of secular time* that undergoes a 'transformative contraction' (2002c: 3; 2005b: 64). The trouble is that, since this figuration of time remains spatial, it is impossible to appreciate the *vital* significance of this contraction without relating it to the course of the line, which would fall back once again into a form of futural "anticipation". What can never be grasped in the spatial schema is the reality of its lived experience. Yet the lived experience of transformed time is the core of the revolutionary problematic for Agamben. Another approach must therefore be found.

Agamben turns to the work of linguist Gustave Guillaume for a solution, and in particular to the two studies collected in his book *Temps et verbe* (1929, 1945), which offer the first worked-out theory of what Guillaume calls 'operative' or 'chronogenetic' time, a time interior to chronological time, on which the latter relies without being able to encompass it representationally in a time-image. While a fuller account of Guillaume's important influence on Agamben's work must be reserved for another occasion, I will attempt to outline the essentials here, which concern the presence — within thought and perception — of an *evaluative* and preindividual genetic dimension of experience wherein time has not yet settled into the constituted tense relations that characterize discursive speech and the spatial paradigms of time reliant upon it.

According to Guillaume, traditional linguistics tended to consider language only from the point of view of the meaning-effects that appear at the level of its actuality in speech, by systematizing the formal rules that obtain at the level of its signifying effects in discourse. This overlooks 'the true reality of a form' that is not located in the 'multiple and fleeting effects of meaning that result from its employment [*emploi*]' but in the 'operation of thought […] that presides over its definition in the mind' (Guillaume, 1968: 132–133).[29] The 'multiplicity of consequences' that the linguistic sign generates in real speech must be referred back to the 'secret operations' in 'the virtuality of *langue*' [*la langue virtuelle*] (Guillaume, 1968: 133). These cannot be studied by directly consulting phenomena, but are accessible only by analysis: if the 'direct observation of sensible phenomena can offer linguistics only "meaning effects" of form', this is because 'it only becomes possible at the moment where form has been incorporated into thought [*la forme à pris corps dans la pensée*], which is to say, after its mental expression'. What the direct observation of the actuality of discourse misses is the '*preparation of form* […], the operations of thought that create them' (ibid, emphasis added). The latter 'necessarily elude the speaking subject studied by traditional linguistics', since 'once we attempt to become aware of these operations, they have already taken place and disappeared', without leaving any memory of them (Guillaume, 1968: 133). The true domain of temporal form in language is therefore not that of 'pensée *pensée*' in which things present themselves already formed and conceived, but what Guillaume describes as the 'deeper and to some extent pre-existent one of pensée *pensante*,' wherein things — still in their genesis — are not yet sufficiently incorporated to 'leave an imprint on our memory' (ibid).

As with Benveniste's distinction between the *semiotic* and the *semantic* — which forms the basis of Agamben's conception of 'infancy', or the human being's thrownness into language, and which internally separates us from our own speaking being — for Guillaume the two domains are separated by 'language itself, which creates, so to speak, the wall between them' (1993: 51-56; Guillaume 1968: 134). As soon as language is expressed, what we have before us is *pensée pensée,* whereas the *pensée pensante* that gave rise to it is closed and dead. The

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[29] See also Guillaume (1984). The latter is a collection composed of excerpts from Guillaume's seminars, and includes several valuable discussions of operative time, especially Part IV, 'The Act of Language', and Part IV, 'Thought and Language'. In an effort to distinguish Guillaume's conception of *langue* from that of Saussure, editors Hirtle and Hewson render Guillaume's use of the term as 'tongue' (see p.*xx-xxi*). Finding this unhelpful, I have opted to retain the French term throughout.

constituted actuality of discourse everywhere depends on an ideal systematic plane, the properties and laws of which linguistic analysis must discover. Guillaume therefore proposes to study the existence of expressive forms in their genetic phase, prior to their actualization in speech.[30] For this, we must seek, now on the side of thought, the 'morphology of the inside' that serves as both the cause and the integrating mechanism of the system's diachronic transformations.

The spatially-flattened or 'panoramic' time-image that we encountered above, and which we represent with the line/point schema, is an image of time in its already-constructed state. What it misses is the experience of time as it is 'still being constructed in thought', as well as the various states it must pass through along the way. As Agamben observes, what Guillaume adds to the chronological representation of time is a 'a projection in which the process of forming the time image is cast back onto the time image itself':

> In so doing, he comes up with a new representation of time, that of chronogenetic time, which is no longer linear but three-dimensional. The schema of chronogenesis thus allows us to grasp the time-image in its pure state of potentiality (time *in posse*), in its very process of formation (time *in fieri*), and, finally, in the state of having been constructed (time *in esse*). (2005b: 66)

Not only speech, but the very experience of action and thought have their genesis in the three-dimensional or triphasic zone of pure praxis or operativity. On the basis of this pre-thetic field composed of virtual or potential problems, there issue *pure acts of chronothesis* or time-positing 'within which the human mind establishes itself' (Guillaume, 1984: 7). What is at issue in chronothesis is not a voluntary act carried out by a pre-existing subject, but an act that itself delineates the perceptual coordinates on which the conscious subject relies: in order consciously to construct a representational or linguistic schema of time, chronothesis must

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[30] To the two "faces" of the phenomenon of language, external and internal, corresponds a methodological distinction between "mechanistic" and "psychological" explications. On the one hand, signs can be grouped into formal systems by virtue of their respective base oppositions and parts of speech. These formal traits can be traced historically or diachronically by attending to the 'phonetic accidents' and variations that allow this or that form to become ascendant at a given moment, either within or between languages. However, according to Guillaume, although such a study has its relative scientific validity, it fails to explain the divergences and resistances that give rise to this variation itself. See Guillaume (1968: 1–6).

intercept the field of chronogenesis though what Guillaume calls a 'prehension' or 'cross-cut':

> Chronogenesis is the genesis of the potential to construct time, and chronothesis is the exploitation of this potential as it is being acquired. Every time such potential is exploited, the process of acquiring it is intercepted at a characteristic point and a cross-section taken. Each cross-section thus obtained constitutes a mood. (Guillaume, 1984: 7)

A first decisive consequence of Guillaume's theory now comes into view: there is no one "synthetic" time in which the mind inheres, but only partial operations of sectioning, interrupting, and cordoning-off. The genesis of the subject is positioned within the 'transitional operation' between chronogenetic time and the chronothetic construction of time-images that issue from it, an operation that takes place through our impersonal contact with the problematic potentialities of the situation in which thought finds itself embedded. Chronogenetic time is never itself representable, since the time-images that we produce by *means* of it cannot themselves "say" the time of their own construction.[31] Consequently, there is, as Agamben puts it, a 'disjointedness and delay […] in the very foundation of subjectivity and consciousness', a 'lapse' (2005b: 66–67). If the thought of time and its representation never actually coincide, this is because there is an 'act of thought' within us that moves along another time, a 'time within time — not ulterior but interior — which measures my disconnection with regard to [chronology], my being out of synch and in non-coincidence' with it (2005b: 67). This delay is not necessarily a sign of a powerlessness on the part of subjectivity, but points instead to an *impersonal activity of evaluation* enveloped within every instance of discourse, representation, and perception, one which is capable — when affirmed — of rendering the experience of the results of action, language, and bodies inoperative. In fact, Agamben will turn things around: it is *only* because operative time is out of synch with chronology, that time can be 'taken hold of' and 'achieved' (ibid).

In fact, Guillaume's thesis is even more radical than we have let on. The concept of chronogenesis refers to a field of tensions out of which issue acts that, prior to speech or representation, *evaluate* the pure potentialities of our situation,

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[31] As Guillaume reminds us, that operative time has no representation does 'not mean that it has no existence in human thought, but that it exists in thought only as our experience does'. Guillaume (1984: 6).

that seize them and construct sense out of them. At this level, time is not yet unified into a coherent whole or "panorama", but merges with the very procedure of evaluation itself. Operative time itself *is* an evaluation that coincides completely with the experience of time at its deepest level. This means that, prior to their being posited, neither time nor sense are formally unified or systematized, but are bound up in a partial process or "operation" that synthesizes and constructs germinal forms out of meaning-potentials, gathering shards of time. It is for this reason that — in an extremely bold assertion — Guillaume later follows his own argument to its logical conclusion: 'the representation of time differs only because the representation of space differs' (Guillaume, 1984: 7). In other words, the shape of the time-images inscribed in our language depend upon the regional and historical shape of our lived *world,* whose meaning-potentials they respond to.

There is a common *World* only at the level of representation; at the level of experience, there are *worlds,* and the time-images that proceed on their basis tacitly testify to the genetic plurality that they simultaneously efface in their actuality. At this point, we must draw the unavoidable conclusion: the time that is seized, the time of evaluation from which all overt external action proceeds, is never a unified time, but is irreducibly *fragmentary*, modulated in accordance with the encounter between thought and its lived situation (it will be recalled that what Agamben calls a "remnant" is neither general nor particular, but the division of this difference — a fragment).

Restoration through fragmentation

Fragmented time is 'the only real time, the only time we have' (2005b: 68). It is the time by means of which we construct the meaning of the situation in which we find ourselves, on the basis of the 'meaning potentials' of sense that it envelops at a virtual level. If ethics for Agamben has a "visionary" component, this is because what is in question here is the fluctuating genesis of our *attention* to our lived situation, an attention on the basis of which we first of all come to be able to speak and act. In what Guillaume refers to as the 'viewing universe' of lived time, what we "see" are not the constituted forms that we eventually become conscious of, but the preparation of form itself; not possibility as the abstract and

probabilistic mirror of the factical given, but *possibilities of life.*[32] If operative time is tri-phasic, the order of its genesis refers,

(1) to an evaluation of the *liveable,* the *thinkable,* and the *sayable;*

(2) to the 'exploitation' of this potential that is *expressed* as possibilities of life, shards or fragments of 'living form' in the process of being assembled and evaluated (life *becoming-form*, or "assembled evaluations");[33] and finally:

(3) to their actualization in this or that act, statement, gesture, or representation.

At the level of operative time, it is not yet possible to detach the form of time from the time of thought's own lived operation, since the formal division between *quid facti*? and *quid juris*? has not yet been accomplished — it will be so only at the moment of its interruption or 'sectioning' by chronothetic prehension (Guillaume, 1984: 6). We might say, following David Lapoujade's felicitous formulation that, in its first two phases, operative time dramatizes a different question: *quid vitae*? (Lapoujade, 2017: 32–38). This question receives its answer not, first of all, through the explicit representational time-image that eventually results from it, but is already dramatized by our mode of attending to the *liveable*, the *thinkable*, and the *sayable*. This dramatization, which affects our body like a *clinamen*, is the living soil of messianic ethics:

> If every body is affected by its form-of-life as by a clinamen or a taste, the ethical subject is that subject which constitutes-itself in relation to this clinamen, the subject who bears witness to its tastes, takes responsibility for the mode in which it is affected by its inclinations.

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[32] For a usage of this term that resonates with our present reading, see Zourabichvili (2017: 156-157): '[A] possibility of life expresses a mode of existence. […] It is never a signification or a collection of significations. It is an evaluation: not simply the evaluation of the possibilities of life, once we have already apprehended them as such; but the possibility of life itself as evaluation, a singular manner of evaluating or apportioning the good and the bad, the distribution of affects. A possibility of life is always a difference. The invention of new possibilities of life therefore presupposes a new way of being affected. […] Politics is therefore first of all an affair of perception.'

[33] This corresponds to what Guillaume calls 'acts of expression' (1984: 6).

Modal ontology, the ontology of the how, coincides with an ethics (2015b: 232).[34]

There is no "attention in general", only this or that way in which we are led to seize upon, and are seized by, the potentialities of the pre-individual milieu from which thought and gesture draw their power, in this or that factual situation. Every lived perception envelops a selection and distribution of the interesting/uninteresting, alluring/repugnant, a sensitivity to this or that set of signs, a characteristic way of being affected by our contact with the world, etc. Between the virtual potentiality of chronogenesis and the constituted actuality of representation, there is the expression of *possibilities of life*, the larval forms dramatized by our pre-individual attention to our situation, which draw together shards of time edge-to-edge, fragment-to-fragment. It is within the frame or coordinates opened up by these expressive forms that representational time-images are in each case inscribed; they draw up the logical-existential plane or zone within which the human mind establishes itself. As Agamben observes, all attention 'brushes up against an impersonal power, something both surpassing us and giving us life' (2004: 124).[35] It is at this level — always singular, always situational — that what we have in common must be sought.

How does this impersonal activity of evaluation bear upon the messianic calling in its difference from the prophetic apparatus? How does the concept of chronogenesis allow us to complicate the time-image of politics?

As Agamben argues, to live in the apostolic calling is to experience not the 'end of time, but the time of the end'; it is 'not the instant in which time ends, but

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[34] The chief disagreement between *Tiqqun* and Agamben concerns whether the singular ethical "assumption" of this *clinamen* across asymmetrical forms-of-life can be adequately grasped by the grammar of war. Whereas *Tiqqun* identifies the perspective of the political with civil war understood as 'the free play of forms-of-life […], the principle of their coexistence' (Tiqqun 2010: 32), for Agamben *stasis* remains but one threshold of politicization among others, but does not exhaust the field of politics. At the same time, and while it is beyond the scope of this article to pursue this question thoroughly, it seems to me equally certain that the relation between forms-of-life cannot be reduced to a problem of "democratic" tolerance. For this reason, I cannot agree with Sergei Prozorov's recent claim that 'the political meaning of the concept of form-of-life consists in the reconstruction of democracy in terms of affirmative biopolitics' (Prozorov 2017: 154).

[35] Among clearest statements of how Agamben understands this pre-individual 'zone of non-consciousness' may be found in his essay 'Genius' (2007b: 9-18). His concept of this 'impersonal' or 'opaque' zone draws upon Deleuze's concept of a plane of immanence (1999: 220-240), Simondon's theory of individuation (2007b: 8-19) and Furio Jesi's practice of 'constitutive esotericism' (2019b; 2002a: 89-92; 2007b: 113-114).

the time that contracts itself and begins to end'. The meaning of this contracted remnant may now be specified: it is operative time that insinuates itself in chronological time, 'working and transforming it from within' (2002c: 2). This time exhibits a 'uni-dual structure […] comprised of two heterogeneous times, one *kairos* and the other *chronos* […], coextensive, but which cannot be added together' (2005b: 62–64). The prefix "uni-" should not mislead us: messianic time is not unified in itself but refers to an individuating temporal form (a shard, fragment, or 'remnant') that has *not yet divorced and detached itself* from lived experience. If the Pauline calling is not a 'third aeon' situated between two *olamin*, but rather fractures or 'divides' the representational division between the present and the "end", thereby causing chronological time to 'begin to end', the destituent ethical gesture that affirms it refers to a specific sort of comportment in which we seize upon our representation of chronology and 'take it for a remnant', thereby *restoring form* to its internal fragmentation (2005b: 83).[36] If messianic *kairos* is nothing other than 'seized *chronos*', that is because it refers to a gesture that restores our lived experience of time to the partiality of a form-under-construction, and which has the effect of destituting the illusion of a unitary historical World. *To inhabit messianic time coincides with the gesture of fragmenting time.* It is to strip representational time of its power to generate the illusion of a *single* common world, the mask of totality that allows it to conceal, in plain sight, the evaluative asymmetries that continuously clash within it. Messianism is neither "another time" that would signal the total effacement of chronology, nor "just another day homogenous with the others", but a way of seizing upon the operative time that presses upon chronology from within it, its 'internal pulsation', in order to fragment it (2005b: 72).

Agamben reproaches the revolutionary tradition with failing to distinguish between messianic and apocalyptic time. The vital significance of apocalypticism lies in its capacity to 'generate a kind of time, in which we dwell, that in itself prevents us from experiencing it'.[37] Once the discrepancy between the experience of time and its representation is taken into account, the eschatological notions of "progress", "development", and the "end of history" are all shown to stem from a common amputation or impotence. Under the guise of optimism or "hope", they work to maintain us in a condition of passivity.

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[36] In spite of many other agreements, I therefore cannot follow Roberto Mosciati in his recent characterization of Agamben's ethics as reliant on an ontology of 'amorphousness'. (Mosciati 2019: 50).

[37] The quotation is from Giorgio Manganelli. Cited in Agamben (2005b: 70).

For instance, reflecting on the recent climate strike movement headed by Greta Thunberg, Agamben criticizes not the movement itself, but the blind faith that certain of its participants appear to have in the power of scientific prediction, which allows the latter to assume a markedly prophetic and eschatological posture:

> Like any religion, even the religion of science could not do without an eschatology, that is, an apparatus that, by keeping the faithful in fear, strengthens their faith and, at the same time, ensures the dominion of the priestly class. Apparitions like those of Greta are, in this sense, symptomatic: Greta blindly believes in what scientists prophesy and expects the end of the world in 2030, just as millenarians in the Middle Ages believed in the imminent return of the Messiah to judge the world. (2019a)

If apocalypticism traps us within a form of ethical paralysis, this is not only because it asks us to wait on what is still-to-come, but because to orient ourselves around the "end of time" is already to begin *too late.* It offers us only a knowledge of time in its already-constructed state — a knowledge that, in this case, is then outsourced to professional prophets through a thinly-veiled secularization of the priestly function — and which therefore cannot possibly be *experienced*.[38] By substituting a time-*image* for our experience of time, apocalypticism directs action toward an uninhabitable abstraction, distancing us from the potentialities of our own lived situation, which alone can be seized-upon. Since *there is no* experience of the "end of time", the horizon of action is always infinitely postponed. In short, there is only an "end" of time provided that time has first of all been conceived of as a homogeneous, spatialized panorama. It is the same with the forced choice between "activism/mass movement", "voluntarism/objectivism". In both cases, it is first necessary to imagine the locus of action as a homogeneous temporal field, which will either develop sequentially of its own internal accord (the unfolding of the historical contradiction) or else must be subjected to a shocking interruption aimed at "hastening the end". Like all time-images, their alleged self-sufficiency has in reality the status of a mutilated idea, an illusion premised on the effacement

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[38] For this reason, Kelly Oliver's recent claim that Agamben has 'replace[d] the opposition between man and animal with the opposition between religion and science' (i.e. that he champions a religious discourse against science) misses the essential, namely, their common participation in the prophetic apparatus. See Oliver (2009: 239). For a critique of Oliver's argument, see Mosciati (2017: 574–575).

of their own genetic conditions of emergence. Too often, once we restore the vital significance of the evaluation that attended their genesis we find the same ethical impotence of a need to "believe" in another world, the believer having at some point or another become incapable of *assuming* this one.

In fact, the problem should be reversed: when we consider the genesis of time-images in experience, it is not operative or messianic time that interrupts chronology; rather, it is chronological time that interrupts, sections-off, and detaches itself from the immanent multiplicity of operational time that constructs it. Only once we have detached ourselves from the affirmative evaluations of operative time *that we are,* only once we have placed our own becoming in parentheses, does it then become necessary to imagine political possibility through the schema of a cataclysmic rupture of chronology. In reality, such a rupture can never truly be lived, but can only assume the status of an abstract article of faith. Both activism and historicism therefore betray a common reliance on the hypothesis of a global or encompassing chronological time, yet the latter is, in reality, merely a conclusion divorced from its premises.

Just as Guillaume's methodology proceeds by converting 'the observed result back into […] a genetic process', Agamben's messianism decomposes the unity of homogeneous time, not by breaking it in half or suspending it through a prophetic or mythic epiphany arriving from elsewhere, but by exhibiting the nullity of the unity of representational time, thereby allowing time once again to be seized upon and fulfilled (2005b: 70). It is therefore precisely because chronological time is defined by an amputation of its internal multiplicity that messianic destitution can take the form of a *restoration through fragmentation*.

It has been a perennial mistake of the far-Left to believe that the beginning of politics lies in posing the "correct" question, of extracting ourselves from the corruption of the world by initiating an epistemological break that will free our thought from ideology. In fact, such ideological beginnings always begin too late, and only re-entrench an abstract and disembodied conception of politics that deprives us in advance of the very tissue of what is shareable between us. In the long run, this mistake is only the latest symptom of the amputated image of political life on which the Western tradition is founded. The West construed politics as 'the assembly that […] gathers all human beings *in abstraction from their respective worlds',* disconnected from 'the network of things, habits, words, fetishes, affects, places, solidarities that make up their world, their sensible world, and that

gives them their specific substance'.[39] It was in keeping with this image that Hobbes began his *Elements of Law* by first asking us to annihilate the world, in order to then proceed to its nominalist reorganization at the level of images and concepts alone (Hobbes 2008: I, Ch. 1, 8). The problem of community, of the *common*, must begin by reversing this Hobbesian gesture. This implies that we learn how to disentangle the experience of a collective *attachment* (loyalty, reciprocity, trust, credence, a shared experience of power and possibility, as well as mutual defence and protection) from its juridical entanglements in the *arcanum imperii* of sovereignty (2005b: 115–117).

The problem is not merely archaeological, but bears immediately on how we approach ethical questions and conflicts in everyday life. Every question we explicitly pose is already a response to a *way of seeing* what lies before us — the dramatization of a regime of attention. If we were to take this messianic insight seriously, then what matters is not the identities that power has ascribed to us, nor who subscribes to the same "radical" or ideological discourse, for neither tells us anything decisive about how that person in fact perceives the lines of force arrayed before us here and now. What really matters is, within a substantive situation, who *sees* the same lines of force, whose attention is drawn to the same potentialities as ours is? Whose gestures respond to a problem in a way that resonates with our own? Whose dispositions testify to the presence of an impersonal demand that places us on a common plane? Only substantive situations, with their worldly entanglements, can tell us this — provided we learn how to look within them correctly. And, often enough, it will not be those whom we might have expected.

Critics often accuse Agamben of being vague or abstract when he proposes we redefine politics as the site in which 'the event of anthropogenesis — the becoming human of the human being — is still happening' (2015: 208). In fact, there is nothing more concrete: it means not only that politics is exhaustively situational, but that our situation does not have the finality or coherence we often attribute to it. What messianism "achieves" is not a magical transfiguration of this world into another one, but a change in our mode of *contact* with this one. Agamben's message is this: stop waiting for another world, learn how to *look* within your situation for the potentialities that allow you to *hold a world in common*, and respond to their call by seizing upon them. In this way, he directs us to where we already are, and tells us something simple: the world is *ours,* but only 'for *use as not-ours*' (Hurley, 2018: 5). What there is of communism will be worked-out here

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[39] Anonymous, "The Call" (2003). The text is a collectively-authored manifesto written in Rennes, France, in 2003, the title of which consciously indicates its messianic intention.

and now, in our capacity to *perceive* a common world and to engage our concrete situation on the basis of this shared perception through a common use without ownership.

All perception envelops lived forms. It is the imperfect nihilism of our time that, by rendering all gestures 'unrealizable', by making all futurity unthinkable, maintains us, suspended, apart from them. If revolutionary violence must enact and coincide with a transformation of time, and if the theory of destituent potential constitutes Agamben's contribution to such a theory, it is because the general movement of a destituent ethics consists in subjecting the unity of chronology to a movement of decomposition, a positive fragmentation of *the* World (singular) that exhibits its fictitious unity, returning the Nothing to nothing. The asymmetry of operative time with respect to chronology provides the transcendental condition for a destituent elaboration of *common sensible worlds* (plural). Yet, what is still needed is a gesture through which to *assume* this time, to restore contact with the *preparation of form* that our attention to the world, our lived experience, already envelops within it. This is precisely the significance of the Pauline *hōs mē*, which functions like a 'perceptual machine', a regime of attention designed to dislocate our ascriptive historical vocations and identities (e.g. our impoverished conception of happiness as "self-interest") and to restore our contact with the operational time of a world-in-construction.[40]

The destituent gesture

Let us return to what Agamben regards as "our question," which we posed at the end of Part I: given the desubjectivation to which Bloom attests, can we think a politics that would not depend on a resubstantialisation of the subject? What would political polarization look like if we were to destitute both the identity of the insurgent *and* the resubjectivising pole of the "enemy"? Can we think a politics in which the subject is subject only of its own desubjectivation?

Paul says, 'let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called [*en tē klēsei he eklēthē*]. Art thou called being a slave? care not for it: but if mayest be free, use it rather' (1 Corinthians 7: 17–22 in Agamben, 2005b: 19). The elementary misunderstanding of this passage would be to see it as telling us to wait for the coming of the Messiah, to remain patient and docile, in the hope of a future redemption. On the contrary, the Pauline gesture consists precisely in *not sidestepping* the situation we find ourselves in. That there is no preliminary to

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[40] On this usage of the term "perceptual machine," see Moses Dubruška, "Preface," in Rafanell i Orra (2017: 18–20)

communism means that it is a potentiality in every situation, anywhere time takes form in a factual condition. This is the first point: "to remain" means to begin not from an ideal state of political action, the hallowed moment in which the time is "ripe", but from right where we are, from the factical condition in which we find ourselves.

What does it mean to "begin" from the calling we are given? How should we relate to the roles, identities, and social determinations to which this world has consigned us?

Paul describes the messianic event as follows:

> brethren, time contracted itself, the rest is, that even those having wives may be as not [*hōs mē*] having, and those weeping as not weeping, and those rejoicing as not rejoicing, and those buying as not possessing, and those using the world as not using it up. For passing away is the figure of this world. But I wish you to be without care. (1 Cor. 7: 29–32 in Agamben, 2005b: 23)

Messianic life lives its worldly vocations "as not". The *hōs mē* does not oppose one referent, predicate or ideology with another ("anarchism" versus "capitalism"), nor does it 'entail substituting a less authentic vocation with a truer vocation' (2005b: 23). Nor, finally, does it refuse to speak, remaining in silent withdrawal from all reference to itself or to the world, as if in contemplation of an obscure God awaiting us at the end of history. Instead, it induces a movement which allows the subject to place its predicates in *contact* with the operative time of its lived experience of the situation, the time they take to be constructed. At issue is an 'anaphoric gesture' that induces an 'immobile shifting' in our relation to our own identities (2005b: 22–23).[41] The term "immobility" should not mislead us: it signals not that nothing has occurred, but rather that what has occurred has not based itself on an ulterior or presupposed ground. If the *hōs mē* is immobile, this is because the messianic vocation has no external or particular content of its own. It does not construct a new political or mythic identity to replace the ones we are offered: it is 'nothing but the repetition of those same factical or juridical conditions' (2005b: 23).

The only way in which a 'movement *sur place'* can induce a change is if the situation in which it operates is already out-of-place, dis-located, outside of itself.

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[41] Cf. Agamben (2004: 121): It is a "question of thinking a flight that would imply no evasion, a movement on the spot, *in the situation itself*" (my emphasis).

As we have seen, since Bloom is nothing other than a dislocation of all identity, it is to this condition that the Pauline *hōs mē* responds. Through it, our vocation does not change; rather, a repetition takes place that introduces a difference in our relation to it, one that — by introducing a new perspective upon it, a *new evaluation* — 'works it from within and hollows it out, nullifying it in the very gesture of maintaining and dwelling in it' (2005b: 24). That a repetition is needed in order for this revocation to take place indicates the origin of the change: it is by re-attaching our factical condition to the singular evaluation of the meaning-potentials that pass between us and the world, that we succeed in *situating* the nothingness of our identities within the operative time of the world. It is by inhabiting our condition, by restoring (in thought) the operative time it takes to construct itself, that we 'revoke [our] condition from top to bottom' (ibid).

The *hōs mē* is the *becoming-situational,* the becoming-operative, the becoming-practice of the world. To 'inhabit' is not to negate our condition, but, first of all, to exhibit the always-partial and incomplete operations on which its power relies, and thereby to win a *point of entry* (a "small door') into our historical epoch through which a strategic perspective can be taken up. If *kairos* is nothing other than "seized *chronos"*, its role cannot be to exhibit a deeper or "truer" meaning to us, but to allow our non-coincidence with our ascriptive identities to be *felt* and affirmed. By allowing us to "dwell" in our condition, the *hōs mē* enacts a peculiar sort of relation, one which *distances* us from time-images of ourselves, by *de-distancing* us from the time of their construction.

While Agamben turns to medieval grammar for an explanation (2005b: 24), Marcello Tarì offers a fruitful example of this tensor in the context of the revolutionary tradition. On the one hand, militant revolutionary subjectivity will certainly not return the way it left — the exhaustion of the possibilities of our world also brings with it the exhaustion of the subject that struggled within this framework. However, as what Guattari called the 'winter years' of the 1980's and '90's demonstrated, such exhaustion can lead to the dangerous temptation to discard the problem of revolution *tout court,* to throw the baby out with the bathwater, ending up in a tacit apology for the status quo. Against this slippage toward reformism or quietism, Tarì points to the need simultaneously to assume *and* to nullify the identity of the revolutionary, to nullify it without distancing ourselves from it:

> Let's be careful to not pit ourselves *against* the militant, whose history deserves our respect. Instead, let us adopt the Pauline strategy of the "as not": militants are *as not* militants [...]. In the first place, this would

mean freeing those who live in that form from the obligation of being *someone*, or, what amounts to the same thing, to live *as if* they were something they are not, something never really present but positioned ahead of them as an exterior end. To live "as not" means for the militant to dissolve the spell that invests him in an *infinite task* and an *absolute delegation.* Mask and face can no longer be superimposed and separated at will, at least if we do not wish to repeat the tragedy of the professional revolutionaries […]. There is no need, therefore, to flee our vocation. Militancy, as the philosopher might say, can be "made use of". It must be placed in tension with revolutionary temporality, deactivating its inclination to become a tyrannical identity, a form separate from life, the conducting thread of a moral substance from which one proceeds by means of gestures and behaviour so easily separable from the subject who performs them. (Tarì, 2016: 8)

However, if an "exhibition" of the nullity of our identities were the only aim, deconstruction's deferral of all presence would be a satisfying strategy. This is not Agamben's view: the introduction of non-coincidence into chronological time through the restoration of its "contact" with operative time does not simply allow our factical identities to appear as the "masks" that they are; it also allows them to be seized upon, inhabited, and thereby *decided.* The messianic calling is not a perpetual deferral of decision, a distantiation of the subject from all identity.[42] On the contrary, by introducing a non-coincidence into the ascription of predicates to our life (worker, queer, anarchist, "terrorist", etc.), the *hōs mē* nullifies language's allusion to its own pre-existing ground, transposing our relation to these determinations onto a field of 'pure praxis' (2005b: 28). Nor should the 'revocation of every vocation' that 'nullifies the entire subject' be understood, in the fashion of contemporary left-communism, as a process of 'self-abolition' (2005b: 41). Instead of abolishing the subject, messianism transforms the experience of identification into a *problem* to be broached exclusively from within a situational strategy. When Agamben writes that the 'messianic vocation is not a right, nor does it furnish an identity', we may understand him as saying that *identity is never wider than its deployment within a situation,* where every situation refers to a field of operations in which we are called, not to stake a "claim" to legitimacy, but to take up a *position* (2005b: 41).

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[42] On the "thwarted messianism" of Derrida, see Agamben (2005b: 103).

Conclusion

How, in the process of deserting one's own ascriptive identity and vocation, does Agamben imagine an experience of community emerging among others? How does one pass from the messianic ethical gesture to a destituent politics? By way of conclusion, I would like to sketch four provisional traits of such a politics:

(i) From the asymmetry of messianic time within history flows an *asymmetrical model of conflict.* Just as we must be "in but not beholden to" history, where it becomes necessary to fight, we must fight obliquely, rather than head-on, and with a different idea of the meaning and stakes of war itself. For this reason, destituent partisanship does not confront the state directly, but only from a perspective of intimate exteriority. Instead of defining the community of resistance negatively through its opposition to its enemy, it is a matter of seeking a genuinely autonomous premise for collective life, an asymmetry between incommensurable ideas of life, of happiness, and of the meaning of collective power, and of discovering the *gestures* that permit us to inhabit them (1996: 59, 114). As Fred Moten recently put it, we must 'organize ourselves in relation to ourselves, before we organize ourselves in relation to them' (Moten, 2018). However, even once we do, the aim cannot be to seize the offices of power and to replace an illegitimate totality with a legitimate one, but to affirm the autonomous and positive value of the fragment, and to expand it outwards.

(ii) *Zones of inhabitation.* The messianic *klēsis* or "calling" does not negate existing law and social institutions in order to constitute new ones a moment later, but 'coincides completely and constitutively with their destitution' (2015b: 277). At the same time, once the violence that deactivates bourgeois society ceases to be conceived as 'maieutic', i.e. as resulting in a product or 'work', it loses its strictly negative or destructive character and becomes a process that we immediately *inhabit*.[43] If destitution is not the prelude to a future order, but the very means through which a common idea of life becomes liveable, than the existence of the messianic community cannot have the status of a substantive: it cannot be a factual event or 'state' that occurs at a given moment or at which we have finally 'arrived', but names the experiential process through which time is actively seized

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[43] On Agamben's earlier view of revolutionary violence as a destructive maieutic process of self-abolition, a perspective eclipsed and abandoned by the theory of destituent power, see Agamben (2009c). On the ethical significance of inhabiting and inhabitation, see Agamben (2019c): "To inhabit means to create, to conserve and intensify habits and customs, that is, ways of being" (my translation).

upon and constructed from fragment to fragment. Its modal exteriority vis-à-vis the reigning order is won not by abruptly suspending historical time but by *intensely* inhabiting it through non-coincidence, by moving along *another plane* of perception, informed by another idea of happiness and living.

(iii) *Shared perception.* As Agamben insists, if messianic communism cannot locate what is "common" between singular beings in an abstract ideological unity introduced from without, yet nor can it be premised on the 'free association' of a 'union of egoists' (thereby re-entrenching their separateness), the only alternative is to *displace the centrality of the subject altogether* (2005b: 32–33). It is not the individual's egoic desires, nor their ideological agreements that form the basis of a common plane of perception, but the *world* to which their perception attends and around which it is oriented. At the centre of the communist project lies a *shared perception of the world* that outstrips individuals, yet which exists only in the crossing and recrossing of their mutual encounter with each other, *in situ*. This cannot assume the status of an ideal form of political organization or society that we then attempt to realize in practice, but has the character of a *response* to the experience of potentiality harboured by our encounter with our situation, and with one another. If there is no communism without the existence of 'communes', the latter must be understood not as a factical institution or a "collective" *oikos* but as an ethical process through which diverse individuals come together and make a decision to *face the world* together, come what may. A communist world is nothing other than the *attentive gathering* or "composition" of convergent processes of desertion that allows them to co-exist across their singular differences in a mode of communion that Agamben calls 'exile' (2015b: 234–39).[44]

(iv). *Exile.* From a certain point of view, the concept of exile represents the pinnacle of the Homo Sacer series, since it explains how messianic community is able to reconcile the singular and the common. According to a first and more loose sense of the term, to *situate* politics is always to "exile" ourselves from the petrified nihilism of classical politics. For Agamben, such exile is not a renunciation of political life, but is in fact the point of departure for a new image of politics: 'exile from politics cedes its place to a politics of exile' (2015b: 326). However, in a more technical sense, exile names the process whereby the restoration of operative time at the individual level opens onto the plane of ethical composition with others. As we have seen, the messianic destitution of identity is the process through which we depose our historical vocations, press into our operative evaluations or "form of life", and remain stuck to them. Toward the

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[44] On the concept of 'composition' in territorial struggle, see Mauvaise Troupe (2018: Ch. 3).

end of *The Use of Bodies*, and following a neo-Platonic turn of phrase, Agamben will interpret this process as the "exile of one alone to one alone" [*phygè monou pros monon*], a process through which we become "inseparable from ourselves" (2015: 236).[45] The difficulty lies in understanding how becoming 'inseparable' from myself — i.e. from the impersonal evaluative *presence to the world* that configures the space of my consciousness — can form the basis of my cohesion with others. How does the messianic perceptual machine not collapse into a subjectivism or individualism? Here Agamben will engage in a delicate conceptual manoeuvre: on the one hand, he decomposes the notion of form-of-life into 'singular' points of entry ('side doors'), yet he *immediately* (i.e. without any mediating representation) links them to one another through what he calls 'contact':

> it is in a contact — that is, in a void of representation — and not in a relation that forms-of-life communicate. The 'alone by oneself' that defines the structure of every singular form-of-life also defines its community with the others. And it is this *thigein*, this contact that the juridical order and politics seek by all means to capture and represent in a relation. Western politics is, in this sense, constitutively 'representative', because it always already has to reformulate contact into the form of a relation. It will therefore be necessary to think politics as an intimacy unmediated by any articulation or representation: human beings, forms-of-life are in contact, but this is unrepresentable because it consists precisely in a representative void, that is, in the deactivation and inoperativity of every representation. To the ontology of non-relation and use there must correspond a non-representative politics.
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> 'Alone by oneself' is an expression of intimacy. We are together and very close, but between us there is not an articulation or a relation that unites us. We are united to one another in the form of our being alone. (2015b: 237)

What we share always departs from what is most singular in us, and never from the encompassing unity of a homogeneous condition. It is from the moment that

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[45] At an 'individual' level, this ethical movement of exile is characterized as an "intimacy without relation", since, having overturned our separation from the operative time that *we are,* from the evaluation of the liveable and the tolerable that envelops and develops itself in our contact with the world, there is precisely no sense in which we can speak of a "relation" between our form of life and ourselves — 'our' life is inseparable from our form of life.

we refuse to be separated from our singular *form of life* that we pass through the side door that allows us to compose a *form-of-life* with others. It is precisely what is singular in us that most calls to be shared, since this is never what belongs to me "peculiarly", but what 'attaches me to the world, and which is therefore not reserved for me, [having] nothing to do with a private property nor with what is supposed to define an identity' (Anonymous, 2003). At the limit, "what there is to be shared" is not a "what" at all, since it is not an "X" detached from us, but our *way* of entering into contact with the world. The commune in exile proceeds through the sharing of our own singular mode of coming-into-presence. It is only by assuming this singular "how" of our existence that we come into contact with the shared power of encounter with other beings, allowing a compositional matrix to unfold between us that will nonetheless be destroyed by any effort to "constitute" or represent it.

There is no integral communist life, nor was there ever: communism is the free play of forms-of-life, from the point at which the latter manage to take on a local and experimental *consistency without constituency*. What Agamben's ethics offers us is not a new social order, but a side door by which we flee the disaster of the present course of the world. The result is not a 'chronologically more originary unity, nor a new and superior unity, but something like a *way out.* […]. [I]f one reaches it and holds oneself there in it, the machine can no longer function' (2015b: 239).

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