The Kingdom and the Glory: The Articulated Inoperativity of Power

William Watkin[*]

Abstract

The starting point of this essay is the internal difference in the concept of power, the issue of authority and its relation to the act. The authority operates as both the assumed perfect coincidence of act and law, and as the pure externality of authority to law. This complex structure is the real essence of power in the West, government, whose main signature, *The Kingdom and the Glory* will go on to argue, has been that of *oikonomia* or economy. Finally, the paper will examine the notion of inoperativity, concept that reveals the total structure of the system. What we can say however is that until the signatures of power are themselves revealed in their inoperativity, the oft promised key to the totality of the *Homo Sacer* project, remains unintelligible. It is for this reason that *The Kingdom and the Glory* may come to be seen not only as one of Agamben's most important statements, but as the fundamental work of political philosophy of our age.

Keywords: power, authority, law, government, inoperativity.

Resumen

El punto de partida de este ensayo es la diferencia interna en el concepto de poder, la problemática de la autoridad y su relación con el acto. La autoridad opera a la vez como la coincidencia perfecta supuesto de acto y ley, y como la pura externalidad de autoridad a la ley. Esta compleja es la esencia real del poder en occidente, el gobierno, cuya signatura ha sido la economía, como *El reino y la Gloria* defenderá. Finalmente, el ensayo examinará la noción de inoperatividad, concepto que revela la estructura total del sistema. Podemos decir que hasta que las signaturas de poder son ellas mismas reveladas en su

* Brunel University, London
william.watkin@brunel.ac.uk

inoperatividad, la prometida clave de totalidad del proyecto de *Homo sacer* permanece indistinguible. Por eso el *Reino y la Gloria* no sólo es uno de los libros más importantes de Agamben, sino la obra fundamental de la filosofía política de nuestro tiempo.

Palabras clave: poder, autoridad, ley, gobierno, inoperatividad.

On Method

The Signature of All Things (2008) must already rank as one of Agamben's essential works, not least because it acts as a permanent corrective to the excessive amount of misreadings around his purported misuse of historical phenomena[1]. The text is divided into three parts which constitute the elements of a single system he calls philosophical archaeology. These elements are defined as paradigm, signature and archaeology itself, specifically the moment of arising or *archē*. Drastically summarising we can define paradigm as the name of the particular mode and function of 'historical' examples. The paradigm has a specific nature: "it is a singular object that, standing equally for all others of the same class, defines the intelligibility of the group of which it is a part and which, at the same time, it constitutes"[2]. Signature describes the mode of the distribution of paradigms through time and across discourses, and again has a specific nature in that it is suspended between signifier and signified, so that rather than being a sign as such it is "what makes a sign intelligible"[3]. It does this by determining a sign's existence through its actual usage in terms of what it makes possible to be said. Finally, philosophical archaeology captures the purpose of the overall method, specifically in terms of its relation to the *archē* or moment of arising of a historical composite, and how this is only accessible through the contemporary moment of its being accessed (the debt here being to Benjamin's related concepts of now-time, the constellation and dialectic at a standstill). Thus at the very end of the study, correcting another common criticism of Agamben's dependence on historical 'discoveries' and origins, Agamben explains that the *archē* is "not a given or a substance, but a field of bipolar historical currents stretched between anthropogenesis and history, between the moment of arising and becoming, between an archi-past and a present"[4]. The field of bipolar currents goes by many names in Agamben's work, but due to certain key historical precedents

1 G. Agamben, *The Signature of All Things: On Method*, Stanford, Ed. Stanford University Press, 2009, p. 9.

2 Ibidem, p. 17.

3 Ibidem, p. 42.

4 Ibidem, p. 110.

(Stoicism, Scepticism, Kant, Hegel and Deleuze) I give preference to indifference, one of his most oft-employed synonyms along with indistinction, indiscernibility and, in the most recent work, inoperativity.

The definition of method comes just one year after the publication of what will surely be come to be seen as another of Agamben's major works, not least because *it* acts as a developmental corrective to some of the limitations of Agamben's most famous work to date, *Homo Sacer* (1995). Perhaps the first thing to note is that *The Kingdom and the Glory* (2007) is significant because it is the first fully worked through demonstration of the method in its entirety. This is not to suggest that the method was not already in operation throughout the earlier work. Indeed, Agamben first mentions the idea of a philosophical philology in *Infancy and History* (1978)[5], where the importance of the paradigm is also addressed[6], and speaks at length about the example in *The Coming Community* (1990)[7]. Yet it is also true that in *Homo Sacer* there is little by way of consideration of signatures, which is significant particularly because *The Kingdom and the Glory* is much more dependent on the logic of the signature than that of the paradigm, even if the two are in effect impossible to parse. In keeping with this, although *The Kingdom and the Glory* presents a theory of signatures more than paradigms, indeed it restricts itself to but two paradigms in the opening chapter, the method makes it clear from the onset that it is the logic of the paradigm that is of crucial importance, especially if we wish to understand the role of indifference and how this relates to inoperativity.

As we saw a paradigm operates with a peculiar logic. It is an object which stands in for other elements of the same group in a manner normally defined as impossible in logic, at least until Badiou's radical application of Cantor's set theory to ontology through the differentiation of set membership versus inclusion[8], in that it composes the group it is also a part of. The reason this functions in Agamben however is that membership of a set is not an ontological definition in the normal sense, but the making operative of an intelligibility. As he says "Paradigms establish a broader problematic context that they both constitute and make intelligible"[9]. Perhaps the best way to define this is that a paradigm is not an object defined by belonging to a set, but

5 G. Agamben, *Infancy and History: On the Destruction of Experience*, trans. Liz Heron, London, Ed. Verso, 1993, pp. 159-167.

6 Ibidem, pp. 119-137.

7 G. Agamben, *The Coming Community*, Trans. Michael Hardt, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1993, pp. 9-12.

8 A. Badiou, *Being and Event*, trans. Oliver Feltham, London, Ed. Continuum, 2005, pp. 81-83 and G. Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen, Stanford, Ed. Stanford University Press, 1998, pp. 24-25.

9 G. Agamben, *The Signature of All Things: On Method*, op. cit., p. 17.

a process of composition, along with other paradigms, that together come to be seen as making a set intelligible in two ways. First, in an ontological sense, they make-up the set as without these paradigms taken together there would be no set. Second, they also sanction the set, not in terms of what can be said about it, its definition through reference to its composite parts, but entirely in terms of what the set allows to be said. A set then is not a definable object but an ongoing discursive process of intelligibility or sayability, what Agamben in his earlier work called communicability[10].

By way of an example Agamben likens this logic to Goethe's term *Urphänomen* referring to a modality of the organisation of experience that renounces Aristotelian genus-species patterns in favour of a system where a point stands in equal relation to all other points in every direction, through the placement of one existent alongside another, and indeed every other (what Nancy calls reticulation)[11]. Analogy, Agamben explains, can be taken as another name for the paradigm or "the place where analogy lives in perfect equilibrium beyond the opposition between generality and particularity"[12]. He then further develops this in reference to Melandri's theories, which, Agamben explains, show how analogy goes against the law of contradiction A or B, which excludes the third or middle, presenting instead the law of neither A nor B. "In other words," he concludes, "analogy intervenes in the dichotomies of logic (particular/universal; form/content; lawfulness/exemplarity; and so on) not to take them up into a higher synthesis but to transform them into a force field traversed by polar tensions […]"[13]. It is certainly the case that we are more than familiar with tertiary and intermediary logics at this late stage in the philosophy game. Yet, Agamben wonders, what is the actual status of the third, which stands in a particular relation to what it is not, being not a third species within a general genus, but something like the paradigm that in belonging to a set also defines a set without exceeding the set? He is led to conclude: "The analogical third is attested here above all through the disidentification and neutralization of the first two, which now become indiscernible. The third is this indiscernibility, and if one tries to grasp it by means of bivalent caesurae, one necessarily runs up against an undecidable"[14].

Analogy, paradigm, disindentification-neutralization, indiscernibility, undecidability; these are just some of the names of this characteristic element

10 G. Agamben, *Potentialities*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen, Stanford. Ed. Stanford University Press, 1999, pp. 27-38; Watkin, W.: *The Literary Agamben: Adventures in Logopoiesis,* London, Ed. Continuum, 2010, pp. 48-51 and pp. 54-57.

11 In J.-L. Nancy, *The Sense of the World*, trans. Jeffrey S, Librett, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1997, p. 40.

12 G. Agamben, *The Signature of All Things: On Method*, op. cit., p. 30.

13 Ibidem, p. 20.

14 Ibidem.

of Agamben's modality of thought. They are all, in this way, paradigmatic examples of a set constitutive of a fundamental late-metaphysical category that is the basis of all of Agamben's philosophy, namely indifference. Paradigms are not historical facts but historical emphases or examples available to us only at certain times, which reveal the relationship between a part of a set and the composition of the set. First, to give us a better vision of the set, but second, and this part is crucial, through the problem of analogical disindentification of whole and part, common and proper, to decompose the basis for the set while at the same time attacking the metaphysical assumptions around common and proper[15]. Paradigms do not develop our historical understanding therefore, they reveal and decompose it. This critical process of decomposing an opposition is what I mean by indifference, which one must differentiate from a Derridean deconstruction of presence through the *différance* of metaphysical oppositions, and it is indifference, often under the guise of suspension, indiscernibility, indistinction and inoperativity, specifically the politics of indifference, that is of concern in *The Kingdom and the Glory*.

Auctoritas and *Potestas:* The Complete Articulation of Power

To say *The Kingdom and the Glory* is an advance on *Homo Sacer* suggests something about the earlier text lags behind the later work, which is not the case, rather what I mean is that *Homo Sacer* was never designed to be read in isolation. At this point, more than a decade later, due to the full availability of the method by the time it was composed, it can be asserted without controversy that *The Kingdom and the Glory* (*Homo Sacer* II, *2*) is a significant corrective development of *Homo Sacer* I, *1* in at least three senses. The first is that it presents an articulation of power missing from the earlier study of sovereign power, an articulation that not only suggests that power is two-fold but that power is not merely to be presented as articulated into two contesting elements, kingdom and government, but that said articulation defines the operativity of power. The second is that the use of paradigms in *Homo Sacer*, often its most controversial moments, is superseded to some degree by the development of the theory of signatures in this later work. In that the method is made up of an interpenetration of paradigmatic logic, signatory distribution and archaeological messianic reconstruction, the lack of any mention of the signature in *Homo Sacer* is certainly a limitation. This is particularly the case in relation to the later work where the signatures of power in the form of *oikonomia*, secularization, glory, order and so on,

15 In relation to the example and linguistic reference in G. Agamben, *The Coming Community*, op. cit., p. 9.

present a much more complex and radical formation than those to be found in the paradigms of the earlier piece. The third and final difference is the development of the Agambenian method of indifference. Indistinction, one of the key synonyms for indifference in Agamben's work, is central to *Homo Sacer* of course, but by the time of the publication of *The Kingdom and the Glory*, the centrality of indifference to the method is fully developed. By this I mean specifically the suspension of historically imposed oppositions wherein one element plays the role of the common, the other that of the proper, and thus where the common element then functions as sovereign foundation of the singularities it makes intelligible but, without which, it itself would be entirely unintelligible (the first clear definition of indifference in Agamben, to be found in *The Coming Community*). But I also mean that through this method of indifference, while the complete articulation of power becomes available to view through our current access to the history of its operations and the recent period of indiscernibility between its two key elements, kingdom and government already impossible to discern from *Homo Sacer*, the real purpose of the text is the role of inoperativity as such, specifically through the signature of glory. In that *The Kingdom and the Glory* takes us, in its final pages, towards a possible suspension of inoperativity, it marks a significant advance in Agamben's use of indifference, constituting in effect the inoperativity or indifferentiation of indifference as such.

Whatever one's opinions as to the particular relation of the two works, what is clear is that they are articulated, primarily, by *State of Exception* (2003). In the preface to *The Kingdom and the Glory* Agamben contends that the project of *Homo Sacer* was always a genealogy of power and in this sense he never intended it to be read in isolation as his theory of politics, as came to be the case for many. To better illustrate this point as to the development of a project over time involving numerous volumes, he then concedes that *State of Exception* (2003) is particularly significant in this regard, in that its consideration of the correlation between *auctoritas* and *potestas* for the first time clearly presents the division of power, which he names "the double structure of the governmental machine". If the theme of power is actually its articulation through an economy, then *State of Exception* operates as the economy of the two extremes of power presented in *Homo Sacer* and *The Kingdom and the Glory*. It is this double structure or articulation that first concerns us and that in *The Kingdom and the Glory* "takes the form of the articulation between Kingdom and Government"[16]. The necessity of the articulation of power arises in response to the simple question: "Why is power

16 G. Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory: For a Theological Genealogy of Economy and Government*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011, p. xi.

split?"[17], it is not perhaps even clear in *Homo Sacer* that it is, and Agamben's answer that "the world is governed through the coordination of two principles, the *auctoritas* (that is, a power without actual execution) and the *potestas* (that is, a power that can be exercised); the Kingdom and the Government"[18]. Aside from the articulation of power as original thesis for *The Kingdom and the Glory*, it is also a significant development in relation to *Homo Sacer* which, although it presents the relation of power to the double articulation of inside and outside as regards the imposed division of *zoē* and *bios*, does not openly concede that power is divided into two elements. If it appears in *Homo Sacer* that the double articulation of inside and outside produces power which then grounds the political, *The Kingdom and the Glory* radically modifies this claim by showing how government effectively produces the power which grounds it, making the kingdom (sovereign power) operative through the inoperativity of the power of glory. If this is proven to be the case then *Homo Sacer* is a long way from Agamben's final word on power and politics, and just as power is articulated then so too is Agamben's genealogy of power.

This discrepancy in *Homo* Sacer makes *State of Exception* all the more pertinent. Ostensibly the text presents a genealogy of the state of exception structure from Roman law on, but it is the concluding chapter of the study that particularly concerns us dealing, as it does, with two designations of power in Roman law, *potestas*, power granted by the will of the people, and *auctoritas*, which we might call the power of authorisation. Agamben traces the roots of the term *auctoritas* to two seemingly contending definitions. On the one hand *auctoritas* means someone who augments an act through the granting of authority: ratification. On the other it means to create rather than augment what already exists. Agamben then notes that for the Greco-Roman world the definition of creation was never *ex nihilo*, a concept we moderns have added to the canon, but always involved putting a stamp on an already existent but formless matter or substance. This means that every creation is a co-creation and he cites historical sources which confirm that authorisation is never sufficient unto itself but must authorise something. Here then *auctoritas* takes on a double existence which is not a contradiction but entirely within its remit as a signature as we shall see. In the ideal act of law there are two subjects, one endowed with *auctoritas* and the other the acting agent. An agent cannot act without authority, but authority alone cannot act. This combination is the perfect act of coincidence between authority and act. However, if there is no such perfect coincidence, in other words where the authority of the act is not self-evident and self-authoring, (which indeed it only is in the acts of gods

17 Ibidem, p. 100.
18 Ibidem, p. 103.

and dictators) then *auctoritas* will be applied from the outside to ratify the act. This being the case, Agamben wonders where the authority of the *auctor* comes from, a question which sows the seeds of the study into kingdom and glory to come.

Tracing the genealogy of *auctoritas* Agamben concludes: "The juridical system of the West appears as a double structure, formed by two heterogeneous yet coordinated elements: one that is normative and juridical in the strict sense (which we can for convenience inscribe under the rubric *potestas*) and one that is anomic and metajuridical (which we call by the name *auctoritas*)"[19]. The normative element needs *auctoritas* to be applied, yet *auctoritas* can only assert itself by suspending the *potestas*. The state of exception is a device for articulating and holding together "the two aspects of the juridico-political machine by instituting a threshold of undecidability…between life and law, between *auctoritas* and *potestas*"[20]. Agamben calls this dialectics a founding fiction. More interestingly for us it shows that the operativity of sovereignty is the real definition of its power, and that this operativity is based on a functional indifference between two structures of power, that of governmental and juridical power. Indeed we can concede that such an articulated power is by the far the norm in our lives, and that the founding authority for every norm does not in fact precede the norm but is created as a founding fiction from governance as such. Government, it can be said, articulates its own foundation in sovereignty, which it disguises in the bizarre garb and obscure insignia of glory.

At this point then we can conclude on power as follows. Power is divided, first of all, into two opposing elements, one common the other proper. Second, conditioning power founds government and yet cannot found anything alone: there is no authority without act, no law without fact. Third, authority operates as both the assumed perfect coincidence of act and law, and as the pure externality of authority to law. It is thus, in keeping with the logic of *Homo Sacer*, intrinsically extrinsic or better included because it can be excluded. Finally fourth, the exclusion of power is what founds the legitimacy of act by assuming authority as foundation to, creative of, act. Yet no authority exists prior to act. Act is the granting of power to authority, or the ratification of the agency of its own self-ratification. This complex structure of division, distribution and co-mutual, ratifying foundation is the real essence of power in the West, government, whose main signature, *The Kingdom and the Glory* will go on to argue, has been that of *oikonomia* or economy. Thus *Homo Sacer* concerns one articulation of indifferentiation,

19 G. Agamben, *State of Exception*, trans. Kevin Attell, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2005, pp. 85-86.

20 Ibidem, p. 86.

sovereignty and bare life, as a first archaeology of power, but it is incomplete as it only reveals the operation of one signature of power, *auctoritas*, whereas the real seat of power is that which produces authority as its founding fiction: government. No understanding of Agamben's politics is complete without a full understanding of power as first, articulated of two opposing elements, kingdom and government, and second that of power as such being, essentially, the process of this articulation.

From the Paradigm to the Signature

We can summarise the main argument of *The Kingdom and the Glory* as follows. First, political power is always divided into sovereign and governmental power. In addition, that through the signature of *oikonomia* we find a "laboratory"[21] for observing the governmental machine. And finally, that the true distribution of power in the West is to be found in the articulation between *oikonomia* and glory, "between power as government…and power as ceremonial and liturgical reality"[22]. It is, in fact, the final point that is the main aspect of the total study and reflective of this is the final, dense chapter on the "Archaeology of Glory" which finds, in the paradox of the glory owed to God and the acts of glorification on earth, the key to the overall aim of this genealogy and Agamben's politics: the rendering inoperative of a political system based on founding sovereign violence and distributive and regulative acts of governance. It is to this final consideration of the inoperativity of power's articulation that our study will move, but to arrive there we will pass through the main moments of the book in a systematic fashion to consider the role of the signature, the machine-like process of economy, and finally the inoperativity of glory.

Commencing with the role of the signature, we see that the first chapter of the book reveals a key structural difference between *Homo Sacer* and this later work. Entitled "The Two Paradigms" it considers the operativity of power in Western politics through the divisive articulation of two paradigms, "antinomical but functionally related". These paradigms derive from Christian theology. The first we are already very familiar with, coming from political theology it is the theory of sovereign power which founds "the transcendence of sovereign power on the single God", in other words the landscape of *Homo Sacer*. The other is the real subject of the book, an economic theology "which replaces this transcendence with the idea of an *oikonomia*, conceived

21 G. Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory: For a Theological Genealogy of Economy and Government*, cit., p. xi.

22 Ibidem, p. xii.

as an immanent ordering"[23]. The first paradigm makes intelligible political philosophy and modern theories of sovereign power, the second makes intelligible modern biopolitics and the "triumph of economy and government over every other aspect of social life…"[24].

At this early stage we must clarify two of the recurrent terms in this essay: signature and operativity/intelligibility. In *The Signature of All Things* Agamben provides us with a tripartite method primarily the result of a critical engagement with Foucault's mature work, especially *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. These three elements are, as we saw, paradigmatic logic, signatory distribution and a messianic philosophical archaeology. As, after the first chapter, *The Kingdom and the Glory* curtails a reliance on paradigms we are at liberty here to concentrate on signature and archaeology (sometimes called genealogy). The concept of the signature originates in Foucault's earlier work *The Order of Things* (1966), but it is the concept of statement in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1969)[25], which, for Agamben at least, most powerfully expresses this agency of distribution. To reiterate, the signature has two elements. First, it dictates how paradigms are transmitted or distributed through time and across discourses through a process of historical inevitability. Second, it indicates how concepts are rendered intelligible through this distribution. This second element is taken, effectively, from Foucault's concept of the episteme, which is not a world view but rather the total set of all relations that come together at specific periods to allow such things as the concept of a world view, the concept of a discipline, and the concept of a formal system to occur at all[26]. As Agamben explains: "the episteme does not define what is knowable in a given period, but what is implicit in the fact that a given discourse or epistemological figure exists at all"[27]. Citing Foucault, Agamben draws our attention away from what exists, in favour of the simple fact *that* it exists or rather that it *can* exist. This then is what is meant by the intelligibility of any sign, not what it means but that it can exist as part of discursive, meaningful formations. This capacity to exist, the ultimate ontology of potential, has two elements. In the first instance a signature must be measured by its sustained presence or existence, the second that it is part of a sanctioned discourse. That these two elements co-implicate each other is what Agamben means when he says the signature is suspended, in a state of indifference, between word and thing. The signature then is not a

23 Ibidem, p. 1.

24 Ibidem, p. 1.

25 M. Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge,* trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith, London, Routledge, 1972, pp. 79-87.

26 Ibidem, pp. 3-17.

27 G. Agamben, *The Signature of All Things: On Method*, cit., p. 15.

sign but the suspension (indifference) of the dynamic in the sign between the semiotic, the functionality and actual material presence of a denotation, and the semantic, what this refers to.

This is best explained in relation to the theory of the Signature of All Things or the ancient system of arcane healing where the resemblance of an object say to a bodily part is the secret signature of its healing potentials. This theory interests both Agamben and Foucault[28] because in it every sign is made up of two degrees of signifier, its neutral signifier and its secret meaningful signature, and two degrees of signified, the object it refers to as sign and the knowledge it releases as signature. Melandri's interpretation makes this most clear when in writing on *The Order of Things* he calls the signature in Foucault's work a "sign within a sign; it is the index that in the context of a given semiology univocally makes reference to a given interpretation…that it indicates, by means of the sign's making, the code with which it has to be deciphered"[29]. This is what we mean by the intelligibility-operativity of the signature. It is something in a sign that does not carry a specific meaning of its own, when a signature moves across discourses it retains the same semiotic and semantic characteristics it ever had as a sign, but is the secret mark of how meaning systems work. That such and such a sign can work in this discourse and in another discourse or in another era without semiotic or semantic alteration, allows us to see over time what remains sanctioned in terms of intelligibility (not least that we retain a language in common and a commonality of discursive norms). In a nutshell it shows us what one can say and be understood as saying such a thing, and in so doing reveals the limits of discursive sayability. This is what we take to be the operativity of signatures.

With this clear sense of the importance of the signature to a messianic historiography we can now return to *The Kingdom and the Glory*. As wilful miscomprehension has been, in the past, rather typical of rapid responses to Agamben's work, let us make clear from the outset that the argument of the book is not that political economy derives from theological economy through a process of secularization. This would be to reproduce the usual 'world view' arguments in this field and further obfuscate the truth as to what makes power operative, meaning we would never access the possibility of its inoperativity (the overall aim of Agamben's messianic political theory). Rather, as Agamben makes clear early on, secularization is not a historical process wherein theological concepts become profaned, but is a signature that allows theological principles and profane ones to enter into a relationship of co-founding intelligibility: "the thesis according to which the economy could

28 M. Foucault, *The Order of Things,* London, Routledge, 1970, pp. 25-29.

29 Melandri cited in G. Agamben, *The Signature of All Things: On Method*, cit., p. 59.

be a secularized theological paradigm acts retroactively on theology itself, since it implies that from the beginning theology conceives divine life and the history of humanity as an *oikonomia*…"[30]. This being the case theology was always already economic and did not become economic later through the inevitability of the history of secularization. He adds that secularization does not reveal "an identity of substance between theology and modernity," but rather "concerns a particular strategic relation that marks political concepts and refers them back to their theological origin. In other words, secularization is not a concept but a signature […]"[31].

Signatory distribution presents a radically different theory of historical progression and influence than normal historiography, a logic which Agamben usefully explains as follows: "The theological signature operates here as a sort of trompe l'oeil in which the very secularization of the world becomes the mark that identifies it as belonging to a divine oikonomia"[32]. This not only presents a clear demarcation of the method in its full realisation, clearly missing from *Homo Sacer*, but also makes a strong correction of the earlier text in emphasising that the issue of power is not sovereignty but *oikonomia*, allowing Agamben to conclude that the real issue of Western politics is "not sovereignty, but government" and that the real failure of political theory has been the designation of government "as mere execution of a general will and law." This miscomprehension of government has resulted in a history of political thought entirely unable to see and thus think governance, a history which is "nothing but the progressive coming to light of a substantial untruth of the primacy of legislative power and the consequent irreducibility of government to mere execution"[33].

Thus we can now present the major development of the work: the division and distribution of sovereign power through the process of government as the very basis of the Western conception of power in the paradox of a theological economy or the operation of God's power on the earth. We can also indicate the central consonance between the archaeological method and power as articulation. The signature of secularization does not simply show how a conception of economy moves and mutates through time. Rather, our present moment of economy is made accessible through its origins in theological economy by virtue of the Greek concept of *oikonomia*, only in as much as these origins themselves are made accessible for the first time by our present situation. So we can say that secularization makes possible its origins in

30 G. Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory: For a Theological Genealogy of Economy and Government*, cit., p. 3.

31 Ibidem, p. 4.

32 Ibidem, p. 4.

33 Ibidem, p. 276.

divine economy by a retrospective gesture of founding precedence wherein theological economy is only possible as the origin of profane economy because profane economy allows this to be an operative structure of meaning. Thus even the logic of philosophical archaeology must submit to the law of the signature, revealing the final point here that a signature marks a process of knowledge formation and distribution both forward and backwards through time. Government is not the endpoint of sovereign power revealed by the continuing signatures of *oikonomia* and secularization, rather government as much founds sovereign power by designating itself as the endpoint of said power, as it is founded by sovereign power. The two paradigms co-found, co-implicate, co-distribute and co-suspend each other; and a signature such as secularization merely reveals the details of this process.

Oikonomia: The Signatory Praxis of Articulating Co-mutual Co-intelligibility

Zartaloudis presents such an excellent consideration of the term *oikonomia*[34] that we do not need to dwell on the detail of the genealogy of this term too much, especially as, although this is the named interest of the book, for our purposes *oikonomia* is merely a signatory process or machine to arrive at glory, the signature of the inoperativity of all things powerful. Thus we need only say that *oikonomia*, origin of the modern term economy, means to the Greeks administration of the house, as opposed to that of the city. Good economy is taken by the Greeks to mean good household administration. That said, the *oikos* or home was a complex zone for the Greeks involving not just the family but an overlay of complex relations which Aristotle, being Aristotle, subdivides into relations between master and slave, father and children, and husband and wife. Looked at from a Foucauldian perspective we can already see that, in the home, masculine power is in a constant process of becoming, or of constant shifts of enunciative positioning (master, father, husband) These differing relations are linked by an administrative paradigm that is not epistemic: "in other words, it is a matter of activity that is not bound to a system of rules [...] This activity rather implies decisions and orders that cope with problems that are each time specific and concern the functional order (*taxis*) of the different parts of the *oikos*"[35]. Agamben then closes on this definition by admitting that it is essentially a pragmatic model for the signature of operativity: "*oikonomia* designates a practice and a non-

34 T. Zartaloudis, *Giorgio Agamben: Power, Law and the Uses of Criticism*, London, Taylor &Francis, 2010, pp. 56-65.

35 G. Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory: For a Theological Genealogy of Economy and Government*, cit., pp. 17-18.

epistemic knowledge that should be assessed only in the context of the aims that they pursue […]"[36].

Agamben now traces how the term is transposed into Christianity particularly through the relation of *oikonomia* to good rhetoric, a classic example of the signatory process where the sign retains the same meanings of order and division, but in an entirely different sanctioning of discursive context. The Greek theory of home economics allows a group of subjects to say something about Christian ideas on rhetoric. Here the sense of *oikonomia* as mere divisive order is made more sophisticated as it designates order in terms of choice and analysis of topics. This then means that as the signature *oikonomia* migrates from Greek to Christian culture, it is able to take on a new intelligibility as the divine plan of salvation, a 'meaning' that was not available before as it could not be sanctioned or understood in the previous context. At this point Agamben develops the signatory process by explaining that with *oikonomia* in its various different manifestations in different discursive formations, there is not a transformation of the sense of the word "but rather a gradual analogical extension of its denotation"[37], and further that it is the relative stability of the sense of the word that allows for its extension into new areas of denotation. That the term has a consistency of meaning means it can develop an almost unlimited universe of references and be said in any number of different senses, whilst remaining intelligible and without affecting the meaning of the sign. Even when the signature reaches a point of radical indistinction, this is not a problem of the meaning of the term, but a structural mode pertaining to a crisis in the field of denotative conflicts which become, over time, unsustainable.

We now enter into one of the major historical observations of the work. Agamben considers a significant problem for theology as regards Gnosticism and the relation between God the Father and God the Son. The assumption of a Trinitarian model was initially to resolve the inherent threat of the Gnostic model, specifically how God can be complete in himself and also exist in material and limited form on earth. This alone is the basic structure of power and governance that we are concerned with. To solve this problem the holy trinity was rendered operative as a paradigm from the signatory sanction of divine economy, engendering new problems, notably: How could the unity of God and son be reconciled with the new Trinitarian model? It is Athenagoras who takes up the basic meaning of *oikonomia* as activity and confers on it the additional status of praxis for a purpose, but also he who considers the *diaresis* between unity and trinity in terms of *oikonomia*. This establishes

36 Ibidem, p. 19.
37 Ibidem, p. 20.

a very particular structural dynamic for *oikonomia*, which is also the more general logic of the signatory method as such. Through a wide variety of theological texts the signature of economy becomes that of the "harmonic composition of the threefold divine activity in a single 'symphony'"[38], meaning that economy as ordered arrangement is that which "articulates the divine being into a trinity and, at the same time, preserves and 'harmonizes' it into a unity"[39].

A citation from Hippolytus is revealing here presenting the following logic. The Father is one, but he is two persons, Father and Son, and then there is a third, the Holy Spirit. The third mediates between Father and Son, first in that the Father gives orders which are performed by the logos revealed in the Son. Then the Son, through belief, is accorded to the Father as the one who performs the Father's will. In other words economy, the Holy Spirit, is a doubly mediating articulation that does not actually reconcile Trinitarian and Gnostic theology but solves the age-old theological problem of how God's will is actuated on the earth without undermining all the elements of God's power, such as omniscience, atemporality, the will of good resulting in the existence of evil etc. We can translocate the theology here by reconsidering the problem in terms of its signatory presence in the philosophical paradigms of conditioned and unconditioned. The question for philosophy is, as ever, how can the unconditioned operate as the condition of the conditioned by remaining unconditioned, but in such a way that it can have a relationality with the conditioned? I would articulate this model as the 1-3-2-3-1 model, which is the fictional presentation of power (1)-administration (3)-governance (2)-administration (3)-power (1). In fact, the model is better presented as 2-3-1-3-2 in that, as we increasingly see, governance founds its founding power through the signatory action of economy.

The 1-3-2 or 2-3-1 model is repeated several times in the theological texts that compose the large majority of this work. Thus later in relation to Aquinas we have his logic that: "Things are ordered insofar as they have a specific relation among themselves, but this relation is nothing other than the expression of their relation to the divine end. And, vice versa, things are ordered insofar as they have a certain relation to God, but this relation expresses itself only by means of the reciprocal relation of things. The only content of the transcendent order is the immanent order, but the meaning of the immanent order is nothing other than the relation to the transcendental end"[40]. This conception of order as relation is repeated several times in this chapter, specifically through a reading of the Aristotelian concept of taxis

38 Ibidem, p. 39.
39 Ibidem.
40 Ibidem, p. 87.

which Agamben opposes to what is separated and what is for itself, which, he says "decidedly inscribes the concept of order in the sphere of the category of relation […]"[41]. Adding Heidegger into the mix Agamben is then able to abstract the maxim that "Order is the theoretical apparatus that allows us to think the relation between the two objects"[42], before realising that the "reciprocal coordination" of transcendence and immanence, which is after all the topic of the book, matches precisely the task of splitting metaphysics in two, followed by the attempt to then keep the two parts together in a dialectic, relational construct (the fundamental critique of metaphysics to be found on every page of every major work by Agamben). "Yet the aporia lies in the fact that order (that is, a figure of relation) becomes the way in which the separate substance is present and acts in the world"[43]. It is these observation that lead Agamben to the conclusion that order as such is an "empty concept…a signature" that "produces a displacement of the privileged place of ontology from the category of substance to the categories of relation and praxis; this displacement is perhaps medieval thought's most important contribution to ontology"[44].

We have then a specific division of division, presenting two orders of division, substantial separation, Father and Son, and economic articulation Father (Spirit) Son. This is expressed in Tertullian as while there is no substantial difference between Father and Son, there is an articulation of difference in terms of their "economic disposition". Agamben further contextualises this explaining that substance is a single reality articulated into innumerable individualities and that in this light economy always forms a single field of heterogeneity which is substantially one, and therefore whose heterogeneity "does not concern being and ontology, but rather action and praxis"[45]. The trinity is nothing other than the praxis of divine being or how God's will, which is eternal, complete and atemporal, orders his earthly kingdom, which is limited, incomplete and determined by a genesis and a destiny. Over time this comes to be called the economy of the mystery of God's will but the mystery is of a specific nature. What is patently not obscure is what God wants or wills; rather it is the economy of his will on earth that is mysterious, "the very praxis by means of which God arranges the divine life […] and the world of creatures […]"[46]. Or, to put it in other terms, God's

41 Ibidem, p. 82.
42 Ibidem, p. 83.
43 Ibidem.
44 Ibidem, pp. 87-88.
45 Ibidem, p. 41.
46 Ibidem, p. 50.

mystery consists in the relation between sovereign power and governance with which we commenced by considering in relation to *auctoritas* and *potestas*.

The signatory role of *oikonomia* then "makes possible a reconciliation in which a transcendent God, who is both one and triune at the same time, can–while remaining transcendent–take charge of the world and found an immanent praxis of government whose supermundane mystery coincides with the history of humanity"[47], specifically in terms of fate, providence and redemption. This vision has led to the assumption that *oikonomia* has two contradictory meanings for Christian theology, as we have seen in fact a clear indicator of the presence of a signature. First, economy is the organisation of God's unity in relation to the trinity and a second meaning relating to "the historical dispensation of salvation"[48]. Rather than a contradiction, what we are confronted with is one of the most significant examples of the signatory logic of indifference in the history of Western thought. The signature *oikonomia* does not have two meanings, two senses, but rather represents "the attempt to articulate in a single semantic sphere […] a series of levels whose reconciliation appeared problematic: noninvolvement in the world and government of the world; unity in being and plurality of actions; ontology and history"[49]. Instead of this being a contradiction indicative of the modality of traditional logic, the two elements in play operate according to the paradigmatic logic of Melandri, so that Agamben says the two levels "do not contradict themselves, but they are correlated and become fully intelligible only in their functional relation. That is to say, they constitute the two sides of a single divine *oikonomia*, in which ontology and pragmatics […] refer back to each other for the solution of their aporias"[50]. This final statement allows us then to step back from the theological detail and focus on what is truly significant in this text for our study: the full development of the logic of a praxis of articulating co-mutual co-intelligibility. This is the true mystery of power and until we can see it for what it is we will never be able to suspend these oppositions, which in fact are not necessarily oppositional at all, and move into a new, for which read 'first actual', political and philosophical situation.

Glory: Articulated Inoperativity

The first original contribution of the text in question is this consideration of *oikonomia* as an economy of power between kingdom and government.

47 Ibidem, pp. 50-51.
48 Ibidem, p. 51.
49 Ibidem.
50 Ibidem.

Yet the second and, in the end, more original contribution does not come into play until the final chapters and concerns the prevalence of glory within political systems. In some sense the logic is the same as you would expect from a thinker of such systematic consistency. There are, theologically, two elements of glory. There is the glory of God which is unconditioned and not of the world, and then there is the glory we owe to god, which we might call glorification. This glorification is not needed for God's *auctoritas* and so why, Agamben wonders, is it so central to the church, especially in the manner in which it determines ceremonial and doxological elements? Agamben commences the argument around the activity of angels whose primary role is God's glorification. He notes a central aporia in the theory of redemption which is the role of angels when God's kingdom is resumed, considering that they previously operated as God's emissaries in leading men to salvation. Agamben is then able to clarify the radical structure of the theory of redemption as an unlimited period of God's kingdom, the briefest of interregnum during which time the issue of economy and government comes about in the fix between Gnostic duality and Christian Trinitarianism, followed by another eternal period of kingdom: "Government is nothing but the brief interval running between two eternal and glorious figures of Kingdom"[51].

The theological problem of the end of economy is raised here. As Angels are God's bureaucrats, in answer to the question as to what is left for them to do when they become inoperative after redemption Agamben explains they survive "as a hymnological hierarchy, as contemplation and praise of the glory of the divine"[52]. In other words Angels, left without act or praxis as God's will has been completed so that he is, yet again, pure Being without any further act, represent, through their songs of praise, God's inoperativity (he no longer needs to act on earth). This opens up the meaning of the term glory for Agamben in a truly original fashion so that he is able to observe: "Hence glory is what must cover with its splendour the unaccountable figure of divine inoperativity"[53]. This figure of the inoperative Angel forms a pair with the rendering inoperative of the law in the Pauline Messianic canon so that both are deactivated in being reconciled with God. Redemption means then the end of act in terms of Being, either as regards the divine economy represented by Angels, or law. "The ultimate and glorious telos of the law and of the angelic powers, as well as of the profane powers, is to be deactivated and

51 Ibidem, p. 162.
52 Ibidem.
53 Ibidem, p. 163.

made inoperative"[54]. It is then the relation between glory and inoperativity that the final part of the text is based around.

In the following chapter Agamben then traces these two elements of glory. Angelic glory has a juridical element in that it constitutes the liturgy. There is then also a parallel phenomenon as regards the tradition of acclamation which is effectively a public glorification of people power. Thus glory is the public exclamation of *auctoritas* and acclamation that of *potestas*. He then relates this to a regular theme of his, language as performative, especially the oath[55]. In making an acclamation the people commit a linguistic act that is also an existential fact: they acclaim themselves and make themselves a people by the speech act of acclamation. In fact both glory and acclamation have this gestic element[56]; they use language to remove the assumed division between word and thing in that use of language is a thing: God is glory as we glorify him or we are a people as we declare that we are a people here and now. Agamben then traces with relish the whole history of ceremonial power as gestic, glorifying acclamation before arriving at a key double definition. First, he confirms, secular modes of glorification and acclamation have a religious origin only if we refuse to place the magical-religious as prior to the political as has traditionally been the case. Second, acclamation and glory have a relation that exists before their clear differentiation, but this relation is not one of precedence and influence but rather, as ever, consists of a threshold of indistinction "where the juridical and the religious become truly indistinguishable"[57].

The first threshold of this type pertains to the sacred and was investigated at length in *Homo Sacer*. This being the case Agamben is able to reveal again why *The Kingdom and the Glory* is such an essential development from that earlier text: "If we now call 'glory' the uncertain zone in which acclamations, ceremonies, liturgies, and insignia operate, we will see a field of research open before us that is equally relevant and, at least in part, as yet unexplored"[58]. In other words the study of power in the West is of two orders, the famous two swords indeed. The first is the indifferential relation between sovereignty and the sacred, the second between government and glory. Power is bifurcated in a zone of indifference between kingdom and government, and each element is further bifurcated in an indistinction named as sacred and glorious respectively. Finally, it is the signature of economy that articulates

54 Ibidem, p. 166.

55 See G. Agamben, *The Signature of All Things: On Method*, op. cit.

56 G. Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory: For a Theological Genealogy of Economy and Government*, cit., p. 180.

57 Ibidem, p. 188.

58 Ibidem, p. 188.

this double articulation, rendering the process operative only on the basis of the operativity of this indistinction which is destined, as the world and God are, for inoperativity, and at which point all articulations are suspended in a relational non-relation.

Obviously a key issue here is the relation of the theological and the political as it determines Western power. It is now more than apparent that the relationship between divine and political economy is not just a simple case of influence, but a more complex determination of moments of arising composing statements into sets through paradigms, and distributing paradigm-sets across discourses and time in the form of signatures. These signatures, through the careful archaeology of the text, present us in our contemporary moment with a moment of arising which, when placed together allow for a moment of indistinction between kingdom and government due to glory that, paradoxically, makes the problem of power distinct as primarily the modality of indifferential indistinction. For Agamben, glory is important because it is "precisely the place at which this bi-lateral (or bi-univocal) character of the relation between theology and politics clearly emerges into the light […] The theology of glory constitutes, in this sense, the secret point of contact through which theology and politics continuously communicate and exchange parts with one another […] Like many of the concepts we have encountered in our investigation, this garment of glory is a signature […]"[59]. Thus glory constitutes the final and, in fact, most significant signature of Western power, for it renders articulate and indifferent the two key modalities of power, not just the sacred power of the sovereign, but the glorious power of government. Glory is the name of the economy of power, the signature of political signatures par excellence.

The final, huge chapter of the work now reveals its true colours. For students of politics, law, and theology the book is perhaps rich enough up to this point. However, Agamben's project is more ambitious than the revealing of new historical resonances and thus the archaeology of glory, not its history, is what the book ends on. The chapter starts with a summary of the ostensible argument of the book. Theology differentiates two trinities, the economic trinity of revelation, and the immanent trinity of substance (God as he is in himself). These match the division between praxis and ontology that make up economic theology or God's operativity in the world. Immanent trinity reveals ontology and theology, and economic trinity praxis and *oikonomia*. Together these have formed the basis of what he terms the machine of the divine government of the world around the poles of transcendent and immanent order. In relation to this structure "Glory is the place where theology attempts

59 Ibidem, pp. 193-194.

to think the difficult conciliation between immanent trinity and economic trinity […] In glory, economic trinity and immanent trinity, God's praxis of salvation and his being are conjoined and move through each other"[60]. In as much as it can be said that the Father glorifies the Son just as the Son glorifies the Father, then economy glorifies being and being glorifies economy. In this "mirror of glory […] being and economy, Kingdom and Government appear to coincide for an instant"[61]. This results in a symmetry of indifferential reciprocity that is ruined by redemption, a profoundly asymmetrical concept. On the day of judgement, after all, only the economic trinity is completed. This asymmetry will have deep ramifications for, at the moment of the revelation of economic inoperativity, what is revealed is that God is composed of glory, and in rendering inoperative glorification we reveal that the essential Being of God is itself void.

When glory returns to God in its purely immanent element at the end of time, what we see is that God, in rendering his economy inoperative, reveals himself to be, fundamentally, nothing other than inoperativity as such. Agamben suggests: "Perhaps the distinction between internal glory and external glory serves precisely to cover over this intimate link between glorification and the substance of the divinity. What appears in God when the distinction breaks down is something that theology absolutely does not want to see, a nudity that must be covered by a garment of light at any cost"[62]. Parallels with the Homo Sacer and bare life can be felt here. Just as bare life is the denuding of the concept of life which reveals the essence of biopolitical power, so too here the denuding of God's Being as fundamentally inoperative reveals the essence of sovereign power.

Now Agamben turns his attention to the final inoperativity at the end of time which defines redemption. It is, he notes, a recurrent theme that redemption is akin to inoperativity: "Glory occupies the place of postjudicial inoperativity; it is the eternal *amen* in which all works and all divine and human words are resolved"[63]. This he then traces through the Judaic tradition via the figure of inoperativity as the name most fitting for God, or God as Sabbath. In the Pauline canon this takes on the name sabbatism or the inoperativity that awaits the people of God, an element Agamben considers in the Messianic 'as not' in *The Time That Remains*[64]. Citing source after source Agamben reveals this

60 Ibidem, pp. 208-209.

61 Ibidem, p. 209.

62 Ibidem, p. 221.

63 Ibidem, p. 239.

64 G. Agamben, *The Time That Remains*, trans. Patricia Dailey, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2005, pp. 19-43; and W. Watkin, *The Literary Agamben: Adventures in Logopoiesis,* cit., pp. 88-91.

special signature of God's Being, a divine inoperativity, and his kingdom, that of the eternal Saturday. This reaches an apotheosis or crisis point in the work of Augustine who struggles to conceive of an eternal Saturday in which there will be no *acedia* (listlessness or sloth) or need. Agamben explains "He finds no other adequate expression for the blessed inoperativity, which is neither a doing nor a not-doing, than 'becoming Sabbath' […] Here, in a stuttering attempt to think the unthinkable, Augustine defines the final condition as a sabbatism to the nth degree, a making the Sabbath take rest in the Sabbath, a resolving of inoperativity into inoperativity"[65].

In as much as one definition of *acedia* is indifference, we can see in a perpetual Sabbath that indifference is itself articulated and that indifference has, as its final destination, what can only be called the indifference of indifference. Why is this necessary? For the simple reason that any resolution of difference that itself can remain operative for us, must not be a resolution of difference into identity, or the re-instatement of the origin within the specific temporal category of the Agamben *archē*. In that a suspension or indistinction retains the opposing elements even if it renders them indiscernible, it is not a state that one can find redemption in, for indiscernibility is a feature of the political, the theological and the philosophical. Indifference is the logical end point of the process and so one cannot accede to a dwelling in this indifference. *Homo Sacer* makes this apparent with its paradigms of indifference: bare life, concentration camps, coma patients and so on. These cannot be utopian political states for the future, not least because they belong to the intelligibility of our political system.

Thus indifference as a future potential cannot remain as it is within the providential machine, it cannot return to an unconditioned origin because its inoperativity extends precisely to the kingdom, rendering it a fictive void of foundation. This being the case, the only option available is to somehow indifferentiate indifference.

> At the beginning and the end of the highest power there stands…a figure not of action and government but of inoperativity…Glory… is precisely what takes the place of that unthinkable emptiness that amounts to the inoperativity of power. And yet, precisely this unsayable vacuity is what nourishes and feeds power (or, rather, what the machine of power transforms into nourishment). That means that the center of the governmental apparatus, the threshold as which Kingdom and Government ceaselessly communicate and

65 G. Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory: For a Theological Genealogy of Economy and Government*, cit., p. 241.

> ceaselessly distinguish themselves from one another is, in reality, empty […][66].

An emptiness that is symbolised most powerfully in the famous figure of the empty throne an image of which adorns the front cover of the English translation. The throne, Agamben states, does not capture the readiness of power, as is usually assumed, but its inoperativity.

Inoperativity: The Indifferentiation of Indifference

Glory presents a double inoperativity through the logic of redemption. On the one hand we have power's essential vacuity, that of Being without act, or God's pure and perfect self-presence. This inoperativity bookends a secondary inoperativity to be found in the cessation of action on this earth with the second coming of God's kingdom. These form two sides of the intelligibility of Western political power, that of *auctoritas* or power through authoritative founding violence and *potestas* the power of the people through the judicial process. Yet in as much as power is composed of two signatures, that of the sacred and the glorious, real power resides in neither camp. Power as such, 'resides' in economy. It is through *oikonomia* that the intelligibility of power through two paradigms distributed across two signatures becomes visible to us now. But it is also through the activity of the economy that runs between the two paradigms and also composes the two paradigms internally, that power is distributed. Thus economy is the signature of all political signatures, in that signatures mark the movement of content through time and place, and glory comes to stand for this signature in a particularly revealing way. It is wrong to look at power as founding government. It is also wrong to look at government as subsequently composing the empty fiction of power. And it is wrong to look at economy as merely the machine that shuttles between the two forms of power, creating the totality of power through imposed division, assumed originary unity and destinal indifferentiation. Economy is no more the machine that fuels power, Agamben speaks of nourishment, than government is the activity that makes inoperative founding power fictively operative. Rather power is both the fuel of its economy and also that which is fuelled by its economy.

Where this becomes particularly significant is the moment that glory and the sacred combine, for example in the form of doxology, ceremonies and the festival. These events capture the inoperativity essential to human life in a separate sphere. This is a complex process of *a-lethia*, showing a particular

66 Ibidem, p. 242.

debt to Heidegger: "The *oikonomia* of power places firmly at its heart, in the form of festival and glory, what appears to its eyes as the inoperativity of man and God, which cannot be looked at. Human life is inoperative and without purpose, but precisely this *argia* and this absence of aim make the incomparable operativity of the human species possible"[67]. This relates directly to the sometimes misunderstood bareness of bare life in *Homo Sacer*. Bare life and glory both present or generate an emptiness. Glory makes visible our essential inoperativity by placing it in a separate sphere. This separation then generates what one might call the motion of inoperativity, primarily between the inoperativity of eternal kingdom and the inoperativity of human destiny. The endless movement between these two inoperativities is profoundly operative in the mode of its making intelligible inoperativity and, in showing us emptiness, in the same way that biopolitics shows us bare life, power is rendered intelligible. Thus when we see an empty throne we see an image full of 'emptiness' rendered functional, ironically, due to the actual emptiness of the power structures it sets into motion.

If this were not complicated enough, bareness and emptiness themselves constitute the actual machine of true signatory inoperativity. For example, Agamben argues, man is dedicated to labor to hide his fundamental ontological inoperativity, thus bringing the arguments of human life and eternal life into a perfect, machinic motion: "And just as the machine of the theological *oikonomia* can function only if it writes within its core a doxological threshold in which economic trinity and immanent trinity are ceaselessly and liturgically (that is politically) in motion, each passing into the other, so the governmental apparatus functions because it has captured in its empty centre the inoperativity of the human essence"[68]. As Zartaloudis explains[69], at the heart of sovereign power is a double void: both Being and beings are inoperative. A pure founding power is as fictive as a pure essence of human being and, in fact, it is the double inoperativity of Being and beings that constitutes the real ontico-ontological difference, a difference we might now term the ontico-ontological indifference. There is no pure state of nature to which man can retreat from the dirty politics of the city, for bare life is the construct of the polis. By the same gesture there is no pure glory of the unconditioned to which man aims at the end of his life of strife, for the unconditioned is a construct of the contingent conditions of life.

67 Ibidem, pp. 245-246.

68 Ibidem, p. 246.

69 Zartaloudis explains in T. Zartaloudis, *Giorgio Agamben: Power, Law and the Uses of Criticism*, cit., pp. 89-93.

Agamben expresses this with great beauty when he speaks of the utopian gesture of politics or a world of perpetual Saturdays, which he sees very much as a signature of theological-political power. These visions, he says,

> are the enigmatic relics that the economical-theological machine abandons on the water's edge of civilization and that each time men question anew, nostalgically and in vain. Nostalgically because they appear to contain something that belongs to the human essence, but in vain because really they are nothing but the waste products of the immaterial and glorious fuel burnt by the motor of the machine as it turns, and that cannot be stopped[70].

In a more prosaic register this can be summarised by the statement that there is no human origin and no post-human destination. Endings and beginnings are just the paradoxical fictive necessities of the philosophy of pure immanence as an endless, processing, eternal becoming. But if this machine cannot be stopped then indifference as such is meaningless, functioning as a mere precursor, the second coming of a John the Baptist that must submit to a radical decollation if the true Christ is ever to arrive. Indifference must finally render itself indifferent.

Aristotle, it would seem, toyed with the idea that man is naturally functionless, establishing the theme of a possible inoperativity of the human species. If the human is that which has capacity and incapacity, then what is the function of capacity in general, returning to Agamben's question in *Potentialities* as to what it means to have a capacity, or to be capable of capacity?[71]. Aristotle rapidly moves against this idea by making logos the purpose of life, but the possible operation of the idea of the essential inoperativity of the human was sanctioned. It finds, of course, its greatest exponent in the concept of eternal life captured in the Greek term *aion*. Eternal life, Agamben argues, results from the world, from its corruptibility, even though the world exists only for its own redemption back into eternity. As such then the structure emulates that of the founding myth of kingdom only in reverse. Whereas, thus far, kingdom was the foundation for the government which actually founds it through economy, now kingdom is the purpose or aim of government, which moves towards a completion it composes from its own radical contingency. So it is that Agamben notes that eternal life has never been a mere temporal category "but designates a special quality of life and, more precisely, the transformation that human life undergoes in the world to

70 G. Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory: For a Theological Genealogy of Economy and Government*, cit., p. 246.

71 G. Agamben, *Potentialities*, cit., p. 179.

come" a transformation into an incorruptible and carefree life[72]. This explains, Agamben thinks, the rabbinical tradition of seeing future life as in opposition to the present life and "at the same time, in a singular contiguity with it; that is, as a deactivation of biological functions and bad instincts […]"[73].

Agamben then directly compares the eternal life of salvation to that of the messianic calling such as he describes in *The Time That Remains*. In the messianic *klesis*, the subject is required to give up their capacity and live the life of the *hōs me* or 'as not'. For Paul this means that eternal life is not a reward to come but a quality of life within messianic time. Living life under the interdiction of the 'as not' means living life under the suspension of law, subjectivity and time. It is, then, the ultimate zone of indistinction within the Western tradition. As Agamben says:

> Under the 'as not,' life cannot coincide with itself and is divided into a life that we live (*vitam quam vivimus*, the set of facts and events that define our biography) and a life for which and in which we live (*vita qua vivimus*, what renders life livable and gives it a meaning and form). To live in the Messiah means precisely to revoke and render inoperative at each instant every aspect of the life that we live, and to make the life for which we live, which Paul calls the 'life of Jesus' (*zōē tou Iesou–zōē* not *bios*!) appear within it[74].

This is divisible, if you wish, into the essential facticity of beings or Dasein, and the ethical value of Being as such. What it expresses is that for our capacity or potential to live to operate, the central intelligibility of that life is its inoperativity, or its *hōs me*. For Agamben specifically it means "The messianic life is the impossibility that life might coincide with a predetermined form"[75]. For Paul, the messianic inoperativity is anything but passive, while in contrast he sees, as others do, the future *aion* as the glorious inoperativity of God. This has the recognisable effect of ruining the inoperativity of messianic life by effectively making it an inoperativity *for* something. "Life, which rendered all forms inoperative, itself becomes a form in glory. Impassivity, agility, subtlety, and clarity thereby become the characters that define the life of the glorious body […]"[76]. What is at stake

72 G. Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory: For a Theological Genealogy of Economy and Government*, cit., p. 247.

73 Ibidem, p. 247.

74 Ibidem, p. 248.

75 Ibidem.

76 Ibidem, p. 249.

here is perhaps best expressed in the language of potential. If, in potential, the specific capacity to be able to do something is made possible only by the presence of an incapacity or essential inoperativity, and if this inoperativity ceases to be indifferentiation but becomes the capacity for indifference, then indifference ceases to be the potential for a form of life and instead becomes indifference as the form of life. At precisely the moment of the appropriation of indifference, indifference ceases to operate, as it does in the activity of messianic life, and instead becomes total rest. Indifference at rest is, at this moment, meaningless in as much as its primary essence is its mobility, even if it is also always defined in terms of its suspensive nature.

Agamben finds another tradition of inoperativity as rest in the Western conception of thought as contemplation. Referring to the verb form invented by Spinoza to convey being at rest with oneself, *acquiescentia* (echoing a similar analysis of the term *pasearse* or to walk with oneself in Spinoza[77]), Agamben considers the idea of self-contentment or self-resting of the self, in terms of whether it represents sabbatical glory, literal inaction, or another more complex form resulting from the act that contemplates its own power to act. "The life, which contemplates its (own) power to act, renders itself inoperative in all its operations, and lives only (its) livability […] 'Self,' subjectivity, is what opens itself as a central inoperativity in every operation, like the live-*ability* of every life. In this inoperativity, the life that we live is only the life through which we live; only our power of acting and living, our act-*ability* and our live-*ability*. Here the *bios* coincides with the *zōē* without remainder"[78]. This defines, for Agamben, the basic model of the Western contemplative tradition which is also that of Christian glorious sabbatism and the basis of the most recent addition to the Homo Sacer project, the monastic order[79]. The structure is as follows: that which defines the human in terms of its praxis is the ability to contemplate its life as such only through the rendering of life as praxis as inoperative. This means, of course, that the praxis of the human is the rendering inoperative of praxis, so that praxis can appear as the operativity of the human. For Agamben terms such as contemplation and inoperativity are "the metaphysical operators of anthropogenesis" in that they free man from biological and social destiny on this earth, fate, resulting in the dimension we tend to call politics but in actual fact, as it is a fundamental inoperativity as such, is better defined as glory.

77 G. Agamben, *Potentialities*, cit., pp. 234-235.

78 G. Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory: For a Theological Genealogy of Economy and Government*, cit., p. 251.

79 G. Agamben, *Altissima povertà. Regole monastiche e forme di vita,* Vicenza, Neri Pozzi, 2011.

It was, then, Aristotle's division of the contemplative and political life as two *bioi* that "deflected politics and philosophy from their trajectory and, at the same time, delineated the paradigm in which the economy-glory apparatus would model itself"[80]. The Agamben method is very apparent in these phrases. As ever there is a moment of arising wherein a contingently imposed division, here between contemplative and political beings for the human, both determines the future direction of signatures across time and place, and also retroactively installs a pre-divisive, fictive perfection. As we saw in *Homo Sacer* at issue there was the idea of a pre-divided human life[81], while here the issue is as much the projection forward of an eternal life as the installation after the event of a bare or pre-divided life. He goes on, in a key phrase, "The political is neither a *bios* nor a *zōē*, but the dimension that the inoperativity of contemplation, by deactivating linguistic and corporeal, material and immaterial praxes, ceaselessly opens and assigns to the living"[82]. In other words, politics is indifference as a process, the endless movement between the two forms opened up by the division, based on a foundation of pre-scission perfection, and hurtling towards a final moment of cessation when such division is rendered once more inoperative. This being the case, he concludes, it is perfectly natural that theological *oikonomia*, the subject of the study, must incorporate inoperativity through the figure of eternal life. It is eternal life, that to which government is heading through the paradox of economy, which is the inoperative center of the human "that the machine of the economy and of glory ceaselessly attempts to capture within itself"[83].

What is left uncertain here is the role of inoperativity through indifference. Although indifference determines Agamben's method and is to be found at the heart of every element of his work from potentiality, through included exclusion to, here, the role of economy, as these comments reveal indifference as such as an inoperativity, is capable of being appropriated at precisely the moment it opens up the system's potential to be rendered inoperative. In other words there are two inoperativities. The first is the appropriation of inoperativity as the fuel for an economic system of kingdom-government. This first inoperativity is life as that which is doubly inoperative. On the earth it is biological pure life as total indetermination. In the kingdom it is instead eternal life as final destination where biological life will fall away.

80 G. Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory: For a Theological Genealogy of Economy and Government*, cit., p. 251.

81 In fact Agamben comes to define the signature life as division as such in G. Agamben, *The Open: Man and Animal*, trans. Kevin Attell, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2004, pp. 13-16.

82 G. Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory: For a Theological Genealogy of Economy and Government*, cit., p. 251.

83 Ibidem, p. 251.

In this manner one can see that bare life is, at any moment, the determined foundation of a governmental, earthly existence, while eternal life is the determined completion of this life and its falling away. Bare life is a myth of foundation that allows for eternal life as a myth of destiny. Operating as two inoperativities on either side of praxis, this concept of the political-inoperative fuels the economic systems of the West.

Then again there is another inoperativity defined as the rendering transparent of the system at precisely the moments of appropriated indifference, so that the system of indifference can itself be suspended. This is what I would call the indifference or inoperativity of indifference, and Agamben ends this complex section with a reference to the poem as a strong analogy for this function. In the same manner that the poem makes the communicative and denotative elements of language inoperative in favour of foregrounding the semiotic as such, so that the power of saying is potentially opened for a new use, so too must we conceive of a kind of political poetics. This includes not merely the opening up of the sayability of language, its intelligibility as we have been calling it, but also the process of desubjectivization regularly taken up by the poet in the act of writing and found in Foucault's work in the concept of subjective enunciations[84]. In other words, at the moment, in the poem, that language is made inoperative due to its being pure sayability, so too the subject is rendered inoperative, in that her enunciative position is entirely dependent on the 'said' of a statement. Thinking of Foucault for a moment, if the intelligibility of a statement is determined by the enunciative position, then the poem makes intelligibility as such intelligible rendering any specific enunciative position fundamentally indifferent. At this moment pure intelligibility denies the subject any of the myths of life that have been sustaining her determined enunciative position, providing an opportunity for a subjectivity that is not subject to a predetermined form of life: bare, political or eternal. "What the poem accomplishes for the power of saying, politics and philosophy must accomplish for the power of acting. By rendering economic and biological operations inoperative, they demonstrate what the human body can do; they open it up to a new, possible use"[85]. Thus inoperativity and indifference present a unique opportunity. In the first instance indifference is the negative driver of metaphysical systems, not issues of presence or difference as has previously been assumed. Second, it reveals the total

84 M. Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, cit., pp. 50-55 and pp. 88-107. See also G. Agamben, *Infancy and History: On the Destruction of Experience*, cit., pp. 50-60; G. Agamben, *Potentialities*, cit., pp. 112-132 and W. Watkin, *The Literary Agamben: Adventures in Logopoiesis*, cit., pp. 23-31 and pp. 107-116.

85 G. Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory: For a Theological Genealogy of Economy and Government*, cit., p. 252.

structure of the system at key moments of revelatory indistinction. Third, at these moments what is provided is not only historical or analytical clarity, but also a window of opportunity to bring about 'change' or something new, specifically here a new idea as to what the human can do, their actual operativity. What this operativity will be is to be determined by the final two parts of the Homo Sacer project and their consideration of *uso* (use, custom)[86] and *ufficio* (office, duty, vocation)[87], texts beyond the remit of this analysis. What we can say however is that until the signatures of power are themselves revealed in their inoperativity, and more than this until the indifferential logic of their inoperativity is itself rendered indifferent or inoperative, the oft promised key to the totality of the Homo Sacer project, namely the full delineation of a form-of-life, a life that cannot be separated from its form[88], remains unintelligible. It is for this reason that *The Kingdom and the Glory* may come to be seen not only as one of Agamben's most important statements, but as the fundamental work of political philosophy of our age.

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86 G. Agamben, *Altissima povertà. Regole monastiche e forme di vita,* cit.

87 G. Agamben, *Opus Dei. Archeologia dell'ufficio,* Torino, Bollanti Boringhieri, 2012.

88 G. Agamben, *Means Without Ends*, trans. Vincenzo Binetti and Cesare Casarino, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, pp. 3-4; G. Agamben, *Altissima povertà. Regole monastiche e forme di vita,* cit., pp. 9-10.