2013

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[*PT* 14.1 (2013) 115-130]
doi:10.1558/poth.v14i1.115
Political Theology (print) ISSN 1462-317X
Political Theology (online) ISSN 1743-1719

Nude, Glorious, Living

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Keywords: Agamben; economy; glory.

With Giorgio Agamben, glory is nude. It is denuded, revealed—as are imbricated possibilities of life and political theology, insofar as Agamben locates glory as "precisely the place at which this bilateral (or bi-univocal) character of the relation between theology and politics clearly emerges into the light."[2] When glory "emerges into the light" through Agamben's *The Kingdom and the Glory*, it reveals that it, like the fabled emperor, has no clothes. Glory ceremoniously parades denuded, in absent or invisible clothes, with Agamben cast (or casting himself) as the fabular child who exclaims, "But he hasn't got anything on."[3]

1. William Robert is Assistant Professor of Religion at Syracuse University. He is the author of *Trials: Of Antigone and Jesus*.

2. Giorgio Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory: For a Theological Genealogy of Economy and Government (Homo Sacer II, 2)*, trans. Lorenzo Chiesa with Matteo Mandarini (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011), 193. In a related vein, Joshua Dubler writes that "if not a substance, power might be said to possess a currency. That currency is glory"—and "no gold standard props up this currency." See Dubler's contribution to the Agamben Symposium, available at http://www.politicaltheology.com/blog/agamben-symposium-joshua-dubler.

3. Hans Christian Andersen, "The Emperor's New Clothes," trans. Jean Hersholt, The Hans Christian Andersen Center, http://www.andersen.sdu.dk/vaerk/hersholt/TheEmperorsNewClothes_e.html. This story concludes with "the whole town" reiterating the little child's proclamation, after which "the Emperor shivered, for he suspected they were right. But he thought, 'This procession has got to go on.' So he walked more proudly than ever, as his noblemen held high the train that wasn't there at all."

Nude

Nudity is nothing new for Agamben.[4] Forms of nudity and processes of denuding mark Agamben's philosophical oeuvre, particularly his *Homo Sacer* project, from its inceptional treatment of life in this project's inaugural volume (*Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*) through its subsequent volumes' considerations of paradigms that include the witness, the *Musselmann*, the state of exception, the monastic rule, the oath, testimony, liturgy—and glory. Agamben's archaeological investigations successively denude these figures as part of his project's ultimate denuding of life, the vital subject at this project's heart. He manifests (and implicitly explains) this attentiveness to life in articulating a programmatic direction for what he, following Walter Benjamin, calls "the coming philosophy," in which

> it will be necessary, moreover, to embark on a genealogical inquiry into the term "life." This inquiry, we may already state, will demonstrate that "life" is not a medical and scientific notion but a philosophical, political and theological concept, and that many of the categories of our philosophical tradition must therefore be rethought accordingly. In this dimension, there will be little sense in distinguishing between organic life and animal life or even between biological life and contemplative life and between *nuda vita* and the life of the mind.[5] Life as contemplation without knowledge will have a precise correlate in thought that has freed itself of all cognition and intentionality. *Theōria* and the contemplative life, which the philosophical tradition has identified as its highest goal for centuries, will have to be dislocated onto a new plane of immanence. It is not certain that, in the process, political

4. Nor is nudity new for political theology. A genealogical (or, following Agamben, an archaeological) investigation of political theology could demonstrate this suggestion by, for example, attending to Carl Schmitt's key claim that "all significant concepts of the modern theory of the state are secularized theological concepts" as a denuding of secularization's effects on political theoretical concepts, which reveals them to be theological. See Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, trans. George Schwab (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 36. I mention Schmitt given the significance of his political theology for Agamben's, though space prevents me from developing this point further, in and through Schmitt's and others' writings.

5. Daniel Heller-Roazen's translation of *nuda vita* as "bare life" in *Homo Sacer* has become standard, though other translators, such as Vincenzo Binetti and Cesare Casarino, instead translate *nuda vita* as "naked life." See Giorgio Agamben, *Means without End: Notes on Politics*, trans. Vincenzo Binetti and Cesare Casarino (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), esp. 143 n. 1. But "naked life" still blurs important conceptual distinctions between nakedness and nudity (some of which I articulate in what follows); so to avoid this blurring and to maintain the etymological kinship of *nuda vita* and *nudità* [nudity], I have left *nuda vita* untranslated throughout and have modified existing translations accordingly. For a brief account of Agamben's *nuda vita* as a translation of Walter Benjamin's *das bloße Leben* (which Agamben cites on page 65 of *Homo Sacer*), see Leland de la Durantaye, *Giorgio Agamben: A Critical Introduction* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009), 202–3.

> philosophy and epistemology will be able to maintain their present physiognomy and difference with respect to ontology. Today, blessed life lies on the same terrain as the biological body of the West.[6]

This passage presciently delineates the contours of his *Homo Sacer* project, as it advances from biopolitics toward glory. This project takes place, I suggest, in and through a method of denuding and a mechanism of inoperativity—and with life as its ultimate subject, from which the possibility and shape of his political theology remain inextricable. In this way, Agamben displays himself via his *Homo Sacer* project as a thinker of nudity, with this project a thinking of and through nudity, which for him serves as a paradigm, tied to a signature, which designates an apparatus and effects a production. Hence attending to glory and life take place by way of nudity, to which I turn.

In naming nudity as a paradigm, Agamben echoes François Jullien's assertion that nudity designates "a paradigm of what the 'West' consists of in cultural terms and brings to light the stances that originally underpinned our philosophy," addressing "the question of essence, of the 'thing itself,'" which "brings into play that which is most direct—frontal—and most sensible, thus reopening and making us keenly sensitive to the possibilities of ontology."[7] Nudity, for Jullien as for Agamben, is a matter of ontology and, more specifically, of ontological exposure. In Agamben's methodological lexicon, a paradigm (*paradigma*) names a form of knowledge that neutralizes the generality–particularity dichotomy, instead passing from singularity to singularity according to a temporality that crosses

6. Giorgio Agamben, "Absolute Immanence," in *Potentialities*, ed. and trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), 220–39 (239). For a helpful and concise summary of "life" in Agamben's *oeuvre*, see Catherine Mills, "Life," in *The Agamben Dictionary*, ed. Alex Murray and Jessica Whyte (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), 123–26. For readings of "life" in Agamben's *oeuvre*, see David Kishik, *The Power of Life: Agamben and the Coming Politics* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012), and Matthew Calarco and Steven DeCaroli, eds, *Giorgio Agamben: Sovereignty and Life* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007), esp. 109–242. I have previously considered "life," particularly sacred life, vis-à-vis Agamben (and others) in "Human, Life, and Other Sacred Stuff," *Journal of Cultural and Religious Theory* 10, no. 1 (Winter 2009): 64–80.

7. François Jullien, *The Impossible Nude: Chinese Art and Western Aesthetics*, trans. Maev de la Guardia (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), vii. Jullien's contextualized assertion reiterates Agamben's methodological insistence that "method shares with logic its inability to separate itself completely from its context." See Giorgio Agamben, *The Signature of All Things: On Method*, trans. Luca D'Isanto with Kevin Attell (New York: Zone Books, 2009), 7. Moreover, each of the three conceptual figures to which this text attends—paradigm, signature, and archaeology—plays a decisive role in Agamben's *Homo Sacer* project, particularly as it progresses, so that these roles are unmissable in *The Kingdom and the Glory*.

diachrony and synchrony.[8] A paradigm thus crosses inclusion (particularity and diachrony) and exclusion (generality and synchrony), so that it expresses an ontological precarity of excluded inclusion, which allows nudity as a paradigm to be, as Agamben writes, "not separate from the thing: it is the thing itself."[9] But nudity "is the thing itself" not as an ontological purity but as what Agamben calls "the thing's knowability (its nudity)," by which he means "nothing other than the giving of the thing over to knowledge, nothing other than the stripping off of the clothes that cover it."[10] This knowability involves, then, a process of denuding ("the stripping off of the clothes that cover it") and donation ("the giving of the thing over to knowledge").

Such donation illustrates nudity's status as a signature (*segnatura*), which for Agamben designates "something that, in a sign or a concept, exceeds it to refer back to a specific interpretation or move it to another context," producing an ontological displacement without a semantic revision—"something that is inseparable from the sign yet irreducible to it," something "that by persisting in a sign makes it efficacious and capable of action" and signification.[11] This signification is semantic and ontological, insofar as a signature is, according to Agamben, "that which marks things at the level of their pure existence" and "dispose[s] it [a thing] toward revelation and knowability."[12] Being—and with it, "the thing itself"—is a signature, which it signs as *haplōs* or as *nuda*, for as Agamben writes, "*nuda*, in the syntagm *nuda vita*, corresponds to the Greek term *haplōs*, by which first philosophy defines pure being."[13] Being, signed nudity, exposes—or

8. Giorgio Agamben, "What is a Paradigm?" in *The Signature of All Things: On Method*, trans. Luca D'Isanto with Kevin Attell (New York: Zone Books, 2009), 9–32 (31). For astute considerations of Agamben's *oeuvre* in terms of paradigm, see Lorenzo Chiesa and Frank Ruda, "The Event of Language as Force of Life: Agamben's Linguistic Vitalism," *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities* 16, no. 3 (2011): 163–80. For a consideration of paradigm in *The Kingdom and the Glory*, see Alberto Toscano, "Divine Management: Critical Remarks on Giorgio Agamben's *The Kingdom and the Glory*," *Angelaki* 16, no. 3 (2011): 125–36. Adam Kotsko offers a response to Toscano's critique in his contribution to the Agamben Symposium, available at http://www.politicaltheology.com/blog/agamben-symposium-adam-kotsko.

9. Giorgio Agamben, "Nudity," in *Nudities*, trans. David Kishik and Stefan Pedatella (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011), 55–90 (84). For one exploration of "the thing itself," see Giorgio Agamben, "The Thing Itself," in *Potentialities*, 27–38.

10. Agamben, "Nudity," 84.

11. Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory*, 87; Giorgio Agamben, "Theory of Signatures," in *The Signature of All Things*, 33–80 (50).

12. Agamben, "Theory of Signatures," 66, 68; see also 43 and 61.

13. Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), 182 (translation modified). The

disposes—the potentiality for revelation and knowability ("not the thing but the thing's knowability").

This exposing disposition points to nudity as an apparatus, or *dispositif*, whose etymological ancestor, *dispositio*, served early Christians as a translation of *oikonomia*. Agamben transposes "apparatus" from its Foucaultian sense, as "'a set of strategies of the relations of force supporting, and supported by, certain types of knowledge'" (though with an eye toward the limits of these knowledges), into "anything that has in some way the capacity to capture, orient, determine, intercept, model, control, or secure the gestures, behaviors, opinions, or discourses of living beings."[14] Agamben thus deploys an apparatus as part of a dialectic with two "classes": living beings and apparatuses, whose interactions produce subjects as an effect of subjectivation. This dialectic pulses through and powers Agamben's *Homo Sacer* project, from its initial iteration—according to which a living being (*zōē*) enters and is affected by an apparatus (the *polis* and its correlative *bios*), the result of which is a subject or subjectivation (*nuda vita*)—to its subsequent iteration in *The Kingdom and the Glory*—according to which power (or, articulated in different terms, being) enters and is affected by *oikonomia* (or praxis), producing glory. In these instances, nudity performs as an apparatus that effects exposition and revelation. Nudity operates as an apparatus of denuding.

In this way, nudity illuminates its status not as an effect but as an event—and, in doing so, marks its difference from nakedness. To demonstrate these points, I follow Agamben's lead in returning (with a nod to Jullien) to a primal scene of Occidental nudity: Adam and Eve's consumption of forbidden fruit from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. (This return reiterates Agamben's contention that "nudity, in our

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Italian here is "*'nuda,' nel sintagma 'nuda vita,' corrisponde qui al termine greco haplōs, con cui la folosofia prima definisce l'essere pure*." See Giorgio Agamben, *Homo sacer: Il potere sovrano e la nuda vita I* (Torino: Einaudi, 1995), 203. See also Agamben, "Theory of Signatures," 66, where he writes that signatures are "that which marks things at the level of their pure existence. *On haplōs*, 'pure being,' is the archi-signator." Carlo Salzani astutely unfolds this use of *haplōs* vis-à-vis being with respect to nudity and to *homo sacer* in "The Notion of Life in the Work of Agamben," *Comparative Literature and Culture* 14, no. 1 (March 2012): 1–9.

14. Giorgio Agamben, "What is an Apparatus?" in *What is an Apparatus? and Other Essays*, trans. David Kishik and Stefan Pedatella (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009), 1–24 (2, 14). Agamben's citation of Foucault comes from the latter's "Confession of the Flesh," in *Power/Knowledge*, ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon, 1980), 194–228 (196). That "apparatus" appears throughout *The Kingdom and the Glory* is unsurprising given that text's preoccupation with *oikonomia*. For an insightful consideration of apparatus and life in Agamben's work, see Timothy C. Campbell, *Improper Life: Technology and Biopolitics from Heidegger to Agamben* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), esp. 42–64.

culture, is inseparable from a theological signature."[15]) After recognizing their transgressions, "the eyes of both of them were opened, and they perceived that they were naked; and they sewed together fig leaves and made themselves loincloths."[16] (Nudity is, again, a matter of epistemology as well as of ontology and theology.) What Adam and Eve perceive, phenomenologically and morally, is their nakedness. Nakedness, Elizabeth Grosz explains, "is a state of vulnerability" to the elements and "to the affect and the impact of the other."[17] This vulnerability owes to nakedness's involving, as Jullien describes, "a diminished state, being stripped, laid bare"—in other words, denuded.[18]

Nudity as paradigm makes nakedness knowable through a withdrawal, through "the stripping off of the clothes that cover it."[19] For Adam and Eve, these clothes were invisible garments of glory, whose withdrawal exposes what Agamben calls "the 'naked corporeality' of the first couple."[20] Nudity as signature effects their revealed state and nakedness's phenomenological and moral significations as "being stripped, laid bare" in both registers, which leads to their desire for and fabrication of loincloths from fig

15. Agamben, "Nudity," 57.

16. Genesis 3:7. For insightful reflections on ways in which conceptions of gender inform readings of this scene—and constructions of nakedness—particularly in Christian contexts, see Margaret R. Miles, *Carnal Knowing: Female Nakedness and Religious Meaning in the Christian West* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989).

17. Elizabeth Grosz, "Naked," in *Encounters with Alphonso Lingis*, ed. Alexander E. Hooke and Wolfgang W. Fuchs (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2003), 119–32 (125).

18. Jullien, *The Impossible Nude*, 4.

19. Agamben, "Nudity," 84.

20. Agamben, "Nudity," 60; see also 57. This movement of withdrawal and discovery effects an unconcealment, or what Martin Heidegger calls *Unverborgenheit* or *alētheia*. For expositions of unconcealment in Heidegger's writings, see (among other texts) "The Origin of the Work of Art," trans. Albert Hofstadter, and "The Question Concerning Technology," trans. William Lovitt, in *Basic Writings*, rev. edn, ed. David Farrell Krell (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1993), 139–212 and 307–41, respectively. For Heidegger's distinction between revelation (*Offenbarung*) and revealability (*Offenbarkeit*), see Martin Heidegger, "Phenomenology and Theology," trans. James G. Hart and John C. Maraldo, in *Pathmarks*, ed. William McNeill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 39–62. Jacques Derrida considers these terms in, for example, "Faith and Knowledge: The Two Sources of 'Religion' at the Limits of Reason Alone," trans. Samuel Weber, in *Religion*, ed. Jacques Derrida and Gianni Vattimo (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), 1–78. For supplementary accounts of revelation, particularly vis-à-vis unveiling, see Jacques Derrida, "Of an Apocalyptic Tone Newly Adopted in Philosophy," trans. John P. Leavey Jr., in *Derrida and Negative Theology*, ed. Harold Coward and Toby Foshay (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1992), 25–71, and "A Silkworm of One's Own: Points of View Stitched on the Other Veil," in Hélène Cixous and Jacques Derrida, *Veils*, trans. Geoffrey Bennington (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001), 17–108.

leaves. Nudity as apparatus enacts these revelations by producing nudity *as* denuding. Nakedness is a state, one that a dynamic denuding reveals—a denuding that *is* nudity, for as Agamben avows, "nudity is not actually a state but rather an event," one "that never reaches its completed form… nudity is literally infinite: it never stops occurring," so that "we can therefore experience nudity only as a denuding and a baring, never as a form and a stable possession."[21] In other words, there is no such thing as nudity. There is only denuding.

Nudity as denuding, then, is an eventive apparatus that effects. It effects, for example, an epistemic passage for Adam and Eve, for whom the knowledge of their denuding is the knowledge of good and evil. As Agamben remarks, "the only content of their knowledge of good and evil is, therefore, nudity."[22] What they come to know is privative: that they have undergone a denuding, in which they have lost something (in their case, their garments of glory). That this knowledge is privative—that it is, as Agamben describes, "devoid of content"—means that "it is not the knowledge of some thing but rather the knowledge of pure knowability. It means that to know nudity is not to know an object but only an absence of veils, only a possibility of knowing."[23] Nudity exposes knowability, and this exposure exposes ontology, since as knowability (to recall Agamben's words) "nudity is not separate from the thing: it is the thing itself," which names not an ontologically pure object but an ontological exposure.[24] As Agamben writes, "to see a body naked means to perceive its pure knowability beyond every secret, beyond or before its objective predicates."[25] Denuding thus exposes not an object of knowledge but a potentiality for knowing.

What denuding reveals is revealability, which is a potentiality—one that is never actualized and, so, never manifested in or as revelation. Revealability, *Offenbarkeit*, is included in revelation, *Offenbarung*, only via exclusion, as a threshold through which revelation passes—but a threshold that never passes across itself. Hence nudity as denuding manifests not a privation, as does nakedness, but a plenitude of potentiality.[26] What denuding

21. Agamben, "Nudity," 65. Denuding is an event that produces nudity by, Grosz writes, "suffusing the image of nakedness with a context, a purpose, and a possible signification." See Grosz, "Naked," 127.

22. Agamben, "Nudity," 81.

23. Agamben, "Nudity," 81. In "The Notion of Life in the Work of Agamben," 5, Salzani explains that "the thing itself is the very medium of its knowability."

24. Agamben, "Nudity," 84.

25. Agamben, "Nudity," 84, 81. See also Jullien, *The Impossible Nude*, 23, where he articulates nudity in terms of "the soaring or surging out indicated by the prefix *ek*—as it appears in ec-stasy or e-vidence," so that nudity "*exposes* Being more completely."

26. Grosz adds that nudity is produced "by suffusing the image of nakedness with a context, a purpose, and a possible signification," as does a signature. See Grosz, "Naked," 127.

exposes is an ontological potentiality that never happens but that *makes happen*. In revealing revealability, denuding exposes inoperativity—a signature that facilitates signification without itself signifying. Nudity exposes itself, in and as inoperativity.

Inoperativity (*inoperosità*) names for Agamben a "mode of potentiality that is not exhausted…in a *transitus de potentia ad actum*."[27] Imbricated in this potentiality is a potentiality *not to*: a non-passage. Inoperativity exposes itself as a *désoeuvrement*, or unworking, just as nudity exposes itself as a *dénudement*, or denuding. Nudity as denuding—what Agamben calls "a cipher of knowledge," a making knowable and giving over to knowledge or a "trembling that makes this body knowable but that remains, in itself, ungraspable"—inacts this inoperativity by remaining knowability that never becomes knowledge.[28]

Glorious

Glory, like nudity, exposes inoperativity. Glory as glorification, like nudity as denuding, exposes (ex-poses) an originary, biopolitical inoperativity, one with corporeal, political, and biological implications.[29]

Denuding effects this exposition by producing the glorious body, just as *nuda vita* produces the biopolitical body. (In these instances, production names a revelation, an exposition, manifested by and manifesting inoperativity.) A glorious body is like a dancer's, whose movements have, Agamben writes, "neither aim nor necessity" but take place "only in order to exhibit…agility," as a dancer "undoes and disorganizes the economy of corporeal movements to then rediscover them, at once intact and transfigured, in the choreography."[30] By dancing, a dancer unworks a corporeal economy of movements in which potentiality passes teleologically into kinetic activity by frustrating this efficient teleology in favor of an inefficient exhibition of corporeal potentiality—of what a body can do.

27. Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 62; see also 61, where Agamben discloses that "everything depends on what is meant by 'inoperativity'." Durantaye describes inoperativity as "an ontological reflection on the modalities of being." See Durantaye, *Giorgio Agamben*, 19, where he also traces inoperativity's conceptual genealogy via Georges Bataille, Jean-Luc Nancy, Maurice Blanchot, and others.

28. Agamben, "Nudity," 82, 84.

29. On a related point, see Giorgio Agamben, *The Open: Man and Animal*, trans. Kevin Attell (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004), 87, where Agamben announces "the inactivity [*inoperosità*] and *désoeuvrement* of the human and of the animal as the supreme and unsavable figure of life."

30. Giorgio Agamben, "The Glorious Body," in *Nudities*, 91–103 (96, 102).

A dancer thus displaces a bodily organ from its efficient, teleological operation (e.g., a foot from walking, a mouth from eating, etc.) by suspending—like a dancer's body in midair—this "*transitus de potentia ad actum*." Suspended, this organ acquires what Agamben describes as "an ostensive function," one that displays this organ's potentiality, for "what is dance other than the liberation of the body from its utilitarian movements, the exhibition of gestures in their pure inoperativity?"[31] Rendered ostensive rather than efficient, a body becomes revealed as a glorious body, which is, according to Agamben, "an ostensive body whose functions are not executed but rather displayed," in their inoperative potentiality.[32] A glorious body is, then, a body that displays the potentiality of its means as such without directing them toward teleological ends. Phrased differently, a glorious body is a body of means as ends rather than of means toward ends. It is, in Agamben's words, a body "undone, rendered inoperative, liberated and suspended from its 'economy,'" exposing and denudingly displaying its inoperativity.[33]

This display of inoperativity is an ostensive display that deactivates a body and, Agamben writes, in doing so "allows the very potentiality that has manifested itself in the act to appear."[34] It allows the very potentiality of this body to be revealed as potentiality via its inoperativity, its ostensiveness. This exposure of a glorious body's ontological potentiality exposes its epistemological potentiality for knowability and disposes it toward new potentialities. As Agamben explains, "at stake here is the rendering inoperative of any activity directed toward an end in order to then dispose it toward a new use, one that does not abolish the old use but persists in it and exhibits it," so that a body's potentiality, exposed in and as inoperativity, "can now become the organ of a new possible use, the organ of a body whose organicity has been suspended and rendered inoperative"—which

31. Agamben, "The Glorious Body," 98; Giorgio Agamben, "Hunger of an Ox: Considerations on the Sabbath, the Feast, and Inoperativity," in *Nudities*, 104–12 (111). Agamben also considers dance in "Notes on Gesture," in *Means without End: Notes on Politics*, trans. Vincenzo Binetti and Cesare Casarino (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 49–60. For readings of Agamben vis-à-vis dance, see David Kishik, *The Power of Life: Agamben and the Coming Politics* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012), 27–32, and Barbara Formis, "Dismantling Theatricality: Aesthetics of Bare Life," in *The Work of Giorgio Agamben: Law, Literature, Life*, ed. Justin Clemens, Nicholas Heron and Alex Murray (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), 181–92.

32. Agamben, "The Glorious Body," 98.

33. Agamben, "Hunger of an Ox," 111.

34. Agamben, "The Glorious Body," 102. For a luminous example of a related revelation (by way of Bill Brown's "thing theory") of glorious bodies, see Patricia Cox Miller, *The Corporeal Imagination: Signifying the Holy in Late Ancient Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009).

is why "there is perhaps nothing more enigmatic than a glorious penis, nothing more spectral than a purely doxological vagina."[35] Consequently, Agamben writes,

> the body that contemplates and exhibits its potentiality through its gestures enters a second, final nature (which is nothing other than the truth of its former nature). The glorious body is not some other body, more agile and beautiful, more luminous and spiritual; it is the body itself [the 'thing itself'], at the moment when inoperativity removes the spell from it and opens it up to a new possible common use.[36]

This new potential use is glorification, as the revelation of glory's revealability via inoperativity. This process of exposing a body's inoperativity comes not through glory but through glorifying, as a denuding that eventively never fully or finally happens.

I have considered nudity and corporeality at such length tactically, to effect a denuding: of the logic of glory and the ana-logic of its inoperativity, which is ultimately bound up with life. While Agamben names archaeology as *The Kingdom and the Glory*'s method, I maintain that this text's effective method is, as it is throughout his *Homo Sacer* project, one of denuding. Hence the logic and ana-logic, the relations and activities, of glory and glorying correspond, vis-à-vis political theology, to those of nudity and denuding vis-à-vis corporeality—with the ultimate revelations of both (which in both cases are revelations of inoperativity) directed toward life.

As paradigm, signature and apparatus, glory unfolds as nudity does, passing from glory as seeming effect to "glorying" as event to glorification as condition of possibility—as an inoperativity that produces glory. Agamben explicitly attends to and investigates glorification as a way of attending to operations of and relations between power and glory. Perhaps he does so because, just as denuding reveals corporeal inoperativity, glorification reveals politico-theological inoperativity in and through *kabhod*, imaged as an empty throne, a *hetoimasia tou thronou*—or, perhaps, as a denuded emperor.

This empty throne recalls the mystical throne vision of Ezekiel, in which—following an incredible image sequence that illustrates what Agamben calls an "optical phenomenology of glory"—Ezekiel discloses that he has seen "something like a throne," above which is "something

35. Agamben, "The Glorious Body," 102, 99.

36. Agamben, "The Glorious Body," 103. Jean-Luc Nancy adds that "glory is the rhythm, or the plasticity" of this presentability that never finishes coming to presence. See Jean-Luc Nancy, *Corpus*, trans. Richard A. Rand (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 65.

that looked like fire," with a "splendor all around. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD."[37] Ezekiel does not see God (YHVH) but God's glory (*kabhod* YHVH), which might here name the revealability of God, so that *kabhod* signals an inoperativity through which revelation may occur. Glory therefore remains unseen because it is unseeable, making Ezekiel's not an empty vision but a vision of emptiness: a vision not of revelation but of revealability, of the inoperative condition of revelation's possibility. Glory, Agamben writes, is "nothing but the splendor that emanates from this emptiness, the inexhaustible *kabhod* that at once reveals and veils the central vacuity of the machine."[38]

Agamben returns to this empty throne of revealability to name it as "not, therefore, a symbol of regality but of glory," which "precedes the creation of the world and survives its end," because glory "is in its innermost self-inoperativity and sabbatism," so that "the apparatus of glory finds its perfect cipher in the majesty of the empty throne. Its purpose is to capture within the governmental machine [one whose center is empty] that unthinkable inoperativity—making it its internal motor—that constitutes the ultimate mystery of divinity."[39] Here Agamben reiterates, in terms of glory, the logic of nudity, which exposes inoperativity at its heart and as its motor. This inoperativity at the heart of and as the motor of glory is glorification, its inoperatively inacting condition of possibility.

This revealing glorification occurs in and through liturgy, which short-circuits an efficient teleology in favor of an inoperative ostensiveness. Liturgy performs a displacement analogous to glory's displacement of corporeality, thanks to which a body becomes a glorious body of means whose ostentive actions reveal inactivated potentiality. (Christian Eucharistic liturgies exemplify this deactivating, ostensive displacement as bread and wine—food and drink whose ordinary *telos* is nutritive—become, literally or symbolically, ciphers that are sabbatically exhibitive of divinity.) Liturgy, too, marshals and displays this potentiality, this inoperativity, to dispose actions—and their relations to language and power—as ostensive, acclamatory means, of which the doxological *amen* is, Agamben writes, "the acclamation par excellence" because as only a means of glorification, a word empty of signifying content, it exposes its

37. Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory*, 204; Ezekiel 1:26-28. Agamben considers various iterations of *kabhod YHVH* in *The Kingdom and the Glory*, 197–213. In Giorgio Agamben, *The Coming Community*, trans. Michael Hardt (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), esp. 79–83, and elsewhere, he obliquely considers "glory" via its kinship to the Kabbalistic figure of *Shekhinah*.

38. Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory*, 211.

39. Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory*, 245; see also xiii and 196. He articulates connections of inoperativity and sabbatism more explicitly in "Hunger of an Ox."

exemplary inoperativity and, with it, the inoperativity of language gloriously displaced in and by liturgy.[40]

Liturgy, moreover, (in Agamben's words) "survives only as doxology," which is, "in the final instance, concerned with producing and augmenting glory."[41] Language rendered inoperative in and by liturgy—language rendered sheerly doxological—is language denuded, exposed as an "empty turning" of inoperativity, of potentiality, that inacts glory through itself as a means of glorification. Just as nudity is produced in and by denuding (in its inoperativity), so glory is produced in and by glorifying (in its inoperativity)—by *amen*.

Liturgy's doxological denuding of language exposes doxology as, in Agamben's words, "the glorifying *kabhod*," graphically represented by the empty throne, to which *amen* as glorification is productively addressed.[42] Returning to this empty throne as a politico-theological scene underscores the political and theological import of glorification as the inoperative potentiality that produces glory.

Politically, glorification is the inoperativity that, Agamben describes, "is the political substance of the Occident, the glorious nutrient of power."[43] Politics and power are thus denuded as doxological, driven by the inoperative mechanism of glorification that produces glory, which marks that opening through which political theology occurs. Glory marks the site where, in Agamben's words, "they 'exchange clothes,'" though this exchange is not with one another but of old clothes for new ones of glory that, like the emperor's, denude and displace bodies and substances, politics and theology, via liturgy and glorification.

Theologically, glorification denudes divinity by exposing its dependence on glorification. If glorification produces glory, then doxological acclamation as the event of glorification is, Agamben writes, "perhaps in some way a necessity part of the life of the divinity," for "if glory is the very substance of God and the true sense of his economy, then it depends upon glorification in an essential manner."[44] That is, if glorification produces glory, and if glory is God's substance, then God depends on glorification, which is an acclamatory and denuding occurrence that denudes

40. Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory*, 230. For quite different but astute reflections on liturgy, see Vincent W. Lloyd, *The Problem with Grace: Reconfiguring Political Theology* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011), 108–27, and Jean-Yves Lacoste, *Experience and the Absolute: Disputed Questions on the Humanity of Man*, trans. Mark Raftery-Skehan (New York: Fordham University Press, 2004).

41. Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory*, 162, 229; see also 232.

42. Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory*, 213.

43. Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory*, 246.

44. Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory*, 221, 226.

inoperativity at the heart of divinity. As Agamben articulates it, glorification exposes that "behind or perhaps within glory lies divine inoperativity," *katapausis*, which "is something that theology absolutely does not want to see, a nudity that must be covered by a garment of light at any cost."[45] This "garment of light" is precisely a garment of glory, since (in Agamben's words) "glory is what must cover with its splendor the unaccountable figure of divine inoperativity."[46] But glory as garment is made of an invisible fabric, woven by the denuding, doxological hands of glorification.

Living

Glory reveals itself in and through the glorious body, via denuding, and in and through the empty throne (and what might be called the doxological body—the body that says *amen*), via glorification. Ultimately, glory reveals itself in and through life, which remains at the heart of Agamben's *Homo Sacer* project. Beginning with the exposure of *nuda vita* and the production of the biopolitical body, this project advances through the denuding, glorifying productions of the glorious, doxological body and the correlative exposure of life, which as Agamben avows, "itself becomes a form in glory."[47] The biopolitico-theological revelations that begin with *nuda vita* finally unveil *vita aeterna*, or *zōē ainōnios*, as the ultimate inoperativity that manifests life's revealability. In this way, biopolitics and political theology lead, on Agamben's account, to eternal life.

Vita aeterna, or *zōē ainōnios*, responsively (or perhaps responsorially) reveals why power vitally needs a glorious inoperativity, so much that it inscribes this inoperativity at its empty center. Eternal life, Agamben explains, "is the name of this inoperative center of the human, of this political 'substance' of the Occident that the machine of the economy and of glory ceaselessly attempts to capture within itself."[48] This inoperative human center, which exposes human revealability, (in Agamben's words) "lives only (its) livability… In this inoperativity, the life that we live is only the life through which we live; only our [potential] power of acting and living, our act-*ability* and our live-*ability*."[49] Life becomes sheer potentiality, an ability that does not pass into activity and thus remains eternally

45. Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory*, 242, 221; see also 215, where Agamben writes that "the circularity of glory here attains its ontological formulation: becoming free for the glorification of God means to understand oneself as constituted, in one's very being, by the glory with which we celebrate the glory that allows us to celebrate it."

46. Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory*, 163.

47. Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory*, 249.

48. Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory*, 251; see also 247.

49. Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory*, 251.

inoperative. Here life as live-*ability*, as *vita aeterna*—instead of naming a zone of indistinction between *zōē* and *bios*, as it does in *nuda vita*—is that through which, as Agamben describes, "the *bios* coincides with the *zōē* without remainder."[50] Life becomes a cipher of inoperativity through which living reveals itself as denuding, as glorification, as eternally inoperative potentiality.

The biopolitico-theological investigations of Agamben's *Homo Sacer* project—and with them, possibilities for life and for political theology—ultimately lead beyond or before life, to life as sheer livability, as eternal denuding of a glorious inoperativity. Life becomes unlivable because it becomes only liv*able*, disposed (like the glorious, doxological body) toward a new potential and, as Agamben writes, "dislocated onto a new plane of immanence."[51] This "new plane of immanence" is not biopolitical but ontological, not temporal but eternal, not living but liv*able*, not realizable but purely potential. It is a plane of contemplation, of sabbatism, of opening and exposing without end.

In dislocating life onto a plane of contemplative inoperativity, this opening, this revealability before or beyond revelation, that *vita aeterna* manifests what Agamben designates "the essential function that the tradition of Western philosophy has assigned to contemplative life and to inoperativity," which is to render "the specific functions of the living inoperative" by serving as "the metaphysical operators of anthropogenesis, which by liberating the living man from his biological or social destiny assigns him to that indefinable dimension that we are accustomed to call 'politics.'"[52] Contemplative inoperativity detaches life from biology and sociality, so that it becomes purely contemplative—like an empty throne, which is a vision of emptiness to gaze upon without seeing anything. Politics, too, becomes displaced onto the contemplative plane of inoperativity, rendered ostensive, acclamatory and anagogic.

Life and politics become deactivated, denuded openings onto eternity via *vita aeterna*, which points (in Agamben's words) to "the dimension that the inoperativity of contemplation, by deactivating linguistic and corporeal, material and immaterial praxes, ceaselessly opens and assigns to the living."[53] Thanks to these deactivations, corporeal denudation and linguistic glorification give way to ontological contemplation of livability. Contemplation is the ultimate revealability of inoperativity since it beholds inoperative revealability itself, in a sphere that opens onto

50. Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory*, 251; see also 245, where Agamben describes life as "inoperative and without purpose."

51. Agamben, "Absolute Immanence," 239.

52. Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory*, 251.

53. Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory*, 251.

eternity. Contemplation names that impossible praxis of sabbatical inoperativity in and through which "But he hasn't got anything on" is not (or not only) denuding revelation but glorious acclamation of livability, forever and ever, *amen*.

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