

**THE POLITICS OF IMPASSIVITY IN
AGAMBEN AND SPINOZA**

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Wednesday August 9 2006

I

The notion of impassivity brings along with it a concern with freedom: freedom from being under the sway of sensation. To negate passivity, to be im-passive, is not to be servant to external causes. "Passion" is derived from the Greek *pathos*, which means to suffer something in the sense of being subjected to matter other than the self encountered accidentally. Because passions are contingent and hence unmasterable, they are differentiated from the historical circumstance that lead to freedom. This is the lesson of the Enlightenment. And Spinoza speaks as a proponent of the Enlightenment in the final Scholium at the end of the *Ethics*:

I have now completed all that I intended to demonstrate concerning the power of the mind over the emotions and concerning freedom of the mind. This makes clear how strong the wise man is and how much he surpasses the ignorant man whose motive force is wholly lust. The ignorant man, besides being driven hither and thither by external causes, never possessing true contentment of the soul, lives as if he were without knowledge of himself, God, and things, and as soon as he ceases to be passive, he at once also ceases to be. On the other hand, the wise man, insofar as he is considered as such, suffers scarcely any disturbance of soul, but being conscious, by virtue of a certain eternal necessity, of himself, of God and of things, never ceases to be, but always possesses true contentment of the soul.¹

The ignorant man is the one who is constantly affected by capricious passions, while the wise man converts capriciousness to necessity.

Despite his Enlightenment insistence on the importance of overcoming the servitude to the passions, Spinoza's argument is not premised on a simple opposition between reason and passivity. Impassivity and freedom are not synonymous. What differentiates the wise from the ignorant is not the absence of passions as such, but rather the *effect* that passions have. While the ignorant is victim to his own emotions, the wise man, on the other hand, is affected by an eternal necessity or cause. Even more emphatically, whereas the ignorant man can die at the moment that the solely external causes who sustain his existence cease to be, the being of the wise man persists as an effect of a cause which does not disturb his soul.² Furthermore, Spinoza argues that

man has active emotions, or that reason is subject to passions as well.³ Reason's active affections are superior to being in the service of passive emotions, only because the continuous being of the wise man *allows for* action. The effect is not the action. Rather, the effect is the allowing itself. The question, therefore, concerns the relation between impassivity and allowing.

For such a question to emerge, it is necessary to pay attention to the repositioning of freedom so as to balance the affects of reason and of external passions. Such a repositioning has three important consequences for the notion of impassivity: First, strictly speaking, impassivity does not characterize a human being, but God as the condition of the possibility of passivity. Second, God is not a form of presence. Spinoza's famous conjunction "God, or Nature" should be taken as an apposition of two substantives, not as the attribution of identity.⁴ (This non-identity will be considered later.) Third, neither can the human be reduced to a mere presence.⁵ The fact that "as soon as he [the ignorant man] ceases to be passive, he at once also ceases to be" offers the possibility of a revolution: the death of the ignorant man may be his transfiguration to the wise man, who continues to be. This is the assertion about the immanence or becoming of life. Such a life leads to the revolutionary politics that arises out of the non-opposition of passivity and reason, coupled with the disjunction of freedom and impassivity.⁶ For such a politics, impassivity, or God, is the principle that regulates the relation between passions and actions. Hence, impassivity is the inexhaustible source of human interaction, or the transcendental condition of the possibility of the political.

Now, given that God in Spinoza's sense is to function as such a transcendental principle which is reducible neither to the totality of physical beings nor to a single wise man, then the political question can no longer be about how to achieve what was called above "the revolution," as if one knew beforehand its content. Spinoza is not an utopian thinker.⁷ Rather, the radicality of Spinoza's thought consists in a double gesture: affirming, on the one hand, that the revolution is nothing but this process of becoming – of *being* – wise, and, on the other hand, positioning the ignorant man as the indispensable threat to this revolution. The ignorant man has a certain formal quality: the threat to the possibility of becoming wise. This is the threat inherent in the revolution itself.⁸ The inscription of this threat within the condition of the possibility of the political entails a double inscription of allowing: as already intimated, the wise man

allows for action and hence freedom; simultaneously, the pathetic ignorant allows for the wise man; and hence passion is both distinct from, and related to, praxis. This double inscription of allowing constitutes a remarkable dialectical reversal: the positioning of the ignorant man alongside God, the affirmation that the most passive and the impassive are indissoluble. The passive *allows* for the impassive, and vice versa. And this also means that neither pure passivity, nor pure activity can exist on their own, but only in their unfolding relation – only in the particular conatus which they express.

This multiple foundation of the political is bound to confound political visionaries no less than a politics of originary foundations. It entails a common ethical basis for ontology (the science of being) and politics (the science of humans' being together). It is because of such a common basis that the *Ethics* is both a study of God and intimately linked to Spinoza's two political *Treatises*. And this basis introduces a commonality between God and man, no less than between men.⁹ It is hardly surprising, then, that this *rapprochement* between the human and the divine led to the accusation of atheism being levelled against Spinoza. Despite – or, rather, because of – God's being a transcendental condition of human interaction, there follows a radically secular as well as politically radical position.

II

At this point Giorgio Agamben can figure. Agamben also has recourse to impassivity in his construal of the political. Moreover, Agamben refers to Spinoza at a crucial juncture of this construal. The concerns addressed by impassivity come to the fore through the *Muselmann*. That was the name given to the most abject inmates of the Nazi concentration camps described by Primo Levi and others. Agamben defines the *Muselmann* as “a being from whom humiliation, horror, and fear has so taken away all consciousness and all personality as to make him *absolutely apathetic*.”¹⁰ The camp is called a “paradigm” because of the political significance of this apathy which is linked to the impossibility of death: “that the death of the human being can no longer be called death ... is the particular horror that the *Muselmann* brings to the camp and that the camp brings to the world.”¹¹ Like Spinoza, death becomes a temporal marker decisive for politics. Agamben's term “biopolitics” signifies this double

basis of the political: the exclusion, on the one hand, of the biological or “bare life” from the public sphere, only for it to be re-introduced by sovereign power.¹² “The production of a biopolitical body is the original activity of sovereign power.”¹³ The *Muselmann*’s apathy is paradigmatic, for Agamben, because it is a testimony to “bio-power’s supreme ambition to produce, in a human body, the absolute separation of the living being and the speaking being ... the inhuman and the human.”¹⁴ Being exposed to a founding violence which renders him neither dead nor alive, the *Muselmann* attests to the inhumanity of a nude animal’s pure passivity which usurps a humanity identified with an acting or speaking being.

Whereas biopolitics separates a passivity in order to move into the orbit of inclusory exclusion, the *Muselmann*’s apathy, according to Agamben, offers an alternative articulation of the relation between passion and action, and hence a different politics. As an “absolutely apathetic” body, the *Muselmann* “no longer belongs to the world of men in any way. Mute and absolutely alone, he passes into another world without memory and without grief.”¹⁵ Agamben defines this “other world” as a space of “an absolute indistinction of fact and law, of life and juridical order, of nature and politics.”¹⁶ The *Muselmann*’s apathy should be read in conjunction with what Agamben calls elsewhere a “fundamental passivity.” Such a passivity is the ground of a potentiality which is not reduced to actuality or presence. “The potential welcomes non-Being, and this welcoming of non-Being *is* potentiality, fundamental passivity.”¹⁷ Such a passivity installs a double movement: on the one hand, it enacts the traditional sovereign gesture of violence separating passion and action, the animal and the human; but on the other hand it also reconfigures human agency as an auto-affection. Thus, fundamental passivity leads to a new definition of the human: “[Fundamental passivity] undergoes and suffers its own being. ... Human beings are the animals who are capable of their own impotentiality.”¹⁸

Through impotentiality, this new subject internalizes the founding sovereign violence and hence coincides with the sovereign. The impotentiality of the human becomes the impassivity of the sovereign. Agamben’s new notion of sovereignty is located at the point where passivity and activity enter that zone of indistinction which characterizes the *Muselmann* and which, Agamben insists, eschews all founding oppositions of traditional metaphysics between knowledge and ignorance, vision and blindness, and so

on. Above all, it cancels out the distinction between the sovereign and the subject – the two become indistinct. Thus, as Agamben puts it, “in the person of the Führer, bare life passes immediately into law, just as in the person of the camp inhabitant (or neomort [i.e., the *Muselmann*]) law becomes indistinguishable from biological life.”¹⁹ Impassivity is the experience taking place in the zone of indistinction. It is constitutive of the subject, as well as of subjectivity’s relation to violence and hence to sovereignty.

Thus construed, fundamental passivity points both to the common ground between Agamben and Spinoza, as well as to the yawning chasm opening between them. To put what they share in the language that Agamben borrows from Negri, who in turn derives it from Spinoza, there is a rupture between constituted and constituting power.²⁰ Legislation and human affectivity are distinguishable, and hence an ethics does not coincide with the imperatives emanating from rules and norms.²¹ Agamben nevertheless suggests that Negri and Spinoza have not gone far enough towards establishing an ontology which is adequate to the task of eschewing mere presence. What is needed as well is “a new and coherent ontology of potentiality” to replace “the ontology founded on the primacy of actuality” so as to solve the aporias of sovereignty.²² Agamben seems here to be even more radical – or, radically secular – than Spinoza: there is not only a *rapprochement* between the divine and the human, but rather a veritable indistinction between the subject and the sovereign. Agamben is critical of the way that impassivity, or God, operates in Spinoza. Agamben wants to do away with any vestige of the divine, seeking instead an understanding of absolute immanence which does not identify it with “God.” Or, more schematically, Agamben apposes nature with God – “Natura, seu Deus” – thereby reverting Spinoza’s conjunction – “Deus, seu Natura.” Agamben’s transformed theory of the sovereign relocates sovereignty from God to subjectivity.

III

The insistence that impassivity is to be thought in such a way as to become a condition of the possibility of the political aligns Spinoza and Agamben. What separates them is that, while for the former impassivity is strictly a divine property, conversely for the latter impassivity is the ground of subjectivity. Both these aspects are present

in Agamben's discussions of Spinoza. As a result, Spinoza is presented as a precursor to Agamben: someone who grasped biopolitics but did not go far enough, remaining trapped in a notion of constituting power or bare life.²³ Agamben's most extensive discussion of Spinoza occurs in his essay on Deleuze, titled "Absolute Immanence."²⁴ Spinoza occupies a central position in the argument, providing the culmination of absolute immanence. The focus will be on the way Agamben extracts from absolute immanence certain conclusions, especially about "desubjectification," related to political categories in Agamben and Spinoza.

According to *Remnants of Auschwitz*, absolute immanence signifies a totality of "everything being in everything." The same point is reached in the article on Deleuze, albeit with a discussion of language. Through a reading of the title of Deleuze's last published text before his death, "Life: An Immanence....," Agamben avers that "the technical term *a life*... expresses this transcendental determinability of immanence as singular life, its absolute virtual nature and its definition through this virtuality alone."²⁵ A syntagm, then, encapsulates the totality of reference, it becomes self-subsistent or paradigmatically self-reflexive. This entails an overcoming of the traditional understanding of the *cogito*, that is, of a mental content separable from its referents in the world.²⁶ At this point, Agamben seeks Spinoza's help in order to clarify the "principle of immanence" which is nothing other than the idea of the immanent cause.²⁷ The rest of the discussion hangs on how this cause is understood. Agamben is explicit: "through Spinoza's idea of an immanent cause in which *agent and patient coincide*, Being is freed from the risk of inertia and immobility."²⁸ In other words, the immanent cause applies a broader ontological significance to the idea of fundamental passivity, extending from the subject – or, rather, a special subject, one in which action and passion "coincide" – to Being at large. The next step is to link the generalized ontology introduced by the immanent cause back to the linguistic notion of absolute immanence: "'a life...' designates precisely the being immanent to itself of immanence."²⁹ Absolute immanence – both as the syntagm articulating it and as the coincidence of a self's actions and passions – enters a zone of indistinction. This zone is, according to Agamben, what Deleuze and Spinoza call beatitude, or what Agamben himself calls bare life – an identity which will have to be questioned shortly.³⁰ Language is crucial, since, as Agamben notes, biopolitics consists precisely in the attempt to separate vegetative life from speech (*logos*) – or *zoe* (bare life) from *bios* (political

life).³¹ Deleuze, Agamben admits, avoids this quagmire of Western metaphysics with the figure of absolute immanence, which is “a potentiality without action” outside the opposition of passion and action, thereby “being instead the matrix of infinite desubjectification.”³² Here, the example of a self-reflexive verb, *pasearse*, from Spinoza’s *Hebrew Grammar*, is taken as the “equivalent for an immanent cause” in the sense that in it “agent and patient enter a threshold of absolute indistinction.”³³ Spinoza is called a “philosopher-grammarians” because his grammatical manual represents a perfect example of that linguistic space where action and passion coincide.³⁴ At the end, Agamben’s verdict is harsh: absolute immanence “once again produce[s] transcendence.”³⁵ The reason is clear: “Today, blessed life lies on the same terrain as the biopolitical body of the West.”³⁶ Bare life, which allows for pleasure, has been separated from political life. Before paying close attention to the passages from Spinoza cited by Agamben, it is necessary to indicate the differences that have started appearing as a result of Agamben criticism.

Agamben’s whole project rests on the argument that to escape the “biopolitical body of the West,” the experience of desubjectification must be radicalised, especially “in the very paradigm of possible” absolute immanence.³⁷ This desubjectification of the individual has to be linked to Western politics. For desubjectification to be accomplished, a sovereign space must be created in which the subject is no longer bifurcated between the pleasurable and the political. Here, the figure of the *Muselmann* and another reference to Spinoza’s *Hebrew Grammar* in *Remnants of Auschwitz* are important, because they show how this move from the individual to the political is to be achieved. According to Agamben’s framing of the question, the issue is how to achieve testimony. After going over the argument about the separation of bare life from political life, Agamben isolates “passivity, as the form of subjectivity” which will be the ground of allowing for testimony. This form of subjectivity – which corresponds to Agamben’s notion of fundamental passivity or absolute immanence – is here defined as being “constitutively fractured into a purely receptive pole (the *Muselmann*) and an actively passive pole (the witness), but in such a way that this fracture never leaves itself, fully separating the two poles.”³⁸ The separation of pleasurable and political life is auto-affective. At this point Agamben summarizes the discussion about self-reflexive constructions in Spinoza’s *Hebrew Grammar* to show how the middle voice admits of this dual action and passion which never leaves the

subject. “The *self* is what is produced by this double movement of auto-affection.”³⁹ Note that Agamben does not refer here to specific enunciations in the middle voice, nor to affections of a subject. The argument is purely formal, because, as a grammatical example, it is explicitly decontextualized. The witness as a “unitary center” witnesses only “an irreducible negativity.”⁴⁰ To sum up, what is missing in Spinoza and Deleuze is this movement of complete auto-affection as a product of biopolitics. Subjectivity fully *in*-corporates the occidental political construct of biopolitics, but in such a manner that bare life or absolute immanence persist outside politics. This “unitary centre” of subjectivity which has arisen out of passivity and which is in a zone of indistinction outside the political is what constitutes the ground of the political for Agamben. This zone is, for Agamben, the realm of impassivity. God has been replaced by this subject arising out of fundamental passivity.

Although such an elimination of God may appear as a radical secularization of the political, in fact Agamben’s reliance on negativity does adhere to a model of negative theology – as Agamben admits: “The exception is to positive law what negative theology is to positive theology.”⁴¹ This constitutes a negative theology of the subject – a *via nuda, seu negativa*. Thus that impassivity, the core of subjectivity – its form, to which fundamental passivity (bare life, the *Muselmann*) is related through a violent separation – is something which not only can never be actualized, but also persists as thoroughly abstracted from actuality. Agamben takes up this point without hesitation: “If the essence of the camp consists in the materialization of the state of exception, and in the subsequent creation of a space in which bare life and juridical order enter into a threshold of indistinction, then we must admit that we find ourselves in the presence of a camp *every time* such a structure is created, *independent of the kinds of crime that are committed there*.”⁴² According to the final clause, Agamben’s notion of desubjectification results in the loss of singularity: the elimination of any vestige of particularity from Agamben’s ontology. This is an ontology of the “every time”.⁴³ It will be recalled that Agamben defines the *Muselmann* as not belonging “to the world of men” but being instead “mute and absolutely alone.”⁴⁴ The sovereign subject resulting from apathy has literally taken everything in: impassivity becomes impunity. Assigning a sovereign centre to subjectivity ranches the self apart from any solid ground of experience, consigning it instead to that immaterializeable – because purely negative – zone of indistinction. At this place, instead of the plurality of men, instead

of the singularity of each individual case, Agamben's gaze is fastened onto an immaterial image he calls "the *Muselmann*."⁴⁵ The definite article next to an abstracted substantive means that the syntagm "the *Muselmann*" functions as a technical term in the sense that Agamben takes "a life..." to be technical for Deleuze: namely, a term which points to absolute immanence and its totality, a subject *for, on, in, through,* and *by* – but *never with* – which "everything is in everything."⁴⁶ This totalized subjectivity becomes the ground of the political, despite losing all its particularity and despite being placed outside all singularity. A solitary subject, stranded in its own otherworldly zone of indistinction.

It must be noted that the gulf which has started opening between Agamben and Spinoza has really nothing to do with the use or otherwise of the name "God." Rather, the difference is discernible at the point where a particular notion of subjectivity is so self-consuming that its causes entirely internalize its effects. This is a position irreconcilable with Spinoza. As it has already been noted, what matters for Spinoza is the way that the *effects* express the cause. A project of freedom entails a history of effects – which, from the perspective of the human, is also a history of affects, the passions of singular and irreducible individuals. Thus, Spinoza would have concurred with Gil Anidjar that to consider the *Muselmann* is "to consider the Muslim question in Europe today," and this entails nothing less than considering "power and its effects" in the relation between politics and religion.⁴⁷ As a result, for Spinoza the political cannot be delineated with recourse to a constitutive loneliness – through a violent scission of the subject from the community.⁴⁸ There is no constitutive or sovereign violence which is responsible of, on the one hand, isolating a state of nature, and, on the other, necessitating an human authority which is to guarantee sociality. If the state of nature provides a principle of civil order and sovereignty, this is only because of the being with of men and their participation in this state of nature. Unlike Agamben, this mutuality and participation indicates that the only appropriate preposition for Spinoza's notion of sovereignty is the "with."

Agamben might object that the violent isolation resulting from his *via nuda, seu negativa* is counter-acted by the fact that, as it is put in the last quote from *Homo Sacer*, "the essence of the camp consists in the *materialization* of the state of exception." And yet, the *effect* of this statement has nothing to do with the material situation, but

is instead to offer, through the figure of the *Muselmann*, a presentification of this materialization which rests on a disjuncture between ethics and politics. Agamben freely concedes to such a disjuncture. Such a construal of the ethical is anathema to Spinoza, since the ethical is precisely that which mediates the relation between ontology and the political. It is all the more surprising, then, that Agamben evokes Spinoza at precisely the point where the scission of the ethical and the political is posited in *Remnants of Auschwitz*. “The *Muselmann*,” Agamben contends, “is a limit figure of a special kind, in which not only categories such as dignity and respect but even the very idea of an ethical limit lose their meaning.”⁴⁹ For Agamben, there is a kind of involution onto the body of “the *Muselmann*” which separates it from the political. But Agamben devolves this involution to a totalized materialization: “This is also why Auschwitz marks the end and the ruin of every ethics of dignity and conformity to a norm. The bare life to which human beings were reduced neither demands nor conforms to anything. It itself is the only norm; it is absolutely immanent.”⁵⁰ This *presentation* or *materialization* both excludes the ethical and includes the whole of normativity.⁵¹ Because of this highly oxymoronic situation – simultaneously material and immaterial – Agamben needs the notion of desubjectification in order to have a subject in the barren (and ‘bare’) landscape of his absolute immanence.⁵²

Absolute immanence is said to become the materialization (the normativity) of a thoroughly immaterial subjectivity, because of its internalizing auto-affection. Agamben supports this argument with recourse to Spinoza’s *Hebrew Grammar*. Thus Spinoza is conjured to lend support at a crucial juncture of the process of desubjectification. Nonetheless, a comparison of Agamben’s reading of reflexive constructions in terms of immanent causality with Spinoza’s source texts themselves will reveal startling discrepancies. Agamben’s argument is that in the *Hebrew Grammar* “the philosopher explains the meaning of the reflexive active verb as an expression of an immanent cause, that is, of an action in which agent and patient are one and the same person.” Agamben cites from Chapter 20 of the *Hebrew Grammar* the example of the verb *pasearse*, which can be translated as “to walk-oneself.”⁵³ Therefore, Agamben contends, Spinoza asserts a coincidence between immanent causality and the dual aspect of subjectivity – its passivity *cum* activity that characterizes the zone of indistinction. Upon this grammatical example Agamben stakes his claim on Spinoza as a precursor. Unfortunately, this claim is problematic in several respects. First, Chapter 20 of the

Hebrew Grammar merely describes the middle voice in *grammatical* terms, making no mention whatsoever of immanent causality.⁵⁴ Second, immanent causality is never related in Spinoza to Individual agency.⁵⁵ Instead of the *Hebrew Grammar*, Agamben should have turned to a number of significant references to immanent causality in Spinoza's writings, especially Proposition 18 from Part I of the *Ethics*. "God," says Spinoza, "is the immanent ... cause of all things."⁵⁶ This Proposition immediately follows a significant Scholium in which Spinoza argues against anthropomorphism, or the attribution of intellect and will to God. In other words, the notion of the immanent cause is conceived in such a way as to be reducible neither to an action nor to a passion nor to a combination of the two. Immanent causality is part of God's essence, precisely because God is not an agent. Third, the indispensable premise of Proposition 18 is, as the proof makes clear, the idea that God cannot be negated, or that everything is in God.⁵⁷ Thus, absolute immanence's totalizing move, which Agamben conducts with recourse to subjectivity (the internalization of everything by the subject), is an idea entirely alien to Spinoza's philosophy.

Agamben's examples from the *Hebrew Grammar* are nothing but grammatical examples: that is, syntagms uttered by nobody at no place. Agamben's reading of Spinoza through grammar is, then, violently decontextualized – and, yet, because of that, all the more symptomatic of Agamben's paradigm of reading. Because it is important that Agamben rehearses in the theory of the grammatical example the theory of sovereign constitution through the exception: "exception and example are correlative concepts that are ultimately indistinguishable and that come into play every time the sense of belonging and commonality of individuals is to be defined."⁵⁸ The logic of the mutual dependence of exclusion and inclusion is, Agamben contends, the same in grammar and in politics, because both are grounded on a founding violence. The example and the exception can give a "sense of belonging and commonality" because they are generated from the violent placing in the outside or not-with, the zone of indistinction, which they inaugurate themselves. This is why Agamben's references to Spinoza's *Hebrew Grammar* can be taken as the exemplary example of the theory of sovereignty based on bare life. Absolute immanence and immanent causality are excluded so as to be included within Agamben's own discourse. Spinoza, the Jew, functions here as the *Muselmann*, who is witnessed by Agamben, the sovereign. Furthermore, Agamben's reading of Spinoza is symptomatic of Agamben's own exceptional

reading practice, because the act of reading is exemplary in the sense of a violent act. Agamben, as the “unitary centre” of the reading self, reads Spinoza as his own auto-affectation. Thus, immanent causality lose any real references to particular texts by Spinoza, placed instead in the zone of reading whose sovereign is Agamben himself. The *effect* of this reading – because, *pace* Agamben, effectivity cannot be neutralized – is that what matters is not the text, but the examples excised from the text. If, as already intimated, Agamben contends that according to his theory of sovereignty “we find ourselves in the presence of a camp every time such a structure [i.e., the witnessing of the *Muselmann*] is created, independent of the kinds of crime that are committed there,”⁵⁹ then his theory of reading as an effect of the example must be strictly symmetrical: we find ourselves in the presence of such a grammatical structure as the one derived from the *Hebrew Grammar* every time we read, independent of the text, and independent of the bodies who have written those texts in a particular place and time. The body – as singular body *and* as body of work – has been internalized within the sovereign. That body – Spinoza’s body – thus becomes the exemplary body for the sovereign reader – Agamben himself.

Impassivity, then, marks both a point of contact between Agamben and Spinoza – the project of reconfiguring the relation between activity and passivity so as to not be in mere opposition – but also, and more importantly, a fundamental divergence in the way they understand the condition of the possibility of the political. The impassive agent in a zone of indistinction violently separated from singularity provides the foundation of Agamben’s politics. Nothing could have been more distant from Spinoza. Embodiment for Spinoza is mediated by a double inscription of allowing: the allowing of the possibility that one becomes wise, and conversely the allowing of the threat that one reverts to being ignorant. Although this allowing is premised on a transcendental principle identified with God, at the same time this principle of impassivity requires for its expression the passivity that characterizes the ignorant man. This means that embodiment and singularity are crucial for Spinoza. Neither the ethical nor the political can be separated from existence. To be is to be with. The political, then, is a matter of power – the political question for Spinoza, as Deleuze insists, is: what can a body do? This question can be approached by delineating the temporal and spatial markers of impassivity. And, as already indicated, impassivity in Spinoza cannot be understood apart from the revolutionary transformation of the dual allowing.

IV

Agamben can provide an initial point of orientation in the investigation of revolution in Spinoza. Agamben says at the end of *Homo Sacer*: “Only a politics that will have learned to take the fundamental biopolitical fracture of the West into account will be able to stop this oscillation and to put an end to the civil war that divides the peoples and the cities of the earth.”⁶⁰ The end of biopolitics is the end of civil war. The apocalyptic tone of the end of *Homo Sacer* is in sharp contrast to the end of Spinoza’s *Ethics*. This is not a difference of mere style, but about the notion of revolution which wields a different, and secular, temporality for Spinoza. The revolution for Spinoza is not cancelled out at a threshold of indistinction but, as Montag has put it, it becomes a “threshold of transformation.” This is also why, as Balibar puts it, “no body politic can exist without being subject to the latent threat of civil war.”⁶¹ This does not advocate for a permanent state of civil unrest. Rather, it is a reminder to any holder of power, in whatever kind of civic order, that there is also a different power not commensurate with the state. This is the people – the multitude – within which transformative power resides.⁶²

At this point, however, a problematic arises with two parts. First, it queries in what way can Spinoza avoid a reduction of the political to yet another extrapolation of individual agency. Second, it questions how it is possible to talk about a revolutionary activity with a certain direction – or, to put it in terms of the final Scholium to the *Ethics*, the road from the ignorant man, to the wise man, to God – without recourse to a destiny of individuality rendered in the plural (a “we” or “the West”). Both aspects are related to the way that time is linked to the political. It will first be shown how time effects a transition from the first kind of knowledge to the second kind of knowledge. This transition, which is the transformation from the ignorant to the wise man, is responsible for individuation. After that it will be possible to show how the common notions, which characterize the second kind of knowledge, allow for commonality and for civil order. All along, time will provide the mechanism for the various transitions between different cognitive levels – and in that sense, time will prove to be not only the motive force for philosophy, but also for revolutionary praxis.

Now a return needs to be made to the Preface to *Ethics* IV, in order to demonstrate how the apposition “Deus, seu Natura” introduces a temporality which is significant for Spinoza’s politics. Part IV of the *Ethics* is about the way affects lead man astray from freedom. However, Spinoza says that a preliminary discussion on perfection is needed – which is in reality a covert way to argue against Aristotle’s distinction of the four causes in book Delta of the *Metaphysics*. Spinoza concludes that only perfection is an attribute only of God. Therefore, as Spinoza puts it, “the eternal and infinite being, whom we call God, or Nature, acts by the same necessity whereby it exists. ... So the reason or cause why God, or Nature, acts, and the reason or cause whereby it exists, are one and the same.” This is another way of saying that in God cause and effect coincide, or God is an immanent cause.⁶³ In a sense, all this has already been shown, although the positioning of immanent causality in relation to Aristotelian teleology opens up two new insights: First, all causes except the immanent one are “nothing but human appetite.” The attribution of a telos to perfection is nothing but the exercise of the human’s servitude to passions. Second, however, a proper definition of perfection entails its temporal understanding: “by perfection in general I shall understand reality ... that is, the essence of anything whatsoever in as far as it exists and acts in a definite manner, without taking duration into account.” The link of these two points is provided by Spinoza’s insistence that the wrong understanding of perfection and temporality cannot be simply rejected. As Spinoza himself puts it, “although this is so, these terms ought to be retained.” The *ethical* is contained in the retention of error or the first kind of knowledge. Imagination, or ignorance, is the condition of the possibility of the political, no less that the eternity of God is also such a condition. But whereas from the perspective of the imagination this condition is derived from passions and their duration, from the perspective of God it is derived from impassivity and its eternity. Thus, affects, as the effects of Nature, are apposed to God, but they are not identical with his essence.⁶⁴

And yet, Spinoza’s critique of teleology, as presented thus far, remains negative. What is still required is a positive articulation, showing how time is to figure in human communities, otherwise than as a duration equated with instantaneous moments. How can past and future figure within the individual? Spinoza tackles this in Proposition 62, which designates the crucial threshold to freedom, because it shows how a disentanglement from the domination of duration understood as continuous instantane-

neity is possible. The Proposition reads: “Insofar as the mind conceives things in accordance with the dictates of reason, it is equally affected whether the idea be of the future, in the past, or the present.” The adverbial qualification – “insofar as” – is profoundly crucial. The “insofar” makes clear that the dictates of reason are not absolute – passions “ought to be retained.” And this, as Deleuze has pointed out, has an important consequence: “When Spinoza suggests that what agrees with reason may also be born of it, he means that from every passive joy there may arise an active joy distinguished from it only by its cause.”⁶⁵ Thus reason does not subsume passions. They have different causes and the link between them is provided by desire. Moreover, to the extent that desire is regulated both by reason and passion, then reason and sociality are still part of the lowest or first kind of knowledge.⁶⁶ The move from imagination to understanding, thus, endures at the point of a limit instituted by time: this is the limit at which time is not longer linear, but admits of an equal affection from past, present and future. All that is changed with Proposition 62 – and therein lies the transformation or the revolution – is the way that time regulates the relation between activity and passivity. As the Scholium to the same Proposition makes clear, “the judgement that we make concerning the order of things and the connection of causes so that we may determine the good or bad for us in the present [i.e., in terms of duration] pertains more to the imagination than to reality.” This preponderance of the present is existence *insofar as* it diminishes past and present. Conversely, to invite the future and the past to the present is the threshold of the second kind of knowledge. Insofar as the past and the future are inscribed in the present, actuality becomes an issue for the individual.

What are the effects of this threshold? The first point to note is that the second kind of knowledge does not pose a violent separation of different realms. Instead, as Deleuze has convincingly argued, so far as “the common notions ... define the second kind of knowledge,” then they are responsible for instituting a network of relations.⁶⁷ Now, since their introductions in Part II of the *Ethics*, it is clear that the relations which pass through the common notions are between particular things and transcendent concepts.⁶⁸ Deleuze points to this feature by saying that thereby common notions “oscillate between two thresholds ... the most universal and the least universal.”⁶⁹ The relations articulated at this point *include* the empirical – in whatever crude, nude or bare form could possibly be conceived in – as well as God. The threshold is non-violent. It

is one of participation, inclusion, and commonality. A site is opened up which invites the optimum participation – not exclusion – and judgement or distinction – not indistinction – between activity and passivity. The limit of this site is nothing but impassivity, although so long as impassivity is associated to God, then it is not excised from this site, but just apposed to it. It is its one side, so to speak. Deleuze, again, has grasped this perfectly: “As related to the common notions which express it, the idea of God itself belongs to the second kind of knowledge. It represents, in this respect, an impassive God. ... The idea of God is thus the limiting point of the second kind of knowledge.”⁷⁰ Because of God’s inscription in the understanding, Spinoza can make impassivity a condition of the possibility of human interaction, without also having to imagine God as a judge in heaven, meddling into human affairs with the mediation of elected individuals. And this also means that no single individual, isolated from the community, can personify the political, because no individual on its own can transform itself. Impassivity dictates that the political arises out of inclusion, not from an exclusory act of violence. It is through this act of inclusion that the individual arises. Individuation takes place as soon as the gesture of founding violence of an omnipotent agent has been renounced as illusory.

Besides impassivity and the human individuation it allows, the other side of common notions pertains to human commonality. “There are certain ideas or notions common to all men,” asserts Spinoza. But these ideas are not merely theoretical constructs but also have practical implications – they are, as the following sentence of the same Corollary indicates, the basis of praxis: What happens, then, if there is a community in which a disagreement arises precisely because common living is based on inadequate ideas? The *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* tackles this problem in Chapter 14, which examines the transition from faith to philosophy, or from the first to the second knowledge. The discussion is framed here in terms of a contrast between obedience and knowledge. Obedience signifies the kind of action taken from ignorance. Spinoza relegates the entire religious dogma to this level. Nonetheless, as already intimated, being-with is already part of the first kind of knowledge. This is the reason why Spinoza says that “the entire [religious] Law consists in this alone, to love one’s neighbour.”⁷¹ Obedience is not motivated by self-interest, but by service to the other. The other becomes the ground of judging and acting. Unless this point is highlighted, it will be impossible to comprehend a distinction Spinoza draws between two kinds of

rebel. Immediately after the assertion that religion consists fundamentally in this affirmation of commonality, Spinoza posits rebellion as the negation of obedience: “he who by God’s commandments loves his neighbour as himself is truly obedient and blessed according to the Law, while he who hates or takes no thought for this neighbour is rebellious and disobedient [*rebellis est, & contumax*].”⁷² The person who is a *contumax* is wilful and stubborn, because he follows his fancies. In other words, his rebellious actions can only be justified through a bifurcation between action and passion which is mediated by the assertion of his individuality rather than through consideration of the other or the neighbour. Spinoza condemns such a kind of rebel.

At the same time, however, there is another kind of rebel, who not only is not undesirable, but rather is indispensable for the polity. Spinoza indicates the way out of obedience with the following remark:

Finally, it follows that faith requires not so much true dogmas as pious dogmas, that is, such as move the heart to obedience; and this is so even if many of those beliefs contain not a shadow of truth, provided that he who adheres to them knows not that they are false. If he knew that they were false, he would necessarily be a rebel, for how could it be that one who seeks to love justice and obey God should worship as divine what he knows to be alien to the divine nature? ... Each man’s faith, then, is to be regarded as pious or impious not in respect of its truth or falsity, but as it is conducive to obedience or obstinacy.⁷³

From within faith itself, the obstinacy of an agitator cannot be tolerated. Such a rebel is still in the service of his personal affections, and hence not free. And yet, there is another kind of rebel who is necessary. He is the one who rebels in the face of falsity. Now, even though the content of this revolution can not be determined in advance, it is still possible to provide a fuller description of the necessary rebel through his distinction from the agitator. Thus, the agitator follows his imagination because what he still has not conceived at the first level of knowledge is the common notion. Only with the common notions can the singularity and the universality of the situation interact so as to produce new relations. And this also means that with the common notions passivity and activity, emotions and reason are not longer separable. The necessary rebel is fully cognizant of desire – but desire in Spinoza’s sense, as containing both passive and active affections. From this perspective, Spinoza’s insistence on the freedom of

opinion in a civic order should be taken as a defence of revolution. At this level, philosophy and revolution become as interconnected as action and passion. Moreover, this a level which can never be proprietary, not even for the sovereign. The second kind of knowledge is on the threshold which opens up to philosophy and to revolution.

This has an importance consequence for sovereignty. As the conclusion to the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* puts it, “the right of the sovereign, both in religious and secular spheres, should be restricted to men’s actions, with everyone being allowed to think what he will and to say what he thinks.”⁷⁴ In other words, the sovereign can only command over the community which constitutes the state, so long as the command pertains to obedience. The sovereign has a right only over action, and action can be separated from passion only on the first kind of knowledge. Thus the sovereign has every right to punish the agitator, but has not right to obstruct the rebel, *insofar as* his rebellion consists in challenging the separation of action and passion. The threat of revolution is inscribed within the constitution of the state, no less than the possibility of transfiguration is inscribed within the human. But this transfiguration can never take place in isolation, but only within the community – a community which includes the ignorant or obedient man, the wise man or the philosopher, as well as impassivity as the figure of God. This call to thinking is a call for thinking to assume its ethical responsibility. The act of philosophy or the act of being wise consists in taking the risk or allowing for the threat of the revolution to be inscribed in the thinking which includes the public. If the outer limit of this extrapolation requires an impassivity as a transcendental condition, then this is only to guarantee that there is no philosophy which escapes the infinite unfolding of the risk of thinking, the threat of revolution – a risk and threat which can only be undertaken at the threshold of the particular and the universal. This is a threshold to which everyone, by right, can participate. And it is the threshold where philosophy, ethics and the political are inseparably intertwined.

¹ E V, 42S.

² Cf. E IV, 67: “A free man thinks of death least of all things, and his wisdom is a mediation on life, not of death.” The passive emotions of the ignorant man are moribund, while the meditations of the wise man are vital.

³ The notion of desire (*cupiditas*) developed from E IV, 15 and ff. is precisely based on this idea.

⁴ Spinoza himself never spoke about Pantheism. The interpretation of his philosophical monism – which is, again, another term never used by Spinoza – as a form of Pantheism rested on the identification of God, the only substance, and Nature. This served as the basis of denouncing Spinoza as an heretic. However, whenever Spinoza conjoins God and Nature, this is done in a very qualified way, such as in the Preface to Part IV of the *Ethics*, which is discussed below. However, the early pantheistic interpretation of the expression “Deus, seu Natura” as positing a strict equivalence between the terms has been one of the most influential – albeit distorting – readings of Spinoza. E.g. see Richard Mason, *The God of Spinoza*, p. 25. As Wolfson has noted, the conception of God as material is, on the one hand, directed not only against medieval theology but also Cartesianism and, on the other, has significant precedents, e.g. in Stoicism (*The Philosophy of Spinoza*, 1: 221-4).

⁵ See E V, 23. Cf. *Ep.* 17.

⁶ Cf. E IV, 67-73.

⁷ This same argument is summarized at the beginning of the *Tractatus Politicus*: “Philosophers look upon the passions by which we are assailed as vices. ... The fact is that they conceive men not as they are, but as they would like them to be. As a result, for the most part it is not ethics they have written, but satire; and they have never worked out a political theory that can have practical application, only one that borders on fantasy or could be put into effect in Utopia or in that golden age of the poets where there would naturally be no need of such” (TP 1.1). Conversely, as Spinoza recalls, “this much is quite certain, and proved to be true in our *Ethics*, that men are necessarily subject to passions” (TP 1.5). And because an applicable political theory requires an ethics, the subjection to passion cannot be eliminated from the project of freedom.

⁸ Here E IV, 39S is crucial again (cf. supra n. 8), since the position that death is not the same as the cessation of bodily functions entails that death is a transformation: “I have no reason to hold that a body does not die unless it turns into a corpse; indeed, experience seems to teach otherwise. It sometimes happens that a man undergoes such changes that I would not be prepared to say that he is the same person. I have heard of a certain Spanish poet who was seized by sickness, and although he recovered, he remained so unconscious of his past life that he did not believe that the stories and tragedies he had written were his own. Indeed, he might have been taken for a child in adult form if had also forgotten his native tongue.” The anecdote of the Spanish poet shows that the transformation precipitated through the change of motion-and-rest Spinoza calls death is not necessarily a change for the better – a change from being ignorant to being wise. The opposite can also happen – the wise man can change to being ignorant.

⁹ This already announces a distancing from Hobbes position. For contrary to the famous formulation of Hobbes’ *De Cive*, “Man to Man is an arrant Wolfe [Homo homini Lupus]” (§1), Spinoza holds onto “the common saying: ‘Man is a God to Man’ [*hominem homini Deum esse*]” (E IV, 35S).

¹⁰ Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, p. 185, emphasis added.

¹¹ Agamben, *Remnants*, p. 70.

¹² Although the term “biopolitics” is borrowed from Foucault, I will not dwell here on Agamben’s dubious, or at least curious, reading of Foucault’s last chapter of the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*. For this, see Peter Fitzpatrick’s “Bare Sovereignty”, §§13-14. In this excellent article, Fitzpatrick also puts to the test Agamben’s reading of the concept of the *homo sacer* in Roman law. See also Andrew Benjamin’s “Spacing as the Shared” which challenges Agamben’s interpretation of Pindar’s ode to *Nomos Basileus* and Agamben’s subsequent extrapolation of sovereignty.

¹³ Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, p. 6.

¹⁴ Agamben, *Remnants*, p. 156.

¹⁵ Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, p. 185.

¹⁶ Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, p. 185.

¹⁷ Agamben, “On Potentiality”, p. 182.

¹⁸ Agamben, “On Potentiality”, p. 182.

¹⁹ Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, p. 187.

²⁰ Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, pp. 43-4. This discussion of Negri, which also refers explicitly to Spinoza, is followed in *Homo Sacer* (pp. 44-7) by an analysis of potentiality which is a summary of the article “On Potentiality” in which Agamben talks about “fundamental passivity.”

²¹ Agamben acknowledges in *Remnants* (p. 24) that Spinoza develops this position. At the same time, Erik Vogt correctly notes that, for Agamben, “boundaries between politics and law are equally indistinguishable, since sovereignty and the sovereign exception are marked too by an inclusive exclusion” (“S/Citing the Camp”, p. 78). Because, on the one hand, politics and law are indistinct and, on the other, ethics and law are incommensurate, Agamben will infer that it is possible to separate ethics from politics. This position, which will be analysed later, is incompatible with Spinoza.

²² Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, p. 44. See Brett Neilson’s “Potenza Nuda?” for a discussion of the section in *Homo Sacer* that discusses Negri, as well as a comparison between Negri’s Spinozan ontology and Agamben’s notion of bare life. Neilson is much more interested in Agamben’s interpretation of Negri, not of Spinoza. Cesare Casarino in “Time Matters” also offers an interesting comparison between Agamben and Negri through their respective uses of time – a comparison which is mediated through the figure of Marx and the image of the revolution. Also, for a number of interesting articles on law and Spinoza, see the special issue of the *Cardozo Law Review on Spinoza* (volume 25, issue 2, 2003). For instance, on the division between natural law and positive law, see Frydman’s “Divorcing Power and Reason.”

²³ As Adam Thurschwell has shown in “Cutting the Branches for Akiba,” Agamben uses a similar appropriation of Derrida.

²⁴ Agamben mentions Spinoza elsewhere in his work. But when there seem to be simply passing references, such as in *The Coming Community*, pp. 18-9 and 90-1, they will not be discussed here. Nor will chapter 7 of *The End of the Poem* be discussed here, since it is really about Elsa Morante’s reading of Spinoza than about Spinoza’s work.

²⁵ Agamben, “Absolute Immanence”, p. 224. Deleuze’s short essay was translated into English in *Theory, Culture and Society* in 1997.

²⁶ Agamben, “Absolute Immanence”, pp. 224-5.

²⁷ Agamben, “Absolute Immanence”, p. 226.

²⁸ Agamben, “Absolute Immanence”, p. 226, emphasis added.

²⁹ Agamben, “Absolute Immanence”, p. 228.

³⁰ Agamben, “Absolute Immanence”, pp. 229-30.

³¹ Agamben, “Absolute Immanence”, p. 231. Cf. *Homo Sacer*, pp. 1-3, and *passim*.

³² Agamben, “Absolute Immanence”, pp. 232-3.

³³ Agamben, “Absolute Immanence”, p. 234.

³⁴ Agamben, “Absolute Immanence”, p. 235.

³⁵ Agamben, “Absolute Immanence”, p. 238.

³⁶ Agamben, “Absolute Immanence”, p. 239. The translation “biological body” has been amended to “biopolitical body,” since the original text in Italian says “il corpo biopolitico” (Agamben, “L’immanenza assoluta”, p. 57).

³⁷ Agamben, “Absolute Immanence”, p. 238.

³⁸ Agamben, *Remnants*, p. 111.

³⁹ Agamben, *Remnants*, p. 112.

⁴⁰ Agamben, *Remnants*, p. 122.

⁴¹ Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, p. 17.

⁴² Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, p. 174.

⁴³ Andreas Kalyvas has also taken Agamben’s conception of temporality to task: “*Homo Sacer* returns to a representation of time – the tie of the sovereign – as uniform, one-directional, and rectilinear” (“The Sovereign Weaver”, p. 111). This general position about time, then, becomes the ground for Agamben’s historical extrapolation of sovereignty: “Sovereign biopolitics ... has uninterruptedly accompanied the ancients and the moderns alike, remaining unaffected by critical events” (p. 111). The upshot of this understanding of sovereignty as a perennial quality is a loss of singularity: “By disregarding the distinct aspects of political power, politics is relegated to a single, pejorative version of sovereign power and state authority” (p. 115).

⁴⁴ Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, p. 185.

⁴⁵ Philippe Mesnard in “The Political Philosophy of Giorgio Agamben” objects precisely to this structure of negative theology in Agamben’s discussion of the *Muselmann*.

⁴⁶ In Catherine Mills’ words: “What Agamben fails to take into account, though, is that the taking place of enunciation can itself be seen as always a matter of ‘being-with’ others.” (“Linguistic Survival”, p. 211).

⁴⁷ Gil Anidjar, “On Cultural Survival”, p. 5 and pp. 10-1. Unlike Anidjar, Agamben never refers to what the *Muselmann* literally means, that is, the Muslim. This is another indication that, for Agamben, the *Muselmann* is both thoroughly abstracted and entirely self-consuming.

⁴⁸ As Gatens and Lloyd explain: “Individual selfhood is not possible in isolation: it depends on continuing engagement with and disengagement from other selves in changing structures of affect and imagination” (*Collective Imaginings*, p. 65).

⁴⁹ Agamben, *Remnants*, p. 63.

⁵⁰ Agamben, *Remnants*, p. 69.

⁵¹ If this radical exclusion of the ethical is coupled with Agamben compulsion to affirm a witness, then, as J. M. Bernstein puts it, it discloses a “pure desire to bear witness” which requires a pornographic gaze fastened on an excluded animality or bare life (Bernstein, “Bare Life”, p. 8). Bernstein pays particular attention the passage from p. 69 of *Remnants* cite above.

⁵² To resist this position entails question whence its authority? How can one legitimately describe this non-human landscape? Or, as Fitzpatrick puts it, “from what omniscient position Agamben can discern such things – discern these entities as being utterly and ever beyond the human”? (Fitzpatrick, “Bare Sovereignty”, §21).

⁵³ Agamben, “Absolute Immanence”, p. 234.

⁵⁴ If this needs reminding, it does not follow that the distinction between nominative (the subject) and accusative (the object) equally implies a positing of human agency independent of its environment. As Derrida put it, “that which lets itself be designated *différance* is neither simply active nor simply passive, announcing or rather recalling something like the middle voice, saying an operation that is not an operation, an operation that cannot be conceived either as a passion or as the action of an agent or patient, neither on the basis of nor moving toward any of these *terms*” (“Différance”, p. 9). This erasure of agency and the ensuing sense of community is the linchpin of John Llewelyn’s discussion of the middle voice in the most interesting recent book on the topic (see Llewelyn, *the Middle Voice*).

⁵⁵ In fact, Agamben’s translation of the Latin is rather misleading. In Latin it is clear throughout Chapter 12 that Spinoza is positioning the reflexive between the active and the passive mood (*ad agentem* and *ad patientem*). Thus, when Spinoza writes “Ideoque necesse fuit Infinitivorum speciem excogitare, quae actionem exprimeret ad agentem, sive causam immanentem relatam” (*Opera*, I: 342), then Maurice J. Bloom accurately translates as: “Therefore it was necessary to devise another form of infinitive which would express an action related to the active mood or to the imminent cause” (*Complete Works*, p. 629). Spinoza’s point is grammatical, not philosophical, and it is a point about the relation between the different moods. Thus, Agamben’s translation of the subordinate clause is rather surprising: “which expresses an action referred to an agent as immanent cause [*che esprimesse l’azione riferita all’agente come causa immanente*]” (“Absolute Immanence”, p. 235/ “L’immanenza assoluta”, p. 52). Agamben’s translation erroneously suggests that Spinoza is talking here about an individual which acts as (*come*) an immanent cause. Spinoza’s point, however, is much more uncontroversial: in the active voice, the subject itself is the cause of the action. There is nothing in the text of Chapter 12 to suggest that Spinoza is advancing a theory of action, or of agency, or of individuation.

⁵⁶ God as “*causa immanens*” is one of the important aspects of Part I of the *Ethics*. The definition of Proposition 18 is already implicit from at least Proposition 15, although the whole of the preceding of Part I can be seen as leading up to Proposition 18. Further, for God and causality – including God as an immanent cause – see also *Short Treatise*, Part I, Chapters 2 and 3, as well as the final chapter of the *Short Treatise*. For the sources of Spinoza’s understanding of divine causality, see volume one of Wolfson’s *The Philosophy of Spinoza*.

⁵⁷ The Proof of *E I*, 18 refers back to Proposition 15, which states: “Whatever is, is in God, and nothing can be conceived without God.”

⁵⁸ Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, p. 22.

⁵⁹ Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, p. 174.

⁶⁰ Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, p. 180. Elsewhere, Agamben calls for a *stasiology* or a theory of civil war, but the only reason for this, is the dissolution of civil war in the zone of indistinction: “The paradigm of consensus, which dominates both political praxis and political theory, seems incompatible with any serious inquiry into the phenomenon of civil war, which it at least as old as Western democracy. Why this lacuna? There is a polemology, a theory of war; there is even an irenology, a theory of peace (or of pacification); but there is no such thing as a stasiology, a theory of *stasis* or civil war. As a matter of fact, a possible reason for the absence of a stasiology in political science is precisely the proximity between civil war and the state of exception. Since civil war is by definition the normal situation, it moves in a zone of undecidability with respect to the state of exception, which is the usual response of state power to extreme internal conflicts” (Agamben, “The State of Exception”, pp. 284-5; see also the second sequel to the *Homo Sacer* project, *State of Exception*, for Agamben’s more detailed engagement with the civil war). Agamben is of course right to associate an utopian vision of the end of stasis (which means civil war, as well as immobility and disease in Greek) with a zone outside the political. Al-

though, *pace* Agamben, this only indicates the futility of both the idea of an *end* to stasis and to defining such a zone.

⁶¹ Étienne Balibar, *Spinoza and Politics*, p. 68.

⁶² In other words, a productive sense of community is not exclusive to the wise men. On the contrary, as Antonio Negri has demonstrated with recourse to Spinoza's final and unfinished work, the *Tractatus Politicus*, it resides with the multitude (see Negri, *The Savage Anomaly*, ch. 8, and "Relinqua desiderantur"). On the multitude or the masses, see also Balibar, "Spinoza, the Anti-Orwell" and Montag, "Who's Afraid of the Multitude?"

⁶³ At this point Spinoza also reminds the reader that "the necessity of his nature whereby he [i.e., God] acts is the same as that whereby he exists has been demonstrated (Prop. 16, I)." The Proof of *E I*, 18 derives immanent causality precisely from *E I*, 16. Thus, although Spinoza does not use here the words "immanent cause" it is clear that that is what he is thinking. Proposition 16 of *Ethics I* is one of the most crucial propositions in the definition of God carried out in this Part of the *Ethics*. Tchimhaus was well aware of that, as is evident from *Ep.* 82. For an authoritative discussion of this proposition, see Matheron's "Essence, Existence and Power."

⁶⁴ This is another way of saying that numerical distinction is different from real distinction, which is a fundamental difference between Spinoza and his predecessors, as Deleuze has demonstrated in Part I of *Expressionism in Philosophy* (see esp. chapter 1).

⁶⁵ Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy*, pp. 274-5.

⁶⁶ See Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy*, pp. 289-90.

⁶⁷ Deleuze, *Spinoza*, p. 116. Deleuze makes a convincing argument that the development of Spinoza's philosophy from the earliest writing to the *Ethics* is parallel to the development of the concept of the common notions. Deleuze shows, for instance, that the *Emendation of the Intellect* stops precisely at that point where Spinoza gets in inkling of the common notion, which though he cannot introduce given the way that work is structured. The delineation of the three kinds of knowledge in the *Ethics* is structured around the idea of the common notion (*E II*, 37-40), and without the common notions the intellectual love of God, or the third kind of knowledge, cannot make sense.

⁶⁸ Cf. the Scholia to *E II*, 40. See also Yovel's "The Second Kind of Knowledge," which convincingly shows that the common notions mediated between error or the first kind of knowledge and intuition or the third kind of knowledge.

⁶⁹ Deleuze, *Practical Philosophy*, pp. 114-5.

⁷⁰ Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy*, p. 299.

⁷¹ *TTP* 515/ 3:174.

⁷² *TTP* 515/ 3:174.

⁷³ *TTP* 516-7/ 3:176.

⁷⁴ *TTP* 572/ 3:247.