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# Paradise Lost in Derrida and Agamben: onto-theology of animal life

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**ABSTRACT**

In this essay, I explore the philosophical resonance of the theological notion of Paradise in the works of Giorgio Agamben and Jacques Derrida through the question of the Paradisiacal belonging of animal life. What is the significance of Paradise for these authors? This essay undertakes the search for the meaning of Paradise by way of these thinkers' assessment of animal or creaturely life. I argue that their differing attitudes towards the life of the animal or creature expose a fundamental discord concerning exactly this issue: the significance of theology, and the myth of Paradise and the Fall. To be precise, it is argued that Derrida means to preclude the narrative of the Fall. Agamben, on the other hand, takes the animal as creature, and thus as a proper theological subject – which in this context means an Edenic exile – and accordingly as a proper subject of redemption. So, where Derrida intervenes in an encounter between human and animal prior to Paradise, Agamben joins the story after man was driven from it. In turn, this essay covers the issue of Derrida and Agamben's messianic terminologies, the ontology of the animal as being-after, and ultimately, the conceptual understanding of Paradise.

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## Introduction

What is the meaning of Paradise and the Fall from Grace for humanity's relationship with animals? In this essay, I explore the theoretical separation between Giorgio Agamben and Jacques Derrida's discord regarding the value of theology and explain their differences by way of looking at their responses to the question of animal life. I argue that Agamben and Derrida's disagreement turns on exactly this issue of Paradise (the Garden of Eden) and its abandonment. The inspiration that drives me here is Agamben's observation from *The Signature of All Things*: '[w]hether a philosophical inquiry is possible that reaches beyond signatures toward the Non-marked that, according to Paracelsus, coincides with the paradisiacal state and final perfection is, as they say, another story, for others to write.'[1] The suggestion of a philosophy of this non-marked is irresistible. Moreover, since Agamben published *The Kingdom and the Garden* (*Il regno*

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*e il giardino*, 2019), an essay on the political significance of the idea of Paradise, and because the itinerary of his sense of the messianic has been brought into focus in recent years, we can perhaps today say a little more about how he would relate to this domain of the 'non-marked.'[2] What is more, the *content* of the Paradisiacal scene – that of a garden populated with innocent beings, animals in particular – allows us further to fill in for an Agambenian position regarding Eden.

By putting Agamben and Derrida's ontologies of animal and creaturely life in the context of their debate around messianeity, I will assess their positions *vis-à-vis* the Paradisiacal scene. Indeed, in his essay on Pope Benedict XVI's abdication, Agamben appears to demand literally such approach.[3] The Paradisiacal scene may come with more or less philosophical connotations; it may be more or less hospitable to philosophical considerations. As the *locus* of innocence, it may be seen as philosophically void; alternatively, as the literary genesis of consciousness, it may be seen as useful. As I will show, for Derrida, there is a straightforwardness about this that allows him to revisit a sense of Paradise – as if, were it possible, mediated by fiction – while for Agamben the scene of Paradise is that of its abandonment: the meaning of Paradise is that we cannot return there; in fact, Man was never in Paradise. Indeed, I will proceed by examining the diverging terminologies of Derrida and Agamben, to see exactly what they make of a 'return.'

To integrate their respective stances on animal life within these comprehensive oeuvres, as stated, I will develop my argument from a reflection on Derrida and Agamben's terminologies, and the messianic positions they indicate. I will argue that while Agamben highlights the animal's theological status, to accordingly press on the abandonment it must share with the human being, Derrida insists that animals have been kept in a Paradisiacal bio-industrial complex, from which they ought to be liberated.

Do we share with animals this theological ontology, and what are the ethical conclusions that we should draw from either kind of companionship? Indeed, an important hallmark of theological thinking is the prohibition of the proximity or continuity between human and animal life. Deleuze and Guattari declare: '[t]heology is very strict on the following point: there are no werewolves, human beings cannot become animal.'[4] Yet both Derrida and Agamben have devoted extensive commentaries to the werewolf – in *The Beast and the Sovereign* and *Homo Sacer,* respectively. If Derrida summons an impressive pack of werewolves, for Agamben its appearance is singular and decisive.[5]

In turn, this essay covers the issue of Derrida and Agamben's messianic terminologies, the ontology of the animal as being-after, and ultimately, the grasping of Paradise in a concept – this last challenge in fact presenting the question of priority, or of first science.

## Celebration of the hidden treasure

In 'The Celebration of the Hidden Treasure', Agamben reads Elsa Morante's glosses in her copy of the *Ethics*. Agamben homes in on the moment when Morante strongly voices her disagreement with Spinoza: 'Oh Baruch! I feel very sorry for you, but here you did not UNDERSTAND.'[6] What was it that Spinoza failed to understand, when he stated the human being's entitlement to exploit the lives of animals? Agamben explains that what lies behind this entitlement, for Spinoza, is not an ontological separation between human

and animal life, but the opposite – their absolute proximity. It is *because* humans and animals are modes of the *same* substance that for both species, as for any modality in which that substance is manifest, their privilege is equal to their capacity. Indeed, it is so that *because* for Spinoza life and philosophy are united, and life is whole, human and animal beings belong together ontologically.

To Agamben, Morante denies this ontological proximity by making the following claim: 'Animals are the sole witnesses to the existence of earthly paradise and, therefore, the sole proof of man's lost Edenic state.'[7] Thus, animals are proof of God's mercy, allowing humanity at least this keepsake of Paradise. This implies how the ontology of animal life is, like that of the human being, caught up in a theological narrative. Also, it brings a twist to the myth of the Fall: it suggests that our exile in possession *of* its myth is preferable over a simple and irrevocable abandonment – the destruction of the Garden.

If for Spinoza, one of the heroic figures of Enlightenment philosophy, there is a point of view – naturalistic, scientific – from which the theological element appears emasculated, for Morante and Agamben there is no such perspective. Therefore, for Morante, the separation between the human being and animal life is far greater than it was for Spinoza who conceives all life as gathered onto the same ontological plane. This reluctance before the naturalistic standpoint motivates my foray into Agamben and Derrida's work on animal life.

In Morante's intellectual development, however, there is room for a later reconciliation with Spinoza. Spinoza turns out a vital and dominant reference for Morante, as is evidenced by her piece 'Song of the H.F. and the U.M. in Three Parts', where the 'happy few' are inscribed on a cross or genealogical tree. Spinoza appears at the head of this cross, his position entitled 'celebration of the hidden treasure,' flanked by Antonio Gramsci ('the hope for a real City') on his left and Simone Weil ('the intelligence of saintliness') on his right, supported by Giordano Bruno ('the great Epiphany') from below.[8] The hidden treasure that Spinoza's name connects to, Agamben links to a Hassidic doctrine: the spirituality of matter – this has been interpreted as Spinoza's atheism. Matter is infused with spirit, steeped in spirit, to the point at which all speculative foresight, indeed *all hope* and furthermore *all theology* becomes meaningless or ceases to speak. Instead, there appears an incandescent *certainty*. Agamben finds it in Elsa Morante's poem *Addio*: 'Ma quando la memoria è masticata dalle sabbie | anche la pulsazione del dolore è troncata. | *Così sia*.'[9] '*So be it*;' to Agamben, this motif of embracing contingency coincides with his own drive to enact a criticism of critique itself, a 'Cut of Apelles,' which would divide this essential gesture of Western philosophy – critique – from within.[10] To this enigmatic position I will give an explanation in the conclusion of my essay.

The essay 'Celebration of the Hidden Treasure' asks pertinent questions about the ontology we may or may not share with non-human animal life. What is more, it does so within the context of a politico-theological consideration of the abandonment that is characteristic of Agamben's analysis of Western politics and metaphysics. Any examination of the ontology of animal life, to Agamben, must follow his particular sense of the messianic: the rendering inoperative of potentiality. I contend that this messianic is elaborated in a close discussion with Derrida, more particularly the rendering inoperative of Derridean concepts and constructs like *différance*, the spectre, writing, and the trace.

Of these, I will single out Derrida's take on the spectre, in connection to his political analysis of the werewolf.

The comparison with Derrida I am going to make below, highlights how his thought, by embracing *khōra*, the trace of the trace, a desert within the desert – and thus by assuming the most traditional philosophical comportment (again, this is the assessment of deconstruction as basically conservative) is unable, and for good reason unwilling, to articulate the theology of animal life.[11]

## Terminologies of deconstruction and archaeology

In this section, I will explain some of Derrida and Agamben's terminology as well as the messianic stance that their respective key terms indicate. Two crucial terms for understanding animal life for Derrida and Agamben are *spectre* and *remnant*.[12] Another word for spectre is revenant; the spectre *returns*: '[. . .] a spectre is always a *revenant*. One cannot control its comings and goings because it *begins by coming back*.'[13] This is why the spectre is such a useful image in Derrida's work; for Derrida, history is never complete: 'At bottom, the spectre is the future, it is always to come, it presents itself only as that which could come or come back [. . .].'[14] Instead, the historical origin that a naïve understanding would simply deposit at the bedrock of time is always involved in a process of re-inscription into a historical narrative. At the origin lies a trace, a mark that returns us to this strange past that was never present. This is the motif for Derrida's questioning of the original, Paradisiacal scene: its perfect presence withstands traditional criticism (epistemological or ontological), because it is in fact presupposed in such criticisms. A Derridean deconstruction, on the other hand, would establish how Paradise is constructed on the back of its destruction. So, for Derrida we only have the spectre of Paradise, its perpetual return, as it maintains a firm grip over our understanding of life, nature, virtue, and other values. In this context, the task of philosophy can only ever be to pry open the moment when Paradise returns to such values or returns us to them.

Like Derrida, Agamben is obsessed with the notion of a return.[15] However, while for Derrida that return means the ubiquitous and ever-relevant opportunity for thought, Agamben thinks a return that is definitive and *irrevocable* – the return does not return. For Agamben, the spectre does not return on their own accord. Instead, necromancers exploit them for their own political purposes. It is evident that for Agamben, there is no space for the typical non-committal, non-confessional Derridean philosophy of difference – which to Agamben comes as the culmination of metaphysics, not its overturning;[16] as the title of William Watkin's landmark text on Agamben indicates, such indifference must be *achieved* philosophically first. Let me briefly explain this claim. Even if Derrida has in many places in his work engaged at a profound level with the unavoidability of confession (the best example here is probably the work he created together with Geoffrey Bennington, *Jacques Derrida*),[17] this *thought*, on confession's necessity, is still philosophical, and it is not – or not completely, and anyway *never completely* – confessional. For Derrida, there is always a minute possibility of playfulness, putting his commitment in question. This playfulness and reserve is on display particularly in the work that is central to this contribution, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*: 'How and why would truth be due?'[18]

Confession is unavoidable, but the discourse that pronounces this unavoidability is not confession; it is deconstruction, *circonfession*.

The key term, then – and here Watkin is our guide still – for Agamben's thought is the *remnant*: an ontology of 'being after'.[19] Indeed, in the context of the present investigation, this sense of 'being-after' is of critical importance, as I will demonstrate in the next paragraph.

Agamben's method – philosophical archaeology – does not use those *margins* of philosophical theory that it *inevitably* generates – that it *could not not* – but instead activates the *remainders* of *certain* politico-philosophical hypotheses; those that it truly *can not*, that it is truly capable of. Such philosophically potent remainder Agamben calls a paradigm. A paradigm is a thing of thought itself; it is what we will come to denote – with Spinoza – as the materialisation of light. Most of Agamben's works deal with a remnant of some sort. Most importantly, we find these remainders of thought in the essays on language collected in *Potentialities* ('To restore the thing itself to its place in language and, at the same time, to restore the difficulty of writing, the place of writing in the poetic task of composition: this is the task of the coming philosophy'), and in *Remnants of Auschwitz* ('[. . .] we give the name *testimony* to the system of relations between the inside and the outside of *langue*, between the sayable and the unsayable in every language – that is, between a potentiality of speech and its existence between a possibility and an impossibility of speech').[20]

For Derrida, the return of the return, the trace of the trace, is the essence of the return – an essence that can only be *represented* – and it occurs in a space, *khōra*, which is always available, but never saturated by it. If for Agamben, it is not a matter of *re*presenting the return, this is because the real matter is of *presenting* its *archē*.

As *parousia* the return is also a *messianic* notion, and as such tied to the respective weak and strong messianic forces at work in Derrida and Agamben. However, this is not the place to further explain the messianic difference between these two thinkers; I have referred to relevant sources above. Let me only add here that werewolves will appear, in Derrida and Agamben's thought, together with their spectres and remnants: for Derrida, the werewolf is always to crop up again, reliably unpredictable, and it is a matter of carefully following its traces, while Agamben uses it as the hidden paradigm of political thinking.[21] So the theological animal fault line – there are no werewolves – with Derrida is disrupted almost casually, with werewolves running wild everywhere,[22] while in Agamben it is violated decisively and determinately: here is *the* werewolf – *wargus* – that one damned specimen, that exposes our legal and political ideology as a predatory regime engaged in producing bare life.[23] Derrida cannot get through his endless lists of werewolves and other fantastic beasts ('I won't get through enumerating them');[24] Agamben puts all the weight and culpability of Western politics on the one ancient legal formula that describes the *homo sacer*.

This means that theology, to Derrida, is much less of a challenge than it is to Agamben. For Derrida, the theological threshold was never a serious obstacle; for Agamben, its reign is evidenced by its sole violation. For Derrida, then, philosophy has always already had the better of theology as it is the privileged, though non-exclusive, mediator to the non-essential but necessary element of *khōra*.

If Derrida's thought is occasional at this profound level: always already anticipated by another's prior use of language ('What exonerates me, in part from this suspicion of

presumption is that I was asked to come, I was asked a question, and so I feel less ridiculous, because I was "answering" an occasion'),[25] this presents the question of what receives this discourse.[26] Having explained Derrida's address of *khōra* elsewhere,[27] I will provide a very brief outline here. In Modern Greek *khōra* is written χώρα: 'country, 'land,' 'chief town,' 'village,' or 'region,' and it can be used as a verb too: χώραν or λαμβάνω – 'to take place.' Also, *khōra* acoustically suggests the courtyard as the scene of classic Greek thought.

> The discourse on *khora* thus plays for philosophy a role analogous to the role which *khora* 'herself' plays for that which philosophy speaks of, namely, the cosmos formed or given form according to the paradigm. [...] Philosophy cannot speak directly, whether in the mode of vigilance or of truth (true or probable), about what these figures approach. The dream is between the two, neither one nor the other. Philosophy cannot speak philosophically of that which looks like its 'mother,' its 'nurse,' its 'receptacle,' or its 'imprint-bearer.' As such, it speaks only of the father and the son, as if the father engendered it all on his own.[28]

*Khōra*, in Derrida's analysis, then, admits all cosmologies and mythologies but is exhausted by none. This feature, double ('the double exclusion (neither nor) and the participation (both this and that)'),[29] of *khōra is* articulated philosophically. In so far as theology and mythology take the shape of a narrative, they cannot identify her.

For Agamben, on the contrary, theology is forever the master discipline.[30] It is clear from the essays on the existence of language – on its very being – collected in the *Potentialities*-volume, for Agamben philosophy must hearken to theology as it will always react to its essential assumption: in the beginning was the word.[31]

To put it differently, *creatio ex nihilo* to Derrida *invokes* a quasi-essential philosophical element – *nihilo* – while to Agamben it *produces* another essential philosophical element: language. Yet Derrida cannot and will not make the totalitarian claim that this mysterious substance, *nihilo*, has a properly philosophical character. Rather *nihilo* must also be *khōra*, the difficult third element of Plato's *Timaeus*.

In this section, I have brought out Derrida and Agamben's terminologies as centred around the *spectre* and the *remnant,* respectively. I have tied this to the way in which their accounts of the werewolf follow from these terminologies. I will now go on to explain for both authors the ontology of animal life: being-after. The werewolf here – following Deleuze and Guattari's thesis – is the litmus test for any theological regime, and Derrida and Agamben's ways of failing that test differ in ways that follow their respective analyses of the spectre and the remnant.

## Being-after: *l'animot*

'One understands a philosopher only by heeding closely what he means to demonstrate, and in reality fails to demonstrate, concerning the limit between human and animal.'[32] This observation is made in reference to a philosopher for who Derrida has immense respect, Emmanuel Levinas. So this understanding of the philosopher – for the moment at which they fail – is a sincere recognition: philosophy fails to understand animal life when it exercises its most essential gesture. In this section, I will bring out Derrida's treatise on animal life, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, and how it constitutes a response to the myth of Paradise. Subsequently, I will explain how Derrida attempts

to aid the animal's escape from Paradise, by involving them in a hermeneutics. Along the way, I will give reminders of Agamben's stance on these matters.

The theological inadmissibility of werewolves is an important waymark for this essay; Derrida's answer is to posit the bio-industrial animal of the *chimera* – undermining our conception of the natural animal in the first place. For Derrida, thinking about animal life means first to go back to the scene of the Fall.[33] Indeed, Derrida revisits a Paradisiacal scene, but not with a view to consolidating it. On the contrary, to Derrida the animal's Edenic status – not its exile – is the problem.

Agamben's view was after: '[. . .] a fracture that passes through the inside of life itself dividing it like the sharpest blade according to whether or not it remained in Eden and whether or not it was contaminated by the shadow of knowledge.'[34] The animals in Agamben's writings seem inspired by a theological need to join in a proximity with the human being that to Spinoza is simply natural. Derrida, interestingly, looks at animals – *at the beginning* – to show the role of the human being in the animal's very genesis. For Derrida, it is as if man's Adamic mastery over the animals has never ended, as if Paradise was never sacked, and thus as if theology's very inauguration – in exile – is perennially postponed. With Derrida, philosophy retains a claim to the moment of theology's deferral, infinitesimal between the fall from grace and the expulsion from Paradise – the *khōra*-element discussed above. A moment, then, of pure heresy: of the human being trembling naked under God's gaze, and yet somehow answering that gaze.

This demands a small clarification: Derrida is a philosopher who works in the wake of Paradise.[35] In this sense aligning Derrida with Hegel, Kevin Hart shows how for both philosophy comes about with the Fall – as does theology. Indeed, Derrida is sometimes said to draw comfort from the knowledge that Paradise was destroyed, criticizing the metaphysical perspective on: '[. . .] a reign in which peace itself would no longer have meaning.'[36] However, the relationship with animals, as Derrida conceives it, remained paradisiacal – which is exactly what allows the extreme brutality by which humans exploit the lives of animals. *That* the natural and the Paradisiacal would converge, as they do in Spinoza's thought that employs the strongest messianic conceivable – the materialization of light –, this is offensive to Derrida. Indeed, and this is the other dimension of the heresy invoked above, Derrida, in forcing philosophy to admit its unawareness of animal life, separates philosophy from theism and turns it into an advocate for animal rights. To put it concisely, Derrida seizes the Paradisiacal moment exactly to foster an absolutely unheard of alliance, or at least sympathy, between philosophy and animal life, as opposed to theological thinking and the philosophies it inspired – which is to say, all of philosophy.

If Agamben means to argue the animal's theological subjectivity, Derrida attempts to liberate it from Eden. For this reason, Derrida's writing embraces theological abandonment and means to expose and depose the illusion of Adamic language, a language that is exercised through the act of naming. So while to Agamben abandonment is the crucial problem to fix – by developing its subjectivity – to Derrida the challenge is the development of the Fall itself, and to expand it to also involve animals. As is well known, Derrida achieves this by showing how the metaphysical ideal of presence-of-mind has always already fallen into representation. This means a trajectory, a path or trace, of the creature that is entirely different from Agamben's in that Derrida, by revisiting an Edenic scene,

denies the theological subjectivity of animal life and in that way tries to bypass a philosophy that justifies the exploitation of animal life.[37]

So it is with dizzying consistency that Derrida, famed for inviting the divided conscience of the human being to reflect on its reliance on writing, also would deny the animal a pure and simple, undivided and indeed *natural* presence – and the purpose of this negation is the emancipation of the animal. For according to the myth, the animal *did not fall* into representation.

Derrida commences his essay making two pleas: he appeals to the beginning and to the ideal of nudity; two invocations of Genesis. Indeed, like Agamben's aspiration reported at the beginning of this essay for a language that simply speaks, Derrida promises to speak 'quite *simply* [...] from the heart.'[38] Doing so, Derrida immediately transports us to an Edenic context. However, he does so, as I already indicated, with the clause: 'were it possible.'[39] The claim to nudity, naked words, and to the beginning is inscribed into an intricate consideration of the possibility of such a claim, and of the theme of 'following', tracing. The value of the beginning is always already entangled with a following of a prior absence: *khōra*.

Indeed, like Agamben, Derrida in *The Animal that Therefore I Am* gives an example of a 'now' conceived as an 'after,' a sense of being reconfigured as being-after: 'What does "to be after" mean?'[40] If this being-after can be read not only as a pursuing and tracing – *within* the logic of abandonment – but also as a pure remaining, a remnant beyond relation, then something in Derrida's thought has escaped the logic of survival and the narrative of mourning that, on Martin Hägglund's influential reading, is insurmountable:

> The key to radical atheism is what I analyse as the unconditional affirmation of survival. This affirmation is not a choice that some people make and others do not: it is unconditional because everyone is engaged by it without exception.[41]

Derrida allows for the space, *khōra*, *between* philosophy (philosophy on principle)[42] and theology, while Agamben insists on the partaking of philosophy (philosophy in its historical and contingent modality) *in* theology.

So, Derrida and Agamben think the creature differently: for Derrida the creature must again be superimposed as the inaudible undecidable between the singular animal and the plural *les animaux*, as *l'animot* on a tradition that knows only the Fall, while for Agamben the creature is *the* theological subject, the only subject that can be redeemed.[43] While for Derrida the animal's subordination must be rejected – for the same reasons that philosophy's obsession with being present must be questioned – for Agamben it must be *developed*. And this difference, then, results from the distinct ways in which the messianic operates in their oeuvres: for Derrida as the only to be circumscribed yet highly prolific open wound of thought – *à venir* –, for Agamben as the immanent critic of Western onto-theology.

Let me observe that, crucially, Derrida's *l'animot* remains the undecidable *of* a certain tradition – within a certain history that cannot consistently make up its mind about it. Agamben's resolve, on the other hand, is to have a certain post-human creature stand at the threshold of that tradition. So while *l'animot* is undecidable and endlessly frustrating given the parameters and foundations of Western philosophy, it also continues that

tradition by its very indecision. The creature as it embarks onto the Open in Agamben's thought means a singular existence marked only by a halo – not reducible to a ground.

Derrida's stance with a view to the tradition of the Fall is apparent from his reasons for not following Walter Benjamin in his essay 'On Language as Such and on the Language of Man:'

> [. . .] because his meditation lays out this whole scene of a grieving aphasia within the time frame of redemption, that is to say, after the fall and after original sin (*nach dem Sündenfall*). It would thus take place *since the time* of the fall [. . .] Still, I have been wanting to bring myself back to my nudity before the cat, since so long ago, since a previous time, in the Genesis tale, since the time when Adam, alias Ish, called out the animals' names *before* the fall, still naked but before being ashamed of his nudity [. . .] Before evil [*le mal*] and before all ills [*les maux*].[44]

Derrida asks after the time in which the non-human animal is the absolute other to the human being, and calls this time into question – this time would be the time of the Fall. Has this animal *Nur-lebenden*, life and nothing more – bare life – time? Derrida has grave suspicions about the concept of bare life, *das bloße Leben* in Benjamin, *vida nuda* in Agamben:

> I can understand it on the surface, in terms of what it would like to mean, but at the same time I understand nothing. I'll always be wondering whether this fiction, this simulacrum, this myth, this legend, this phantasm, which is offered as a pure concept (life in its pure state – Benjamin also has confidence in what can probably be no more than a pseudo-concept), is not precisely pure philosophy become a symptom of the history that concerns us here.[45]

The suspicion is that this concept would be symptomatic of the history of the Fall, epiphenomenal to a certain conception of time – Derrida has already turned the problem upside down: not the bare life of a particular conception of time is at stake, but the time of that (posited) bare life. The concept of bare life, Derrida suggests, simply derives from the theological notion of the Fall: nudity is a consequence of the human being's fall from grace.[46] Presumably, Agamben would not disagree, and would admit that the concept he works with in *Homo Sacer* is a phantom, a phantasm, a spectre – a force without significance. Derrida's objection coincides with the explicit critique of Agamben presented in the seminars on *The Beast and the Sovereign* – which share the motif of following with the animal essay – where he ridicules Agamben's naivety and presumption of an exclusive claim to certain philosophical origins.[47] Agamben indeed intervenes in a linear history of philosophy, without contesting its linearity – yet this does not imply that Agamben conceives of this history as necessary. Instead, he turns its linearity against it, as contingency. While Derrida would question the idea of time that generates concepts like bare life, Agamben finds a paradigm for that bare life, *homo sacer*, and thus has it *demonstrate* a fault line within metaphysical thought. So while Derrida circumscribes the metaphysical invention's conditions of impossibility, Agamben thinks *with* the invention, the unwarranted abstraction, which, as the metaphysically excluded, contains the material – or matter – for a coming philosophy.

Derrida reiterates a structural distinction between revealability and revelation, the messianic and messianism, justice and law, and, in this essay on animal life, between autobiography and confession ('How and why would truth be due?').[48] There remains

a dimension or horizon within thought, represented by a given word, which cannot be comprehended by philosophical discourse – I have already stated how Derrida's position, his *space* and *place* – in circumscription of a secret, a name, *khōra*, concerns us as it disallows the archaeology of such secret, name, of their *taking place*. More or less truthfully and more or less ethically, philosophy responds to this name. The slight interval between autobiography and confession, of a writing of oneself that is not yet an avowal, is significant. In the case of animal life, the distinction is between the abstract term 'animal,' which conveys and continues an obscured ideology of industrial exploitation, and a neologism that brings that brings that hidden content to the fore: *l'animot*. Yet a neologism also to expose the artificiality of the more familiar 'animal,' and brings it to the fore precisely by highlighting its lingual coinage: ani-*mot*, the *word* for/of animals. As Naas explains:

> Derrida invents a word that draws attention to the fact that 'the animal' is not some natural category that has been simply picked out by human perception and language but is, precisely, an age-old neologism and an invention of man [. . .] Fashioned out of two different words, the plural of animal and the word for word, *mot*, it is not unlike those composite animals found in mythology that philosophers are so fond of invoking or inventing in their meditations or thought experiments.[49]

Animal life, traditionally conceived as without language, is here adorned with a *word*, and becomes the author of its own autobiography. As with other distinctions, Derrida reclaims a particular dimension by way of a deconstructive introduction: there is givenness irreducible to any given content; there is a dimension to hope irreducible to religious dogma; there is a dimension to justice irreducible to law; there is truth about oneself that is not yet owed – and there is an address of animal life prior to the myth of the serpent's seduction of the human being and her consequent exile from Paradise. So, as we saw, Derrida at each point claims a space – *khōra* – from theology (*khōra* is not philosophical, but it is *for* philosophy, *before* it is *for* theology); a space that for Agamben cannot be assumed prior to the archaeology of potentiality – as to Agamben, at the beginning *khōra* was usurped by Aristotelian *hylè*.[50]

Not *since* the time of the Fall, then, but *before* the fall: '[. . .] *before original sin*.'[51] Derrida's cue in this address is his experience of being seen naked by a cat, from which he is cast into an abyssal shame – a shame with no ground, a shame of being ashamed.[52] In a way, Derrida's text is abandoned to the very problem that Agamben means to have done with. And with a view to Agamben and his use of the topographical indicator of a threshold, Derrida's treatise on animal life, in turn, makes a theme out of the limit – which is 'in Kantian terms' the opposite of the threshold.[53] Here, as well as elsewhere, Derrida appears to give an immanent and sincere analysis ('were it possible;' the disengagement is minimal) to what in Agamben's hands turns into parody – parody following immediately upon the exhaustion of sincerity, not on a transcendent level but as a halo:

> [. . .] unlike fiction, parody does not call into question the reality of its object; indeed, this object is so intolerably real for parody that it becomes necessary to keep it at a distance. To fiction's 'as if,' parody opposes its drastic 'this is too much' (or 'as if not').[54]

By following this cue, Derrida questions the time of the Fall, but this implies holding a discourse that precludes the Fall and then appears to restage it – by way of the cat's singularity, a cat that is never named in the text, a cat over which

Derrida suspends his Adamic entitlement. Derrida's writing is marked through and through by the fall from grace, and his work presents an attempt at coming to terms with the human condition in that theological sense – banishment. Yet while Derrida's thought is very much *of* the Fall, it declines to think *with* the Fall. So what Derrida means to question is not the Fall, but the entire paradisiacal myth and its force in philosophical thought: Adam's naming of the animals as a paradigm of language.

For Derrida, the animal and philosophy remain mere symptoms of that particular concept of time that takes the Fall for granted: ever since being abandoned from the garden, the human being lives in simple opposition to its existential antipode, the animal. Instead, Derrida offers *l'animot* – chimerical creature. Unlike the creature from Eric L. Santner's *On Creaturely Life* (2006), inseparable from the figure of sovereign power, *l'animot* admits rather of an evil doctor master – they admit of a genius like Descartes or Spinoza. *L'animot* are the industrial animal, the biopolitical animal. As Derrida keenly points out, when writers of the Western canon (Homer or Descartes) do address the chimera, they omit its serpent element, suggesting that our tradition has a vital stake in leaving the animal's potential monstrosity an anomaly, insisting on the pacified natural and Paradisiacal animal, insisting on the continuity from Adam's mastery over the animals until our own.[55] Only in the chimera and in Derrida's *l'animot* do both the Fall and the subsequent industrial exploitation of animal life come to the fore. As Derrida points out, philosophy is not in any position to adjudicate between the human being and non-human animals, as it has from the outset excluded animal life from its domain.

Even though for Derrida philosophy is inextricably bound up with the Fall – or better: precisely for this reason – animal life must be addressed as prior to it. And this is because the animal is perennially excluded from philosophy, as absolute other. And this is philosophy taking the heritage of the Fall for granted – rather than, as Derrida does, trying to conceive its constitutive state of fallenness. For this reason, Derrida introduces his chimerical beast: *l'animot* – the biopolitical and historico-industrial animal. While the animal remains symptomatic of and epiphenomenal to the heritage of the Fall, *l'animot* is imbedded in this history and co-authors it on its own body. Yet again, we should take note that for Derrida the deconstruction of the exploitation of animal life begins and ends with its exposure. *L'animot* are still identifiable, are no less vulnerable for being evidently put to suffer at its sovereign manipulator's hands. As Naas points out, and as the reference to Levinas that I began this paragraph too indicates: '[Derrida's] aim is always to rethink the line between the animal and the human, to take up the animal within the human, and to do so for the sake of both the animal and the human animal.'[56] He cannot, then, also divide this line from within to deliver its remnant. Derridean 'being-after,' in the context of animal life, is not a remnant beyond relation. The result of this is that Derrida rejects the discourse of the Fall, unwilling to buy into its premises, but accordingly is also prohibited from its messianic undoing: the creature at the threshold of sovereignty. This messianic undoing is only attainable if one follows a natural history of the animal, if one thinks *with* the Fall. Relinquishing his claim on the messianic undoing, yet also in indefinite occupation of the scene of the Fall, Derrida again turns to circumscribe the zone of

philosophy. This is the weakest messianic: the softest objection against the regime of theology.

## The theological regime and the question of priority in deconstruction and archaeology

So if Derrida thinks the animal's Paradisiacal status has been misunderstood, and that this misunderstanding lies at the source of humanity's mistreatment of animals, for Agamben its status as a fellow Edenic exile is underreported. In other words, if for Derrida, the animal is taken by a *faux*-concept of the 'natural,' to Agamben it is steeped in a reality shaped by political theology. Ultimately, I will bring out the respective sense of urgency for Derrida and Agamben. If for Derrida, metaphysics has a claim on Paradise, it must be circumscribed by the playful note of fiction, 'as if,' to Agamben, the theological claim itself is so strong as to warrant the grimmer determination of parody – 'as if not.'[57] Indeed, and this is the familiar point, to Agamben the spell of theology must be rendered inoperative, philosophy still engaged in liberating itself.

In this section, I explain Agamben's reintroduction of animal life into a theological regime, as the condition for redeeming a form-of-life from that regime, against the background of a philosophy that preserves the idea of the natural animal as theologically indifferent. Agamben is not concerned with the rights of animals, but with the emancipation of life from the divisions into which it is cast in Western thought. This is the element of Agamben's thought that I characterised before with the 'Cut of Apelles' and the criticism of critique. To achieve this, it is crucial for Agamben also to involve animal life. Because Western ontology has a vital stake in excluding the question of animal life, and because Western politics rely on moving life in between legal and natural categories, Agamben has to think the life of the animal in his attempt at depleting the tradition.

Both human beings and non-human animals are bound by the spell of Being. However, humanity is kept in abandonment by this spell – having always already forgotten about Being – while non-human animals are absolutely captivated; cut off from the separate existence of entities. This is the view – Heidegger's, Derrida's – which Agamben overturns by a philosophical archaeology, because within this framework the animal remains theologically neutered. Indeed, the archaeology aspires to the threshold that is the zone of indistinction between these forms of abandonment, is the moment of anthropogenesis, the instant of disenchanted freedom.

Agamben criticized Derrida for his depiction of Kafka's Man from the Country as mesmerised in front of the law. Instead, he finds more nuance in this citation from Massimo Cacciari:

> How can we hope to 'open' if the door is already open? How can we hope to enter-the-open? In the open, there is, things are there, one does not enter there . . . We can enter only there where we can open. The already-open immobilizes. The man from the country cannot enter, because entering into what is already open is ontologically impossible.[58]

The Open is ontologically impenetrable, but only because ontology assumes the *logos* for a ground, for a law – the impassability of the Open results from our understanding of Being along legal categories: to enter the Open would violate the very principle of ontology. However, the intuition of Rainer Maria Rilke's eighth *Duineser Elegy* – 'All

eyes, the creatures of the World look out into the open. But our human eyes, as if turned right around and glaring in, encircle them; prohibiting their passing' – is that the Open *does* become a possibility, but not for the human subject.[59]

It is well known that Heidegger values the poetry of Friedrich Hölderlin over that of Rainer Maria Rilke: '[. . .] Rilke's poetry does not come up to Hölderlin's in its rank and position in the course of the history of Being.'[60] The reason for this is that Rilke's poetry remains within the parameters of Western metaphysics, a limitation that Heidegger stresses throughout his essay.[61] Heidegger's treatment of animal life, similarly, focuses on what bearing animal life has on the question of Being. Agamben has remarked that even though Heidegger understands the animal to be poor-in-world, he also stresses that the animal's life 'is a domain which possesses a wealth of openness, with which the human world may have nothing to compare.'[62] Derrida in turn exposed the contradictions within Heidegger's assessment of the animal's being poor-in-world as well as absolutely lacking in spirit, presenting the following provisional compromise: '[. . .] the animal, it has access to entities but, and this is what distinguishes it from man, it has no access to entities *as such*.'[63]

Heidegger's approach is to find a paradigm in which the presuppositions of metaphysics are entirely volatile and questionable: Hölderlin, *Dasein*. In paradigms that do accommodate the remainder of that metaphysics – Rilke, animal life – Heidegger cannot find an ally. In the final section, it will become clear that Derrida's approach is not altogether different in this respect: it too attempts to conceive of animal life as without metaphysical assumptions, as prior to the paradisiacal exile of the human being – adding the playful clauses 'as if' and 'were it possible,' – to thereby do justice to the singular animal.[64] This assumption of poetic license regarding the circumscription of metaphysics is the signature of deconstruction. However, the metaphysical remainder also contains the *theology* of potentiality, and of abandonment, that a philosophical archaeology will draw out of its essential reserve. Indeed, as I will go on to demonstrate, animal life gives us an acute instance of sovereign power, exactly because it is saturated with metaphysical and theological debris. Eden revisited is a moment in the history of the metaphysics of presence, and of the theology presupposed in it; a theology that can be foregrounded in the paradigm of creaturely life. Nevertheless, Derrida's own particular prying open of the Paradisiacal scene might not obey its sense of cogency, and instead expose its inner cracks: the undivided cohabitation of man and animal – in Spinoza's sense – to Derrida, already indicates the latter's enslavement.

The remnant, as said, is not only that which absolves and redeems thought of its presuppositions, but is also itself free of the presupposed. Indeed, Derrida, in his own way, is adamant not to make assumptions on behalf of the remnant. However, this is exactly what accounts for the separation between Derrida and Agamben: the space – *khōra* – that Derrida defends between name and trace, between writing and interpretation, between messianic and messianism, disallows their critical *taking place* as Agamben claims it. The distinction is that Derrida insists on a space between the paradisiacal scene and the myth of the Fall, a chance to think about animal life that precludes the Fall, while Agamben seeks another approach to animal life precisely immanent to the myth of the Fall. This distinction, then, means that Derrida, as a matter of the highest ethical urgency, refuses to philosophically claim or activate the remainder, while for Agamben in the

remainder lies the very thing of thought itself. This thing of thought – an absolute messianic resolution of philosophy – is what Derrida's weaker messianic will always defer, and defer to.

The paradigm allows Agamben to think a politics of singularity that keeps a sense of community. This means a politics in which we do not inhabit a world that is simply and extra-terrestrially *beyond* sovereignty, but one in which a creature experiences the limit, the threshold, of its Creator – a creature that sees the face of God. The ground suspended from beneath the creature's feet returns to it as an added emptiness – the creature is placed in a relationship to its own exteriority; it acquires a face, an idea, a halo.[65] This means that the creature is not reducible to a political, theological or zoological concept or theory, but that it belongs (that it has a name, that it exists in language) to the *archē*, the phenomenological fulfilment, of its own idea. This is the very idea of philosophical archaeology: 'the idea of a thing is the thing *itself*.'[66] Only the name itself remains unnamed – there is no word for language as such, and thus Agamben deals with the structure of presupposition, which is also the structure of potentiality and sovereignty.

The Open is not a foreign land or transformed world completely other than our own. Rather, it is our world altered by only a tiny displacement: the anthropogenetic moment of its discovery. The Open is the face of the world.

In 2019, Agamben's long essay *The Kingdom and the Garden* appeared. Here, Agamben takes on the Church fathers Augustine and Thomas Aquinas, for their framing of the notion of Paradise. Indeed, the Church has created a constellation wherein Paradise and Kingdom are polar opposites, both infinitely unattainable except, in case of the latter, by way of the Church. To counter this tradition, Agamben makes connections from Pelagius to Scotus Eriugena to, most importantly, Dante. From these writers, a different picture of Paradise emerges. Paradise is human nature, untarnished by sin; yet we currently have no way of accessing this existence. Here, as elsewhere, Agamben is advocating that the human being does not remain the dupe of the economy of salvation and abandonment.[67] What is more, Agamben appears to address once again the problem he postponed in *The Signature of All Things*:

> Nature and grace, nudity and clothes together constitute a singular apparatus, whose elements seem autonomous and separable and yet, at least insofar as it concerns nature, do not remain unchanged after their separation. This means that nature – exactly like simple nudity – is, in reality, inaccessible: there is only its being made nude, only corrupt nature exists.[68]

The Unmarked, of which the earlier book left the question hanging, is addressed, as Agamben claims for the human being the capacity to restore its presence: '[. . .] the Garden and the Kingdom result from the split of one sole experience of the present and that in the present they can therefore be rejoined.'[69] Agamben, then, keeps faith in a restored concept of nature, realigned with humanity.

## Conclusion: thinking Paradise and the question of priority

It has become clear that the debate on the being of the animal for both Agamben and Derrida puts both philosophy and theology as such at stake, especially when 'Being' is rephrased as a 'being-after' – this means the issue of priority is contested between these

disciplines. It is also clear that that such 'being after' is theologically inadmissible, as life is held in the balance between Paradise and Kingdom for the sake of the consistency of theology itself.

'The materialisation of light;' this is Spinoza's happy philosophical atheism that Agamben appears to claim for his own. Like language, light allows entities to appear. Like language, light is not easily illuminated or explained itself. Yet that entities appear on the basis of an invitation or allowance of these concepts means also a dependency of them. It means that Western metaphysics at the fundamental level has acquired a legal characteristic; Agamben acknowledges a debt to Nancy on this point, which goes to the core of his own analysis of Aristotelian potentiality.[70] Yet the legal subject is not a happy one, and what is more, the separation within life of political life from naked life is, to Agamben evil in a literal sense: 'Evil [. . .] is the reduction of the taking-place of things to a fact like others, the forgetting of the transcendence inherent in the very taking-place of things.'[71] The good, on the other hand, is the returning of place to itself; it is *taking place* – 'grasping a presence' in the language of *The Kingdom and the Garden*.[72] For Agamben, the good lies in a return to and of place; a return that has been barred ontologically by the law that metaphysics defend. The resolution of the myth of Paradise and its abandonment, then, lies in a Paradise regained.

The Spinozist materialisation of light must pertain to light's very taking place. This is the treasure hidden in plain view. I have explained before how Agamben considers an unavoidable theological itinerary; it is simply the case that on that path, Spinoza is ahead of us. For Spinoza there can be no more theological speculation, no economy of salvation, no more hope. What is more, there can be no more evil. For Spinoza there can be no evil, for everything is considered in its singular and contingent light. *Così sia*, so be it. What there can be, is wisdom, and with that, joy.

Agamben has voiced a strong objection against Derrida's thought: it is on the side of the doorkeepers – those angels brandishing flaming swords.[73] Indeed, on the structural level, Derrida interferes with our access to the law. Unmitigated meaningfulness – a philosophical Paradise – is always put beyond our reach. Yet the reasons behind the deconstructive gesture have been made clear above: Paradise itself is an unremitting mirage, a regime of the most extreme violence, and, in this context, it *is* the human being's autoimmune response to animal life. And I have pointed out how Derrida circumscribes the Paradisiacal scene. He enters 'as if,' were it possible. Yet entering also means never getting out; for Derrida there is no eschatologico-philosophical programme. Here we find the surprising rapprochement between Derrida and Agamben – unacknowledged by the latter; the objection still stands in *What Is Philosophy?* from 2016 – as for Agamben it has always been the case that the human being was never in Paradise. Agamben and Derrida both arrive at a rejection of the Paradisiacal narrative, and both arrive there by way of their respective, and very different, accounts of animal life. For Agamben there is, at the end, the Spinozist position: the materialization of light. When light turns into something other than the revelation of the world, or the promise of it, and assumes a life of its own, there can be no more hope. Indeed, elsewhere in *The End of the Poem*, Agamben speaks of a light that is completely profane.[74] In the same way, in *The Kingdom and the Garden*, Agamben puts the garden of earthly delights to correct for the paradigm of the Kingdom.

For Derrida, there appears the incredible, yet soft rebuke to philosophical thinking, really the most radical deconstructive gesture, and especially of philosophy's hang-up with the theological principle – that there may be no werewolves. Ultimately, both philosophers protest against a theological regime appropriated by philosophy, as they see clearly how its line in the sand runs along the artifice of the distinction between man and animal.

In this essay, I have demonstrated how from their comportment towards the myth of Paradise and the Fall, and accordingly through an investigation of the ontology shared with animal life, we can gather how the theological *logos* resonates differently for Derrida and Agamben: while Agamben means to reposition the Paradisiacal element as opposed to the bio-politics of the Kingdom, and to gather them in a messianic stance of the human being – liberated of the economy of salvation – Derrida, when he finds himself naked and exposed in front of a cat, begins to articulate a 'being-after.' It is this being-after that is so theologically troublesome: it is the truth that is not (yet) owed, it is loss of innocence or fall from grace before the expulsion from the garden – it is the philosophical moment par excellence, the moment that philosophers will always fail to meet, as they again and again distort the phenomenon of consciousness to match one particular mental content, theory, dogma, or creed. I have also demonstrated how Agamben does not acknowledge the critical resources of Derridean thought: while Agamben puts Derrida with the door-keepers, this image has to be nuanced when we take the Paradisiacal path. Indeed, Derrida, with signature playfulness, presents a new philosophical claim to Paradisiacal territory, to the constitutive moment of the theological regime, and to a different sense of being-after.

## Notes

1. Agamben, *The Signature of All Things*, 80.
2. See Dickinson, *Agamben and Theology*; Willemse, *The Motif of the Messianic*; and Dickinson and Kotsko, *Agamben's Coming Philosophy*.
3. "What made sense only as *philosophia ultima* has thus taken the place of *prima philosophia*." Agamben, *The Mystery of Evil*, 19.
4. Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 252.
5. For an analysis of the juxtaposition of the general and the singular between Derrida and Agamben, see: Willemse, "Tell the Story of all this".
6. Agamben, "Celebration of the Hidden Treasure," 103.
7. Ibid., 105.
8. Morante, *The World Saved by Kids*, 163.
9. "But when the memory is chewed by the sands | the pulse of sorrow is truncated too. |*So be it*." (my translation, emphasis added; see https://rebstein.files.wordpress.com/2017/04/elsa-morante-addio-1968.pdf p. 14. Morante, *Il Mondo Salvato dai Ragazzini*.
10. Agamben, "Celebration of the Hidden Treasure," 106; and Agamben, *The Time that Remains*, 50.
11. Derrida, *On the Name*, 89–127.
12. For the most comprehensive archives for the spectre and the remnant, see Derrida, *Spectres of Marx The State of the Debt*; and Agamben, see *Remnants of Auschwitz*.
13. Derrida, *Spectres of Marx*, p. 11.
14. Ibid., 48.
15. In particular, see Agamben, *Death and Language*, 92: "Philosophy is not initially at home, it is not originally in possession of itself, and thus it must return to itself".

16. Ibid., 39. See also, Agamben, *What is Philosophy?*, 20: "Metaphysics is always already a grammatology and the latter is a fundamentology, in the sense that, since the λόγος takes place in the non-place of the φωνή, the function of negative ontological foundation belongs to the letter and not to the voice".
17. Bennington and Derrida, *Jacques Derrida*.
18. Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I am*, 21.
19. Watkin, *Agamben and Indifference*, 35.
20. Agamben, "The Thing Itself," 32; and Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz*, 145.
21. Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 105.
22. Derrida, *The Beast and the Sovereign*, 3.
23. Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 104–11.
24. Ibid., 5. Derrida reprimands Agamben over this selectiveness qua werewolves: "These forgettings of wolves, and of wolves that have as it were a priority, are the more interesting and even amusing in that, as is regularly the case with this author [Agamben], his most irrepressible gesture consists regularly in recognizing priorities that have supposedly been overlooked, ignored, neglected, not known or recognized, for want of knowledge, for want of reading or lucidity of force of thought – priorities, then, denied or neglected, and so, in truth, priorities that are primacies, principalities, principal signatures, signed by the Prince of Beginnings, priorities that everyone, except the author of course, has supposedly missed, so that each time the author of *Homo Sacer* is, apparently, the first to say who *will have been* first"; and Ibid., 92.
25. Derrida, and Ferraris, *A Taste for the Secret*, 65.
26. See also Bradley and Cerella, "The Future of Political Theology and the Legacy of Carl Schmitt," 206: "[. . .] he modern opposition between faith and knowledge – religion and reason, the sacred and the secular – is preceded and undermined by a common origin and condition: an immemorial faith, promise or openness to the other".
27. Willemse, *The Motif of the Messianic*, 108–114.
28. Derrida, *On the Name*, 126.
29. Ibid., 91.
30. See also Kotsko, *What is Theology?*, 95: "[. . .] the very idea of a 'turn' toward religion is incoherent in his case, because that 'turn' presupposes a clear distinction between theological and philosophical traditions".
31. Agamben, *Potentialities*, 27–47.
32. Derrida, *Animal That Therefore I am*, 106.
33. Shakespeare, *Derrida and Theology*, 7; and Naas, "Derrida's Flair (For the Animal to Follow . . .)," 229.
34. Agamben, "Celebration of the Hidden Treasure," 106.
35. See Hart, *The Trespass of the Sign*; and Nancy, *Dis-Enclosure*.
36. Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, 161.
37. Stephen Morton's analysis of Derrida's deconstruction of anthropocentrism arrives at a similar position, by way of a different argument, see Morton, "Troubling Resemblances, Anthropological Machines and the Fear of Wild Animals," 105–123.
38. Derrida, *Animal That Therefore I am*, 1. Emphasis added.
39. Ibid., 1.
40. Ibid., 55.
41. Hägglund, *Radical Atheism*, 2.
42. Michael Naas underlines the point; philosophers will insist on the clear division between humanity and animal life: "certain philosophers might well have called the singular limit between the animal and the human into question, they would not have done so *as philosophers* but rather as poets, thinkers, or writers – anything but philosophers." See Naas, "Derrida's Flair (For the Animal to Follow . . .)," 227.
43. Derrida, *Animal That Therefore I Am*, 39.
44. Ibid., 20–21; Benjamin, "On Language as Such and on the Language of Man," 72–3.
45. Derrida, *Animal That Therefore I Am*, 22.
46. Agamben, "Nudity," 57.

47. Derrida, *The Beast and the Sovereign Volume I*, 92. David Farrell Krell follows Derrida in this critique. But Agamben does not claim to "be[ing] the first in your neighbourhood" but claims to witness the moment of arising, the moment of *archē*; and See Krell, "Of Dog and God," 277.
48. Derrida, *Animal That Therefore I Am*, 21.
49. Naas, "Derrida's Flair (For the Animal to Follow . . .)," 229.
50. See Agamben, *Potentialities*, 218; and See also Agamben, *Idea of Prose*, 37.
51. Derrida, *Animal that therefore I am*, 18.
52. Ibid., 4.
53. Agamben, *The Coming Community*, 67; and Derrida, *Animal That Therefore I Am*, 29.
54. Agamben, "Parody," 48; and See also Agamben, *The Highest Poverty*, 5.
55. Derrida, *Animal That Therefore I Am*, 46
56. Naas, "Derrida's Flair (For the Animal to Follow . . .)," 242.
57. In my interpretation, Agamben moves between absolute seriousness and parody. For analysis of how Agamben makes use of a concept of fiction, exactly when defining *humanity*, see Dickinson's excellent Agamben's, *Homo Sacer Series*, 132–140.
58. Massimo Cacciari cited from Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 49.
59. Rilke, *Duino Elegies*, 65.
60. Heidegger, "What Are Poets For?," 96.
61. Ibid., 99: "Rilke [. . .] thinks of it metaphysically in terms of the nature of will"; p. 105; "The song that sings of this different relation [. . .] is the eighth of the *Duino Elegies* [. . .] Ever since Leibniz, the distinction among beings in this respect has been current in modern metaphysics"; p. 126: "Rilke attempts [. . .] within the spherical structure of modern metaphysics [. . .] to understand the unshieldedness established by man's self-assertive nature [.];" p. 130: For Rilke's poetry, the Being of beings is metaphysically defined as worldly presence".
62. Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, 255; and Agamben, *The Open*, 51.
63. Derrida, *Of Spirit*, 51. Heidegger actually says almost the same thing; and see Heidegger, *Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, 248.
64. Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, 1.
65. Agamben, *The Coming Community*, 68. An excellent guide to this thinking without or beyond ground as it is staged in the thought of Agamben and his contemporaries is van der Heiden's, *Ontology Beyond Ontotheology*.
66. Agamben, *The Coming Community*, 76.
67. Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Garden*, 66–7.
68. Ibid., 115.
69. Ibid., 152.
70. Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 58; and Nancy, "Abandoned Being," 44–7.
71. Agamben, *The Coming Community*, 15.
72. Agamben, *Kingdom and Garden*, 150.
73. Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 54.
74. Agamben, *The End of the Poem*, 128–9.

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