

# SCENES OF INDIFFERENCE. THE ADDRESSEE OF THE ADVENTURE

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## **ABSTRACT**

The article, born of a dialogue between two thinkers of negativity and the neuter, elaborates Agamben's philosophy of indifference through a series of (dis)connected scenes or thematic episodes. These scenes do not so much describe as perform indifference, insofar as they pursue the same themes through in-different variations. In seeking to critically articulate Agamben's 'archaeology of the subject' by assessing the manner in which Agamben's thought picks up and differs from Foucault and Heidegger as well as the lesser known Salomo Friedlaender/Mynona, the text evokes a range of avenues into deactivation, inoperativity, indifference, and the event. The deliberately performative approach both addresses and seeks to embody the spirit of adventure at work in Agamben's thinking by exploring a plane and practice of thought "below" or beyond surface assumptions of identity and position – where ways of being, forms of life, and modes of thinking and writing attune, and are acquiesced to, as necessarily open and plural. The essay seeks to show how Agamben's attempts to render inoperative the metaphysical determinations of the human as subject are keyed to a specific form of address, an address that can be understood as a response to Jean-Luc Nancy's question "who comes after the subject"?

## **KEYWORDS**

Active/Passive, Aesthetics of Existence, Subjectivity, Anthropogenesis, Creative Indifference, Deactivation, Inoperativity, Event, Form of Life, Freedom, Ways of Being.

Viens, viens, venez, vous ou toi auquel ne saurait convenir l'injonction, la prière, l'attente.

Maurice Blanchot, *Le Pas au-delà* (Blanchot 1973: 185)

## 1. PROLOGUE

Whether the ambages (torturous wanderings) that will have constituted this present adventure culminate in tragedy or comedy, or in the elucidation of something at the source of both, in between or beyond the two (Agamben 1999d: 20-21, 132), will perhaps not become clear, if ever it does, until the tale has ended. But it began, or so the story goes, with an encounter between two acquaintances connected at first only by their professed mutual interest in the notion of 'indifference'—already an oxymoron of sorts, it would seem, insofar as the very word 'interest' brings into play a *making*, i.e. constituting of difference which the 'indifferent' would appear to automatically neutralize. Into the scene of this strange predilection came a call: the invitation to contribute to a volume of texts in which an ensemble of addresses would be brought together, responding in manifold ways to the digestion of the 'subject' of Giorgio Agamben's philosophy. Our quest in what is truly an adventure of sorts, since we do not where exactly we are headed, nor yet quite how to get there, is to explore our common interest in the notion of indifference, to contextualise it, but also, to seek to *apply* it (for want of a better word), that is, to find a form best suited to elucidating its resonance in both the contexts of our respective lives and philosophical work. Although the present text is the result of a dialogue in progress, and therefore not complete, we have chosen not to 'perform' it as a dialogue, but rather to present a series of 'scenes'. These scenes, or 'thematic episodes', are held together perhaps less by the dramaturgical arch of reason and logical consequence most habitually associated with academic narration ("firstly, secondly, in conclusion"), but they communicate with each other as dis-connected (and only *thereby* as relatable) vignettes, each describing a theoretical 'region' with its own idiom, vocabularic landscape and horizon of thought. Informed by a sensitivity for the relation between content and form, our text exposes itself willingly as but an exercise in the practice of a language of indifference (one learns to speak by speaking) that necessarily leans into the performative contradiction inherent in seeking to speak in a common *voice*.

Setting out from a shared interest in indifference, our conversation has revolved around certain scenes in Agamben's work where the question of the subject becomes topical. We do not seek to give a comprehensive, synoptic or synthetic account of Agamben's various problematizations of the subject. And we certainly do not wish to offer a general introduction to the notion of indifference (already given in the important study by Watkin 2015). Rather, we propose to revisit certain scenes in Agamben's work that we have found ourselves drawn to in the process of our

unfolding conversation. Questions that have animated our discussion have been: what necessitates Agamben's critique of the subject? Why does the idea of the human and of life—of human life—become so important in his attempt to think about “who comes after the subject”, to use Jean-Luc Nancy's poignant phrase?<sup>1</sup> How does Agamben's response to this thought that “comes towards us and calls us forth” differ from those of his interlocutors, such as Foucault, Deleuze and Heidegger? How can we conceive indifference as a form-of-life? And in what ways (or not) does Agamben's thinking relate to that of Salomo Friedlaender, arguably the only philosopher who prior to Agamben thought extensively about the relation between subjectivity, life and indifference? Our hope is that the staging of scenes communicates something of the rhythm of our dialogue, of the pulse and hopefully innovative potential of collective, collaborative thinking and writing—and that this pulsating rhythm of thought, with its flow and interruptions, gaps and repetitions, is responsive to the task of understanding philosophy as a practice in which thinking, that is to say living, is not separate from life. The scenes are indifferent to one another: they suggest no logical progression or chronological succession. They occupy the same empty space, pursue the same theme through in-different variations and can therefore be read in any order. We thus engage in exegesis, reconstruction and argumentation, but above all we seek to open up questions and avenues for future thought narrations, recognitions and, *retrouvailles* of indifferent truth.

## 2. THE ADVENTURE (A 'PRIMAL' SCENE?)

In 2015, Giorgio Agamben published a slim volume entitled *The Adventure*, a characteristically learned yet playful *dérive* through the history of philosophy, philology, literature and religion in the course of which he subtly introduces some of the most urgent concerns of his work. Rather than presenting it as an amusing or exciting episode, Agamben seeks to restore a different, perhaps more exigent meaning to the adventure, to consider it as “a specific way of being” (2018: 42). To the extent that it is a particular ‘way’ of being, distinct, that is, from any other way of being, being on this or any adventure requires that the addressee be in the driving seat: they have to have chosen or acquiesced to the adventure. And yet of course their being open to the adventure means that they are also passive in the sense that the adventure necessarily involves events that happen to them, challenges that befall them, situations that call them to act in response. Agamben explains the active-

<sup>1</sup> The question “Who Comes after the Subject?” was initially posed by Jean-Luc Nancy on the occasion of his invitation to edit an issue of the international review *Topoi*. In the introduction, Nancy writes: “Not only are we not relieved of thinking this some *one* [...] but it is precisely something like this thought that henceforth comes toward us and calls us forth” (Nancy 1991: 5). For a questioning of the ‘who’ implied in Nancy's question, see Haines and Grattan (2017) biopolitical reframing, *Life After the Subject*.

passive—or, perhaps, archi-passive—stance of the addressee by evoking the manner in which each and every individual must come to know their own rapport to the figures of demon, chance, love, necessity and hope—and how these interrelate with one another.

The book's fourth chapter is dedicated to the notion of "the event", an important concept in twentieth century philosophy but one that had played no dominant role in Agamben's work until this point. In this elaboration, however, it appears as the philosophical key to thinking a way of being designated by the adventure. What is in question here is how the event of the adventure finds its addressee, that is to say, how one becomes involved in the adventure of the event, how one is called upon by it: neither by freely choosing it, nor by merely submitting to a random incident. The modality of the address must somehow move out of this active-passive dualism to allow for a different kind of passivity, an attunement. To approach this modality, Agamben rehearses, on a few dense pages, some central motifs of his thought and glosses Gilles Deleuze's and Martin Heidegger's respective theories of the event. Engaging in a subtle dialogue with these thinkers, Agamben here works towards something that could be understood as a response to Nancy's question about the "some one" who comes after the subject. For the "specific way of being" that is at stake in the adventure concerns precisely the being of its addressee, which in turns is deeply linked to the mode of the address.

Of course, the question "who comes after" can be framed or heard in a multitude of ways – each evoking a different mode of address and pointing to a particular register of difference or indifference. Much of the philosophical interest of the question stems from its problematization of the constraints that grammar here seems to enforce upon thought. As Derrida once put it in response to Nancy: "What we are seeking with the question 'Who?' perhaps no longer stems from grammar, from a relative or interrogative pronoun that always refers back to the grammatical function of subject. How can we get away from this contract between the grammar of the subject or substantive and the ontology of substance or subject?" (Derrida 1991: 101) Beyond the sequentiality of narrative, the purely chronological ("first this happened and then, as a consequence, that...", "first this person arrived on the scene, and then, by chance, there was an encounter..."); and beneath the surface level of semantics that poses the question of the identity of the agent who comes 'after' the other (Bernardo's "who's there?"<sup>2</sup>, "who—or what—is the being that does the coming after?"), there is the question of intention and of what it means to actively, purposefully pursue (come after) or indeed to be pursued. ("What is the issue that clamors for attention, what is it that haunts you, keeps you up, won't let you rest or ignore it?", and "What or who commands the urgency or grants the right to ignore all duty; what is it that allows you to sleep soundly despite it all?"). Who follows whom, in other words, and what difference does it make which way around it is? And what

<sup>2</sup> Hamlet I, 1.

does any or all of it have to do with the calling—that apparently one either may or may not have—to *philosophize*? (“...nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so”<sup>3</sup>).

At first, Agamben recounts Carlo Diano’s distinction of form (Platonian *eidos*) and event, where the latter is considered as a singular, concretely situated and embodied experience. What interests Agamben about this understanding is that the ‘someone’ who is addressed by the event—or the adventure—does not pre-exist it as a stable subject. Rather, Agamben suggests, the order is reversed, such that one could say that “the adventure subjectivizes itself, because happening (*l’avvenire*) to someone in a given place is a constitutive part of it” (Agamben 2015: 68). The decisive questions then become: what kind of being is called upon by the event? How is the truth or even mere facticity of the event discerned? Who is addressed by the event and how? Agamben briefly flags his theory, inspired by Émile Benveniste, that in order to be in the position of the “I” of an address, one must take up the instances of discourse designated by linguistic shifters. Of the address of the adventure, Agamben therefore says: “The adventure, which has called him into speech, is being told by the speech of the one it has called and does not exist before this speech” (Agamben 2015: 70). For Agamben, the event is therefore essentially a linguistic address; yet this address is no mere (contingent) proposition, but the event of language as such, which solicits the speaking being.

To specify the nature of the address, Agamben then turns to Deleuze’s notion of the event as sense. As subtly and indirectly as ever, Agamben is here not only citing but also challenging Deleuze. Of course, Deleuze understands the event in opposition to the subject, or even as a pure form of de-subjectivation; but he still has recourse to the notion of the will to specify the address of the event. It is a question, Deleuze asserts, “of attaining this will that the event creates in us” (Deleuze 1990: 148). To will the event means, for him, to be willing “to release its eternal truth, like the fire on which it is fed”; and hence the addressee wills “not exactly what occurs, but something in that which occurs, something yet to come which would be consistent with what occurs [...]” (Deleuze 1990: 149). To become worthy of the event, the addressee must will its release, must will its truth, which for the early Deleuze is a decidedly tragic one: “It is in this sense that the *Amor Fati* is one with the struggle of free men” (Deleuze 1990: 149). After having cited Deleuze’s claim that “the event is not what happens (the accident), rather it is, in what happens, the pure expressible that signals and awaits us”, Agamben approvingly specifies that the happening of the adventure is not “the subject’s free choice; it is not a matter of freedom” (Agamben 2015: 72). And yet, Agamben insists that the Nietzschean doctrine of *amor fati* “is the opposite of an adventure” and one may suspect that this is due to the fact that the will cannot serve as the concept that links the event and its addressee (Agamben 2015: 72). Instead, Agamben writes: “Desiring the event

<sup>3</sup> Hamlet II, 2.

simply means feeling it as one's own, venturing into it, that is, fully meeting its challenge, but without the need for something like a decision. It is only in this way that the event, which as such does not depend on us, becomes an adventure; it becomes ours, or, rather, we become its subjects" (Agamben 2015: 71-72). Not the will, but desire individuates the event. Yet Agamben adds that this desire "is a form of impassivity that knows that events, perfect in themselves, are ultimately indifferent, and that only the individual's acceptance and use of them is important" (Agamben 2015: 74-75). An impassive desire for an indifferent, whatever, event: such is the strange modality—defying the opposition of active and passive—that the address of the adventure takes, according to Agamben<sup>4</sup>.

From this exceedingly indirect criticism of Deleuze, Agamben goes on to discuss Heidegger's understanding of the event. He briefly glosses the well-known semantic ambiguity that Heidegger claims to be present in the German *Ereignis*, insofar as Heidegger relates this noun back to the verb *er-eignen*, to appropriate. For him, the very name 'event' amounts to a crystallization of what he once called "the most difficult thought of philosophy" (Heidegger 1991:I:20): the thought of being as time, or being without any foundation in any particular beings. But Agamben here puts the notorious question of time to one side and focuses, again, on how Heidegger understands the 'addressee' of the event, that is to say, on his comments regarding the mutual appropriation of being and event. The event, Heidegger asserts, "appropriates man and Being to their essential togetherness" (Heidegger 1969: 38). Radically recasting Heidegger's understanding of this reciprocity (which involves a criticism we will pick up on later), Agamben argues that what is at stake here is the becoming human of the human, the event of anthropogenesis: "The living being becomes human—it becomes Dasein—at the moment when and to the extent that Being happens to him; the event is, at the same time, anthropogenetic and ontogenetic; it coincides with man's becoming a speaker as well as with the happening of Being to speech and of speech to Being" (Agamben 2015: 77-78). How can, one may ask, ontology and anthropogenesis be so easily conflated? How can ontology, as Agamben puts it in *The Use of Bodies*, be "the memory and repetition" of anthropogenesis (2016: 111)? How can this be anything but a metaphysical reduction of ontology to anthropology? And yet, the preceding discussion indicates that what is at stake is precisely the opposite, namely that one think the address of an unknown addressee who has *suspended the confines of the sub-jectum*. Who, then, is the addressee of this adventure? Who desires, impassively, the event of

<sup>4</sup> It would be necessary to compare and contrast this form impassive desire with Blanchot's deconstruction of the active-passive opposition in terms of *patience*: "Patience opens me entirely, all the way to a passivity which is the *pas* ('not') in the utterly passive, and which has therefore abandoned the level of life where *passive* would simply be the opposite of *active*. In this way we fall outside inertia; the inert thing which submits without reacting, becomes as foreign as its corollary, vital spontaneity, purely autonomous activity" (Blanchot 1982: 13-14).

anthropogenesis? And why does Agamben—despite all the anti-, trans- and post-humanisms at work in contemporary theory—hold on to the name of “the human”?

### 3. ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE SUBJECT

Giorgio Agamben’s first published book, *The Man Without Content*, develops a critical analysis of the place of contemporary art through a sustained interrogation of artistic subjectivity. Read from today’s vantage point, one can trace how Agamben here approaches some of the questions that will become vital in his subsequent work. For what appears as a ‘regional’ analysis of artistic subjectivity is, actually, a problematization of the notion of the subject as such and the attempt to outline a different understanding of human life and doing. The diagnosis from which Agamben sets out is the fact that art has been predominantly understood in terms of aesthetics, be it through the lens of art criticism or, philosophically, in relation to a theory of aesthetic judgement. According to Agamben, this privileging of the spectator is far from innocent, inasmuch as it is based on a radical split, which is experienced by the artist as fatal: “To the increasing innocence of the spectator’s experience in front of the beautiful object corresponds the increasing danger inherent in the artist’s experience, for whom art’s *promesse de bonheur* becomes the poison that contaminates and destroys his existence” (Agamben 1991a: 5). While he does not yet employ this terminology, Agamben thus analyzes aesthetics as something that he will later refer to as an “apparatus”: a mechanism that becomes operative by division and exclusion. This is because both positions—artist and spectator—can only be articulated through a laceration of the cultural fabric of transmission: the spectator judges the artwork in a disinterested fashion, whereas the artist feels cut off from the audience and rebels against this dire state as the fate of art. The artists Agamben has in mind are those who expressed a radical negativity in relation to art, such as Antonin Artaud, who called for a destruction of the disinterested experience of art. Agamben’s exigent undertaking is to align himself with these artistic attacks on aesthetics, while trying, at the same time, to move beyond their purely destructive gesture<sup>5</sup>.

Faced with the predicament of aesthetics, Agamben calls for a “destruction” of aesthetics in the technical, Heideggerian sense of dismantling the historical categories that are constitutive of the aesthetic regime. For Heidegger, the destruction of the history of ontology meant, first and foremost, calling the Cartesian subject into question, which has been the “*fundamentum inconcussum*” of modern philosophy—the very source of the mathematical projection of nature, of the dualism of subjectivity and objectivity, of the privileging of self-presence and of the oblivion of

<sup>5</sup> Here we focus solely on how *The Man Without Content* sets up Agamben’s engagement with the notion of subjectivity. The intricate structure of this much neglected book remains unexplored here. For a more detailed analysis, see Rauch 2020.

being-in-the-world (c.f. Heidegger 2001: 46). In a familiar yet very distinct way, Agamben argues that the regime of aesthetics is premised on the understanding of the artist as a subject. According to Agamben, one might say, aesthetics captures the artist in the position of the subject and it is this capture that Agamben's first book is meant to undo. Once culture is torn apart, Agamben argues, the artist is bound to take the position of the free, creative subject that elevates itself above transmitted contents: "The artist then experiences a radical tearing or split, by which the inert world of contents in their indifferent, prosaic objectivity goes to one side, and to the other the free subjectivity of the artistic principle, which soars above the contents as over an immense repository of materials that it can evoke or reject at will" (Agamben 1991a: 35). Here, artistic freedom appears as premised on a radical split from the audience and all transmitted contents.

Historically, the trajectory Agamben refers to is the process by means of which art becomes autonomous. Far from portraying this as a history of emancipation, however, Agamben insists that the emergence of the autonomous artist is, in truth, tantamount to the emergence of an eminently destructive figure, inextricably tied to the termination of Western metaphysics in nihilism. For, once the artist is defined solely by her subjective freedom, this freedom becomes bare, worthless, purely formal and hence purely negative. One may object to this genealogy on the grounds that art is thus finally set free from religious and cultic constraints. But Agamben is not contesting this and certainly does not advocate the 'goodness' or 'innocence' of a pre-modern state of art. What he is suggesting, rather, is that this freedom takes a strangely limited form, insofar as its sole content is the negation of what has been culturally transmitted. Henceforth, the artist is a subject "without content", since she is bound to invent ceaselessly and since the only path of such ceaseless invention is the negation of anything given, ultimately the negation of transmissibility as such: "Artistic subjectivity without content is now the pure force of negation that everywhere and at all times affirms only itself as absolute freedom that mirrors itself in pure self-consciousness" (Agamben 1991a: 56). Thus, according to Agamben, the fate of art is deeply intertwined with the operative categories of modern subjectivity. And much of Agamben's early work is informed by the attempt to offer a different account of artistic doing and a different 'negative' modality than the destruction of transmissibility.

The key of Agamben's archaeological argument is that "the crisis of art in our time is, in reality, a crisis of poetry, of *poiesis*", which he understands in Heideggerian terms as the "very name of man's *doing*, of that pro-ductive action of which artistic doing is only a privileged example" (Agamben 1991a: 59). Cast in this perspective, the anti-aesthetic endeavours of artists such as Duchamp appear as symptoms of a crisis in the regime of human making. Agamben tries to flesh this out through the contrast between praxis, which is defined by the "the will that finds its immediate expression in an act", and *poiesis*, which is marked by the passive



“experience of production into presence, the fact that something passed from non-being to being, from concealment into the full light of the work” (Agamben 1991a: 69). In a few tightly argued pages, Agamben follows the relation of *praxis*, *poiesis* and *ergon* from antiquity to modernity, arguing that the idea of human doing has been increasingly understood in terms of praxis. Eventually, in modernity, Agamben suggests, all human doing is understood as work and the human is understood as “the living being (*animal*) that works (*laborans*) and, in work, produces himself and ensures his dominion over the earth” (Agamben 1991a: 70-71). Hence Agamben’s dire diagnosis: “The point of arrival of Western aesthetics is a metaphysics of the will, that is, of life understood as energy and creative impulse” (Agamben 1991a: 72). What is eclipsed in modernity is, then, an idea of human life that allows for *poetic* passivity, since all human doing is understood in terms of the subject’s active will. And yet, what arguably remains unanswered in this sketch is the role of philosophy—which assigns the truth to art while its own place remains unsolicited—as well as the addressee of Agamben’s analysis—who seems to stand uneasily between art and philosophy. In short, what remains unanswered in Agamben’s earliest deconstruction of the metaphysics of subjectivity is the actual ‘subject’ of this address: “Who Comes after the Subject?”

Strikingly, in some of his most recent essays, Agamben returns to many of the concerns he raised in his very first book. Tracing once more the rise of the aesthetic regime, Agamben notes that: “[A]rt has withdrawn from the sphere of activities that have their *energeia* outside themselves, in a work, and has been transposed into the circle of those activities that, like knowing or praxis, have their *energeia*, their being-at-work, in themselves” (Agamben 2019: 7). Yet, if one compares these analyses with *The Man Without Content*, it becomes clear that the decisive element that has been added to the analysis is a notion that Agamben has framed variously as inoperativity, deactivation and indifference. Arguing against the metaphysical signature of art as “creation”—traces of which he finds even in Gilles Deleuze’s work—Agamben notes that: “Politics and art are neither tasks nor simply ‘works’: they name, rather, the dimension in which linguistic and bodily, material and immaterial, biological and social operations are deactivated and contemplated as such” (Agamben 2019: 27). In *The Man Without Content*, Agamben’s analysis remained haunted by the shadow of an idea of “the original space of man”<sup>6</sup> that could be re-

<sup>6</sup> See especially the following passage, where art is essentially identified with an understanding of the sacred that recalls Heidegger’s highly problematic locutions on the topic but also stands firmly in the tradition of French thought reaching from Marcel Mauss to Georges Bataille—i.e., exactly that tradition which Agamben will later criticize in the harshest terms: “[A]rt is the gift of the original space of man, *architectonics* par excellence. Just as all other mythic-traditional systems celebrate rituals and festivals to interrupt the homogeneity of profane time and, reactualizing the original mythic time, to allow man to become again the contemporary of the gods and to regain the primordial dimension of creation, so in the work of art the *continuum* of linear time is broken, and man recovers, between past and future, his present space” (Agamben 1991a: 101-102).

appropriated, and it is precisely against these metaphysical residues that Agamben develops his understanding of something we may call an ethics of inoperativity. Accordingly, the section devoted to ethics in *The Coming Community* commences almost with a reversal of the claim found in Agamben's first book: "The fact that must constitute the point of departure for any discourse on ethics is that there is no essence, no historical or spiritual vocation, no biological destiny that humans must enact or realize" (Agamben 2009: 43). Instead of an original space, the human ethos here turns into a question of potentiality and inoperativity. What is "proper" to human life is the absence of anything proper, any essence or origin. Reiner Schürmann has aptly characterized such a severance of action from metaphysical categories as "a life 'without why'", which means, essentially, "a life without a goal, without *telos*" (Schürmann 1987: 10)<sup>7</sup>. Yet, while Agamben endorses the idea of a "without why", he has always remained critical of the various anti-foundational philosophies of difference and their elaboration of non-finality in terms of scatter, dissemination, or an irreducible manifoldness.

#### 4. ENCOUNTERS: FOUCAULT AND HEIDEGGER

In *The Use of Bodies*, the un-finished conclusion of the *Homo Sacer* series, Agamben weaves together several threads of his work. As in his previous analyses, the subject appears as a central category in the originary fracture between being and language that pervades the history of philosophy in its entirety: "Western ontology is from the very beginning articulated and run through by scissions and caesurae, which divide and coordinate in being subject (*hypokeimenon*) and essence (*ousia*), primary substances and secondary substances, essence and existence, potential and act, and only a preliminary interrogation of these caesurae can allow for the comprehension of the problem that we call 'subject'" (Agamben 2016: 105). Throughout his work, Agamben offers a range of archaeologies of subjectivity—or of processes of subjectivation—and attempts to outline a non-exclusionary understanding of human life in contradistinction to these. One can see the germs of this analysis in *Language and Death*, where the human can only become a speaking being by suppressing the animal voice: "Man is that living being who removes himself and preserves himself at the same time—as unspeakable—in language; negativity is the human means of having language" (Agamben 1991: 85). And one can of course observe a familiar strategy in *Remnants*, where the subject is considered as "a field of forces always already traversed by the incandescent and historically determined currents of potentiality and impotentiality, of being able not to be and not being able not to be" (Agamben 1999b: 147-148). In these differently inflected archaeologies

<sup>7</sup> The "without why" is borrowed from Heidegger, who, in turn, borrows the phrase from Meister Eckhart via Angelus Silesius (Heidegger 1997: 57-58). Also see Schürmann's important gloss (Schürmann 2001: 61-62).

of the subject, the human is always captured in the position of a sub-iectum, which in turn is always articulated on the basis of scissions. Given this persistent problematization of the subject, it is no coincidence that the two Intermezzos in *The Use of Bodies* are dedicated to Heidegger and Foucault's responses to the question 'who comes after the subject'. In these strategically positioned excursions, Agamben takes issue with the two key references for his project on the grounds that their attempts remain entrapped in circles of metaphysical divisions and dualisms.

In relation to Foucault's "aesthetics of existence", Agamben sets out by challenging Pierre Hadot's reading, since the latter "does not succeed in detaching himself from a conception of the subject as transcendent with respect to its life and actions, and for this reason, he conceives the Foucauldian paradigm of life as work of art according to the common representation of a subject-author who shapes his work as an object external to him" (Agamben 2016: 100). According to Agamben, however, the crucial gesture of Foucault's late idea of "the care of the self" is that it eliminates any such externalism; in fact, "this care is nothing but the process through which the subject constitutes itself" (Agamben 2016: 104). Here, the subject has no priority in the sense of a constitutive or foundational function; it is thought in purely relational terms. Foucault speaks of the "etho-poetic" function of the various technologies through which individuals can attempt "to question their own conduct, to watch over and give shape to it" (Foucault 1990: 13). Hence, insofar as the self coincides with this relational process, it "can never be posited as subject of the relationship nor be identified with the subject that has been constituted in it. It can only constitute itself as constituent but never identify itself with what it has constituted" (Agamben 2016: 105). In an essay dedicated to the late Foucault, Reiner Schürmann coins the helpful concept of "anarchist subject" to describe this form of auto-constitution that tries to skirt all essentialist foundations. The anarchist subject, Schürmann argues, "constitutes itself in micro-interventions aimed at resurgent patterns of subjection and objectification" (Schürmann 2019: 29). And yet, although the Foucauldian self thus seems to be deprived of its transcendental function, it turns, Agamben argues, into a hypostasis once it is conceived *as constituted* within the process. There is, therefore, a non-coincidence between constituted and constitutive elements, between self and subject in Foucault's work, which the insistence on process and relationality cannot solve: "As constituent power and constituted power, the relation with the self and the subject are simultaneously transcendent and immanent to one another" (Agamben 2016: 106). What Agamben seeks to retain from Foucault is the idea of thinking the life of the self immanently, yet he deems it necessary to skirt the aporia of auto-constitution that led Foucault into this impasse.

Agamben's confrontation with Heidegger also turns on the question of coincidence and co-belonging, but the focus of his analysis shifts. Returning to the investigations begun in *Language and Death* and worked out in *The Open*, Agamben

challenges Heidegger's attempt to propose a fundamental ontology of Dasein that would have detached itself from the metaphysics of subjectivity. Essentially, Agamben takes Heidegger to task for being unable to think "the relation between the living human being and Da-sein" (Agamben 2016: 179). Pointing to Heidegger's frequent comments about the co-belonging yet non-coincidence of the human and Dasein, Agamben argues that what remains unthought in Heidegger is the notion of life, of the living human being, which Heidegger must presuppose and repress at once. What Heidegger understands as the opening of the human to the clearance of being appears, to Agamben, precisely as the exclusion of animality. This is an argument that Agamben first advanced in relation to Heidegger's suppression of the animal voice in *Language and Death* and then extended into a general scrutiny of Heidegger's treatment of animal life in *The Open*. In these texts, Agamben's resistance towards Heidegger's understanding of Dasein insists—from different angles—on the fact that Heidegger's conceptualization of disclosure is permeated by the disavowal, silencing and suppression of animal life. And to the degree that the 'opening' of the human world is predicated on the annihilation of animality, "being is traversed by the nothing"<sup>8</sup>. Here, Heidegger's strategy to elaborate an anti-foundational notion of Dasein is essentially taken to be held captive by the exclusion of life.

This long-standing engagement with Heidegger is at play when Agamben, in *The Use of Bodies*, claims that: "The 'there' of Dasein takes place in the non-place of the living human being" (Agamben 2016: 180-181). Agamben is obviously aware of Heidegger's insistence, throughout his work, that Dasein cannot be thought of as an 'addition' to animal life, lest the exposition would fall back into a metaphysical understanding of the human as a biological substance. Yet, if Heidegger refuses, for this very reason, to grant the status of Dasein to the fact of mere living, this cannot hide the fact that such an understanding of mere living remains the unarticulated and irreducible condition of his fundamental ontology: "[I]f the human being is truly such only when, in becoming Dasein, it is opened to Being, if the human being is essentially such only when 'it is the clearing of Being', this means that there is before or beneath it a non-human being that can or must be transformed into Dasein" (Agamben 2016: 181). To think the human as 'the open'. Agamben

<sup>8</sup> "From the beginning, being is traversed by the nothing; the *Lichtung* is also originally *Nichtung*, because the world has become open for man only through the interruption and nihilation of the living being's relationship with its disinhibitor" (Agamben 2004: 69-70). This is strictly analogous to the argument found in *Language and Death*: "And if metaphysics is not simply that thought that thinks the experience of language on the basis of an (animal) voice, but rather, if it always already thinks this experience on the basis of the negative dimension of a Voice, then Heidegger's attempt to think a 'voice without sound' beyond the horizon of metaphysics falls back inside this horizon. Negativity, which takes place in this Voice, is not a more originary negativity, but it does indicate this, according to the status of the supreme shifter that belongs to it within metaphysics, the taking place of language and the disclosure of the dimension of Being. [...]. The thought of Being is the thought of the Voice" (Agamben 1991: 61).

suggests once again, Heidegger is bound to think the open as suppression and suspension of animality. Formally similar to the aporia in which Foucault's thought was caught, Heidegger here remains unable to think the co-belonging of the two terms—the human and Dasein—and ultimately succumbs to a dualism that elevates the human openness above 'mere' animal life. Challenging this conception, Agamben claims that: "Only a conception of the human that not only does not add anything to animality but does not supervene upon anything at all will be truly emancipated from the metaphysical definition of the human being" (2016: 183).

Comparing the digressions into Foucault and Heidegger, it becomes evident that, for Agamben, both authors fail because of similar problems in moving beyond an essentialist understanding of the subject. Heidegger thinks Dasein without any foundation as the pure opening to being; but Dasein's non-base is, in truth, the suppression of animal life, which pervades in the guise of a metaphysics of nothingness. Foucault, on the other hand, thinks 'the care of the self' as an immanent, purely relational process; but his insistence on self-creation and positing ends up in a dualism between constituted and constitutive elements that fractures the supposed immanence of the process.

## 5. SALOMO FRIEDLAENDER/MYNONA

A concept of indifference is the central motif in the prolific writings of a still posthumously to be 'constructed' author<sup>9</sup>, namely Salomo Friedlaender (1871-1946) a.k.a. Mynona (the German word for anonymous in reverse). Friedlaender/Mynona (F/M) was quite well known in his time, a century ago, albeit arguably less so for his prolific philosophical writings than for his satirical grotesques, which were printed in expressionist journals like *Der Sturm* and *Die Aktion* and performed/read out in various avant-garde venues frequented by expressionist artists, writers and other intellectuals of the day. The central concept of 'creative indifference', which he consistently sought to elaborate and refine over decades and throughout numerous publications as well as in extensive works many of which have only been published very recently<sup>10</sup>, served as a constant thematic compass even in his less explicitly philosophical, more literary texts. The general gist of this notion can be briefly summarized as a philosophical position which urges the individual to find a point of balance midway between what we generally think of as opposites—

<sup>9</sup> "F/M [ist] ein noch in Konstruktion befindlicher Autor" (Thiel 2012: 8).

<sup>10</sup> Salomo Friedlaender's collected works (both philosophical, literary and including a vast correspondence throughout his life with a wide range of cultural figures of his time) are still in the process of being published in over thirty volumes thanks to the extraordinary effort and dedication of Hartmut Geerken and Detlef Thiel. A first extensive anthology of his works translated in English is expected to be published in 2021 in the performance philosophy book series at Rowman & Littlefield Int. (eds. A. Lagaay & D. Thiel).

what he terms polarities—and to creatively engage with the world from this neutral point of indifference. According to F/M, who grounds his thinking first in a close reading of Nietzsche and later, after distancing himself from the later, in a radical ‘completion’ of Kantian principles (“This is *electrified Kant*” Friedlaender/Mynona 2015: 31 – trans. A.L.), all outward expression, indeed all expression *tout court*, is only possible, i.e. only (o)utterable, within and thanks to a necessary (linguistic) paradigm of perpetually evermore distinct differentiation. This paradigm of differentiation, he claims, is relatable in all instances to the principle of polar oppositionality and has its logical counterpart in a theoretical point of indifference *within* (as opposed to outside) the subject. Conceptualising and moving towards this precise inward point (not zone!) of indifference within themselves, the subject can be freed from the burden, as it were, of ‘division’ or ‘divuation’ and become the centre of the world—its most general, universal and absolute origin. Although itself devoid of all characteristic and therefore impossible to express or articulate in words, this zero point is what F/M in later texts refers to as ‘heliocentre’, ‘magical I’, or ‘*Weltperson*’ (world persona). It is a theoretical (i.e. non-empirical) ‘person’ who or which by virtue of having disconnected itself from any individual characteristic, rendered all distinct functions, all adjectives, inoperative (so to speak), is necessarily general, universal and free. Of particular interest is the clear insistence with which F/M seeks to dismiss any suggestion that this theory may be driven by, or associated with, a metaphysical, moral or even religious vein. To quote just one instance in which F/M declares this, in a letter to Traut Simon in 1939, he writes:

Bitte trauen Sie mir nicht die Geschmacklosigkeit zu, Ihnen etwa gar Moral zu predigen. Ich spreche weder von Moral noch von Religion noch auch nur von Philosophie, sondern ganz nüchtern von purer Lebenstechnik. Denn das Leben will so erlernt und betrieben sein wie eine Präzisionstechnik. (Please do not presume I would be so tasteless as to preach to you a moral. I speak neither of morality nor of religion nor even of philosophy, but quite simply of a pure life technique. For life wants to be learned and practiced like a precision technique (8th March 1939, Friedlaender/Mynona 2020: GS Vol. 31: 210).

At the time of its publication in 1918, F/M’s philosophical monograph *Schöpferische Indifferenz* (Creative Indifference) clearly sent considerable ripples of positive contagion and affect throughout the cultural scene of its time. There is, for instance, evidence that it influenced Walter Benjamin, through whom a more or less direct reverberation into Giorgio Agamben is conceivable<sup>11</sup>. F/M’s book is also explicitly credited by Fritz Perls as having been a major influence on his development of

<sup>11</sup> Detlef Thiel (2012) has assembled ample material demonstrating the affect F/M had on Benjamin. He also provides a thorough analysis of the relationship between F/M and Schelling, Husserl and Derrida respectively (Adorno, Bloch, Kubin, Scholem, Simmel, Unger are just a few of the other contemporaries he explores in some detail). Agamben makes at least one explicit reference to F/M in Agamben 2011: 71. But his description of the process of creative indifference as “dialectical” is misleading. Cf. Thiel 2012: 143.

Gestalt Therapy<sup>12</sup>. The potential line of conduction that connects these very different contexts of experience to or via the notion of ‘creative indifference’ is thought provoking in itself insofar as it suggests a position in which the philosophical subject and its bio-political correlation not only coincide with each other, but also with the experience of a psychological self as well as with the subject’s embodied, physical and structural i.e., in a certain sense, ‘objective’ being (Gestalt) – all the while being potentially anonymous and general – once could say: *inoperative*.

That there be a necessary connection between these various parallel dimensions of subjectivity might seem intuitively obvious, and yet, in the actual practice of theory, especially in the context of academic discourse, more often than not, whilst the philosophical and the political may increasingly be being discussed in terms of each other, the subjective position from which the very question of their respective relativity or indeed equivalence (or not) to the registers of *lived* empirical life, i.e. to practices and experiences of actual (human) being is posed, still verges on the taboo—despite the efforts of multiple forms of feminism, queer studies and post- and decolonial studies<sup>13</sup>. It tends to be implied, for instance, that engaging in philosophical discourse, especially of the kind that mainly involves close reading or textual exegesis, and especially if done so in a professional academic context, has little or nothing to do with one’s own person (which includes aspects of character, gender, class, race, situatedness, and calling). A scholar’s particular passage through a given theory—their ‘adventure’ in discourse—need not be measured or brought to bear in any way on their personal, biographical life, or only retrospectively so, that is to say, posthumously, once they become historical ‘objects’—suddenly open to a new dimension of scholarly scrutiny. (One may think here of Agamben’s apt comparison of the photos in Paul Ricœur’s biography, which “depicted the philosopher solely in the course of academic conferences”, and the images of Debord in *Panegyrique*, which attempt to put life—“the clandestine”—into the foreground, in however insufficient a way [Agamben 2016: xviii]<sup>14</sup>). To leave traces of personal inclination or attitude in philosophy is generally only welcome in the form of the anecdotal—i.e. with the clear function of backing up, illustrating or colouring in whatever abstract topic, theory or position happens to be in discussion; but its affect must be

<sup>12</sup> “I recognise three gurus in my life. The first one was S. Friedlander (sic.) who called himself a Neo-Kantian. I learned from him the meaning of balance, the zero-centre of opposites (...) His philosophical word – creative indifference – had a tremendous impact on me. As a personality he was the first man in whose presence I felt humble, bowing in veneration. There was no room for my chronic arrogance” (Perls 1969 quoted in Frambach/Thiel 2015: 245).

<sup>13</sup> Indeed, some of these elisions also affect Agamben’s work, as brought out, for instance, with regard to the relation of biopolitics and black feminist race theory in Weheliye 2014 and with regard to feminist critique in Deutscher 2008.

<sup>14</sup> In fact, one could also consider in this regard Agamben’s *Autoritratto nello studio*, where he charts his own trajectory—not only in writing, but also by showing photographs of the places and studies he worked in, the people he lived and thought with, as well as the artworks and books that made an impact on him. See Agamben 2017.

understood as serving additional and incidental information only, not making an essential difference. Beyond the mere anecdote, drawing on anything too distinctly personal or individual would amount to a confusion of register—not only is it not the “done thing” (cf. “That’s How We Do It”, Agamben 2016: 240-244), but still now, in philosophy, it would tend to fly in the face of what Derrida aptly diagnosed as the “dream or the ideal of philosophical discourse [...] to make tonal difference inaudible, and with it a whole desire, affect, or scene that works (over) the concept in contraband [...] [t]hrough what is called neutrality of tone, philosophical discourse must also guarantee the neutrality or at least the imperturbable serenity that should accompany the relation to the true and the universal” (Derrida 1992: 29).

Perhaps it is in this sense that F/M’s conception of an a-personal person, at the very core of the in-dividual takes on a promising potential—in relation to Agamben. For this ‘zero-point’ that is conceived as both indifferent and as the source of creation seems to allow intuitively for something that is personal yet not private, intimate (because inwardly oriented) yet by definition communally shareable and indeed intended to be so, that is, in a sense, always already shared. Agamben clarifies this with the distinction he makes in *The Coming Community* between the notion of a boundary as closure (a locked door with no key, an unclimbable wall), in contrast to that of a threshold. “The outside,” he insists, “is not another space that resides beyond a determinate space, but rather, it is the passage, the exteriority that gives it access [...]. The threshold is not, in this sense, another thing with respect to the limit; it is, so to speak, the experience of the limit itself, the experience of being-within an outside” (Agamben 2009: 68). It is, in other words, the lived experience of one’s vibrant intellectual ability to in-differentiate oneself that gives rise to the differentiation of the “world”. For F/M it is a dynamic process, an oscillation between inside and outside, outside and in, that never completely settles either side of the boundary, but that with deliberate practice can give way to a glimpse of the infinite. Agamben is no less hyperbolic: “This *ek-stasis* is the gift that singularity gathers from the empty hands of humanity” (Agamben 2009: 68).

The test of how to compose philosophical discourse from the position of this anonymous and therefore ‘collective’ voice that is mine but not mine alone would be perhaps a form of writing that disturbs the assumption of objectivity, not necessarily by divulging intimacies but by applying a method of collaboration and indistinction with regard to voice from the start. As such, the question we seek to ask here, not just in theoretical terms but also in terms of the very practice of engaging, as we do, in reading and writing philosophical discourse, really is *who speaks in this empty space?*<sup>2</sup> Who is the thinking, scholarly or other genre of author, who, devoid of all particular characteristics, having suspended all difference, and turned themselves towards their innermost zero point, having come, that is, as close as (only) humanly possible to the point of neutral indifference, having witnessed and become charged by its creative potential, now speaks not just from the position of *anybody*



but *for everyone*, and yet is still capable of formulating the philosophy of that subject? *Who*, in other words, *are we* (that is not us)?

What if, moreover, that ‘voice of thinking’ (if not necessarily that of reason!) that displays its thought here in the form of a monologue or thesis (as opposed, for instance, to a dialogue between “two”), makes no effort to conceal the fact that it is not the result of a singular voice (if such a thing were ever to be potentially audible as such) but at least of, and likely more than, two?

## 6. INDIFFERENCE AS FORM-OF-LIFE

What most clearly distinguishes Agamben’s thinking from Heidegger’s Dasein and Foucault’s care of the self—but also from Friedlaender’s Kantian notion of the subject as well as from most contemporary philosophers in the post-Heideggerian and post-structuralist traditions—is how stubbornly he holds on to the concept of the human, while obviously refusing any essentialist determination of the concept. In many ways, a non-metaphysical elaboration of human life is at the very center of Agamben’s thought, and it is only on the basis of this elaboration that his thought on ethics and politics becomes comprehensible.

Agamben’s elaboration relies on a set of closely related concepts, which imply or even merge into one another: impotentiality, inoperativity, deactivation, use, form-of-life, to name but a few. There is, however, something like a relay that holds these concepts together, and this relay is the notion of indifference. In fact, Agamben precisely tries to think human life as an indifferenciation of the scissions to which preceding articulations succumbed, not as a substance to be determined in ontic terms. Against Heidegger’s thinking of difference as difference, Agamben holds: “It is not a question of having an experience of difference as such by holding firm and yet negating the opposition but of deactivating the opposites and rendering them inoperative” (Agamben 2016: 239). This is the general approach that orients Agamben’s attempt to move past the subject. For instance, in contradistinction to Heidegger’s anti-biologist determination of Dasein, Agamben claims that it is not a question of seeking “new—more effective or more authentic—articulations” of the divide between the human and the animal. The point is, rather, to expose “the central emptiness, the hiatus that—within man—separates man and animal, and to risk ourselves in this emptiness: the suspension of the suspension, Shabbat of both animal and man” (Agamben 2004: 92). What is crucial here is that the human is not defined in biological or any other substantialist terms; but solely by what Agamben calls here an “emptiness” and which he elsewhere refers to as “void”, “absence of relation”, or “contact”. This is Agamben’s way of acknowledging the absence of any human essence or identity. The ‘nature’ of the human, as he writes elsewhere, is such that the human “appears as the living being that has no work, that is, the living being that has no specific nature and vocation” (Agamben 2007: 2). Yet Agamben

refuses to think this void, as Heidegger does, for instance, in terms of nothingness. The ‘privative’ aspect of this void is not difference or negation, but a suspension that reveals human impotentiality; it is an indifference of all articulations that are based on dualisms and scissions.

Here, we encounter something that is, perhaps, the most difficult aspect for Agamben’s thought. For what Agamben tries to think is a non-essentialist account of the human—of human life and human doing—that does not introduce any divisions for its articulation. It can, however, appear as if Agamben did exactly this, for example when he claims that: “Other living beings are capable only of their specific potentiality; they can only do this or that. But human beings are the animals who are capable of their own impotentiality” (Agamben 1999c: 82). Is “impotentiality” here not simply introduced as the quality or capacity that distinguishes the human from animality? Impotentiality, however, is precisely not a given quality or capacity. It is not a feature of the human that can be actualized as the human comes to its own self-presence. Rather, it is a purely privative quality or capacity. Hence it is absolutely common and absolutely immanent inasmuch as, and this is the decisive point, it is absolutely indeterminate. In his earlier writings, Agamben often drew on the idea that the dispossession of all specific qualities or ‘works’ could allow for this appropriation of the improper ‘as such’. Among the most provocative variations of this line of argument is the claim that pornography and advertising, in their brutal commodification of the living body, “are the unknowing midwives of this new body of humanity” (Agamben 2009: 49). Or that the emergence of a planetary petty bourgeoisie offers the possibility for “making of the proper being—thus not an identity and an individual property but a singularity without identity, a common and absolutely exposed singularity”, which would allow humanity to “enter into a community without presuppositions and without subjects, into a communication without the incommunicable” (Agamben 2009: 65). In his more recent work, Agamben opts, instead, for an insistence of deactivation to vindicate indifference. The quick succession and linkage of Agamben’s key concepts bears witness to the difficulty involved in holding the different elements of the argument together. “A living being,” Agamben writes towards the end of *The Use of Bodies*, “can never be defined by its work but only by its inoperativity, which is to say, by the mode in which it maintains itself in relation with a pure potential in a work and constitutes-itself as form-of-life, in which *zoè* and *bios*, life and form, private and public enter into a threshold of indifference [...]” (Agamben 2016: 247). That is to say: there is no essence or *ergon* unifying the different modes of human life. It is striking to note that Agamben comes back to the figure of the artist at this decisive juncture in *The Use of Bodies*, suggesting that it is possible that in the “artistic condition there comes to light a difficulty that concerns the very nature of what we call form-of-life” (Agamben 2016: 246). The gloss that Agamben supplies on the artist in relation to the notion of form-of-life is revealing:

And the painter, the poet, the thinker—and in general, anyone who practices a *poiesis* and an activity—are not the sovereign subjects of a creative operation and of a work. Rather, they are anonymous living beings who, by always rendering inoperative the works of language, of vision, of bodies, seek to have an experience of themselves and to constitute their life as form-of-life (Agamben 2016: 247).

The only ‘determinacy’ that Agamben’s understanding of the human has is, thus, an indeterminacy: the indifferenciation of preceding articulations based on division and scission. There is, as Agamben is always at pains to insist, no “immediate access to something whose fracture and impossible unification are represented by these apparatuses” (Agamben 2005: 87)<sup>15</sup>. Hence, it is the suspension of the fractures at the heart of metaphysical humanism that allows for a different understanding of the human, not the return to some primordial human innocence. And the artistic *poiesis* is, from the beginning of Agamben’s work until its most recent manifestations, framed as an exemplary case of this suspensive movement. If the language of the speaking subject is premised on exclusion of the animal voice, and if this scission is paradigmatic for the scissions running through the history of philosophy, then the poet’s suspension of this understanding of language is paradigmatic for thinking the possibility of a different use. In so doing, the poet offers a guiding thread for Agamben’s project of a general suspension of all apparatuses that divide life. There arguably is something quite classical in this gesture of investing art with the capacity of ‘healing’ the scissions that lacerate life. But in *The Use of Bodies*, Agamben seeks to think the concept of “use”, first explored in *The Highest Poverty*, as a form of human doing that would extend the paradigm of artistic suspension to all regions of life, without, of course, implying any aesthetization of life. Rather, life, insofar as it is lived in the immanence of use, would constitute itself as form-of-life: “It defines a life—human life—in which singular modes, acts, and processes of living are never simply facts but always and above all possibilities of life, always and above all potential. And potential, insofar as it is nothing other than the essence or nature of each being, can be suspended and contemplated but never absolutely divided from act” (Agamben 2016: 207). Here, it becomes evident how indifference, form-of-life and the idea of anthropogenesis are related. Since what is at stake in the immanence of life designated by the terms “use” and “form-of-life” is, precisely, a modification of human life such that it would no longer be premised on exclusion and division. And what is at stake in a mode of being designated by the ontology of indifference is the mode of life that has suspended and rendered indifferent all metaphysical articulations of human life. The thought of indifference is the thought of a non-exclusionary life.

<sup>15</sup> In this passage, Agamben continues: “There are not *first* life as a natural biological given and anomie as the state of nature, and *then* their implication in law through the state of exception. On the contrary, the very possibility of distinguishing life and law, anomie and nomos, coincides with their articulation in the biopolitical machine” (Agamben 2005: 87). For Agamben, this structure holds true for any metaphysical articulation of the human.

## 7. EPILOGUE

The greatest danger in thinking indifference and inoperativity is, perhaps, to consider them as absolute or transcendent features that could be actualized once and for all—pointing to a peaceful, if empty neutrality stripped of all differences, dualisms and qualities. Often, these concepts seem to intervene in Agamben’s texts as a resolution of sorts, as if they designated the definitive neutralization of a metaphysical paradigm. And yet, Agamben notes that what we call a form-of-life is “a life in which the event of anthropogenesis—the becoming human of the human being—is still happening” (Agamben 2016: 208). Accordingly, the whole group of concepts organized around the idea of indifference do not denote anything that can be fully actualized or come to self-presence (F/M’s non-gendered “zero-point” of indifference is in this sense truly a utopia). On the contrary, these concepts allow one to think an abandonment of life to the plurality of its modes, such that it can never stabilize itself in any identity or essence while coinciding with its lived experience. That the ‘nature’ of the human is its impotentiality translates into the demand that every mode of life must make room for an aberration of the actual. If philosophy is “the memory and repetition” of anthropogenesis (Agamben 2016: 111), then this is not because it knows the truth of the human essence, but because it is one of the practices that answers to this aberrant demand. For Agamben, becoming-human means, then, becoming otherwise than being, other than identity, other than self-same: “The anthropogenetic event has no history of its own and is as such unintelligible; and yet it throws humans into an adventure that still continues to happen (*avvenire*)” (Agamben 2018: 83). The drama that continues to unfold is thus neither tragic nor comic, and the characters embarked on its adventure not predestined to one fate or another, but they are called to acquiesce to a journey. Joining voices in discourse, that is to say, losing one’s voice, is an attempt not just to formulate but to practice a form of indifference. Philosophy is one of the practices that tells of and participates in this anonymous tale.

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