Aristotle's Anthropological Machine and Slavery: An Agambenian Interpretation

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ABSTRACT: Among the most controversial aspects of Aristotle's philosophy is his endorsement of slavery. Natural slaves are excluded from political citizenship on ontological grounds and are thus constitutively unable to achieve the good life, identified with the collective cultivation of logos in the polis. Aristotle explicitly acknowledges their humanity, yet frequently emphasizes their proximity to animals. It is the latter that makes them purportedly unfit for the polis. I propose to use Agamben's theory of the anthropological machine to make sense of this enigmatic exclusion and suggest a new conception of the good life and community detached from political rule. Aristotle's distinction between humans and animals condemns slaves to bare life, but also reveals an opportunity for an inoperative form-of-life.

> *Liberation from the tradition is an ever new appropriation of its newly recognized strengths.* —Martin Heidegger[1]

According to Aristotle's *Politics* Book I, politics concerns the search for the good life within a naturally developed community. Some are however not invited. Since Aristotle identifies the good life with the cultivation of rational discourse (*logos*) in the *Nicomachean Ethics* (I, 7, 1098a2-3) and claims that only free adult autochthonous males have the potentiality for *logos*, women, children, slaves, foreigners, etc. are necessarily excluded on ontological grounds.[2] They have deficient souls, according to Aristotle, and are thus unable to contribute to the search for the good life in the *polis*.[3] Only free adult males are, in Aristotle's anthropology, complete human beings and therefore worthy of political participation.[4] This has the sinister effect of depoliticizing some exclusions: how could one contest one's political status if one lacks the abilities necessary to qualify as a political

agent? This is especially troubling in the case of slavery. Aristotle himself agrees that physical markers differentiating natural slaves from free human beings are hard to sustain (*Pol.*, I, 2, 1254b28-33), so visibly there is no way of distinguishing both. How can Aristotle defend such a radical exclusion of natural slaves if they are not perceptibly different from their politically empowered masters? There have evidently been slave revolts, but these events have no proper place in Aristotle's political philosophy. Aristotle's anthropological commitment to *logos* and his belief in the deficiency of the slave's *logos* force him to suspend the applicability of the good life to slaves. This makes one wonder: how does Aristotle come to the depoliticized exclusion of slaves and what can be done about it within his philosophy?

I propose to answer both questions with Giorgio Agamben's commentary on Aristotle's political anthropology. In contrast to many other scholars,[5] Agamben does not blame Aristotle's endorsement of slavery on mere cultural bias, an easy escape for contemporary Aristotelians. Agamben argues for a profound revaluation of Aristotle's political anthropology. Agamben interestingly provides an idiosyncratic solution to the issue of slavery. Throughout history, the repoliticization of slavery via the demand for more inclusion has been the norm. Political activists and philosophers have construed new human vocations as alternatives to Aristotelian *logos* to include more people into the political community. Agamben argues however that the good life is not to be found in the *polis* at all.[6] Instead it is located in 'inoperativity,' i.e., in the detachment from any human vocation (*opera dell'uomo*), whether it be *logos* or any other quality. When life is voided from its obligation to adhere to a certain ideal subjectivity, it is free to flourish in whatever form.

Agamben's interpretation is however controversial. Laurent Dubreuil, for instance, calls it a "a philology for show."[7] Agamben *seems* to deliver profound and innovating commentaries, but in fact counts on the ignorance of his readers to defend his idiosyncratic readings. My Agambenian interpretation of the Aristotelian slavery will consequently develop in four steps. I first delineate Agamben's theory of anthropogenesis in general. In the second part I see whether this theory is applicable to Aristotle's writings taking the many criticisms into account. This will result in an Agambenian interpretation of Aristotle despite Agamben's own philological mistakes. In the third part I focus on the issue of natural slavery. Lastly, I defend Agamben's proposal of inoperativity against repoliticization.

1. Agamben's Archaeology of Anthropogenesis

According to Aristotle, happiness (*eudaimonia*) is achieved by leading the good life within a political community, but who qualifies for such a life? Who can be recognized as a citizen of the *polis*? Since for Aristotle the communal good life is only achievable for human beings (*Pol.*, I, 1, 1252b29-1253a5), the definition

of the political community requires a delimitation of humanity. In *The Open*, Agamben explains this demarcation as a continuous process of anthropogenesis via anthropological machines.[8] One is not born human, but becomes human thanks to discursive operations that explicate the meaning of humanity. One can distinguish five characteristics in each anthropological machine:

(1) Anthropogenesis requires an ontological apparatus that formulates a division between human and animal by identifying a specifically human quality. Even if human beings are conceptualized as a species of animals, there is some quality that makes them unique in the animal kingdom. This *differentia specifica* can be self-knowledge, free will, rationality, etc., but the distinction is never absolute, since humans always remain animals as well. The diversity of demarcation lines already suggests that the human-animal distinction is often based on an arbitrary selection of 'human' as opposed to 'animal' potentialities.

(2) These ontological commitments constitute, beyond descriptions, also a political project. Being human is not a given, but a goal with normative value. In order to sustain one's humanity, a living being should exhaustively actualize the specifically human potentialities and suspend the actualization of animal potentialities. The apparatus hence functions as a selection machine, imposing on each action the vocation of humanity. Since the caesura between human and animal is never absolute, the animal in human beings can always reappear and requires continuous vigilance. "This overcoming is not an event that has been completed once and for all, but an occurrence that is always under way, that every time and in each individual decides between the human and the animal, between nature and history, between life and death."[9]

(3) The necessary condition for cultivating humanity is the rendering 'impotential' of the actualization of animal potentialities. Agamben derives the notion of 'impotentiality' (*adynamia*) from Aristotle's *Metaphysics* and interprets it as a privation inherent to potentiality. Whenever one has, for example, the potentiality to eat, one can also suspend its actualization to actively not-eat. Hunger strikers, for example, show their potentiality to eat not by exhaustively realizing it, but by visibly suspending the actualization of this potentiality and thereby demonstrating that they *could* eat, but refuse to do so. What makes such moments special is that the potentiality to eat is at that time manifest in its pure state. It is disclosed as such without subsequent enactment.

Similarly Agamben envisions anthropogenesis as a suspension of the rules governing animal behaviour. He dedicates most of *The Open* to the example of Heidegger's anthropology in *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*. Heidegger argues that animals are poor in world (*weltarm*), while humans are world-forming (*weltbildend*).[10] Animals are captivated (*benommen*) by their environment, so they cannot take a distance from their involvement with environmental stimuli, or disinhibitors (*das Enthemmende*).[11] A bee instinctively reacts to a flower insofar

as the latter triggers visceral responses, but it cannot reflectively experience the flower as flower. It cannot distance itself from its own immediate and automatic responses. According to Heidegger, human beings *can* experience the world reflectively thanks to their ability for world-formation (*Weltbildung*) revealed in the attunement of boredom (*Langeweile*).[12] The latter is a suspension of the immediate captivation of an organism with its environment. When one is bored, nothing triggers any response anymore. Its relation to the world is one of complete indifference and estrangement. The actualization of captivation is hindered so that the subject's receptivity to disinhibitors remains potential.[13] The world *could* disinhibit a response, but fails to do so. The human animal hence becomes pure receptivity, while the world appears as such, and not in light of a particular disinhibitor. This suspension of captivation enables humans to acquire some distance vis-à-vis the world. This reduction of the animal-world relation to its potential state is thereby the necessary condition for human being-in-the-world. Animality is included into the human order as that which is excluded, or impotential. Animal captivation does not disappear from human life, but is preserved in a suspended state. It is implicitly still present as an anonymous substrate, potential but unactualized.[14]

(4) The suspension introduces, Agamben argues, an originary nothingness into being, "neither an animal life nor a human life, but only a life that is separated and excluded from itself—only a *bare life*."[15] It is a zone of indistinction between animality and humanity, where neither the animal nor the human potentialities are actualized. This subject is both included and excluded in the human community.[16] It is excluded insofar as it is incapable of actualizing the specifically human potentiality identified within a specific anthropological machine. It is however included insofar as it does belong to that community because it manifestly possesses that potentiality, even if only in a suspended state. Bare life is consequently the condition when the enactment of the good life remains impotential without thereby returning to animality.[17]

Within Heidegger's anthropological machine the Auschwitz *Muselmann*—conspicuously absent in Heidegger's own writings, but identified as the limit of Heidegger's philosophy by Agamben in *Remnants of Auschwitz*[18]—could be described as bare life for whom all relationality to the world is suspended, both captivation and being-in-the-world.[19] The *Muselmänner* were camp inmates so destitute by the harsh conditions of forced labour and arbitrary violence that they turned into walking machines bereft of any relation to their environment.[20] They were "an anonymous mass, continually renewed and always identical, of non-men who march and labor in silence, the divine spark dead within them, already too empty to really suffer. One hesitates to call them living: one hesitates to call their death death, in the face of which they have no fear, as they are too tired to understand."[21] These camp inmates have a suspended capacity for captivation, but also for being-in-the-world. They *could* relate to their environment automati-

cally or reflectively, but are so dispossessed that they fail to enact that capacity. They are unable to assume being-in-the-world as the purported human vocation. Since being-in-the-world is the prerequisite for belonging to human community in Heidegger, Auschwitz inmates cannot make their suffering and exclusion heard within Heidegger's writings. The suspension model leaves open the possibility for a remnant to manifest itself whenever the actualization of both human and animal potentialities is suspended. The anthropological machine is unable to integrate this remnant since the latter falls neither on the side of animality nor of humanity. One could thus hypothesize that Heidegger's silence about Auschwitz consequently not only stems from his own political past, but also from his inability to situate the *Muselmann* within his anthropological machine.[22]

(5) While the anthropological machine imposes a vocational form on life with all its defects, Agamben pleads for the cultivation of a form-of-life (*forma-di-vita*) without imposed vocations.[23] It is a way of life that instead of submitting to the selection machine of anthropogenesis and identifying with a human vocation, renders the machine inoperative by identifying with its remnant. Form-of-life hence constitutes not a replacement but a supplement to the anthropological machine. The latter determines the community of fully realized humanity, whereas form-of-life displays a 'coming community' based on the bare life of all and displaces the cultivation of the good life to the latter.[24] Agamben's notion of coming community refers to an association of beings not gathered on the basis of some shared actualized potentiality, like Heideggerian being-in-the-world or Aristotelian *logos*, but of 'whatever being,' i.e., the subtraction of all actualized potentialities.[25] "Such-and-such being is reclaimed from its having this or that property, which identifies it as belonging to this or that set, this or that class (the reds, the French, the Muslims), ... for its being-*such*, for belonging itself."[26] According to Agamben, the only form of the good life that can overcome the production of bare life is one that locates happiness not in the actualization of a particular quality, but in the detachment from any actualizable vocation. Bare life is in an ideal position to reveal this form-of-life because it is nothing but this manifest unrealized potential for belonging. The *Muselmann*, for instance, as revealed impotentiality to be-in-the-world, shows a capacity to become human, yet its actualization is suspended. This figure announces the point where Heidegger's machine stutters and shows that there is still life after the failure to assume *Dasein* as human vocation. So where bare life is the actual suspension of the actualization of a human vocation by force, form-of-life is life conscious of its non-coincidence with any human vocation, but it does not require the actual suspension of the actualization of any potential form of being-in-the-world.

In 'The Passion of Facticity,' Agamben clarifies what a form-of-life within the Heideggerian anthropological machine would look like.[27] Heidegger distinguishes between two ways of being-in-the-world: propriety (*Eigentlichkeit*) and impro-

priety (*Uneigentlichkeit*).[28] The latter designates the way in which humans are fallen in the world without assuming their own *Dasein* as a vocation. They keep themselves occupied with everyday existence without confronting their human calling. Agamben however uses ambiguities within Heidegger's texts to argue that propriety "has no other content than inauthentic existence; the proper is nothing other than the apprehension of the improper."[29] Propriety is not a new form of existence, but a new manner of relating to improper existence. It does not impose new rules on *how* to exist, but assumes the mere fact of existence (*Faktizität*), i.e., *that* one exists, as what constitutes the good life. There is no selection on the basis of actualized ways of being-in-the-world, but only the potentiality to be-in-the-world as such. This move inaugurates a community from which the *Muselmann* is not expelled. Agamben displaces the question concerning the good life from the acquisition of certain qualities, or ways of being-in-the-world, to the mere fact of existence that is presupposed in whatever form beings take.[30]

To conclude, each anthropological machine has five characteristics: (1) an ontological human-animal distinction based on a selection of human potentialities (2) with normative value, (3) a passage from animal to human via the suspension of animality, (4) the possible suspension of animal *and* human potentialities in bare life, and (5) a form-of-life supplementing the anthropological machine. Applied to Heidegger, we can schematically represent his anthropological machine:

Anthropological machine	Heidegger's anthropological machine
1) Human-animal distinction	Animals as poor in world vs. humans as world-forming
2) Normative value	Captivation vs. being-in-the-world
3) Passage from animal to human via the suspension of animality	Boredom as the suspension of captivation overcome in being-in-the-world
4) Bare life	The *Muselmann*
5) Form-of-life	Propriety as assumption of improper facticity

2. Aristotle's Anthropological Machine

Agamben's application of the anthropological machine hypothesis to Aristotle is controversial.[31] Dubreuil goes so far as to accuse Agamben of intellectual dishonesty: "Agamben's philology ... is *foremost* intended for the readers who do not possess the means of verification. . . . Agamben's is a philology for show."[32] The problem mainly lies in Agamben's three-step commentary on Aristotle's *Politics* in *Homo Sacer*.[33] He first maps the distinction between human and animal onto the opposition between natural life (*zoê*) common to all living beings and socio-political good life (*bios*) unique to humankind and geared toward *eudaimonia*. *Zoê* is allegedly included in socio-political life as that which does not belong to it. He secondly defines the specific difference of humankind as the political animal

(*zôon politikon*) and lastly substantiates the argument with Aristotle's opposition between voice (*phônê*) and rational discourse (*logos*).

The first two steps are philologically questionable. Firstly, Aristotle does not postulate any opposition between *zoê* and *bios*. For instance, in *On the History of Animals* Aristotle differentiates the divisions of the animal kingdom "according to their ways of life" (*kata tous bious*) (I, 1, 487a10).[34] Animals can thus have a *bios*. Secondly, being a political animal does not constitute humanity's unique vocation, since Aristotle deems many gregarious animals, bees for example, 'political' (*Pol.*, I, 1, 1253a8-9).[35] If the critics are right, one might wonder what ontological machinery Aristotle uses to differentiate humans from the rest. In this section, I focus on the first three characteristics of the anthropological machine, namely (1) the human-animal distinction, (2) its normative implications, and (3) the suspension model.

(1) Agamben correctly highlights Aristotle's distinction between the animal voice (*phônê*) expressing pain or pleasure, and human rational discourse (*logos*) deliberating on benefits and harms, justice and injustice:

> And why man [*sic*] is a political animal in a greater measure than any bee or any gregarious animal is clear. For nature, as we declare, does nothing without purpose; and man alone of the animals possesses speech (*logos*). The mere voice (*phônê*), it is true, can indicate pain and pleasure, and therefore is possessed by the other animals as well (for their nature has been developed so far as to have sensations of what is painful and pleasant and to indicate those sensations to one another), but speech (*logos*) is designed to indicate the advantageous and the harmful, and therefore also the right and the wrong. (*Pol.*, I, 1, 1253a7-16)

Both humans and gregarious animals are *politika* by associating cooperatively for a common work (*koinon ergon*) on the basis of shared emotional and cognitive capacities and a division of roles.[36] But humans purportedly have higher cognitive capabilities expressed in rational discourse (*logos*) and hence also pursue higher ends, the good life instead of mere survival.[37] Although animals can thus be political, human beings are more political.[38] Aristotle is consequently much less invested than Heidegger in introducing firm distinctions between humankind and the rest of the animal kingdom.[39] The difference between humankind and animal is just one of degree, but there is an undeniable contrast in the means of forming a community. Animals communicate primarily pain and pleasure as automatic responses to their environments.[40] Animal voice is an immediate reaction to environmental stimuli. Just like a flammable branch cannot but ignite when one throws it in the fire, a dog cannot but cry out in pain when it is struck. These 'voices' are not devoid of meaning, since they communicate *phantasmata* and hence produce meaningful sound (*sêmantikon psophos*) (*DA*, II, 8, 420b29-33).[41]

They can thus establish a community, but not one that articulates the good life. Voice is a foundation for communication and community based on sensations.

Humankind is however an animal that has rational discourse (*zôon logon echon*) and deliberates on right and wrong, the vocabulary of the good life.[42] Human utterances are not immediate reactions to stimuli, but speech containing rational content. This affects the way humans articulate their political communities. Humans possess their potentialities "according to reason" (*dynameis meta logou*). In his *Metaphysics* (IX, 5, 1048a7-8) Aristotle elaborates that humans have capacities to contrary effects. A doctor's knowledge can, for instance, make a patient either healthy or ill (*Met.*, IX, 2, 1046b5-20).[43] The conduct *meta logou* that Aristotle identifies as specifically human keeps life open-ended. Humans are not predetermined by natural stimuli, but choose their own life as a collective.[44] Their community is consequently not based on sensation, but on *logos*. Achieving the good life through choices between right and wrong implies a collective use of *logos* that in itself does not prescribe one correct future, but many possible articulations.[45]

(2) For Aristotle, the *phônê-logos* distinction is more than a descriptive marker of human nature. Beyond the "raw material of mere nature," *logos* reflects the vocation of humanity.[46] In his *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle defends this with the so-called function (*ergon*) argument:

> Perhaps then we may arrive at this by ascertaining what is man's function. For the goodness or efficiency of a flute-player or sculptor or craftsman of any sort, and in general of anybody who has some function or business to perform, is thought to reside in that function; and similarly it may be held that the good of man resides in the function of man, if he has a function. (*EN*, I, 7, 1097b24-30)

A good sculptor actualizes the potentiality for sculpting well and likewise a good human life resides in performing one's humanity well. "The happy man is the man in whom human 'nature' is fully realized."[47] Aristotle explicitly rejects sensation-based accounts of *eudaimonia* on the grounds that they lead to a slavish lifestyle, comparable to cattle (*EN*, I, 5, 1095b19-22). Like in the *Politics*, immediate sensations of pain and pleasure only serve survival. Real happiness lies in the full development of *logos*-based community as the human *ergon*.[48]

Since Aristotle distinguishes five sides to the human *logos* (*EN*, VI, 3, 1139b14-16)—technical skill (*tekhnê*), scientific knowledge (*epistêmê*), philosophical wisdom (*sophia*), intelligence (*nous*), and practical understanding (*phronê-sis*)—there are also different ways of perfecting the human *ergon*.[49] For Aristotle's political anthropology of the good life *meta logou* especially practical understanding is relevant, as it is the main form of reasoning used in political action (*EN*, VI, 8, 1141b23-29). In this domain Aristotle famously specifies virtue (*aretê*) as the ability to act according to the right mean (*EN*, II, 6, 1106b5-7), which requires the

optimal use of *phronêsis*. For instance, bravery holds the middle ground between recklessness, an excess of bravery, and cowardice, a lack of bravery. The lack of universal rules gives practical understanding the freedom for multiple different articulations of the good life depending on the deliberations of the reason-based community in concrete situations.

(3) Aristotle does not provide a clear theory of the passage from animal *phônê* to human *logos*. He obviously does not intend to radically split both as if human beings would ever permanently overcome pain and pleasure. Agamben's suspension model thus provides an approach where the animal potentialities are preserved in a suspended state. In Aristotle's anthropological machine, the virtues perform this function of suspension, but to understand this, we first need to comprehend how human beings actualize their potentialities in Aristotle's philosophy. The good life, whatever form it takes, is acquired through habitual practice. One becomes brave by acting bravely in particular situations. Virtue is hence "a habitual disposition connected with choice (*hexis proairêtikê*), lying in a mean relative to us, a mean which is determined by rational discourse (*logos*), by which the person of practical understanding would determine it" (*EN*, II, 6, 1106b36-1107a2). *Hexis* is etymologically derived from *echein* ('to have') and denotes a stable disposition to act, for instance bravely, in certain situations, acquired through repeated brave behaviour. One 'has' a potentiality when it becomes second nature to an individual. Ontologically *hexis* transforms a generic, first potentiality into an existing, second potentiality (*DA*, II, 5, 417a21-417b2).[50] Now I have the generic capacity to speak Russian in the sense that my mouth and larynx can move in the ways required to utter the sounds of Russian words. After taking classes however I will have the second potentiality to *really* speak Russian. From then onwards, it is more than a mere possibility: I *have* (*echô*) the potentiality to speak Russian. So when Aristotle writes that humankind is a *zôon logon echon*, the *echon* should be interpreted not just in a descriptive sense. Rational discourse should become a *hexis*, a potentiality people 'have.'

Cultivating a *hexis* to live according to the right mean requires the repeatedly correct use of rational choice (*prohairêsis*) for the right mean. *Hexis* and *prohairêsis* maintain a circular relationship.[51] On the one hand, *prohairêsis* expresses a particular *hexis*. Choices reflect the attitude of a person in the sense that brave actions express a brave disposition. Such an attitude makes potentialities for bravery more available to be chosen for actualization. On the other hand, a *hexis* is established by consistently making choices. Just like playing a guitar makes both good and bad guitarists, particular choices make both good and bad citizens. Human potentialities are *dynameis meta logou* and can thus go in both directions (*Met.*, IX, 2, 1046b5-6). Just like medical knowledge can produce health or illness in a patient, human agents can cultivate the good life or its opposite.[52] Good choices foster good *hexeis*, but bad choices foster bad *hexeis*.

For Aristotle, to cultivate good *hexeis* choices based on reason have to be favoured over behaviour motivated by sensations: "The generality of men and the most vulgar identify the good with pleasure, and accordingly are content with the life of enjoyment. . . . The generality of mankind then show themselves to be utterly slavish, by preferring what is only a life for cattle" (*EN*, I, 5, 1095b19-22). Since human potentialities can move in contrary directions, developing the good life *meta logou* implies the suspension of choices based solely on pain and pleasure. This does not imply that these considerations disappear, but that their proper place is not in the *polis*. Animality is included in human community as what does not belong and requires continuous vigilance. One should be able to bracket pain and pleasure for the good life according to reason to take shape. Hunger strikers, for instance, accept to endure pain for the sake of a grander political purpose. They suspend the sensation-based inclination to avoid pain in favour of political justice. Acquiring *logos* as a *hexis* requires rendering the actualization of the animal voice in oneself impotential.[53] One has to be capable of suspending strivings informed by pain or pleasure, even if they remain present.[54] The hunger strikers bracket the pain for a higher purpose formulated in terms of the just or the unjust. The political choice to not-eat reflects the suspension of any considerations about the pangs of hunger in order to devote one's actions *meta logou* exclusively to concerns about right and wrong. The establishment of Aristotle's political community hence requires the suspension of any kind of community organized with immediate feelings of pain and pleasure to construct a community on the basis of rational discourse concerning the good life.

In this case, it is the virtue of courage that brackets the sensation of pain. "If then the same is true of courage, the death or wounds that it may bring will be painful to the courageous man, and he will suffer them unwillingly; but he will endure them because it is noble to do so, or because it is base not to do so. And the more a man possesses all virtue, and the more happy he is, the more pain will death cause him. . . . But he is none the less courageous on that account, perhaps indeed he is more so, because he prefers glory in war to the greatest prizes of life" (*EN*, III, 9, 1117b7-14). The courageous hunger striker brackets the force of pain in the name of a higher political purpose. Similar descriptions can be given of other virtues. Temperance (*sôphrosunê*), for instance, is the capacity to suspend the actualization of the pursuit of "slavish and bestial" (*andrapodôdeis kai thêriôdeis*) pleasures in favour of higher purposes (*EN*, III, 10, 1118a25). A temperate person is able to forego immediate pleasure not by cancelling out the sensation of pleasure, but by elevating it to the pursuit of the good life *meta logou* by suspending its immediate satisfaction.

3. Aristotle's Natural Slave as Bare Life

Aristotle distinguishes between human and animal on the basis of the presence of voice or rational discourse as the foundation of community. This account is not merely descriptive, but also imposes an *ergon* on human beings: they have to cultivate *logos* in order to become what they are. This requires the suspension of sensation-based inclinations via the virtues and its replacement with concerns about the good life. Aristotle however does not deem all human beings capable of fully developing their *logos* and hence excludes some from the political community. Not all "hominids" are fully human.[55] Those hominids whose *logos* is held back in impotentiality are the remnant of bare life in between both realms.

This is of course not the only form of exclusion present in Aristotle's *Politics*. Even free adult autochthonous males can be excluded from political rule. Especially in book III Aristotle classifies different political regimes on the basis of who partakes in political rule. In kingships only one person rules, in aristocracies a few, and in polities all potential citizens. There are multiple reasons for these exclusions, but the important thing to realize is that non-participating free adult autochthonous males unequivocally remain "potential citizens."[56] In an ideal *polis* all these potential citizens would be actual citizens.[57] Through political opposition and reform they can force their inclusion without thereby undermining the validity of Aristotle's philosophy. Their exclusion is contingent and changeable via political reform.

Within the category of people necessarily and ontologically excluded from political life, there are women, slaves, savages, etc. All suffer in different ways from a deficient soul, which makes them allegedly unfit for the good life. They might consequently be residents of the *polis*'s territory, but they are not active participants in the deliberation of the good life. The anthropological machine installs exclusions that cannot be challenged within the political framework. Agamben highlights the depoliticized exclusion of slaves in *The Use of Bodies*.[58] Failing to formulate a physical criterion of identification (*Pol.*, I, 2, 1254b27-34), Aristotle argues that natural slaves only perceive reason, but cannot possess it themselves (*mê ekhein*) (*Pol.*, I, 2, 1254b23-24), since they lack the capacity for *prohairêsis* (*Pol.*, III, 5, 1280a32-35). Slaves hence still deliberate on the means to reach specific ends and understand the rational admonitions of their masters, but are incapable of choosing their own ends.[59] This deficiency is mostly found among non-Greeks (*barbaroi*)—especially Asians (*Pol.*, VII, 6, 1327b27-29)—whom Aristotle terms *alogistoi* (*EN*, VII, 5, 1149a10).[60]

Scholars debate where to situate natural slaves on the spectrum between humans and animals.[61] Aristotle frequently postulates analogies between slaves and animals (e.g., *EN*, I, 5, 1095b19-22; *Pol.*, I, 2, 1254b24-26), but also unequivocally admits their humanity (*Pol.*, I, 2, 1254a17). Agamben's theory of bare life can explain this confusion. Slaves are human, but the rules of anthropogenesis are

suspended. "There are some human beings whose *ergon* is not properly human."[62] The development of *logos* remains potential in slaves without ever becoming actualized. Slaves display the potentiality for leading a good life, but are constitutively incapable of enacting it. Their incapacity for *prohairêsis* makes it impossible to 'have' their potentialities as *hexeis* of their own. Slaves can therefore appear to free citizens as if they were animals because of their manifest inhumanity, even if they are strictly speaking human.

Since the actualization of slaves' *logos* remains impotential, submission to a master as a 'cognitive prosthesis' is to their benefit, according to Aristotle (*Pol.*, I, 2, 1254b19-20).[63] "These considerations therefore make clear the nature of the slave and his potentiality: one who is a human being belonging by nature not to himself but to another is by nature a slave, . . . being a man he is an article of property" (*Pol.*, I, 2, 1254a13-17). The *ergon* of slaves is hence not identical to that of free human beings. Both aspire to the perfection of *logos*, but slaves can only reach perfection as 'animated instruments' (*organa empsykha*) for a master's *logos*. They "participate in reason so far as to apprehend it but not to possess it" (*Pol.*, I, 2, 1254b22-23).

There are two interpretations of the relation between master and slave. Kraut and Frank argue that slaves are not constitutively incapacitated, but have been brought up with the wrong *hexeis*.[64] Generations of slave labour have deteriorated the prohairetic faculty so profoundly that despotic rule is beneficial. This reading is optimistic, since it implies that good masters can instil a minimum of virtue in their slaves and thereby educate them toward full humanity. Slaves, in this interpretation, can move up the ladder of anthropogenesis and merit liberation (*Pol.*, VII, 9, 1330a32-33).

The optimistic interpretation however conveys some flaws. Firstly, too many people would qualify for slavish submission, namely all those whose bad habits make them profit from ethical guidance.[65] More importantly, the optimistic interpretation does not take seriously Aristotle's rejection of the acquisition of *logos* as the slave's *ergon*. The sole function of slaves is to let their bodies be used by others (*Pol.*, I, 2, 1254b17-20). When defining the natural slave, Aristotle states that slaves cannot own their *logos*, but can *only* participate in the *logos* of another. Their potentialities inherently belong to an other (*allou esti*). Only the master can select the right kind of actions and hence the slaves' actions do not contribute to their own *hexeis*, but to those of their master. Just like beds and dogs do not acquire *hexeis* of their own, but are means for the acquisition of *hexeis* of their users, so slaves do not own any of their dispositions. Although Aristotle acknowledges the humanity of slaves, the latter form an exception to all rules normally applicable to human beings. Even if they are human, what makes them human is not theirs. Slaves are nothing but the bare potential for humanity. One should thus read Aristotle pessimistically and assume that slaves cannot be assimilated

in the anthropological machine of *logos*, even if that interpretation admittedly cannot explain Aristotle's acceptance of manumission (*Pol.* VII, 9, 1330a32-34).[66]

Agamben consequently suggests that slaves are without function (*argos*); they only manifest the potentiality for *logos*, but this potentiality cannot mature endogenously from these slaves.[67] Although Aristotle would not put it that crudely, it is true that the humanity of slaves is constitutively suspended. Humankind is defined as *zôon logon ekhon*, while Aristotle says explicitly of slaves "*logon . . . mê ekhein*" (*Pol.*, I, 2, 1254b23-24). Slaves are the exception to the rules of anthropogenesis. They manifest a pure form of potentiality insofar as there is no selection procedure within slaves that guides them toward humanity. The selection of potentialities happens in the master, but this cannot cultivate *hexeis* in slaves. The latter can never appropriate their own potentialities, because the latter belong to someone else. But slaves do not belong to the animal kingdom either since they manifest the potential for belonging to the human reason-based community. They cannot fully participate in this *polis* because they lack ownership over their choices and habits. Neither fully animal nor human, slaves live irrevocably abandoned on the threshold between both realms.[68]

4. The Natural Slave Rendering Aristotle's Anthropological Machine Inoperative

Showing how Aristotle's anthropological machine creates a depoliticized exclusion of slaves from the *polis* is not yet providing a solution. The most intuitive response is repoliticization. If the Aristotelian *polis* denies citizenship to slaves, the latter demand inclusion. This position dominates political philosophy, but Agamben is sceptical of this approach.[69] Contesting the anthropological machine by reformulating the selection procedure does not radically transform the machine itself. It still assumes an ontological apparatus that posits a human-animal distinction in which becoming human implies a suspension of the actualization of animal potentialities. This necessarily leaves open the possibility of bare life where the suggested actualization of the human vocation is also rendered impotential. Repoliticization gives a new criterion for anthropogenesis, but leaves the machine essentially intact. To give one example, human rights are commonly regarded as the best instrument to include all human beings in the political community, since they purportedly apply to everyone by definition. There seems to be no distinction between excluded hominids and included human citizens like in Aristotle, since one receives human rights for the simple fact of belonging to the biological species of *Homo sapiens*.

Agamben gives two counterarguments.[70] Firstly, even if human rights *de jure* appeal to everyone, they require institutions to guarantee their application.[71] Human rights imply a submission to state authorities, but the latter's willingness to

enforce those rights can be variable, as in the case of refugees. Secondly, human rights render the anthropological machine perpetually unstable. "Once it crosses over the walls of the *oikos* and penetrates more and more deeply into the city, . . . nonpolitical life is immediately transformed into a line that must be constantly redrawn."[72] Trying to include everyone does not radically change the dynamics of the anthropological machine, but only puts every possible answer into doubt by demonstrating "the sheer contingency of any social order."[73] Political communities produce depoliticized exclusions because they require anthropological machines to formulate the characteristics individuals ought to have in order to be counted as humans. Repoliticizing exclusions only shows these decisions for particular characteristics to be arbitrary, but it does not exempt communities from having to pose the question again. The phrase 'human rights' does not by itself formulate its sphere of application. Anthropological machines are hence still necessary equipment. Even purely scientific criteria like biological DNA would still imply a *decision* on membership to the political community with its own depoliticized exclusions (for instance, hominids with abnormal mutations in their DNA). Apart from making the identification of human bodies even more enigmatic than before, human rights do not provide much guidance about how to go about this process. Keeping the question of what counts as human open—as human rights do—creates the risk of restrictive decisions reintroducing exclusions. When countries at war, for example, compare each other to wild animals, they discursively justify killing by suspending the applicability of human rights for those whose actions are deemed 'inhuman.'

Instead of repoliticizing the exclusion of slaves from Aristotle's *polis*, Agamben looks for a notion of the good life that does not demand a selection of the human vocation, "an *aretê* that knows neither *ergon* nor *energeia* and nevertheless is always in use."[74] In Heidegger this was based on the mere facticity of *Dasein*, which was a pure potentiality for all the different ways of being-in-the-world, but did not demand the actualization of any specific way. The Auschwitz *Muselmänner*, whose capacity to be-in-the-world was suspended, were hence not excluded from this community but its utmost representatives, even if Heidegger himself was unable to take his political anthropology to this limit. The *Muselmänner* exhibit the mere fact of existence in its purest form. Proper existence, in Agamben's reading, constituted not a repetition of the *Muselmann*'s bare life, but life in the full knowledge of the contingency of factical existence and a subsequent detachment from any specific way of being-in-the-world.

According to Agamben, one can interpret Aristotle against himself in the margins of the *Politics*. Aristotle's remarks on natural slavery grant Agamben the opportunity to identify the slave as a figure of pure potentiality, although this was probably not Aristotle's own intention. Although the essential quality of humankind is *logos*, slaves manifest this calling in its impotential state. Slaves

are human beings whose potentiality to become what they are, is perpetually suspended due to a defective *prohairêsis*. How can this situation however be cultivated as a form-of-life? Agamben does not demand everyone to become slaves or *Muselmänner*, which would be undesirable, but hypothesizes that slavery offers an "idea of potentiality that is [not] annulled in actuality, [but] a potentiality that conserves itself and saves itself in actuality."[75] The phenomenon of slavery provides an exemplar from which people today can learn. The goal is not to repeat or imitate the slave's life, but to take it as proof of humankind's non-identity any specific human vocation and subsequent absolute potentiality to cultivate a multitude of vocations.

In the notion of 'use of the body' (*tou sômatos chrêsis*) (*Pol.*, I, 2, 1254b18) Agamben sees a possible subversion of Aristotle's anthropological machine.[76] The master is supposed to 'use' the slaves' bodies as animated instruments, or even as extensions of his—the master is always a 'he' for Aristotle—own body. Any action of slaves consequently belongs to their master, as only the latter can acquire *hexeis* of his own. Only the master can bracket his animal nature *and* actualize the human *ergon*. If the *ergon* of humanity is the actualization of a community based on *logos*, the slaves' lack of *prohairêsis* suspends this *ergon* permanently. In the *chrêsis* the master makes of their bodies, slaves can only assume this passivity as a contingent expression of their actual state that in no way exhausts their potential for many other identities. Their real being coincides not with the actual identity they perform, but with the result of subtracting any acquired characteristic from their positive identity.[77] Whenever slaves perform a certain action, it is not they but their master that acts through them and is ultimately responsible. None of their characteristics belong to them. The slaves could have acted otherwise and there is no reason to privilege this current condition over the other potential outcomes of their lives. They are, in Agambenian terminology, a void of pure potentiality left when all positive characteristics are subtracted. Since they do not own any of their *hexeis*, they also do not have to own up to them. Within this context, Agamben frequently refers to a statement of Saint Paul coincidentally dealing with slavery:

> Were you called in the condition of a slave? Do not be concerned about it. Even if you can gain your freedom, rather make use. . . . Even those having wives may be as not (*hôs mê*) having, and those weeping as not weeping, and those rejoicing as not rejoicing, and those buying as not possessing, and those using the world as not using it up. (1 Cor. 7:21-31)[78]

The human redemption Pauline slavery points toward does not lie in political liberation—although liberation from servitude would certainly be beneficial—but in a new use of this condition. Political reform might liberate particular slaves, but would not put the exclusionary tendencies of anthropological machines into question. The most sustainable way to handle the lamentable status of slavery,

according to Saint Paul, is to subtract oneself from the identity one is actually assigned to and to lead a life 'as if not' (*hôs mê*). One can still have a wife, weep, or rejoice, but one should not completely identify with these actual events. Things could have been different and every particular action should refer to the multitude of possible worlds instead of this or that particular world. One need not go as far as Paul in simply accepting the predicament of slaves, but he shows the possibility of taking up the good life as a subtracted life *hôs mê*, since Aristotle disowns them of their prohairetic actions and habits anyway. Aristotle expropriates them from the subjectivity most citizens wrongly identify with the good life. The Aristotelian anthropological machine has already suspended slaves' human vocation and thus does not expect anything of them either. The Aristotelian *polis* already detaches slaves from all their positive characteristics, since those belong to the master. Slaves can reciprocate the *polis*'s abandonment and hence use their potentialities as they please, since the latter are not theirs to begin with. Slaves can actively assume the passivity the Aristotelian anthropological machine has imposed on them. If slaves' *hexeis* are never their own, but always of their masters, then slaves' subjectivities cannot be identified with a particular set of *hexeis*, but only with the subtraction of all *hexeis*. If they perform a certain action, it is not the expression of a specific habit, as for Greek citizens, but a contingent outcome that in no way excludes the slaves could have acted otherwise. Slaves can assume the revocation of any specific vocation as their way of life: whatever behaviour they perform, it is not essentially their own, but they rather are the subjects to whom this life and so many others could have happened. They are the void underlying any possible *hexis* to be acquired.[79]

Agamben's point is not to idealize the slaves' predicament. They would evidently benefit from manumission. He emphasizes however that natural slavery in Aristotle shows a potential way of life that normally remains obscured in the political search for the good life. Whereas most political communities have focused on finding happiness by actualizing a supposed human vocation, there is also the possibility to detach oneself from any imposed identity. In the Aristotelian anthropological machine slaves are actually reduced to a state of wholesale impotentiality by force, but other ways of achieving this subtraction are possible. By cultivating a form-of-life that does not seek fulfilment in the enactment of a specific vocation but in the withdrawal from any calling, people today can, according to Agamben, find a non-violent way of repeating the slaves' subversion of the Aristotelian anthropological machine. The point is then not to actually render the actualization of any human potentiality impotential, but to become conscious of the fundamental non-identity between human beings and some ultimate human vocation. Whatever humanity is supposed to be, the good life lies not in the actualization of that quality, but in the detachment from it—although

this detachment need not take the form of a violent rendering impotential of the actualization of a human vocation.

To conclude, whereas repoliticizing the exclusion of slaves can be a good strategy for the specific problems slaves experience in Aristotle's anthropological machine, it is not a long-term solution. It renders the machine unstable by exposing its arbitrary decisions, but does not question the logic of depoliticized exclusion as such. Whenever a new standard is configured, new forms of bare life will appear. Initiatives like human rights that attempt full inclusion without undermining the anthropological machine itself end up rendering any decision on the human-animal distinction unstable and thereby risk outrageously restrictive reactions.[80] Agamben's configuration of the slave's inoperativity does not replace the anthropological machine or undermine its stability, but supplements it with a wider form-of-life to displace the collective search for the good life. Since the slaves' *logos* is deficient, Aristotle demands submission to a master's *logos* and turns slaves into parts (*moria*) of their masters. Instead of lamenting this predicament (although lamentation would certainly not be unjustifiable), Agamben believes that wherever there is danger, also the saving power grows. Since slaves have no human *ergon* of their own to fulfil and are even incapable of assuming this vocation, they are forced to lead a life 'as if not' by subtracting all positive qualities from their identity. Instead of tragically attempting to actualize the human *ergon*, slaves show the opportunity of detaching oneself from any specific narrative and to use (*chrêsthai*) one's potentialities to one's own liking. Although for slaves within the Greek anthropological machine the actualization of *logos* is actually rendered impotential, human redemption lies in the acceptance of non-identity between humankind and human vocation. Instead of constructing a wholly new form of life with its own anthropological machine outside the Aristotelian narrative, Agamben suggests a detachment from anthropogenesis. The Aristotelian notion of the good life in a *polis* is supplemented with a coming community that remains unsaid in all anthropological machines, namely a life of inoperativity, without vocation, shared by all.

5. Conclusion

How does Agamben uncover the depoliticized exclusion of slaves in Aristotle and what would his inoperative solution mean? Regarding the first question, Agamben demonstrates how Aristotle's political anthropology assumes the exclusion of natural slaves before the question of the good human life becomes pertinent. Those who fail to qualify for the criterion of *logos* are excluded from politics despite their humanity. Applying Agamben's theory of the anthropological machine on Aristotle's philosophy of anthropogenesis can elucidate this problem:

Anthropological machine	Aristotle's anthropological machine
1) Human-animal distinction	*phônê* vs. *logos*
2) Normative value	Search for pleasure vs. virtue
3) Passage from animal to human via the suspension of animality	The virtues as *hexeis proairêtikai* that suspend sensation-based behaviour
4) Bare life	The natural slave
5) Form-of-life	Use life 'as if not'

Whereas most Aristotle scholars take Aristotle's own words for granted and link politics to the question of the good life within a *polis* of citizens able to cultivate their *logos* collectively, Agamben displaces the good life to a supplementary field. He terms the depoliticized exclusion of, for instance, slaves inevitable due to Aristotle's reliance on an anthropological machine. Agamben relocates the good life in Aristotle beyond the confines of the anthropological machine by preferring inoperativity to repoliticization. The latter only shows the arbitrariness of Aristotle's choice for *logos*, but it does not undermine the necessity for identifying a new vocation of humanity. Inoperativity, on the other hand, does not attempt to replace an anthropological machine by another selection of essentially human qualities that ought to be cultivated, but suggests the acquisition of a new attitude toward life. One should live *as if* this actual life is *not* one's own. The slave is forced into this situation since Aristotle already subtracts all actual characteristics from the slave's identity, but Agamben pleads for a non-violent way of achieving a form-of-life. Instead of actualizing a specific vocation or of being forced into the rendering impotential of the actualization of such vocation, people can disidentify with this *ergon* and identify with their potentiality to assume whatever form. This does not replace, but supplement the anthropological machine. The good life does not lie in the cultivation of any actual life, but in the consciousness of its contingency.

NOTES

1. Martin Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 352.

2. All references and translations in this article are from the Loeb Classical Library editions of Aristotle's writings.

3. W. W. Fortenbaugh, "Aristotle on Slaves and Women," in *Articles on Aristotle*, ed. Jonathan Barnes, Malcolm Schofield, and Richard Sorabji (London: Duckworth, 1977), 135–9; Thomas Lindsay, "Was Aristotle Racist, Sexist, and Anti-Democratic? A Review Essay," *Review of Politics* 56(1) (1994): 128–34. Jacques Rancière also raises this issue in *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 71–5. However, since Rancière focuses on the exclusion of the people (*dêmos*) instead of the slave, I will not deal with his critique here. See Adriel M. Trott, "Rancière and Aristotle: Parapolitics, Part-y Politics, and the Institution of Perpetual Politics," *Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 26(4) (2012): 627–46, 630–4.

4. Josiah Ober, *Political Dissent in Democratic Athens* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1998), 296.

5. Bernard Williams, *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 2006), 40; Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue* (London: Bloomsbury Press, 2011), 189.

6. I use the word '*polis*' in this article to designate communities of human beings living together to pursue the good life, not geographical spaces (Wolfgang Kullmann, "Man as a Political Animal in Aristotle," in *A Companion to Aristotle's Politics*, ed. David Keyt and Fred Miller (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1991), 109).

7. Laurent Dubreuil, "Leaving Politics: Bios, Zoè, Life," *Diacritics* 36(2) (2006): 88.

8. Giorgio Agamben, *The Open* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2004), 79–80. For a good summary, see Sergei Prozorov, *Agamben and Politics: A Critical Introduction* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), 150–76.

9. Agamben, *The Open*, 79.

10. Heidegger, *Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, 177.

11. Ibid. 239.

12. Ibid., 165–7.

13. Agamben, *The Open*, 66–7.

14. Ibid., 73.

15. Ibid., 38.

16. Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1998), 7–8.

17. Agamben, *The Open*, 37–8.

18. Giorgio Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz* (New York: Zone Books, 1999), 73–6.

19. Timothy Campbell, *Improper Life: Technology and Biopolitics from Heidegger to Agamben* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 37; Claire Colebrook and Jason Maxwell, *Agamben* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2016), 177.

20. Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz*, 53–4.

21. Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), 90.

22. Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz*, 76.

23. Giorgio Agamben, *The Use of Bodies* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2016), 207.

24. When Agamben consequently defines his ethics in *The Coming Community* ([Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992], 43–4), he argues that human beings have no vocation to actualize or moral rules to implement, but have to assume the mere fact of their existence as potentiality, common to all. One can see here how some critics are mistaken in arguing that Agamben's philosophy is a political nihilism without any other alternative to the anthropological machine than death (e.g., Antonio Negri, "Giorgio Agamben: The Discreet Taste of the Dialectic," in *Giorgio Agamben: Sovereignty & Life*, ed. Matthew Calarco and Steven DeCaroli [Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2007], 121–5). It is not because Agamben focuses his attention on cases of destitution like the Auschwitz *Muselmann* that he denies the existence of any kind of resistance beyond the mere fact of dying. When he calls the *Muselmann*'s behaviour "a silent form of resistance" (*Homo Sacer*, 185), he means that these cases of suffering reveal explicitly the underlying coming community that remains implicit in all anthropological machines and political communities. Manifest bare life serves as Agamben's main herald of the coming community, because in them there is nothing left *but* their membership to this community (*The Coming Community*, 63–5). They have lost touch with the political community of the anthropological machine. This, however, does not imply that one can only become part of the coming community by imitating the destitution of the *Muselmann*.

25. Prozorov, *Agamben and Politics*, 50–2

26. Agamben, *The Coming Community*, 1–2.

27. Giorgio Agamben, *Potentialities*, 196–204.

28. The standard translation of *Eigentlichkeit* and *Uneigentlichkeit* is 'authenticity' and 'inauthenticity,' but I keep to Heller-Roazen's translation of the Agamben essay, since it better reflects Agamben's Italian version (*proprietà* and *improprietà*) and also shows more adequately the reference to the proper (*das Eigene*) in Heidegger.

29. Agamben, *Potentialities*, 197.

30. Agamben provides clarification with the phenomenological example of love (*Potentialities*, 204). Proper love is not attached to a phantasm of the beloved as having actualized desirable qualities, such as hair colour, friendliness or wittiness. If the beloved person changed hair colour or personality, the love would not vanish. Such phantasms only impose standards similar to the anthropological machine. Proper love conveys the other in her facticity. It does not matter how the beloved exists, since the mere fact of existence is the love object. Even when the beloved is revealed in an utterly unflattering perspective, the love would not be diminished. The beloved's qualities are, however, not completely irrelevant. One loves another for *all* of his or her qualities, either actual or potential (Agamben, *The Coming Community*, 2). One loves the other's hair colour, for example, whether it be brown, blond, or whatever. It is not just about the qualities actualized now, but also about the potentialities this actuality incorporates. Love does not impose one vocational quality on the other, but attaches itself to the other's mere fact of being-in-the-world, whatever form it takes.

31. Dubreuil, "Leaving Politics," 84–7; Jacques Derrida, *The Beast and the Sovereign: Vol. 1* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 315–34; James Gordon Finlayson, "'Bare Life' and Politics in Agamben's Reading of Aristotle," *The Review of Politics* 72(1) (2010): 105–16. Especially in Derrida's case, the critique goes deeper than simple philological remarks. He questions Agamben's insistence on finding the *arkhè* of things as some kind of original presence lost in human history (Derrida, *The Beast and the Sovereign*, 92). Such criticisms, however, are outside the scope of this article.

32. Dubreuil, "Leaving Politics," 88; Dubreuil's emphasis.

33. Agamben, *Homo Sacer*: 1–8.

34. Dubreuil, "Leaving Politics," 85; Derrida, *The Beast and the Sovereign*, 316; Finlayson, "'Bare Life,'" 108n47. Derrida (325), however, misreads Agamben as claiming that *zoê* is identical to bare life. Agamben's flawed interpretation of *zoê* and *bios* can be traced back to Heidegger, *Aristotle's Metaphysics Thêta 1–3*: 105.

35. Dubreuil, "Leaving Politics," 85; Finlayson, "'Bare Life,'" 113. For an extensive account of Aristotle's statement of humanity as a political animal, see Kullmann, "Man as a Political Animal," 99–101. According to David Depew ("Humans and Other Political Animals in Aristotle's *History of Animals*," *Phronesis* 40 [1995]: 167), Aristotle's usage of *politikos* can even refer to human communities outside the *polis*, like the household.

36. Depew, "Humans and Other Political Animals," 171.

37. Kullmann, "Man as a Political Animal," 102.

38. Adriel Trott, "*Logos* and the Political Nature of *Anthrôpos* in Aristotle's *Politics*," *Polis* 27(2) (2010): 294. Depew ("Humans and Other Political Animals," 162) argues that identifying being political as the essence of humankind is wrong, but he must still admit that being political finds its highest expression in humankind (322).

39. Kullmann, "Man as a Political Animal," 107; Martha Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 265; Adriel Trott, *Aristotle on the Nature of Community* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 105. Aristotle describes a continuum of plants, animals, humans, and eventually gods. That is why Aristotle, for instance, sees no trouble in using the same models of locomotion and action for both animals and humans in *On the Soul* or *On the History of Animals*. Aristotle, however, does not reject all distinctions. This paper consequently focuses on the differences he postulates between human and animal, but, as will be demonstrated, this separation is more fluid than frequently assumed. Humans can fail at cultivating their humanity—either because of some constitutive defect, like the natural slave, or due to a bad upbringing—and these living beings form a grey zone between human and animal that Agamben calls 'bare life.'

40. Francis Sparshott, "Singing and Speaking," *The British Journal of Aesthetics* 37(3) (1997): 201. It is interesting to note, however, that Aristotle, in *On the Soul* (II, 8, 420b5–22), explicitly denies that all animals have voice, since the latter requires the breathing in of air. It is hence strange that Aristotle defines animality through the notion of voice. For a discussion of the lack of voice in insects, see Ömer Orhan Aygün, "On Bees and Humans: Phenomenological Explorations of Hearing Sounds, Voices, and Speech in Aristotle," *Epoché* 17(2) (2013): 337–50.

41. Agamben wrongly states that Aristotle restricts meaningful sound to the human voice based on a reading of this same passage from *On the Soul* (Giorgio Agamben, *Stanzas: Word and Phantasm in Western Culture* [Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992], 124–5). In later texts, Agamben correctly links the difference between animal and human voice in the latter's articulatedness (*diarthrôsis*) (Giorgio Agamben, *Language and Death* [Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006], 38–9; *Che Cos'è la Filosofia* [Rome: Quodlibet, 2016], 27–35).

42. Francis Sparshott, *Taking Life Seriously: A Study of the Argument of the Nicomachean Ethics* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 45–8.

43. Stephen Makin, "*Energeia* and *Dunamis*," in *The Oxford Handbook of Aristotle,* ed. Christopher Shields (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 407.

44. Wayne Ambler, "Aristotle's Understanding of the Naturalness of the City," *The Review of Politics* 47(2) (1984): 169–70; Trott, "*Logos*," 293.

45. Sparshott, *Taking Life Seriously*: 47.

46. Julia Annas, "Aristotle on Human Nature and Political Virtue," in *Aristotle: Critical Assessments,* Lloyd Gerson (London: Routledge, 1999), 50. Annas, however, rightfully claims that nature is not always normative (49–50). Aristotle does not formulate naturalist arguments that simply equate the status quo with how things naturally are and thus should be. As we will see further on, for Aristotle nature is the raw material for rational discourse (*logos*) and habit (*hexis*) to work on in search for the good life within a political community.

47. Michael Oakeshott, *Lectures in the History of Political Thought* (Exeter: Imprint Academic, 2006), 121.

48. Ambler, "Aristotle's Understanding," 169; Trott, "*Logos*," 296.

49. In Book X of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle specifies that not the political life (*bios politikos*) but the contemplative life (*bios theôrêtikos*) is the highest fulfilment of humankind (*EN,* X, 6, 1177a11–17), although this form of life relies less on *phronêsis* (*EN*, X, 8, 1178a16–23). It actualizes the highest part of *logos* and thinks the highest objects (*EN,* X, 7, 1177a20–21) so that it eventually mimics divine thought (*nous*) and elevates human beings to a god-like stature (*EN,* X, 7, 1177b30–31). Contemplation is, however, a solitary affair and so less relevant for Aristotle's political anthropology and its discussion of slavery. At most, the theoretical life is relevant for Aristotle's politics insofar as the ideal city should be able to accommodate its citizens with enough leisure time to devote themselves to philosophical contemplation (Kraut, 197–202).

50. Pierre Rodrigo, "The Dynamic of Hexis in Aristotle's Philosophy," *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* 42(1) (2011): 10–1.

51. Cary Nederman, "The Puzzle of the Political Animal: Nature and Artifice in Aristotle's Political Theory," *The Review of Politics* 56(2) (1994): 295.

52. Rodrigo ("The Dynamic of Hexis," 11) adds that these *hexeis* can never intentionally produce contrary effects. The indeterminacy of potentiality hence resides in potentiality itself, not in the will that actualizes these potentialities. The virtues are an exception to this indeterminacy however. Once one has the virtue of, for instance, courage as a *hexis*, it will not endogenously lead to uncourageous choices.

53. Agamben (*Opus Dei* [Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2013], 92–4) consequently links the passage from potentiality to act via *hexis* as a process of mastering privation (*sterêsis*). Acquiring a quality as a second potentiality implies having the capacity to suspend the actualization of other potentialities and even the potentiality of that same potentiality. Being able to speak Russian not only contains having the capacity to suspend the speaking of one's mother tongue, but also of not speaking Russian.

54. Trott, *Aristotle on the Nature of Community*, 107.

55. John Rist, "Aristotle: The Value of Man and the Origin of Morality," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 4(1) (1974): 1.

56. Kullmann, "Man as a Political Animal," 94; Ober, *Political Dissent*, 340.

57. Ober, *Political Dissent*, 300, 340–2.

58. Agamben, *The Use of Bodies,* 3–23. The slave is a more paradigmatic case of depoliticized exclusion than, for instance, women, since Aristotle calls mastery over slaves explicitly despotic (*Pol.*, I, 1, 1252a31–34), while he acknowledges that the father's rule within the household is similar to kingship (*Pol.*, I, 1, 1252b20–22). The relation between master and slave is, for Aristotle, in no way comparable to political rule.

59. Martin Harvey, "Deliberation and Natural Slavery," *Social Theory and Practice* 27(1) (2001): 42–3.

60. Ober, *Political Dissent*, 305–6; Kraut, 290–295; Malcolm Heath, "Aristotle on Natural Slavery," *Phronesis* 53(3) (2008): 245.

61. For two opposing accounts in this debate, see Heath, "Aristotle on Natural Slavery," 258–9; Malcolm Schofield, *Saving the City: Philosopher Kings and Other Classical Paradigms* (London: Routledge, 1999), 139.

62. Agamben, *The Use of Bodies*, 5.

63. Heath, "Aristotle on Natural Slavery," 266.

64. Kraut, 283–303; Jill Frank, "Citizens, Slaves, and Foreigners: Aristotle on Human Nature," *The American Political Science Review* 98(1) (2004): 91–104. Arendt (*The Human Condition* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998], 83–4) provides a minority variation of the optimistic reading. She argues that slaves are excluded from politics, because their lives are completely submitted to natural necessity and labour. According to Arendt, slavery is for Aristotle hence only a necessary evil that contingently befalls some but not others. That perspective is, however, inconsistent with Aristotle's search for a definitive criterion for natural slavery.

65. Nicholas Smith, *Aristotle's Theory of Natural Slavery*, 116. Kraut (302–3) solves this problem by arguing that Aristotle is not defending the institution of slavery in general, but the specific way it was practiced in his time. He had to justify why foreigners and not Greeks were constitutionally slavish. This requires distinguishing between those who fail to lead a good life by acquiring bad *hexeis* and those in whom ages of servitude and bad rule have instilled submissive *hexeis* as a natural inclination. The latter coincides with all non-Greeks. This argument, however, remains unclear about how a *hexis* could be transferred over multiple generations and how natural inclinations toward servitude could ever be repaired.

66. Ober, *Political Dissent*, 345. Ober (344–7) himself offers a third approach, claiming that Aristotle saw slavery as a necessary evil for the greater good of developing human *logos* to its fullest for Greek citizens. The *telos* of any *polis* is the achievement of survival and the good life, both of which are served well by slavery. Especially since *skholê* is a necessary condition for the good life (*Pol.*, II, 6, 1296a35–36), slavery seems an inevitable yet acceptable ill. The problem with this answer is that it does not explain why Aristotle tries so hard to define slavery as a natural condition beneficial to the slaves themselves. If it is just an arbitrary necessary evil, there seems no point in justifying who should be enslaved.

67. Agamben, *The Use of Bodies*: 17.

68. One can hence not appreciate Aristotle's anthropology separately from his controversial writings on slavery, as, for instance, MacIntyre (*After Virtue*, 189) defends. Contrary to the hopes of many, Agamben shows that the exclusion of bare life in the slave is not a contingent product of Aristotle's cultural bias, but the necessary result of his reliance on an anthropological machine. From the moment that he identifies *logos* as the human nature and vocation, Aristotle sets the stage for the slave as bare life. If human life is predicated on the capacity to actualize a specific human vocation, there will always be people constitutively failing to do so.

69. Contemporary philosophers pleading against Agamben for repoliticization are Jacques Rancière (*Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics* [London: Continuum Books, 2010], 70) and Ernesto Laclau ("Bare Life or Social Indeterminacy," in *Giorgio Agamben: Sovereignty & Life*, ed. Calarco and DeCaroli, 14–6).

70. Agamben, *Homo Sacer*: 126–135.

71. See also Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: A Harvest Book/ Harcourt Inc., 1973), 291–2.

72. Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 131.

73. Rancière, *Disagreement*, 15.

74. Agamben, *The Use of Bodies*, 22.

75. Agamben, *On Potentiality*, 184.

76. Agamben, *The Use of Bodies*, 21–3.

77. Prozorov, *Agamben and Politics*, 142–4.

78. Giorgio Agamben, *The Time that Remains* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2005), 23.

79. Prozorov, *Agamben and Politics*, 181.

80. Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 129–30.