

“To Give an Example Is a Complex Act”:  
Educational Intelligibility and Agamben’s Paradigm

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In this essay, I consider how Giorgio Agamben’s notion of the paradigm can inform educational theorizing, curriculum design, and pedagogical conduct. I further wish to show how his paradigmatic method presents a significant alternative to both deconstructive and hermeneutic educational theory. Finally, I will suggest how the concept of paradigm challenges or extends previous conceptual research that relates Agamben’s philosophy to educational theory.

THE EXAMPLE: PARADIGMATIC AND ONE CASE

Educational theory and practice tend to treat an example *either* as a typical *or* as an exceptional case in relation to a broader set, class, process, or rule. An example is used, then, to illustrate, confirm, or challenge classifications, principles, or policies.<sup>1</sup> But this conventional dualist, part-whole, particular-universal conception of an example’s relation to its context or class is to be distinguished from that of Agamben.<sup>2</sup>

Agamben treats the terms “example” and “paradigm” as synonymous, following the classical Greek sense of *para-deigma*, “that which is shown alongside.”<sup>3</sup> In this position “alongside,” the example — or paradigm — resists being a universal’s illustrative particular, that is, of belonging to a class, set, or category. Instead, it exposes dynamic analogies among singularities. This analogic paradigmatic relation is never reified, but open to a multiplicity of engagements with singular objects, phenomena, practices, and ideas. Agamben thus argues that the notions of example and exception “come into play every time the very sense of the belonging and commonality of individuals is to be defined.”<sup>4</sup>

Giving an example is “a complex act” (*WP*, 18) because the example, that is, the paradigm, “shows its belonging to a class but, for this very reason, the example steps out of its class in the very moment in which it exhibits and delimits it” (*HS*, 20). The example, qua paradigm, is thus “suspended”<sup>5</sup> from its being one instance of a class and, conversely, the class’s supervening control of that example is “deactivated” (*WP*, 18). Drawing on Aristotle and Michel Foucault (much more so than on Thomas Kuhn), Agamben shows how paradigmatic logic is irreducible to the traditional universal-particular, part-whole dualism (*WP*, 19). This irreducibility makes it “impossible to clearly separate an example’s paradigmatic character — its standing for all cases — from the fact that it is one case among others” (*WP*, 20).

It is important to emphasize that a paradigm is not a referent to a particular object, idea, or phenomenon, nor does it “merely occur between sensible objects or between these objects and a general rule.” Rather, “it occurs instead between a singularity (which thus becomes a paradigm) and its exposition (its intelligibility)” (*WP*, 23). Without maintaining this tensive double quality of singularity and

exemplarity, a paradigm is transformed "into a principle of identity and classification," thus "sacrificing its specialness."<sup>6</sup> For Agamben, there is nothing more important to understanding our culture, language, politics, and ethics than the dangerous slippery slope of this transformation. Thus, unlike an object of hermeneutics, a paradigm is "never already given and produced." "Essential" to this placement and exposition is a "suspension of reference and normal use" (*WP*, 24).

Much of Agamben's writing seeks to extricate us from Western thought's presupposition that language and conceptual frameworks can encompass, subsume, and structure actual experience. Thus, he articulates qualities of experience like "infancy," "potentiality," "pure mediality," and "whatever being" that expose this eclipse of experience and that reveal something more than our language and categories can name. For Agamben, there is no meaningless, chaotic abyss that lies beneath language. But there is much more than language. A paradigm exposes this "more" that has become lost or unnoticed in the presuppositions of Western thought. But importantly, this exposition of the uncategorized "more" can only occur in the paradigmatic relation between singularities, rather than in a presupposed subjection or subjectibility to categorization.

#### EXPOSING INTELLIGIBILITY

What is at stake in Agamben's notion of the paradigm is intelligibility. A paradigm is an example that constitutes a context's intelligibility. Now in much of philosophy, intelligibility's limits, the boundaries of this concept, are said to separate it from what, on the one side, is incomprehensible, ineffable, or infinite; on the other side, the intelligible is said to be distinct from the sensible or sensory. Intelligibility then would be situated between the ineffable and the sensible.

Departing from this structure, there are two aspects of intelligibility that are intertwined with Agamben's notion of the paradigm. The first is a certain virtual quality; the second is a manner of "perfection" or "purity." The virtual aspect of intelligibility can be understood by considering how Agamben uses this particular suffix, "-ability." It is important to recognize that this suffix suggests a virtual or potential quality. Intelligibility, then, connotes possibility or, more accurately for Agamben, "potentiality" and a concomitant "impotentiality."<sup>7</sup> As virtual, it "can never hope to be fully instantiated or exhausted in any one realization."<sup>8</sup> It thus possesses a kind of open quality, "the very openness at issue in language," its "very sayability."<sup>9</sup> This paradigmatic exposure of openness suggests that an experience, phenomenon, or thing always exceeds its presupposed categorical boundaries.

In addition to this sustained potentiality, Agamben's notion of intelligibility has a surprisingly categorical, absolute quality: "perfectly intelligible,"<sup>10</sup> "absolute intelligibility," (*HS*, 37) "pure intelligibility,"<sup>11</sup> "fully intelligible,"<sup>12</sup> "clear and intelligible."<sup>13</sup> He does not mean to suggest a perennial certainty or progression toward an Absolute. Rather, his notion of intelligibility suggests a "guaranteed" potentiality that is exposed in the paradigmatic relation.<sup>14</sup>

In part, the need to "guarantee" intelligibility stems from the fact that concepts become increasingly ambiguous over time: "There is a moment in the life of

concepts when they lose their *immediate intelligibility* and can then, like all empty terms, be overburdened with contradictory meanings” (*HS*, 51, emphasis added). So when, for example, “the religious category of the sacred” “irrevocably loses its significance and comes to assume contradictory meanings,” Agamben’s well-known, enigmatic paradigm, *Homo Sacer* (“Consecrated” or “Sacred Man”), exposes, “with *perfect* circularity,” notions of “sacrality, life, and politics” (*HS*, 51, emphasis added).

#### FROM “HERMENEUTIC CIRCLE” TO “PARADIGMATIC CIRCLE”

Agamben departs from hermeneutic philosophy, arguing that the “hermeneutic circle” is really a “paradigmatic circle.” The “vicious” circularity of the former is in its requirement “to recognize in phenomena the signature of a pre-understanding that depends on their own existential structure.” Agamben thus finds the problematic circularity in the demand to “recognize” one’s own “pre-understanding” *in* “phenomena” while recognizing the dependence that pre-understanding has *on* those very same phenomena (*WP*, 26–27).<sup>15</sup>

So, for Agamben, the paradigmatic relation is not a revelation of something that had been concealed. Rather, it poses, or *ex*-poses, intelligibility, not through an interpretation of preexisting phenomena or of pre-understandings, but by placing the example alongside a class of phenomena or figures that it simultaneously constitutes. The constituted “ensemble” of phenomena can be considered “a new network of pragmatic and hermeneutic relations” next to which the constitutive example is “positioned.” And it is this positioning that exposes a new set of relations as yet unseen or unknown.

#### “THE FRIEND”: RESPONDING TO DECONSTRUCTION

In his essay, “The Friend,” Agamben suggests how his paradigmatic method is, in part, a response to deconstruction. For him, deconstruction “suspends” paradigms “and makes them idle . . . in such a way that there is never any access to the realized event of meaning.”<sup>16</sup> In the myth of the “pure sign,” of the “absolutely excessive sign” meaning suffers an “infinite deferral.”<sup>17</sup> As an alternative, Agamben wishes to show how the “taking place” of language is what allows for the otherwise ambiguous to become “perfectly intelligible” (*FR*, 27). Yet, as we will see, he does not suggest the return to a presumed identity between sign and signified, of language and its referents.

Both Agamben and Jacques Derrida write on friendship and comment on a textual variance in a tradition ascribed to Aristotle (*FR*, 25–38).<sup>18</sup> In a version of this text that was considered authentic up until the seventeenth century, Aristotle is said to declare: *O philoi, oudeis philos*, “O friends, there are no friends.” This was emended by a seventeenth-century philologist to read, *Mi philoi, oudeis philos*, “He who has (many) friends, does not have a single friend” (*FR*, 26–27). Agamben asserts that this emended text “then became so *perfectly intelligible* that it was taken up by modern editors” and goes on to situate this “corrected version” as a paradigm (*FR*, 27, emphasis added). With notable exceptions, this latter version became standard in modern philosophy. But Derrida gives preference to the pre-emended

version ("O friends, there are no friends") and goes on to deconstruct and elucidate the concept of friendship.<sup>19</sup>

These diverging choices of textual variant clearly are related to these thinkers' respective philosophical outlooks toward intelligibility in language, thought, and education. For Derrida, the contradiction and dissonance in his chosen variant reflects his own concern with those very qualities in language. The performative statement, "O friends, there are no friends," is an opportune instance of language's *différance*, its "ambivalent" performativity, its performative-constative tension, and its resonant capacity for iterable interpretation.<sup>20</sup> The division in the statement, then, reflects the break in language in the very moment of its utterance and shows how this break is necessary for what Derrida calls a "*minimum* of intelligibility."<sup>21</sup> Agamben, however, insists on the need for "*perfect* intelligibility" or the "*perfect* allegory of friendship" (*FR*, 27 and 31, emphasis added).

Invoking the logic of the paradigm, Agamben is interested in a figure of friendship that can be both singular *and* exemplary. We recall that the example, as paradigmatic, sits alongside the class that it exemplifies *and* constitutes. In the narrow space between the paradigm and its constituted class, intelligibility emerges. So Agamben rejects the first (pre-emended) Aristotelian variant's dissonance because it suggests that friendship is "at once affirmed and distrustfully revoked" (*FR*, 28). He thus privileges the emended version that reads: "He who has (many) friends, does not have a single friend," the version that suggests a distinction and paradoxical paradigmatic relation between a singular "friend" and the collective class of "(many) friends" (*FR*, 27). Yet exposing this very relation, situating the one (the singular) *beside* the other (its constituted class) makes the notion of friend "perfectly intelligible" (*FR*, 27).

#### PARADIGMS IN EDUCATIONAL THEORY AND PRACTICE

Maintaining the exemplary as both singular and constitutive presents education with the possibility of resisting the presuppositions of categorizations of people and events and recognizes the individual case's potential to open up new perspectives and new worlds. Paradigmatic teaching, then, would involve an exposition and engagement in an open space between particulars, creating provisional sets of new relations. Agamben's paradigmatic method thus challenges universal categories as it presents a dynamic set of relations anew and invites discourse and description of those relations' pedagogical potential.

Let us consider the paradigmatic relation's educational import for three areas: the notions of the refugee, educational community, and curriculum.

#### REFUGEE AS PARADIGM

Agamben notes how the refugee is a geo-political, social, and historical phenomenon of increasing prevalence, one vital to understanding politics and socio-economic justice. Drawing on the work of Hannah Arendt, the refugee paradigm exposes "a disquieting element in the order of the nation-state," testifying to the fact "that growing sections of humankind are no longer representable inside the nation-state — and this novelty threatens the very foundations of the latter."<sup>22</sup> A

permanently resident mass of noncitizens are not “members” of the nation-state; but they are “included” in the latter in as much as they fall within its borders or control. The crisis is the dissonance of this type of *inclusion* without *belonging*. Agamben thus envisions the refugee as replacing the notion of citizen: “[T]he guiding concept would no longer be the *ius* (right) of the citizen but rather the *refugium* (refuge) of the singular.”<sup>23</sup>

As a paradigm, the refugee would constitute a class — “mass statelessness” — of which it, in one sense, is a member, and in another sense, is singular and therefore not included. This paradigm thus exposes the need for “definitive emancipation from naïve notions of the citizen and a people” and “for a renewal of categories” for political and “civic” education.<sup>24</sup> But even more importantly, the refugee paradigm exposes the consequences of presupposed categories and the presumption of language’s serving to capture and classify human being. The refugee then could be considered a paradigm of paradigms for it exposes the problematic logic of a politics of separation and categorical identities.

In addition to questions regarding the condition of refugees, pertinent educational questions would also be: How are *we* refugees? From what do *we* seek refuge? Can the government give us refuge without requiring unequivocal loyalty? Does the citizenship naturalization oath co-opt my identity?<sup>25</sup> When does one’s national fidelity loosen its grip, causing one to become a refugee? In what ways does my gender, sexual preference, race, language, or domestic situation make me a refugee? How might we consider departing from a logic that foundationally categorizes “us” and “them”?

#### COMMUNITY

In his writing on language, politics, history, literary theory, and art, Agamben frequently builds upon the work of Walter Benjamin. Though he does not take up Benjamin’s work that deals explicitly with education,<sup>26</sup> Benjamin’s early writing on this subject is significant for an understanding of Agamben’s potential import for educational theory and practice.

Benjamin’s paradigm for “moral education” is his “principle of ethical community” that he considers “fundamental.”<sup>27</sup> He thus suggests that to “create space for” such an “emergent” community is “the most urgent requirement” of modern pedagogy. For Benjamin, the educational community’s mission is “conferring and fostering freedom”<sup>28</sup> for, “[i]n the final analysis, every good deed is only the symbol of the freedom of the individual who accomplished it.”<sup>29</sup> No law subordinates ethical, cultural emergence. The school becomes the place in which “we first attain the concept of community” in “everyday life.”<sup>30</sup> An educational environment fosters the kind of civic community “in which everything necessary becomes once more voluntary and everything at bottom voluntary becomes necessary.” For “only in community, not through lessons in the moral,” will a student learn and grow in “moral sense” or “moral capacity.”<sup>31</sup> For Benjamin, then, “the process of moral education is opposed in principle to every rationalization and schematization, it can have nothing to do with any type of instruction.”<sup>32</sup> In the “renunciation of a

scientifically closed theory of moral education,” Benjamin maintains the “possibility of a moral education as an integral whole, although without systematic closure in the particulars.”<sup>33</sup>

I suggest that Benjamin’s notion of moral educational community resonates with Agamben’s concept of paradigm. With his explanation of the medieval monastic concept of *regula*, Agamben articulates the function of the paradigm in the ethos of a community. The *regula* “is often . . . envisaged as a . . . rule [that] does not indicate a general norm but the living community (*koinos bios, cenobio*) that results from an example and in which the life of each monk tends at the limit to become paradigmatic — that is, to constitute itself as *forma vitae*” (*WP*, 21–22). He thus suggests how this paradigmatic notion is distinct from any kind of rule-based, reason-based, utilitarian, or deontological normativity. Each educational setting constitutes a paradigmatic form-of-life, a particular cultural, political, or moral community. As paradigmatic, the community’s ethos is exposed in its form-of-life, a “life that can never be separated from its form.” Within the community, within its form-of-life, “the single ways, acts and processes of living are never simply facts but always and above all possibilities of life, always and above all power.”<sup>34</sup> Paradigmatic thinking, then, suggests an educational community not grounded in a dualist structure of inclusion and exclusion; rather, the community exposes an enduring potentiality for ways of being and communicating together.

Consistent with Agamben’s paradigmatic philosophical method, the teacher, educator, student, and school culture are singularities that give ethics its intelligibility. Never reducible to a maxim or rule, moral conduct can only be experienced in a community that expresses a potential form-of-life. There is no closed definition to the moral; it can only be exposed in a paradigmatic relation and thus made intelligible, even as a potential endures for further articulation of its paradigmaticity.

#### CURRICULUM

Agamben maintains that “the capacity to recognize and articulate paradigms defines the rank of the inquirer no less than does his or her ability to examine the documents of an archive” (*WP*, 32). I suggest that this “rank” and “ability” also apply to educators who seek to surpass the habits or demands of adhering to a particular curricular archive of methods, content, hierarchies, and conceptual taxonomies. Rendering something intelligible creates a certain ontology in the learning experience, what Agamben calls “a paradigmatic ontology” (*WP*, 32). Following his method, a curriculum would be comprised of what Agamben calls paradigms and the “broader problematic context[s] that they both constitute and make intelligible” (*WP*, 17).

Conventionally, a curriculum is founded on the relationship of the particular to the general as its organizational framework. The paradigmatic relation, in contrast, calls on curriculum to include what Agamben calls “hybrids of archetype and phenomenon, first-timeness (*primavoltitá*) and repetition” (*WP*, 29).<sup>35</sup> Each curricular category, goal, strategy, process, and content area would then be a kind of hybrid — an organizing prototype *and* a singular phenomenon. Each singular element

would be approached as if for the first time as well as repetition. The curriculum, then, would involve both multiplicity and unending affinities. In its dual status of being both typical and singular, each paradigmatic curricular element “stands in relation with countless others, in the way we say of a freely floating luminous point, that it emits its rays in every direction” (*WP*, 30).<sup>36</sup>

This open multidirectionality of curricular relationships thus invites, even demands, sustained revisioning, reconceptualizing, and redescribing. Challenging, to be sure, a paradigmatic curricular orientation potentially engages students and teachers holistically and singularly, rather than simply as beings in need of a limited, presupposed kind of knowledge. Paradigmatic education, then, would seek to expose our open lived experience with objects, narratives, ideas, and others.

Such an approach to curriculum would thus challenge educational policies that deskill teachers with scripts and excessively deterministic standards. Teachers and learners would expose ever-evolving classes of concepts, skills, and understandings that emerge in their choices and articulations of paradigms. Similarly, the notion of the paradigm would have much to contribute to current deliberations on academic freedom in that the exemplary is not based on its being positioned within a predetermined set, but in opening the potential for new forms of knowledge.

#### THE PARADIGM AND RECENT EDUCATIONAL THEORIZING

It is important to recognize that the paradigm is to be understood as a relation that exposes intelligibility. This relationship is easily misconstrued when only one side of the paradigmatic relation is considered. My interpretation of Agamben thus departs from that of Joris Vlieghe<sup>37</sup> whom I suggest underemphasizes the importance of this paradigmatic *relation*. Vlieghe argues that Agamben would suggest that students “practice” “language as ‘purely and absolutely grammatical.’”<sup>38</sup> Through practice, asserts Vlieghe, “letters appear as ‘pure letters’ and language is experienced as emptied of its proper semantic and communicative function.” Repetitive practice of “pure letters” or words with no semantic quality, purportedly, would allow students to experience the pure potentiality of human beings’ linguistic nature.<sup>39</sup> The pure grammar of a language would then, purportedly, be a paradigm for the language’s discursive use.

For Agamben, however, if language itself is experienced as paradigmatic (a view that he emphasizes from his earliest writing), then language shows its own “taking place”; it exposes the intelligibility of its taking place.<sup>40</sup> As a paradigm, language exposes intelligibility in the relation between its semiotic (being a sign or syntagm) and its semantic (contextually meaningful) function. The paradigmatic quality of language is in the relation that exposes language’s very intelligibility and communicability. It is true that language, to be a paradigm, must be deactivated, made inoperative from its normal use as part of a certain larger class of signs or syntagms, but this does not imply suspending *any* possible use. It calls for exposing potentiality for new and free use *in discourse*. For Agamben, then, language is not experienced in the repetitive practice of grammatical tables and categories. Rather it is experienced in the exposition of its taking place in a dynamic relation between a sign or syntagm and its free or new use in discourse.

Tyson Lewis has recently argued, successfully I believe, that Agamben's notion of "study" can serve as a helpful response to "critiques of 'learning discourse.'" Citing Charles Bingham's and Gert Biesta's important arguments, he notes that the "discourse of learning" implies an "inequality" between teaching and learning in that learning is presented as responding to a deficit, to incompleteness, to a kind of consumerism that makes up for a lack by commodifying education.<sup>41</sup>

I suggest that the notion of the paradigm strengthens Lewis's argument that Agamben's conception of "study" presents an important alternative to the "learning" model. The paradigmatic relation exposes intelligibility, rather than a body of as yet unlearned content or skills. Paradigmatic education, therefore, creates *potential* webs of intelligibility that can be discerned in considering singularities. The paradigmatic relation exposes the potential for the singular to stand outside of any existing rule or class and to stand alongside a class that it, itself, constitutes. This implicating of intelligibility can never be a dimension of a deficit-oriented model of learning.

Lewis also argues that Agamben's notion of education involves a kind of "pedagogical gesture" of "inconclusiveness," that counteracts the limits and dangers of "reducing education ... to mere representation or verification."<sup>42</sup> In contrast to the latter, Lewis suggests that "the best teachers are not those whose work has passed into actuality."<sup>43</sup> Illustrating such a perspective on teaching, Lewis continues: "Thus what is most inspirational about Marx's *Capital* or Benjamin's *Arcades Project* is precisely their status as fragments.... They exist in a state of suspension between pure potentiality and actualization."<sup>44</sup> Read against the background of Agamben's method, these "fragments" are paradigms. In their state of suspension, the paradigms are not members of the class they exemplify. But nor are they decisive indicators of new classes. Rather, they expose the potential of classes to be comprehended, that is, their intelligibility, through consideration of the analogic relations among singularities and provisional sets.

#### CONCLUSION

The notion of paradigm, then, is far more than a method; it is epistemological (a way of knowing and conception of knowledge), ethical (a fostering of freedom from presupposed categories, reified principles, presumed identities), and ontological (a type of being that exposes the potential of knowing and communicating — intelligibility and communicability). Drawing on Benjamin, I have suggested how Agamben's paradigms present a conception of educational community. And I have further suggested that our very conception of curriculum can be influenced substantially by the use of singular examples to constitute classes of concepts, allowing for a certain openness and release from more rigid categories and standards. The notion of paradigm thus promises to encourage educational theory's continued consideration of the array of singular (albeit intricately interlaced) examples in Agamben's oeuvre. In addition, his paradigmatic method invites continued articulation of new relations of intelligibility between the singular and the exemplary.



1. See Michel Alhadeff-Jones, "Challenging the Limits of Critique in Education Through Morin's Paradigm of Complexity," *Studies in Philosophy & Education* 29, no. 5 (2010): 477–490; Bo Eneroth, "Knowledge, Sentience and Receptivity: A Paradigm of Lifelong Learning," *European Journal of Education* 43, no. 2 (2008): 229–240.
2. Giorgio Agamben, "Example," in *The Coming Community*, trans. Michael Hardt (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 9–12; and Giorgio Agamben, "What is a Paradigm?" in *The Signature of All Things: On Method*, trans. L. d'Isanto with K. Attell (New York: Zone Books, 2009), 9–32. This work will be cited in the text as *WP* for all subsequent references.
3. Agamben, *Coming Community*, 9.
4. Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 20. This work will be cited in the text as *HS* for all subsequent references.
5. Giorgio Agamben, *Potentialities*, ed. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 260, 267.
6. Giorgio Agamben, *Profanations*, trans. Jeff Fort (New York: Zone Books, 2007), 59.
7. Samuel Weber, *Benjamin's –abilities* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008); Agamben, *Potentialities*, 177–84.
8. Weber, *Benjamin's –abilities*, 14.
9. Agamben, "The Thing Itself," in *Potentialities*, 35.
10. Agamben, "The Friend," in *What Is an Apparatus? and Other Essays*, trans. David Kishik and Stefan Paditella (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 27. This work will be cited in the text as *FR* for all subsequent references.
11. Agamben, *Profanations*, 57.
12. Giorgio Agamben, *Stanzas: Word and Phantasm in Western Culture*, trans. Ronald L. Martinez (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 69, 26 n. 3.; *HS*, 77.
13. Giorgio Agamben, *Idea of Prose*, trans. M. Sullivan and S. Whitsitt (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1995), 43.
14. Agamben, *Stanzas*, 110; Giorgio Agamben, *Infancy and History: The Destruction of Experience*, trans. Liz Heron (London: Verso, 1993), 150.
15. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), 195.
16. Agamben, "Theory of Signatures," in *Signature of All Things*, 78.
17. Agamben, "Theory of Signatures," 78.
18. See also Jacques Derrida, *The Politics of Friendship*, trans. George Collins (London: Verso, 1997).
19. Samuel Weber, "'And When Is Now?'" (On Some Limits of Perfect Intelligibility)," *MLN* 122, no. 5 (2007): 1028–1049; and Simon Morgan Wortham, "Law of Friendship: Agamben and Derrida," *New Formations* 62 (2007): 89–105.
20. Weber, "Limits of Perfect Intelligibility."
21. Jacques Derrida, *Limited Inc*, trans. Samuel Weber (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1988), 144 (emphasis added).
22. Giorgio Agamben, *Means without End: Notes on Politics*, trans. Cesare Casarino and Vincenzo Binetti (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 21–22.
23. Agamben, *Means Without End*, 23.
24. *Ibid.*, 17.
25. "I absolutely and entirely renounce and abjure all allegiance and fidelity to any foreign prince, potentate, state or sovereignty, of whom or which I have heretofore been a subject or citizen ... without any mental reservation" (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, 2012).

26. Walter Benjamin, “The Free School Community” (1911), in *Early Writings (1910–1917)*, ed. and trans. Howard Eiland (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), 39–45; Benjamin, “School Reform: A Cultural Movement” (1912) in *Early Writings*, 57–62; Benjamin, “Moral Education” (1913), in *Early Writings*, 107–115; Walter Benjamin, “Letter of August 4, 1913 to Carla Seligson,” in *Correspondence of Walter Benjamin, 1910–1940*, trans. Manfred R. Jacobson and Evelyn M. Jacobson, eds. Gershom Scholem and Theodor W. Adorno (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 49–53; and Benjamin, “Epilogue” (1912), in *Early Writings*, 53–56.
27. Benjamin, “Epilogue,” 109.
28. Benjamin, “School Reform,” 60.
29. Benjamin, “Letter to Seligson,” 52.
30. Benjamin, “Epilogue,” 110.
31. *Ibid.*, 111.
32. Benjamin, “Moral Education,” 109.
33. *Ibid.*
34. Agamben, *Means Without End*, 3–4.
35. Agamben here quotes Goethe’s concept of “*Urphänomen*, an ‘originary phenomenon.’”
36. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Naturwissenschaftliche Schriften*, vol. 1, in *Gedenkausgabe der Werke, Briefe, and Gespräche*, vol. 16, eds. Ernst Beutler (Zurich: Artemes, 1949–52), 851–52, as quoted in *WP*, 30.
37. Joris Vlieghe, “Experiencing Im-potentiality: Bollnow and Agamben on Educational Meaning of School Practices,” *Studies in Philosophy and Education* (2012): 1–15.
38. Vlieghe, “Im-potentiality.”
39. *Ibid.*
40. Giorgio Agamben, *Language and Death: The Place of Negativity*, trans. Karen E. Pinkus with Michael Hardt (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 25, 31, 35, 36, 37, 56, 57, 58, 61, 62, 66, 68, 69, 73, 74, 76, 77, 79, 890, 84, 85, 87, 94, 95, 96, 99, 101, and 102.
41. Tyson Lewis, “Rethinking the Learning Society: Giorgio Agamben on Studying, Stupidity, and Impotence,” *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 30, no. 6 (2011): 585–599.
42. *Ibid.*, 597.
43. *Ibid.*, 596.
44. *Ibid.* (emphasis added).