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Governmentality Meets Theology: 'The King Reigns, but He Does Not Govern'

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The Kingdom and the Glory: For a Theological Genealogy of Economy and Government

by Giorgio Agamben, trans. Lorenzo Chiesa (with Matteo Mandarini)

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Abstract

While this 'extraordinary' book appears as an intermezzo within the *Homo Sacer* series (Negri, 2008), it supports two fundamental theses with its own philological, epigraphic, liturgical and religious-historical research, and a close reading of figures such as Ernst Kantorowicz and Marcel Mauss. These theses concern political power first as an articulation of sovereign reign and economic government and, secondly, as constituted by acclamations and glorification. These can be approached theoretically through its author's engagement with Michel Foucault's genealogy of governmentality and with the Erik Peterson/Carl Schmitt debate on the closure of political theology. Agamben's reformulation of power and his derivation of liberal governmentality from the theological *oikonomia* prove convincing. A renewed analytics of power and politics of resistance should be possible, however, without recourse to a project seeking to deactivate all profane powers including those of public bureaucracies.

Keywords

acclamation, glory, government, power, reign, sovereignty

This book is a translation of *Il Regno e la Gloria: Per una genealogica teologica dell'economia e del governo* (*Homo Sacer II*, 2), first published in Italy in 2007. The Italian word *regno*, of the title, has been rendered in English as 'kingdom' but 'reign' is clearly attested by the theoretical traditions addressed here and the intent of the present book. In doing so, the translation presents an immediate obstacle to grasping its

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fundamental advance in the conception of power.¹ For Giorgio Agamben's central concern here is the activity of rule, or the operation of power, implied by 'reign' and not merely the spatiality of rule within a given territory, as in 'kingdom'. The book might be read as a continuation and modification of Michel Foucault's genealogy of power and in particular the relationship between what he called sovereignty and governmentality. The juxtaposition of reign and governing thus amplifies our conceptual vocabulary in approaching the relationship between a 'sovereignty' nourished by spectacle, ceremony and ritual, and ultimately, as Agamben argues, glory, and government as both the actual operation of executive political power and as a form of power working through capacities of self-government and the life of individual subjects and the population, or what Foucault occasionally called a 'biopolitics' (2003: 243–5).

A focus on reign links the book to Agamben's long-standing concern with the character of sovereign power initiated in *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (1998), which presented political power in terms of the invidious relationship between moral and political life (*bios*) and the inclusive exclusion of naked or mere life (*zoē*) that, in contemporary modernity, assumes the paradigm of the camp. In fact, this volume presents itself as a successor to that book and, as its title indicates, a second part of Book Two of the series it initiates. Thus *Homo Sacer* (I) is now followed by *State of Exception* (II, 1), and the present volume (II, 2). In the sense that *State of Exception* drew upon German philosopher Carl Schmitt to examine the state of exception as a permanent technique of government rather than temporary suspension of the law, the present volume brings that project to an end by seeking to open Schmitt's political theology to questions of governmentality and by drawing upon theologian Erik Peterson's closure of political theology. The present volume is followed by the recently published *The Sacrament of Language: An Archaeology of the Oath* (II, 3), a small and dense work on the relationship between the performative uses of language and the production of truth within rituals of power characteristic of law and religion. This is then followed by *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive* (III), which was first published in English in 1999, and an as yet unpublished volume on 'the forms of life'.² While the first three volumes might be read as focusing on the genealogy of power relations in Occidental thought and politics, the next volume promises to amplify Agamben's thinking on resistance. The preface to the current book evokes *zoē aionios*, eternal life, as 'the decisive meaning of inoperativity as a properly human and political praxis' to be addressed in that forthcoming volume (p. xiii). With Antonio Negri, one can hope that the latter moves beyond an 'absolute resistance' grounded in Benjamin's notion of a pure, apocalyptic violence (2008: 99).

The serial placement of the text is not its only bibliographical difficulty. The current book falls into two parts, which, though not marked in

this edition, are apparent from the content of its chapters. The first part (Chapters 1–5) on *regno* is an investigation into how the notion of sovereignty can be reoriented toward an understanding of government. This is done by a bold move into a discussion of the early Christian patristic literature on the nature of the Holy Trinity as an *oikonomia*, an economy. The second part (Chapters 5–8), on *gloria*, deals with different techniques of consensus building from Byzantine coronation rituals and medieval acclamations, through prayer and liturgy, to modern media and public opinion formation. It examines how the rationality of glorification, so central to church liturgy and worldly sovereign power, is first enunciated in the intensive scholastic speculation on the nature of the angelic hosts, which would serve as a model for the hierarchical offices and functions of bureaucracy, and proposes the thesis that acclamation or glorification is not simply a recognition but constitutive of both divine and worldly sovereign powers.

The chapters themselves are divided into sections (which are used in referencing here), and include long italicized passages that serve as digressions, clarifications, and footnotes. Each concludes with a ‘Threshold’, which summarizes the results and foreshadows further investigation. The bulk of the text is made up of very hard, patient, documentary exposition, of classical, Hellenistic, early Christian, and medieval texts, and significant engagement with a wide range of 20th-century theological, anthropological, philological and political-philosophical literatures. There are also two lengthy appendices on ‘The Economy of the Moderns’ that drive this empirical research toward the present. The first, ‘The Law and the Miracle’, is on divine providence in Malebranche’s theodicy and its translation into democratic theory by Rousseau. The second, on ‘The Invisible Hand’, follows the theological paradigm into a genealogy of modern economics, via Linnaeus’s *œconomia naturae*, through Quesnay’s *l’économie animale* to political economy in the Physiocrats and Adam Smith. These appendices connect us to Foucault’s genealogy of liberalism and thus to the diagnosis of the present.

Despite its status as an instalment of a much larger project, this book stands alone as a contribution to the history of political thought and practice and its present relevance. It is by far the longest of all the books in the series and perhaps the most demanding to the general reader, given the likely unfamiliarity for the non-theologian of the textual matter precisely analysed here. For contemporary readers in the humanities and social sciences, however, it contributes to the intellectual history of political discourse, to our conceptions of the operations of political power, to the genealogy of notions of ministry, mission and hierarchy in bureaucracy, and to studies of political acclamation, public opinion and the role of the media. Above all, it instantiates the economy as absolutely central to the long-term trajectory of Western, and now global, politics and begins the archaeology of its points of

translation into the secular idiom and technologies of liberal-democratic rule.

A key part of the interest of this book, however, lies in its close reading of Michel Foucault's work, particularly the lectures on 'governmentality', *Security, Territory and Population* (2007), and its related engagement and displacement of political theology associated with Carl Schmitt and Erik Peterson. In fact it is the apparently contradictory theses of Peterson on the closure of political theology *and* the political character of Church liturgy that emerge as the central generators of Agamben's investigations here. Perhaps the key payoff of this text is that Agamben presents us with a figure of power that combines and displaces aspects of governmentality and political theology and which provides an effective account of the complex interlacing of the sovereign/reign side of rule and its governmental/economic form. A second payoff concerns the doxology of sovereignty itself. It is here Agamben locates his central questions. 'Why does power need glory? If it is essentially force and capacity for action and government, why does it assume the rigid, cumbersome and "glorious" form of ceremonies, acclamations, and protocols? What is the relation between economy and Glory?' (p. xii).

To pose these questions is to strike a blow against theoretical motifs that view liberal politics as thoroughly secular and compulsively undertake the profanation of the state itself. For purposes of exposition, the route I take into Agamben's thought here is an unashamedly 'theoretical' one through the genealogy of the arts of government and German antagonisms over political theology.

Foucault and the Arts of Government

In the Preface, Agamben locates his work 'in the wake' of Foucault's 'investigations into the genealogy of governmentality' that, however, 'fail to be completed' (p. xi). If *Homo Sacer I* could be criticized for its loose deployment of Foucault's definition of biopolitics, the expression of affinity here seems anything but casual, given the close reading of the latter's 1978 lectures (2007). Indeed this might be the most Foucauldian of all Agamben's works, but we should be aware that, as Agamben says elsewhere, he deploys the 'capacity for elaboration', Ludwig Feuerbach's *Entwicklungsfähigkeit*, by which 'the difference between what belongs to the author of a work and what is attributable to the interpreter becomes as essential as it is difficult to grasp' (2009: 8). In that precise spirit, then, we might identify three major departures from Foucault's lectures in Agamben's engagement here: an historical one, a methodological one and a theoretical one.

The first, historical departure begins with Foucault's genealogy of the Christian pastorate. Foucault locates a critical contribution of the eastern father, Gregory of Nazianus, in the earliest discussion of the

pastorate (2007: 192–3). Gregory writes of the pastorate as an *oikonomia psychón*, an economy of souls, notes Foucault, which is translated into Latin as *regimen animarum*, the government or regimen of souls. He quickly argues that economy is not the best French translation of the term and moves on to a discussion of the meanings of ‘conduct’ as the activity of conducting and form of behaviour or self-conduct. As a consequence, economy disappears from Foucault’s field of vision only to reappear with Quesnay and the Physiocrats and Adam Smith in the 18th century with the emergence of a liberal government through the economy in modern governmentality.

Agamben argues that Foucault should not have passed over the notion of economy, particularly given his own observation of its centrality to liberal forms of government, and should rather have examined the theological implications of the notion of economy for Gregory, who was instrumental in the formation of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. In contrast, Agamben traces its meanings from that of the management of the household or *oikos* in Aristotle and Xenophon (§2.1), to argue that this administrative paradigm forms the semantic core of the term that determines any analogical extension (pp. 18–19). He then examines such extensions around the sense of ‘arrangement’ in Hippocratic and Stoic literature, especially its use to mean the ordering or arrangement of material or argument in rhetoric (pp. 19–20). This leads to an examination of early Church Fathers to demonstrate how the term gradually assumed a complex theological meaning through the reversal of a Pauline syntagma to form ‘mystery of the economy’ in Hippolytus and Tertullian (§2.10). *Oikonomia* emerges with the theological meaning of arrangement or *disposito*, which, tellingly, given Foucault’s use of the French derivative, *dispositif*, is one of its Latin translations. The term articulates the divine being into a Trinity and, at the same time, preserves its unity, and is also the divine plan for salvation. For Agamben, it thus provides a conciliation of competing claims of monotheism in Judaism and certain Christians, such as the Monarchians, and the Gnostic proliferation of the ‘hypostases’ of God. Thus the Church Fathers used this complexly determined term to articulate a single semantic field that can reconcile the divine government of the world, through God’s non-involvement and involvement, His being and praxis, and ontology and historical plan for salvation. In doing so they clear the ground for dual-level concepts of causality and providence, and the articulation of the notion of ‘order’, in medieval scholasticism and particularly Thomas Aquinas (§4.8, §4.10), and the gradual translation of the notion of providence, via Malebranche’s theodicy (Appendix §1.2–1.4), in early modern secular paradigms of politics (Appendix §1.5–1.6) and political economy (Appendix §2.3).

The second departure is the argument that Foucault fails to attend to what Agamben calls ‘signatures’ in his genealogy of government. This is interesting given that elsewhere he draws upon Foucault’s archaeology to

develop this notion (Agamben, 2009). In the current book signatures appear as a marking of a sign or a concept that keeps referring it back to a determinate interpretation or field, even when shifted across domains (p. 4). The important action signatures perform for Agamben is to move concepts and signs between the sacred and profane without redefining them semantically. Thus, from this perspective, Foucault has sought the genealogy of government in texts that deal with the actual government of an ecclesiastical or religious community or the mundane government of city and kingdom rather than the core Christian discussion of the divine government of the world. For example, Foucault cites Aquinas's *De Regno* in which he finds the figure of the 'theological-cosmological continuum' in which the sovereign governs as a part of a continuum 'from God to the father of a family by way of nature and the pastors' (2007: 234). Nevertheless, he fails to address that part of the *Summa Theologica* that deals with the divine government of the world, *Dei gubernatione mundi*. Here, Agamben argues, Foucault would have found, in a discussion of God's government of the world, the basic elements of a theory of government as distinct from reign (p. 111). Chief among those elements are the key notions of providence and order. Thus signatures move and displace concepts and signs from and between the sacred and the profane without redefining them. By regarding *oikonomia*, *ordo* and *gubernatio*, economy, order and government, as signatures, Agamben follows the Christian-theological bequest to modern, liberal political power through a series of linked couples: being and praxis, transcendent and immanent order, Father and Son, constituent and constituted power, *auctoritas* and *potestas*, general providence and special providence, and, above all, reign and government.

The third departure is the fundamental, theoretical, one. Agamben, however, underplays the differences it entails, despite his insistence that Foucault was prevented 'from articulating his genealogy of governmentality all the way to the end and in a convincing way' (pp. 112–13). Rather, he argues that Foucault's genealogy should be extended back in time to take note of how *oikonomia* is central to the theological debate on divine government, itself a laboratory for problems of worldly government. In the first Appendix (§1.6) on Malebranche, Agamben cites Foucault's observations on Rousseau, and suggests that he 'has come as close as he possibly can to the intuition of the bipolar character of the governmental machine, although the methodological decision to set aside the analysis of juridical universals prevents him from articulating it fully' (p. 273). Thus Agamben endorses Foucault's view of Rousseau as articulating a terminology of 'nature', 'contract' and 'general will' that allows for both a theory of sovereignty and an art of government (Foucault, 2007: 107). However, Foucault does not appear to realize, according to Agamben, how much more intimately tied are sovereignty and government in this terminology due to the way they are founded

upon the theological model of providence Rousseau explicitly adopts from Malebranche. As in Malebranche's concept of 'occasional causes' as the actualization of God's general will, so 'the government, or executive power, claims to coincide with the sovereignty of law from which it nevertheless distinguishes itself as its particular emanation and actualization' (p. 275).

It is the distinction and articulation between reign/sovereignty and government/economy that is at the heart of Agamben's conception of the bipolar character of political power, and which is so promising for the analysis of rule in liberal-democratic states. More crucial than either the historical or methodological limitation identified by Agamben is the long-noted problem in Foucault of his failing to bring his discussion of sovereignty and governmentality into a coherent conceptual relationship.

As a way of making that point, we can refer to a formula found in Foucault's lectures (2007: 76), which Agamben cites without passing critical comment (§5.1). The formula is '*le roi règne, mais il ne gouverne pas*' (the king reigns but he does not govern), which Foucault attributes to Adolphe Thiers in 1830 (2007: 85n). Such a phrase indicates for Foucault the 'modern political problem, the privilege that government begins to exercise in relation to rules... and the fact that government is basically much more than sovereignty, much more than reigning or rule, much more than the *imperium*' (2007: 76). For Foucault, then, this phrase is equivalent to his near contemporary diagnosis that 'we need to cut off the King's head' in political theory, that is, to displace the juridical-political theory of sovereignty in the analysis of power (1980: 121).

Without making reference to this intellectual decapitation, which could stand for the myriad successful analyses of the immanence of power, Agamben supplies us with a range of examples that support the image of a mutilated, useless and absent king. However, from mythological, historical and anthropological points of view, these images underline the necessity, not displacement, of the position of the sovereign in political thought and practice. Thus the 'wounded king' (*roi mehaignié*) of Arthurian legend (§4.1) 'does not lose any of his legitimacy or sacredness', even as a 'paradigm of divided and impotent sovereignty' (p. 69). The *rex inutilis* (§4.12) of canon law of the 12th and 13th centuries begins to establish the distinction between the *dignitas* and *administratio*, 'the office and the activity in which it expresses itself' (p. 98). Similarly, Agamben argues, the image and actuality of the 'empty throne' is found in the Upanishads, Mycenaean Greece at Knossos, the ancient Macedonian military, in Republican and Imperial Rome, and in the arches and apses of paleo-Christian and Byzantine basilicas (§8.23). In the latter, as in the Septuagint, the empty throne is the 'throne of glory' that 'has always been ready and has always awaited the glory of the Lord' (p. 245). The empty throne is not an early recognition of the futility of the sovereign paradigm of power, but, as Agamben will argue, the

target of practices of religious glorification and political acclamation. Reign, whether divine or worldly, is constituted through such practices, and it is they that allow the articulation of the two obligatory poles of power and thereby ensure its operability.

In this sense, Agamben's own formulations indicate a much more fundamental theoretical demonstration of the intimacy between each side of the figure of power. However, perhaps in order to distance himself from Schmitt, Agamben reproduces something of the displacement of sovereignty thesis. Thus, in apparent agreement with Foucault, he concludes, 'the real problem, the central mystery of politics, is not sovereignty, but government; it is not God but the angel; it is not the king, but the ministry; it is not the law, but the police' (p. 276). For those for whom sovereignty is not only a glorified empty throne but also the attempted monopoly of legitimate violence within a domain (Weber, 1972: 78), which can be arrogated by and delegated onto multiple agents, it is not necessary to choose between either side of these serial binaries.

Agamben's critical judgement no doubt concedes too much to Foucault, for he has not merely confirmed Foucault's theoretical nucleus on power but decisively advanced it. To duly recognize the nature of that advance, and to move further into the study of glory, we can turn to a darker, more fraught, theoretical passageway in the book – Peterson's announcement, contra Schmitt, of the closure of political theology.

Schmitt, Peterson and Political Theology

For Agamben, the paradigm of political theology was crafted in Schmitt's 'lapidary thesis' (p. 2). 'All significant concepts of the modern theory of the state are secularized theological concepts' (Schmitt, 1985: 36). While most secular academic debate on political theology has focused on the eponymous book of Schmitt, Agamben seeks to situate Schmitt's position within wider German debates spanning half a century.

Agamben notes that one of those debates about the status of the idea of secularization took place in the 1960s. Then, Karl Löwith and Schmitt found themselves unwittingly on the same side against Hans Blumenberg who had asserted the illegitimate character of the very category (§1.3). Löwith had argued that German idealist philosophy of history and Enlightenment progress were nothing more than the secularization of the theology of history and Christian eschatology. The crucial point for Agamben, who cites Schelling, is that the eschatology of salvation, resumed by German idealism, was 'nothing but an aspect of a vaster theological paradigm' of *oikonomia*, that is, the object of his own study (p. 5). Agamben more broadly contrasts the thesis of Max Weber that secularization was a part of the process of disenchantment of the modern world with that of Schmitt that 'in modernity, theology continues to be

present and active in an eminent way' (p. 4). In this sense, for Agamben, the notions of secularization (and sacralization) describe the movements of signatures between sacred and profane (and vice versa).

The more fundamental debate on political theology for Agamben is that between Schmitt and Peterson, Jacob Taubes's 'apocalypitics of the counterrevolution' (p. 6). The explicit discussion Agamben deals with is commenced by Peterson in a short book of 1935, *Monotheism as a Political Problem* (2011b), in which Peterson denies the possibility of a Christian political theology and Schmitt's 'late and resentful reply' (p. 72) in his last book, *Political Theology II* (2008), some 35 years later. The final footnote of Peterson's book had concluded, after mentioning Schmitt's earlier work, that 'here, we have tried to demonstrate, by a concrete example, the theological impossibility of any political theology' (in Schmitt, 2008b: 132). Schmitt presented his own book as not simply an assessment of whether the evidence supports such a conclusion but also an attempt to wrench what he calls a 'Parthian arrow', i.e. a 'parting shot' from his former intellectual friend, from his breast (Schmitt, 2008b: 32).

One of the threads of the discussion is the same phrase that Agamben extracts from Foucault. Peterson evokes the phrase, *le roi règne, mais il ne gouverne pas*, no less than seven times, and with emphasis, according to Schmitt (2008b: 69). Agamben argues (§1.5) that Peterson does so to summarize a theological paradigm, grounded in the Aristotelian unmoved mover, which is found in Judaic ideas of divine monarchy, the theocracy of Philo of Alexandria, and the early Church fathers up to Bishop Eusebius (the 'defamed' hairdresser of Constantine's theological periwig [Schmitt, 2008b: 4]). In Peterson's divine monarchy, with Constantine, 'the *single* king on earth corresponds to the *single* king in Heaven and the *single* sovereign *nomos* and *Logos*' (p. 10). However, with the formation of the dogma of the Trinity, Peterson argues, monotheism ceases to be a political problem and the idea of political theology is completely demolished.

For Agamben, the Trinity is at the heart what is at stake here. Part of Schmitt's response, as Agamben notes (p. 12), is that by introducing the possibility of conflict between the persons of the Trinity, the doctrine remains a political theology. For Schmitt, it instantiates the possibility of civil war within God, and is thus a genuine political-theological practice (Schmitt, 2008b: 123). Agamben agrees, remarking that it is far from evident 'that the elaboration of the Trinitarian theology is in itself sufficient to eliminate any theological conception of a divine monarchy' (p. 12). He then proceeds to show that Peterson's closure of political theology fails because it systematically represses the key place of the concept of *oikonomia* in the very authors he cites, including Gregory of Nazianus and Tertullian (§1.7).

Agamben's relationship to the formula we are following is extremely subtle and requires some elaboration with respect to both Peterson and Schmitt. He shows, on the one hand, how Petersen neglects the political elements in the formation of the Trinity and cites Gregory to show how the latter resorts to the political idiom of Monarchy, Anarchy and Polyarchy to demonstrate that the peaceful articulation of the hypostases is possible in one God (§1.6). On the other hand, he agrees with Peterson to the extent that the latter has intuited a rupture between Christian Trinitarian doctrines and monarchical/monotheistic political theology. For Agamben, Peterson was right to seek a demolition of a certain kind of monarchical political theology, but completely misses the possibility of an economic one. In this sense, for Agamben, Christianity is less a political theology with its foundation (*archē*) in a divine monarch than an economic theology of potentiality and action (*dynamis*) without foundation. If Christians are 'the first fully "economic" men' (p. 24), they are also the first to give themselves over to the anarchy of the economy.

Agamben also uses the formula to illustrate Schmitt's inability to separate a notion of government from that of reign or sovereignty. He points out that Schmitt uses the phrase several times prior to the engagement with Peterson (§4.4). A first occasion is in Schmitt's *Constitutional Theory* of 1927 (2008a) where it is used to describe the Belgian model of a constitutional monarchy with a separation of powers and where Schmitt cites Seydel's question: 'what then remains of the *régner* if one removes the *gouverner*?' (2008a: 315; p. 75). Agamben also notes that Schmitt fatefully uses the term in the 1933 pamphlet, *State, Movement and People*, to describe the office of the president in the new National Socialist State and its relation to the *Führer* (pp. 76–7). In a 'vertiginous' anticipation of Foucault's lectures on pastoral power, Schmitt models his conception of leadership (*Führertum*) on the Christian pastoral relationship of shepherd and flock. However, as Agamben shows in an important digression, the relationship of *Führer* and the 'impolitical' or passive people is not one of transcendence, as in the pastorate, but based for Schmitt on the concept of racial identity (pp. 76–7). The collapse of the 'transcendent' sphere of sovereignty and state with Nazism prepares the way for the governmental-economic paradigm to fill the space of the sovereign-political sphere. Or, to put this in another way that links back to Agamben's earlier books, the exception to the legal-political order becomes, under National Socialism, the norm. There are important analytical links here to Foucault's discussion of state racism in the articulation of biopolitics into sovereignty (2003: 254–63).

For Agamben (§4.3), Peterson's contribution is to show that the formula 'the king reigns but he does not govern' illuminates a parallel between the liberal political paradigm that separates reign from government and the theological paradigm that separates the *archē* and *dynamis*, the being and the action, of God. However, the secret complicity of Schmitt and Peterson,

for Agamben, is that both are enemies of the formula – the latter because it sums up the Hellenistic-Judaic monotheism that lies at the basis of political theology, the former because it acts as a byword for the liberal constitutionalism he rejects. Both, however, avoid at all costs the links between it and the emergence of an economic-theological paradigm.

Agamben is nothing if not a brilliant reader. Strangely, it is Peterson, with his eccentric theses and implicitly anti-Semitic apocalypses (pp. 15–16), who emerges as an unlikely guide not only for attempting to slay Schmittian political theology in two pages and a footnote (§1.5) but, in apparent contradiction to this, asserting the political character of the Christian church in its liturgy and acclamations. Thus for Peterson, according to Agamben (§6.1), while the Christian-theological postulate of a triune God does not derive from a monarchical political order, the organization of the Church itself has an eminently political character. At the core of that political character are the angels, according to Peterson's lesser-known *The Book on the Angels* (2011a). There, the liturgical worship of the ecclesiastical community is an extension of the worship of the angels in the celestial kingdom and both can be described in terms of rights, assembly and citizenship.

Under Peterson's authority, then, Agamben sets his task as the investigation of glory and glorification and the parallels, overlaps and grey zones between liturgical acclamation of God and popular acclamations of kings and emperors. This leads Agamben to examine the medieval discussion of angels and their dual roles and identities around the higher-status contemplation or worship of God, and the administration of His will in human matters (§6.3–§6.5). The analogies between hierarchy, ministry and orders of angels and bureaucracy are readily drawn, so that Agamben concludes that long before the terminology of civil administration was developed, '[n]ot only the concept of hierarchy but also that of ministry and mission are . . . first systematized in a highly articulated way precisely in relation to angelic activities' (p. 158).

Peterson helps push Agamben's thesis even further. Agamben argues that Schmitt's first encounter with Peterson is precisely on the problem of acclamation, when Schmitt cites Peterson's dissertation on the expression *Heis theos kai Christos* (one God in Christ), which examines its obscure, political foundations (§7.1). In a paper on referenda, Schmitt cites this work to characterize a 'pure' or direct democracy in which 'the acclamation is the pure and immediate expression of the people as constituent democratic power' (p. 171). This leads Agamben to analyse religious and political acclamation through multiple empirical illustrations. These include: Church liturgy; the term Amen; Andreas Adöldi's work on imperial Roman ceremonies (§7.5); E.P. Schramm's flawed research on *Staatssymbolik*, including on monograms, seals and flags (§7.6); others' research on hand gestures and oaths (§7.7); the Roman Republic's *fascis lictoriae*, the rods and axe assemblage borne by a special

and deadly corporation, the *lictors*, who always accompanied the consul (§7.7); the intricacies of Byzantine imperial ceremony and acclamation (§7.9–§7.10); and the work of Ernst Kantorowicz, particularly his *Laudes Regiae*, which deals with particular acclamations that developed fully in what he called ‘Carolingian political theology’ (§7.11). All this is exacting material and the resonances with National Socialism and Fascism remain pertinent. It allows Agamben to argue that glory is the place where the relationship between theology and politics emerges and to cite Thomas Mann to the effect that religion and politics ‘exchange clothes’ but without there necessarily being a body underneath (p. 194). The ‘garment of glory’ is a signature that marks bodies politically and theologically, and is the place where the boundaries between politics and theology become indistinct.

Agamben’s evidentiary apparatus is extremely rich. One final key piece of evidence is Marcel Mauss’s unfinished doctoral study of prayer (§8.16). Here, Mauss shows, using prayer as an example, that rites of glorification produce the glory which is the very substance of God, thus confirming the thesis of his close colleague and relative, Emile Durkheim, that the gods would die if they were not worshipped (p. 227). This point, confirmed by rabbinical literature and the Kabbalah (§8.17), and Mauss’s unpublished work on nourishment (*anna*) in Brahmana (§8.20), is that worship is central to the working of divine government. By extension, Agamben concludes, profane acclamations are not just an ornament of the political but found and justify it (p. 230).

Agamben manages to show that, as far as the study of glory and practices of glorification and acclamation are concerned, theology and politics become increasingly difficult to distinguish. In a final Threshold, and following another indication by Schmitt on the nexus between public opinion, acclamation and public law (2008a: 272–5), Agamben views public opinion as the contemporary equivalent of acclamation and argues that the media takes on a doxological function in the will-formation of the contemporary citizenry (pp. 255–6). With reference to Guy Debord’s ‘society of the spectacle’, the media become the force of the acclamatory constitution of sovereign political power, of reign, that makes the liberal-democratic and capitalist power system operative. ‘Contemporary democracy’, Agamben concludes, ‘is a democracy that is entirely founded on glory, that is, on the efficacy of acclamation, multiplied and disseminated by the media beyond all imagination’ (p. 256). In a parting shot, perhaps Agamben’s own Parthian arrow, he argues (pp. 258–9) that theorists of communicative action such as Jürgen Habermas, seeking to liquefy popular sovereignty into communicative forms of will-formation, hand political power over to the media and its experts, and that the acclamations of the immediate presence of people in authoritarian-national regimes and the mediated communicative forms of liberal-democracies are but two sides of the same coin, that of glory.

There is enough here to convince the reader that this empirical investigation allows us to support central historical-theoretical conclusions about the nature and operation of power that eluded both Foucault and Schmitt. This is some achievement. However, there are also apparently tendentious elements where Agamben seeks to reveal or establish 'the inoperativity' of power to found a new kind of resistance. This resistance will be based on the identity of the human as the 'Sabbatical animal par excellence' (p. 246), the Sabbath being the day of inoperativity and worship in Judaism. While this sanguine vision of human potentiality is not without appeal, we might ask whether it makes sense for all 'profane powers', including those of public bureaucracy and states, 'to be deactivated and made inoperative' (p. 166) when they form an important limit to the glorification of the economy and the civil havoc this wreaks. Was it not, after all, the collapse of state authority and a 'transcendent' sovereignty in the face of the anarchic spiralling of an economy in crisis that prepared the way for fascism, as Agamben himself indicates?

Today, the now globally imagined economy in crisis is both the exception to sovereignty and law, and thus the rationale for governmental action and individual conduct and self-formation, and at the same time the collectively-willed providential order constantly glorified in sporting events and advertising, and by celebrity and financial reporting (cf. Minca, 2009). In the face of this, Agamben shows us that the analyses of the 'immanent' side of power and economy, however valuable, are not enough. Those demonstrations that the economy is constituted through material, technical and performative means can only be completed by others that analyse how the economy has entered a domain that at once claims a glorious transcendence and a right of death founded on the monopoly of violence.

There is enough in the empirical evidence of power adduced by Agamben to begin anew the relatively modest but political task of an analytics of power and resistance while putting to one side his messianism, whatever other consolations it may offer. Nevertheless, after this book, the theoretical and empirical investigation of power relations in our societies surely cannot remain the same.

Notes

1. The French and Spanish editions have translated the term as *le règne* and *el reino* respectively. Jeffrey Bussolini (2010: 111) notes that reign 'maintains ties to the French *règne*', important to Rousseau and Foucault, and resonant in Schmitt, Peterson and Kantorowicz. He argues that 'reign' links more to the wider concerns of all these thinkers of sovereignty and power than 'kingdom', which refers to the geographical and temporal extent of monarchical authority.
2. To complicate matters further, at the time of writing (October, 2011), another volume has been announced in France as *Homo Sacer, II, 5*, entitled,

Opus Dei: archeologie de l'office, continuing the present book with an examination of liturgy and the priesthood. This will supplement the genealogy of the theological roots of notions of bureaucratic office.

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