

From *Broken: Thought-Images of Life in the State of Exception*  
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## PREFACE

The camp . . . is the new biopolitical *nomos* of the planet  
—Giorgio Agamben

The political events of the past few years have demonstrated the urgent need to think seriously about the politics of radical separation and exclusion. The creation of an internment camp outside all international law at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, the prisons in Eastern Europe established to conduct “legal” torture and by-pass the Geneva Conventions, the PATRIOT Act, the illegal wiretapping of U.S. citizens based on the suspension of the U.S. constitution through executive order, the Military Commissions Act of 2006, the growing loss of civil liberties on a global scale, the pre-emptive Iraq War, the systematic torture at Abu Ghraib, invisible genocide in Darfur, the 2000 U.S. Presidential election, and the abandoned refugees of New Orleans in 2005 are all examples of the global state of exception.<sup>1</sup> Rather than locating the origin of these

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<sup>1</sup> See George W. Bush’s “Military Order of November 13, 2001 On the Detention, Treatment, and Trial of Certain Non-Citizen’s in the War Against Terrorism” <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/11/20011113-27.html> (accessed March 15, 2003), Giorgio Agamben, “No to Bio-Political Tattooing,” originally published in *Le Monde*, January 10, 2004, widely available on the WWW, for one example, see <http://www.ratical.org/ratville/CAH/totalControl.html> (accessed September 22, 2005), and Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception*, Trans. Kevin Attell (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005). The present text was written during a period of time in which there were little to no substantive secondary sources on the project of *Homo Sacer*. One volume that has appeared, as of the writing of this text, but which I have not had time to consult, is *Politics, Metaphysics, and Death: Essays on Agamben’s Homo Sacer*, Ed. by Andrew Norris (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005). Thomas Carl Wall’s manuscript for that volume, “Au Hasard,” was read as early as 1999 (unfortunately, I have not had the opportunity to compare this early work with the version published this year). I, also, regret that I have not had the opportunity to consult Judith Butler’s *Precarious Life: The Power of Mourning and Violence*, (New York: Verso, 2004). For my own work published during this time, see “Living in Urgency: *Homo Sacer* and the State of

events in a generalized rhetoric of terror, war, emergency, or fear—a rhetoric which is clearly evident in, and coextensive with, these events—we would do better to grasp the juridical and political limit within which these events have been allowed to happen. That limit is the simple act of suspension. The *event* of New Orleans deserves comment precisely because of the concrete example it presents to us of life in a state of suspension. It demonstrates the abandonment of life in the creation of a space of radical exclusion, in this case, refugee camps in sports stadiums, the modern city as modeled on a paradigm or, image of the camp, the relation between the spectacle and the exception, and how the exclusion of life, and entire populations of people, has now become the norm. As Agamben wrote in *Homo Sacer*, some ten years previously, “we must expect not only new camps but also always new and more lunatic regulative definitions of the inscription of life in the city.”<sup>2</sup> These events have made it obvious that we are increasingly “governed” on a global scale by a paradigm of separation and exclusion. Since the early 1980’s, entire populations of people who have no “home” and populate the streets of the U.S.’s major cities have simply been abandoned. This radical exclusion, which takes place in plain view of everyone, is experienced as a “normal” and “everyday” occurrence. Yet we act *as if* this experience of abandonment isn’t happening. *As if* these beings were simply not “there,” and *as if* we, who are ostensibly not homeless, weren’t separated from our own experience of this abandonment, which we plainly see and experience every single day in the contemporary city. This separation from experience is not something that can easily be relegated to “others” whom

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Emergency of AIDS,” *Symposium* (No. 6, 2001): 9 – 76, and “Remnants of the World: Agamben and Messianic Affect,” *Crossings* (No. 5/6, 2002/2003): 269 - 295. For the first secondary work on Agamben in English, see Thomas Carl Wall, *Radical Passivity: Levinas, Blanchot, and Agamben* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1999).

<sup>2</sup> *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1998): 176.

we name the “homeless.” We all participate in this dissociation from the lives that we are living, as we live them. And this is only one example among many of a generalized separation that marks contemporary life. Certainly this experience is not something new in the history of the West, but its radical unmasking as a political paradigm in the period since World War Two *is* new and indicates the emergence of a global state of exception.

This book is based, in part, on the experience, detailed study, and meditation on, the teaching of Giorgio Agamben’s *Il tempo che resta* (*The Time that Remains*) at UC Berkeley in the fall of 1999.<sup>3</sup> As such, it bears an intimate relation to Agamben’s work and the project of *Homo Sacer* as a whole. *Il tempo che resta* was written, and taught in the United States at Northwestern and University of California at Berkeley, between the publication of volume three

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<sup>3</sup> *Il tempo che resta. Un commento alla Lettera ai romani* (Torino: Bollati Boringhieri, 2000). The literal translation of *resta* is “remains.” The English word “remains,” however, includes a meaning of something “supplementary” or left over, as in a remainder. This meaning is not only absent in the Italian *resta*, it is directly at odds with Agamben’s concept of the *remnant* as that which can never be divided (a supplement or left over remainder would, in fact, allow for division, exclusion, and therefore, the exception). This is why Agamben prefers the translation *The Time that is Left*, which was also the title of the seminar. Both the seminar and the text are organized according to the first sentence of Paul’s “Letter to the Romans” *Paulos doulos ious christu, cletos apostolos eis evaggelion theou* (Paul a servant of Jesus Christ called to be an apostle set apart for the announcement of god), Giorgio Agamben, *The Time that is Left* (Audio tape recordings of course lectures, U.C. Berkeley, 1999), October 6, 1999. Throughout the following text, I refer to the audio tape recordings of the course lectures according to the title of the course and the date of the particular lecture or discussion cited. Incidentally, there was no discussion of the last word of the first sentence of Paul’s “Letter to the Romans” because, as Agamben explained in the final seminar “One should be free to write a work on theology without mentioning the word ‘god,’” *The Time That is Left*, November 10, 1999. All references below are to the Italian and the tapes from the seminar, unless otherwise noted. The English translation, which appeared in late 2005, is *The Time that Remains: A Commentary on the Letter to the Romans*, trans. Patricia Dailey, (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2005). This text will hereafter be cited as *The Time That Remains*. I regret that this translation appeared after most of the present text was completed and I did not have time to fully consult this work.

of *Homo Sacer (Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive)* and *L'aperto: L'uomo e l'animale (The Open: Man and Animal)*.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, it occupies an instructive place in Agamben's work. It is both outside the work of *Homo Sacer*, properly speaking, insofar as it does not comprise one of its volumes, and yet remains thoroughly bound-up with its project, particularly regarding the development of the concept of the exception in relation to contemporary politics. It is, therefore, a text that stands beside and exposes *Homo Sacer*: a *para* text.

The time of the following book cannot be separated from its work: written, as it was, both before the events listed above and after their effects continue to register in our everyday lives. What began as a patient effort to demonstrate the importance and applicability of the concept of the exception to our everyday lives—that is, an attempt to bear witness to life in the state of exception and to sketch out, as patiently as possible, the logic of that experience has, since that time, become something else: an exercise in patience and endurance. Patience because of the time it has taken to finish this work (interrupted innumerable times by the need to simply survive) and endurance because of what we have all been forced to “go under” as a result of living a life that is increasingly reduced to mere survival. This text is an existential-philosophical usage of Agamben's teaching in the United States at a unique moment in time. A moment marked by the radical rupture of the exception into everyday life in ways that he himself could scarcely have imagined. This prescience, I think, is a direct result of the fact that Agamben's work concerns what has been *excluded* from our thought of a radical, non-dialectical politics of the past 35 years: the experience of life in the state of exception. The present work seeks to think

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<sup>4</sup> *L'aperto: L'uomo e l'animale*, Torino: Bollati Boringhieri, 2002. Translated as *The Open: Man and Animal*. trans. Kevin Attell. (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2004).

this experience of political, philosophical, and existential abandonment through the encounter between the work of Giorgio Agamben and Gilles Deleuze. At the same time, it seeks to engage in that philosophical activity, insofar as it is possible, in a way that is not separated from the experience of that abandoned life.