

AGAMBEN



AND THE

EXISTENTIALISTS

EDITED BY MARCOS ANTONIO NORRIS
AND COLBY DICKINSON

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Chapter 3

Biopolitics and Probability:
Modifications on Life's Way

Virgil W. Brower

Despite everything people ought to have learned from my maieutic carefulness . . . they will probably bawl out . . . that I know nothing about sociality . . .

Kierkegaard's journal¹

This project retraces activations of Kierkegaard in the development of political theology. It suggests alternative modes of states of exception attributed to him. Several Kierkegaardian themes open themselves to 'something like pure potential'² in Agamben, namely: living death, animality, criminality, auto-constitution, modification, liturgy, love and certain articulations of improbabilities.

Genealogy of Infatuations

It is almost comical, distinctly short of divine. The Dane and Dante are thought together. Something borders on humour about the way Agamben twice invokes Kierkegaard in an early essay devoted to the radical naming of the divine as '*Comedy*'. He is included among a solemn few who appreciate the tragic-comic distinction in the development of modern philosophy. But this early engagement seems to strand Kierkegaard exclusively on the tragic stage – as if lacking any laughter on his side³ – associating *Fear and Trembling* with the Abraham of Averroes: 'the tragic situation par excellence'.⁴

Something is no less tragic about another way Agamben later invokes Kierkegaard as a prophet of the state of exception, by which a delimited extreme becomes a norm. In §2.4 of *Remnants of Auschwitz*,

the 'extreme situation' or 'limit situation' . . . is analogous to the function ascribed by some jurists to the state of exception . . . As Kierkegaard writes, 'the exception explains the general as well as itself. And when one wants to really study the general, one need only look around for a real exception.'⁵

Agamben does not find it necessary to cite or reference the text in question. This is already an anxious tic symptomatic of an overgeneralised and unnuanced deployment of Kierkegaard within political theology. Agamben is not *the first* to exhibit this symptom. This deployment becomes a self-perpetuating – perhaps even tactical (considering its dissemination in wartime) – feedback loop of repeated self-reinforcements that verges upon regulatory 'capture'.⁶ The primary concern would be critical consideration of what remains uncaptured: beginning with the serious omissions that have been made to Kierkegaard's text.

For a thinker so allegedly attuned towards style⁷ as Agamben, there is tragic inattention to the meticulous pains and 'maieutic carefulness' Kierkegaard devotes to the pseudonymous perspectives⁸ of respective texts through his signature mode of indirection. The deference which Agamben's political theology grants to 'the anonymous ones we call artists [seeking] to constitute their life as a form of life', specifically, 'one who signs [a "work"] with an ironic false name'⁹ must be extended Kierkegaard's singular style.

Such referential haste in *Remnants* is likely self-pardoned by Agamben because he is simply extracting the first two sentences from a larger quotation already canonised by Schmitt in the first chapter of *Political Theology*.

*A Protestant theologian [Ein protestantischer Theologe] who demonstrated the vital intensity possible in theological reflection in the nineteenth century stated: 'The exception explains the general and itself. And if one wants to study the general correctly, one need only look around for a true exception. [Here, Agamben stops.] It reveals everything more clearly than does the general. Endless talk about the general becomes boring; there are exceptions. If they cannot be explained, then, the general also cannot be explained. The difficulty is usually not noticed because the general is not thought about with passion but with a comfortable superficiality. The exception, on the other hand, thinks the general with intense passion.'*¹⁰

In *Homo Sacer* Agamben identifies this 'theologian . . . as none other than Søren Kierkegaard'.¹¹ Schmitt not only omits the title of the text in question, but even Kierkegaard's name (the omission of which is, ironically, perhaps the most astute aspect of the quotation).

Besotted Repetitions

Something almost criminal is at hand. As if constituting a kind of sovereign command or expropriating control over another's words, Schmitt's block

beyond the probable, God is absolutely not included, though it does not follow from this that he is present wherever there is venturing beyond the probable.⁹⁷

Politics and probability are found entangled and indissociable. The political demotes the possible to the probable. Politics takes command of humanity as probability feigns control over possibility. In politics as such humanity is perhaps no longer possible. It probabilises the *polis* – as mega-data enumerates subhumans – so politics might optimise policing.

Theodicy of Probable Animals

Agamben draws attention to how probability calculus seems reliant upon enumeration. ‘If the cause of the rupture with . . . classical physics was the numerical character of the calculation of probabilities’, he then wonders along with Simone Weil ‘why scientists did not choose to work on the very notion of probability in order to elaborate a model of calculation that is not founded on discontinuity but on continuity – instead of changing the theory of physics from top to bottom’.⁹⁸

Bad faith in raw numbers potentially burgeons into a form of governmental command. This is indicative of Bernoulli’s ‘law of large numbers, on which every statistical calculation is based’.⁹⁹ Kierkegaard shares this suspicion of reality based on vast enumeration.

How [ironic] that *the law* is this – that everything that *needs numbers* in order to be important . . . *the more numbers it needs, the less important it is*. Everything that can be . . . *realized, only by means of great numbers*, and that men then regard with stupefied admiration, as if it were really important – everything of this kind is unimportant. What is truly important is *quite the reverse, it always needs less and less numbers in order to be realized*. . .¹⁰⁰

The reliability of numbers is of course a fraud, they are unreliable; and yet this is what is offered you in *the world, calculated to fool you*, so that you *become part of the numbers* . . . Numbers are used in order to conceal the emptiness of existence, they put you in a state of exaltation, like opium, and so you are *tranquilized* by the *immense* reliability of numbers running into millions . . . *the animal needs no higher certainty than numbers*.¹⁰¹

Kierkegaard, the Anti-Bernoulli, transgresses the law by imagining a nonlaw of lesser numbers.¹⁰² Command again is found malforming human life into animality, now, through probability (algorithmically self-optimised by numerical law) rather than sovereignty (administratively auto-constituted by exceptional law). Kierkegaard indicts enumeration as a brute logic of animal survival far less than human living. Numbers

‘tranquillise’ animals for Kierkegaard (as sovereign power passivises wild werewolves into licking the king’s boots).¹⁰³ Enumerated lifeforms become more susceptible to such deception. It fools humans into reckoning as animals, for whom unreal numbers are ‘realised’ as reality itself.

This mechanism fooling folk into ‘becom[ing] part of the numbers’ is certainly applicable to contemporary information society. Mass datafication by surveillance and platform capitalism¹⁰⁴ tends ‘to replace people with data trails, turning them into more effective shoppers or workers . . . the people affected remain every bit as abstract as the numbers dancing across the screen’.¹⁰⁵ Big data is deciphered by parahuman machine-learning ‘precisely’ by the law of great numbers. The immense algorithmic mining of it – from a ‘special perspective’¹⁰⁶ once attributed by providential theodicy to god – is appropriated by governmental command over datafied people, apostate to any *lit-urgy* worthy of the name. Today this virtual gubernation is part of ‘The Providential Machine’¹⁰⁷ and due as much solemn attention – which, for Agamben, ever evokes the Dane – as the comedic name Dante attributed to the divine.

Notes

1. Søren Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*, trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), p. 409.
2. Giorgio Agamben, *Creation and Anarchy*, trans. Adam Kotsko (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2019), p. 24.
3. ‘There sat all the gods . . . I was granted . . . a wish. “What do you want,” asked Mercury. “. . . I choose one thing – that I may always have the laughter on my side.” Not one of the gods said a word; instead, all of them began to laugh.’ Søren Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*, Part 1, trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), pp. 42–3. Cf. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. Adrian Del Caro (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 146; [Part 3, *On Apostases*, §2].
4. Giorgio Agamben, *The End of the Poem*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), pp. 9, 7.
5. Giorgio Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz*, trans. David Heller-Roazen (New York: Zone Books, 1999), p. 48.
6. Francis Fukuyama, *Our Posthuman Future* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2002), p. 204 fn.; Cathy O’Neil, *Weapons of Math Destruction* (New York: Crown, 2016), pp. 53, 29.
7. Giorgio Agamben, *The Use of Bodies*, trans. Adam Kotsko (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016), pp. 224–33.
8. Cf. Søren Kierkegaard, *The Point of View*, trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995); Jacques Derrida, *The Gift of Death*, trans. David Wills (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. 58; Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), pp. 61–74.
9. Duchamp’s *Mutt* in Agamben, *Creation and Anarchy*, pp. 12–13.
10. Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology*, trans. George Schwab (Chicago: University of

- Chicago Press, 2005), p. 15; italics added. Cf. Schmitt, *Politischer Theologie* (Berlin: Duncker & Humboldt, 2004), p. 21.
11. Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), p. 16.
 12. Søren Kierkegaard, *Repetition | Philosophical Crumbs*, trans. M. G. Piety (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 78.
 13. Ibid.
 14. Jakob Taubes, *Ad Carl Schmitt* (Berlin: Merve, 1987), pp. 55–6.
 15. Jakob Taubes, *The Political Theology of Paul*, trans. D. Hollander (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), p. 65.
 16. Ibid. p. 66.
 17. Ibid. p. 69. Cf. Bartholomew Ryan, *Kierkegaard's Indirect Politics* (New York: Rodopi, 2014).
 18. Quoted in Taubes, *The Political Theology of Paul*, p. 69.
 19. Ibid. p. 70.
 20. Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Palgrave, 2008), pp. 79–150.
 21. Taubes, *The Political Theology of Paul*, p. 108.
 22. Ibid.
 23. Ibid. p. 77.
 24. Jakob Taubes, *Occidental Eschatology*, trans. David Ratmoko (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), p. 191; italics added.
 25. Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*, pp. 365–66; Kierkegaard's italics and emphasis.
 26. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology*, n.t. (Amherst: Prometheus Books, 1998), p. 183; italics added.
 27. Ibid. p. 198; italics added. With my brackets Schmitt and Taubes perform as [Stirner] through which Kierkegaard assumes the gravity of [Hegel] (first as speculative tragedy, then as exceptional farce).
 28. Jacques Derrida, *The Beast and the Sovereign*, vol. 1, trans. Geoffrey Bennington (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), pp. 92, 94.
 29. Kierkegaard, *Repetition*, p. 77.
 30. Agamben, *The Use of Bodies*, p. 267.
 31. Kierkegaard, *Repetition*, p. 78; italics added.
 32. Cf. 'to be the first to tell us about the first'. Derrida, *The Beast and the Sovereign*, vol. 1, pp. 330, 92.
 33. 'Eros was the god of erotic love but was not himself in love . . . if it did happen to him once, it was an exception . . .'. *Either/Or*, Part 1, p. 63. This first exception is introduced by his first description of the *power of exclusion*: 'precisely because [sensuality] is to be excluded [by spirit or Christianity] it is defined as a principle, as a power . . .', p. 61.
 34. Kierkegaard, *Repetition*, p. 77; italics added.
 35. Ibid. p. 78; italics added.
 36. Agamben, *The Use of Bodies*, p. xix.
 37. Thomas Pynchon, *Gravity's Rainbow* (New York: Penguin Classics, Deluxe Edition, 2006), p. 438. Q.v., p. 156, p. 169, p. 233.
 38. Agamben, *The Use of Bodies*, pp. xix–xx.
 39. Kierkegaard's 'king' that deactivates his sovereignty for love of 'the lowest' 'peasant' in *Philosophical Crumbs* (pp. 102–7) approaches the theo-economics of Agamben's cenoby and impoverished uses beyond ownership in *The Highest Poverty*, trans. Adam Kotsko (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013), pp. 122–4, 92–3, 119, as well as the socio-economic justices striven for in the preferential options of Latin American liberation theologies (and those that follow).
 40. Agamben, *The Highest Poverty*, p. 139; *The Time That Remains*, trans. Patricia Dailey (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), pp. 23–4.

41. Kierkegaard, *Three Discourses on Imagined Occasions*, trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), p. 80. Cf. 'I live as one already dead'. *Either/Or*, Part 1, p. 42.
42. Kierkegaard, *Purity of Heart is to Will One Thing: Spiritual Preparation for the Office of Confession*, trans. Douglas V. Steere (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1948), pp. 91–2; italics added. Q.v., p. 97, p. 191.
43. *Kierkegaard's Journals and Notebooks*, vol. 10, *Journals NB31–NB36*, ed. Niels Jørgen Cappelørn et al. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), p. 335; italics added; [NB 36:37].
44. *Kierkegaard's Journals and Notebooks*, vol. 10, p. 259 [NB 33:13].
45. Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception*, trans. Kevin Attell (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), p. 7.
46. Giorgio Agamben, *Profanations*, trans. Jeff Fort (New York: Zone Books, 2007), p. 85.
47. Jacques Derrida, *Given Time*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. 7.
48. Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*, pp. 267–8; Kierkegaard's italics of *mine* and *yours*; all other italics *mine* (if there is such a thing).
49. Consider Agamben's understanding of the Spinozist *conatus*: 'the being that desires and demands, in demanding, modifies, desires, and constitutes itself. "To preserve in its being" means this and nothing else.' *The Use of Bodies*, p. 171. See p. 155 (mode and affection), p. 156 (haecceity and *ecce homo*), p. 167 (between entity and identity with itself).
50. Giorgio Agamben, *What is Real?*, trans. Lorenzo Chiesa (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2018), pp. 41–3.
51. Agamben, *The Time That Remains*, pp. 18–19, 23.
52. Ibid. p. 109; cf. 2 Thess. 2.
53. Ibid. pp. 106–7.
54. Agamben, *Creation and Anarchy*, p. 10.
55. Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Crumbs*, p. 85.
56. 'The idea of law, of the imperative . . . is thus inscribed in *pragmas*; "it must" is inscribed in this doing . . . "it must" weighed from the start on the sense of *pragmas*, and of *pragmatic*, in Greek and Latin, in Latin where it was able to follow a very precisely juridical direction, designating sometimes, very strictly, a rule . . . the rule of civil power in ecclesiastical matters.' Jacques Derrida, *Theory and Practice*, trans. David Willis (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019), p. 42.
57. Giorgio Agamben, *Opus Dei*, trans. Adam Kotsko (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013), p. 35; *Creation and Anarchy*, p. 9.
58. Agamben, *Opus Dei*, pp. 40–1; Derrida, *Theory and Practice*, pp. 75–7, 83, 90–3, 102, 104, 108.
59. Ibid. p. 27.
60. If he is 'a Protestant theologian', Taubes would likely identify Kierkegaard as 'a lay theologian'. *The Political Theology of Paul*, p. 65.
61. Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Crumbs*, p. 85.
62. Ibid.
63. Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, p. 59. 'We hum[an] beings want to reassure ourselves with the assistance of numbers (and it is quite true that *numbers do impress all relative sovereigns*'). *Kierkegaard's Journals and Notebooks*, vol. 11.2, *Loose Papers 1843–1855*, ed. Niels Jørgen Cappelørn et al. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020), p. 352; italics added; [646–7:539]. In this context, Agamemnon as well as any of the angry gods he appeases would represent such relative sovereigns and be numerically impressed as such.
64. Agamben, *The Use of Bodies*, p. 174.
65. Søren Kierkegaard, *The Sickness unto Death*, trans. Howard V. and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), pp. 13–14. One might discern a

- meta-conceptual (even if under-conceptualised) articulation of this in the closing paragraphs to the 'Teleology' discussion of the *Greater Logic*: '... such a movement is itself immediately doubled and a first is always also a second. In the concept taken for itself, that is, in its subjectivity, the difference of itself from itself is as an immediate identical totality on its own; but since its determinateness here is indifferent externality, its self-identity is in this externality immediately also self-repulsion again, so that what is determined as external and indifferent to the identity is rather this identity itself, and the identity as identity, as self-reflected, is rather its other'. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *The Science of Logic*, trans. George Di Giovanni (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 668.
66. Kierkegaard, *The Sickness unto Death*, p. 14. Cf. 'an exclusively receptive relation' in which one 'simply kept [one]self receptive' and, as such, 'a change occurred in everything [one] received'. Søren Kierkegaard, *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses*, trans. Howard V. and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), p. 45. Here Kierkegaard perhaps anticipates the subtle but solemn possible differences between (1) self-relation and (2) letting oneself receive relation; *c'est à dire*: between (1) colloquial and autonomously agential apprehensions of auto-affection (aesthetic or ethicist) as merely to affect or 'to feel oneself [*se sentir*]' and (2) a far more receptive relation further supplementarily hospitable to an effectual ontology 'in which one lets oneself be affected also by a feeling [*se laisser affecter aussi par un sentiment*]' addressed in Jacques Derrida, 'Justices', trans. Peggy Kamuf, *Critical Inquiry* 31.3 (Spring 2005): 689–721, esp. p. 690; italics added; Jacques Derrida, 'Justices', in Appels de Jacques Derrida, ed. by Danielle Cohen-Levinas and Ginette Michaud (Paris: Hermann Éditeurs, 2014), pp. 19–71, esp. p. 21. Such Kierkegaardian receptivity would have something to do with the passivity by which any so-called 'I' of oneself is 'overcome by its own passivity, its ownmost sensibility' in Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz*, p. 105.
 67. Agamben, *The Use of Bodies*, p. 174.
 68. Ibid.
 69. Ibid. p. 264.
 70. Ibid. p. 170; Agamben's italics.
 71. Ibid. p. xix.
 72. Ibid. p. xxi.
 72. My reading of the Kierkegaardian system (if it is that) inclines to possibilities suggested by Merold Westphal, whereby works of love exceed the religiousnesses (a and b) sketched out within it (and, as such, the system itself). 'Hidden inwardness remains, but it is teleologically suspended in outwardly visible works of love. Here is an interpretation . . . that goes beyond Climacus. I call it Religiousness C.' Merold Westphal, *Becoming a Self: A Reading of Kierkegaard's Concluding Unscientific Postscript* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 1996), p. 197.
 73. Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Crumbs*, p. 108; italics added.
 74. Agamben, *The Use of Bodies*, p. xxi.
 75. Agamben, *Opus Dei*, p. 28.
 76. Agamben, *The Highest Poverty*, pp. 70, 74, 92–3, 98, 141. Cf. "Lebensweise" in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Die deutsche Ideologie, Werke*, vol. 3 (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1990), p. 21.
 77. Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*, Pt 2, trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), p. 263.
 78. Ibid.
 79. Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, p. 16; italics added.
 80. Cf. vicissitudes of chance in 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, History', *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Penguin, 1984), pp. 78, 93; Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), pp. 25–8, 197; John Maynard Keynes, *A Treatise on Probability* (Lexington:

- Wildside Press, 2017 [1920]), p. 337. (Keynes might have more in common with Nietzsche, Foucault and Deleuze on such issues than continental theorists are often led to believe, especially if receiving their modes of thinking through Agamben's presentation of them.)
81. Kierkegaard, *Repetition*, p. 78; italics added.
 82. Derrida, *The Beast and the Sovereign*, vol. 1, p. 333.
 83. Schmitt, *Political Theology*, p. 5; italics added.
 84. 'It is important to remember that in the exception . . . the law maintains itself in relation to the exception in the form of its own self-suspension.' Agamben, *The Time That Remains*, p. 104; cf. *The Highest Poverty*, p. 10.
 85. Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, p. 56.
 86. Ibid. p. 105; italics added.
 87. Agamben, *What is Real?*, pp. 32–3; italics added.
 88. Kierkegaard, *The Use of Bodies*, p. 265.
 89. *Kierkegaard's Journals and Notebooks*, vol. 10, p. 84. Note this animality within 'To Want to Be First' alongside Derrida's critique of Agamben (discussed above).
 90. Agamben, *What is Real?*, p. 26.
 91. Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, pp. 105–9.
 92. Agamben, *The Time That Remains*, pp. 134–5.
 93. Agamben, *The Highest Poverty*, p. 77; italics added.
 94. Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, pp. 60–1; italics added.
 95. Kierkegaard, *Repetition*, p. 78. Science is he that decides the boxception.
 96. Agamben, *What is Real?*, p. 33; italics added.
 97. *Kierkegaard's Journals and Notebooks*, vol. 10, p. 120.
 98. *What is Real?*, p. 23.
 99. Ibid. p. 29. 'Bernoulli . . . forms a system with the law of the equality of probabilities and confirms the principle that probability does not concern a real given event but only the tendency to infinity of the number of examined samples', pp. 31–2.
 100. Kierkegaard, *The Last Years: Journals 1853–1855*, ed. and trans. Ronald Gregor Smith (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), p. 273; italics added. This critique of what is 'realised' by the numbers is written before the emergence of so-called 'real numbers' after Dedekind or Cantor but would likely still address itself to them. But such real numbers are perhaps no longer numbers at all but rather para-numerical quantities akin to sequences, successions, sections, agglomerations, aggregates, or 'a variety of mathematical entities that may not be numbers' and, as such, elude the critique. Paolo Zellini, *The Mathematics of the Gods and the Algorithms of Men*, trans. Simon Carnell and Erica Segre (London: Allen Lane, 2020), p. 117. Yet Kierkegaard is no doubt influenced by Hegel regarding such numerical problems, whose previous critique arguably anticipates Dedekind and Cantor and would still seem to allege their subsequent quantities of mere approximations of bad infinity by decimal seriality. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *The Science of Logic*, trans. George Di Giovanni (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 192, 202, 210–12, 276.
 101. Kierkegaard, *The Last Years: Journals 1853–1855*, pp. 163–4.
 102. This radical idea is perhaps still saturated in Kierkegaard's congenital Protestantism and its institution of a *chosen few*. This demands a reboot of the Weberian critique in the present age. However digitally disenchanting, the *populus electus* personally persists in believing itself chosen (as in the 2016 US election) via hyper-personalised algorithmic microtargeting (by entities like Cambridge Analytica). Such targets are prone to constitute themselves silently and secretly elected to personally elect the new elector. Cf. Hobbes: 'I find the KINGDOM OF GOD, to signify . . . a kingdom properly so named, constituted by the votes of the people of Israel in peculiar manner; wherein they chose God for their king . . .'. *Leviathan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 216 [ch. 35, ¶2]; italics mine.

103. *Homo Sacer*, pp. 105–8; [§6]. Cf. the ‘exception’ to ‘large number’ of the ‘Anti-Darwin’ entry in Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, trans. Thomas Common (Mineola: Dover, 2019), p. 44.
104. Consider the ‘State of Exception’, ‘Surveillance Exceptionalism’ and ‘The New Priesthood’ in Susanna Zuboff, *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism* (London: Profile Books, 2019), pp. 71–4, 112–1, 187–90; Nick Srnicek, *Platform Capitalism* (Malden: Polity, 2017), p. 57. See Safiya Umoja Noble, *Algorithms of Oppression* (New York: New York University Press, 2018); Colin Koopman, *How We Became Our Data* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019).
105. O’Neil, *Weapons of Math Destruction*, p. 48.
106. Agamben, *What is Real?*, p. 35.
107. Giorgio Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory*, trans. Lorenzo Chiesa and Matteo Mandarini (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), pp. 109–43; [§5].

'Consistently challenging, informative, and enlightening, the essays in this volume make a major contribution in situating Agamben's thought in relation to existentialist thinkers and themes. They provide a bright new lens through which to view Agamben's work.'

Kevin Attell, Cornell University

Explores the philosophical relationship between Giorgio Agamben and the existentialist tradition

While Giorgio Agamben's work has not previously been categorised as existentialist, his work creatively repackages important existentialist themes in a politico-theological context. This collection of essays offers creative new ways of considering Agamben's critique of the sovereign exception, as well as other existentialist themes, including feminism and postcolonialism.

The international range of contributors each challenge, complicate or reimagine Agamben's reading of the sovereign exception, which appears among the writings of Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Sartre, Heidegger, Beauvoir, Fanon, Kafka, Dostoevsky and others in both theistic and atheistic forms.

Divided into three sections – Agamben and the Sovereign Exception, Agamben and the Death of God and Existentialist Themes in Agamben – this collection re-introduces Agamben as an unacknowledged existentialist philosopher who takes the major themes and concepts of existentialism in a startling new direction.

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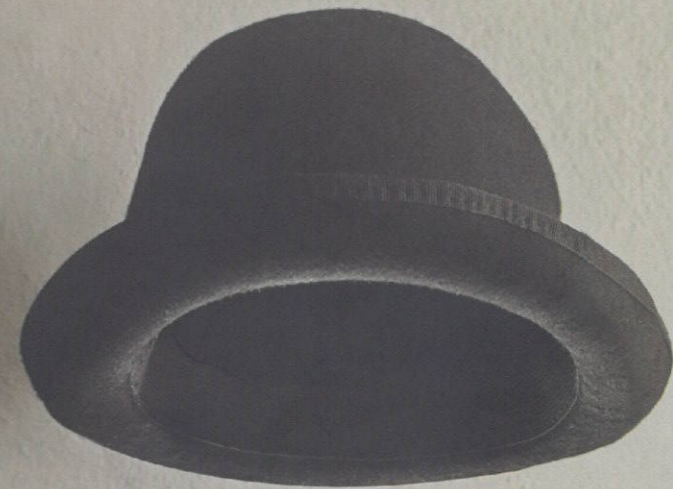


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