

Title: Nihilism, Parody, Profanation (Part I)

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Source: *Janus Unbound: Journal of Critical Studies*, vol. III, no. II  
(Spring 2024), pp. 62-73

Published by: *Memorial University of Newfoundland*



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## Nihilism, Parody, Profanation (Part I)<sup>1</sup>

Mehdi Belhaj Kacem

Text was originally published in « *L'ESPRIT DU NIHILISME* » by Mehdi Belhaj Kacem. Paris: © Librairie Arthème Fayard, 2009. This English-language version is a translation of the original in French. In case of any real or perceived discrepancies, the original prevails. Translation was done with permission from the publisher.

Translated by Conor O'Dea

To profane means: to *reappropriate*. The similarity between the appropriative event, and the problematic equivocation we are struggling to elucidate with regard to the purely nihilistic charade of the event, thus coincides to a fault with the Agambenian notion of profanation;<sup>2</sup> an equivocation which comes undoubtedly from all manner of misinterpretations that we continue to nourish regarding *jouissance*.<sup>3</sup> We shall soon see why.

And the equivocity would signal its possible lifting in this way: the event is pure appropriation of the inappropriable; profanation is reappropriation of that which was expropriated in the sphere of the sacred (that is to say, today, purely and simply, the sacro-sanct capitalist “private property,” in particular that of billionaires). The re- of profanatory reappropriation really signals that it is about a repetition, an ontico-ontological “reparation” which was obscurely “possessed” but is so no longer.

There is thus, in profanation, the idea of a *jouissance*; we cannot cut off [Giorgio] Agamben’s face-off with the concepts of psychoanalysis, and in particular the way in which the economy of *jouissance* commands repetition.

[Alain] Badiou wrote us one day that “the event properly spoken characterizes itself by delivering not *jouissance*, but the chain of its consequences.” It took us a great deal of time and effort to come to the conclusion that he was correct. But the evental *affects* of love, of art, of politics, of science, of philosophy are properly “*sur-jouissances*,” these *passions* sharing with *jouissance* all its character traits of *interruption* of all representation, which is in its essence sexual *jouissance*, but yet distinct from it.

As witness of love in an exemplary way, the *jouissance* of the event is a *jouissance* which does not repeat itself.

Wouldn’t *Homo Sacer*<sup>4</sup> be someone that, in some way, anyone, no matter who, could appropriate? It is thus not an accident if the figure of *Homo Sacer*

can find its exemplary illustration in the prostitute under the laws of [Nicolas] Sarkozy,<sup>5</sup> that is to say someone that you can violate, slash, and kill without incurring the least real punishment.<sup>6</sup> That which is dissimulated in the interpretation made by [Slavoj] Žižek (2002) of *Homo Sacer* is in reality the most important today: the index of sacrality that this figure must, in its very definition, by all necessity, *traverse* in order to find it where it is. The “sacred prostitution.”

The sacred is *precisely* that structure which brings Death into immanence, which fabricates, by way of a body “biologically” living, an *anticipated Death* which no supplementary act of homicide can come, in the eyes of man, to *kill again* (the “Muslim” of the camps, the Haitian Zombie, the Hindu Pariah. In democratic nihilism, we thus contribute as well to the “sacralization” of these “figures,” in contemporary “artistic depression.” The “profanity” of *Homo Sacer* is immediately recognized as that which is most “*sacred*”).

The impasse that we have pointed to concerning the ethics of refusal of “throwing a sacrificial veil over Auschwitz,” it is there and not elsewhere: this is why the conceptual sobriety that [Philippe] Lacoue-Labarthe (and [Theodor] Adorno before him)<sup>7</sup> order us to “after Auschwitz” could not but be: Auschwitz *has* been sacralized. And it is a matter of saying once and for all what has been said. The index of sacrality without aura which will have re-covered Auschwitz.

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This is why one can take the measure of the point or the question, apparently derisory, of the irony<sup>8</sup> which will have finished by leading us: to a quite distant truth. As pure form of contemporary subjectivity, for which romanticism is the forerunner sign, it delivers the key to the actual moment of nihilism, after that of [Ludwig] Feuerbach, [Friedrich] Nietzsche, [Martin] Heidegger. Agamben, in this respect only, but in this respect totally, deserves to complete this glorious trio; and maybe with him there is again an advantage of complicity with and fascination for nihilism which there was not with the three illustrious predecessors. It must be said that everything will have been done to make it seem so.

So, what is Agamben saying to us? This: it’s not incredulity or indifference which opposes itself to the religious, therefore, today, in Capital, but a sort of “active negligence” of which we form the syntagme.

In the era of Capitalism, the question of profanation reveals itself to be quite distinct from earlier forms of religion, where the sacrilegious act was duly punished. Profanation is more and more visibly *already* inscribed in the very processes of capitalist consummation. The democratic nihilism of Capital formally *condones* profanation; and this is the whole of the problem that Agamben is attempting to unwind.

To take something quite good from Žižek, *Homo Sacer* is essentially *homo sucker*, that is to say, he who in relation to the product, to merchandise—merchandise which is as often a “human” being as an object, it suffices to evoke

“stars” and their permanent passibility to “people,” that is to say to the citizen demonstration of the “profanation” of their private lives, all of which is in fact bound to be read as an unwitting sedentarization of Akhenaton’s subversion<sup>9</sup>—and effectively that of a parody of profanation; but parody, by way of the logic of repetition that we are unleashing, which resembles a parody of the very thing it is parodying. But as the profanation of Agamben itself claims to be a “subversive” form of parody, there’s a big risk that we will lose ourselves in the details.

The dialectic that Agamben proposes to us would thus be in some way: the very bad, permanent parody by way of which the distractions of the global capitalist spectacle give themselves over, and a little step further, which makes all the difference (for Agamben!), a qualitative jump towards a “good” parody which would be the true profanation. Agamben says to us: “[t]o profane the unprofanable is the political task of the coming generation” (2007, 21). But then what exactly is an *unprofanable*? We are the first generation of Capital, educated in this by post-68 vitalist leftism, to inscribe, at least parodically, profanation within the consumption that we adore; we consume so many journals, TV channels, we consume the discs and films that they sell us, and at the same time we are profoundly “negligent” of them, a negligence that Agamben assures us is the profanatory *stimmungen*<sup>10</sup> [sic] *par excellence*, and which he compares to the focus of the child *vis-à-vis* its toy (and as well, of course, to the human cruelty to which he bears witness in this respect). Contemporary art of the last 30 years (Wim Delvoye, Maurizio Catelane ...) has brought the elevation of this structure to a hitherto unattained extreme.

Profanation is thus nothing less than the absolute singularity of the epoch in which we grew up, that which localizes it historically. If Capitalism is a cult, and the most extreme that has ever existed,<sup>11</sup> our epoch is the first in the History of humanity where *iconoclasm* and *iconolatry* appear to be rigorously the same thing. A being which appears is exactly an event,<sup>12</sup> and thus, whatever name that we apply to this sequence, “nihilism” or something else, the method which is ours consists in traversing from the most extreme negativity of this epoch itself to detect in this very negativity, the “positive” of what is being sought. This would be the *pas de deux* of the last sections; the first two do not, for their part, only hold to “flat” negativity, to appearance without being or again, the “unbeing” of the sequence in question. At the same time, this “unbeing,” the repetitive identity of iconoclasm and of iconolatry, which “fuses” two attitudes thus far opposed to all appearance, must have been, “somewhere,” an event. Where? We wouldn’t have enough space in this entire book to *say* rigorously.

To what does this “permanent cult” of the religion of nihilism, which is Capitalism, consecrate itself, according to Agamben? To the erection of the absolutely divided monument of repetition, to permanently organize, in dull entertainment and tired hatred of everything, the degenerative cult of “the event,” where all repetition is always repetition of *a* real event, itself also obliterated in this parody. Which event? Well, it suffices to examine which repetition in order to know.

This cult commemorates an event, which is equality, the entrance of the masses into History, notably with the French Revolution. The profanatory rites

which commemorate equality give us the spectacle of equality (or more exactly “egaliberty,” as Etienne Balibar (1989) says), but only its spectacle, because it does nothing further for that which is our real becoming-historical, effective political equality. Nihilist sarcasm quite simply spiritualizes equality in order to do nothing to render it effective. It *dematerializes political equality in its incessant parodic spectacle*. To concrete processes of political equality are thus substituted, under the mode of the categorical imperative of the derision of everyone and everything, a systematic spirituality of *equivalence*.

[Jean] Baudrillard roughly said that in appearance, we were iconolaters, but secretly, we were iconoclasts (1981). This sounds a bit bucolic, as one says, and to tell the truth, totally *dépassé*. We are the first generation to know that now, *iconolatry and iconoclasm have become a one-and-the-same “cultural”<sup>13</sup> phenomenon*. We are the first generation to have grown up under a precise cultural form: the identity of iconoclasm and iconolatry in the permanent form of *parodic profanation*. The gigantic permanent machinery of the media consists in a cultural commemoration without respite of “equality” (and of “liberty”: of “enjoying without hindrance,” by the screen of interposed “profanations”), in order to obliterate generic efficacy.

The messianic-revolutionary iconoclasm of profanation thus seems to stumble, as its very own *aporia*, into the “integrated” iconoclasm of the current consumer. And it’s even the absolutely decisive trait of democratic nihilism, a sort of inverted eschatological messianism: the whole truth must appear, there must be no shelter (this is the symptom of the weakest part of contemporary art), nothing can hide itself any longer, that which again inverts the good messianic “drive” into its absolute other side, the real of democratic fascism: all appearance, and nothing but appearance, is the truth: all thus must appear, and it is this *instantaneous* appearance of All which is the truth. A sort of degenerate Hegelianism and “flat” testamentary messianism of absolutely inconsistent Being at the same time as the being hunted down everywhere.

Democratic nihilism is thus this *spite of the inapparent*. The lemma upon which [Guy] Debord predicates the ideology of the “spectacle,” “all that which appears is good, all that which is good appears,” equally signifies: all that which does not appear is bad, all that which is bad does not appear voluntarily, so for execrable reasons, one thus must not just *summon it to appear*, but to *force* it to do so (1967, 9-10). Without which, it is condemned to disappear, which is completely different from not appearing/unappearing. As [Maurice] Blanchot remarked, on a subject not incidental to [Michel] Foucault, the world which we enter is one where we no longer have the *right* to disappear.<sup>14</sup> He wanted to say, conceptually: not appear/unappear. One sees that which links Big Tech/technological gigantism and, above all, the “democratic” with the precursor spirit/genius of National Socialism: in the form of a circular All, nothing does not appear—there is no inexistence, no site which holds. That which derides the universal demand (“totalitarian”) to ceaselessly appear must thus be made to disappear.

Nothing, since democratic nihilism “is” the revealed truth (in [Francis] Fukuyama’s sense (1992)),<sup>15</sup> *must not appear*: there is no inexistence in democratic

nihilism, therefore no thinkable site, and thus, to the great relief of the nihilist “democrat,” neither event nor being either; and this is the trait by which it has tipped over, at first insensibly (in the 80s) then visibly (in the last 15 years) into “democratic” *fascism*.

But in reality, democratic nihilism is much more radical than Debord suggests. It doesn't say “the good,” but rather *the truth*. The real materialism of democratic nihilism consists in saying that *all* of the truth must appear and that *all* of that which appears is all of the truth (the “transparency”).

It is real totalitarianism, the last henology: none of the “totalitarianisms,” which have always determined their outside and their closure, have succeeded. As shocking as it might seem to delicate ears, there is thus an implacable logic that democratic nihilism commemorates in National Socialism, its primitive stage, and in the “Shoah,” its negative cult. The *first religion of nihilism* thought it could consecrate its birth with the Holocaust of the Jews, that is to its eyes the *emptiness of being*, that which opposes *the integral appearance of the truth*. And we don't intend this in the trivial sense, and a false one at that, of a nihilist “religion.” We intend it in a much more radical sense of a growth of a mass organized toward nihilism, the omnipresent master signifier of Germany of the years 1932-1945. We cannot therefore exonerate Nietzsche altogether—and Heidegger in the propagation which he ensured for his concept by deepening it—of the responsibility of the formation of such a concept, which could very well be a *pseudo-concept*. And contrary to what Agamben says (Capitalism is a “nihilist religion”), Hitlerian National Socialism had been up until now the only one to make explicit usage of “nihilism” as *mass ideology*.

One therefore senses that one dimension of our thread to be shared with Agamben touches on the extraordinary popularity that has been enjoyed by the concept of “nihilism” among the majority of important philosophers *after* Nietzsche and Heidegger, and, in the form of a chiasm, thanks to the political Nazi apocalypse and the indelible imprint left by them on History.

The chiasm simply enunciates: without the political accomplishments of National Socialism, *it is not at all certain that we would have made such a big deal of the concept of “nihilism.”* Stalinism and Maoism haven't done anything; neither has the explicit ideology of democracy (that is to say of assumed Capitalism). But Western democracies, being the place where the National Socialist apocalypse produces itself, have not ceased to bequeath to the majority of the best European intellectuals the saturated usage of this concept. American intellectuals, for example, themselves smitten with European thought (Nietzschean or Heideggerian, for example), have very little recourse. It is clear that sex and money, that is to say [Sigmund] Freud and [Karl] Marx who never use the concept, are the immanent names of the sempiternal “accomplished nihilism” of the Heideggerians, and singularly of Agamben.

Why sex? Why money? Because these are the domains where the dialectic of lack, of excess, and of waste formalizes itself with the most transparency.

At this stage of our reflection, it must be remembered that of the two paradigms that the ancients acknowledged as *jouissance*, food was thus, due to the fact that the manufactured and non-industrialized hunt was in close proximity,



the paradigm *par excellence* of *jouissance*; not sexual *jouissance*, which is a paradigm of the moderns, the credit for which goes to Jean-Claude Milner for having, in a great little book, put into evidence (1997). We will return to it.

Let's admit, provisionally, that the originary paradigm of consumption, and of the *jouissance* which it sanctions, is not coitus, but eating.

The impossible cannibalism, that is to say here the impossible *profanation-event*, this is the ultimate paradigm of *jouissance*. And the essence of profanation is at its base this impossible, that is to say: the imaginary, as we have seen, of the eucharist (and thus of the parodic eschatology that is the essence of pornography, as Agamben subtly sees it: "Pornography, which maintains its proper phantasm in its intangibility by the same gesture by which it reproaches it and renders it unbearable to watch, *is the eschatological form of parody*" (2007, 47 [Kacem's italics])).<sup>16</sup>

The two great paradigms where Agamben will find something to illustrate this tricky logic, which leads him to pose the only political question that is worthwhile in his eyes: how to profane that which is already, that which presents itself as already of itself as profaned, and is therefore "improfanable"—these two paradigms will also be found to be: *the game* and *pornography*.

However, we had contended, from the time when our work was not quite there yet, that our reflections on the game contained a way out of Agamben's *aporias* (2007).<sup>17</sup> In what way? In that the game is the form that we confront in the distinction between Law and rule, that all political philosophy should in the future take stock of in order to clarify its own reasoning (and remove some of its *aporia*, as we do in order to finish with Agamben). Several points must be retained:

1. The Law/rule distinction intersects to a very large extent with that of event and repetition.

2. There are "simulacra" of events, of which National Socialism would be the biggest example: this is what Agamben, in the very centre of his thought, calls "the paradox of the sovereign" (1998): the one who dictates the rules (of the "civic") all the while being above them ("the Führer and only the Führer is the Law," as Heidegger said).<sup>18</sup> This is the distinction that we established between Law and rule in our transcendental analytic of the game (we will come back to this). This paradox—that of the sovereign—has always been constitutive of politics in its entirety, but it's only today that this paradox can be brought to full light, and in some way, to our faces. But Agamben, possibly too stuck in the mental space of contemporary nihilism—like all of us—refuses to say a word about the fact that the event is the example of "good" sovereignty: of the general will which dictates, finally, its Law to the entire space of civic rules.

We are thus reprising the Agamben/Badiou debate on the "tenability"—separated—of the three following statements:

*a. Jouissance* is the absolute vanishing presence of animal affectual intensity, which is then subjective within the ontological appropriation that the human

makes (by and large: Freud). And as absolute presence is never anything but affectual, *jouissance* is immediately presence for the animal which remains, “under” the cut of the repetition, human/inhuman.

b. The site is that “thing” which we hold as closely to itself as possible, that we confine and reduce to its “object” materiality (saying: Agamben). Absolute absence in the state, whose sudden emergence has the effect of maximal presence, most often in the horrific mode (thus the monstrosity of this object).

c. The event is maximal identity and vanishing to itself (in total: Badiou). Therefore absolute presence, but this time *objective*.

The ontologico-anthropological mystery of statement c. being: why does this arrive *only thanks to an event*, and never anywhere else?

More exactly, why in the event does this identity, which works elsewhere as the being of every situation, come to appear?

And why, to put more precisely again the central *aporia* of all of Agamben’s thought, is the event, while being formally indistinct from the state of exception decreed by fascist sovereignty, nothing of “the state of exception,” but rather a “state of grace,” where “the abolition of the Law” does not open a return to the state of “natural” barbarism?

Profanation, itself, is the “event” of democratic nihilism. The mix-up of the event and of profanation is thus better problematized by the following statement:

d. The event is the sequence where all are sovereigns.

But who is *Homo Sacer*? We will see it with “sacred prostitution”: the one in relation to whom all men are sovereigns.

The contemporary *aporia* of “democracies,” and nowhere more obvious than in France, consists in the absolute abyss that now exists between the Law of the general will and the *rules* that place themselves in state form. They no longer have *any* relation.

3. The paradox of sovereignty is, to be sure, absolutely complicit in *Homo Sacer*: the sovereign is the Law which dictates all the rules, but who, to give consistency to the ensemble of rules that he imposes, must also designate, in *Homo Sacer*, the point where all the rules disapply themselves. The sovereign is above the Law which dictates the “laws,” those which we call rules; a rule is a *decreed* Law; meanwhile a Law is an unformulated rule, that is exerted through brute violence; a “force of law” which exerts itself without decreeing itself (except under the mode devoid of content, which exhibits the paradox itself in its pure form: “The Führer is the Law”). *Homo Sacer* is conversely, that is to say symmetrically, the above-the-law excluded from all protection by normative rules, for example, the Medieval “bandit.”

4. Badiou takes us out of the nihilist temptation of Agamben, in not giving up on the fidelity to events, which are the “positive” reversal and as miraculous as



the structure where Agamben seals us in behind double locks. This miracle of the event is evidently, always, the reversal of the damned *Homo Sacer*, this “abject” evental site, in appropriative grace; one of the examples most frequently mentioned—by Badiou—being, at the named point, the revolt of the slaves in Rome, under the command of Spartacus. An unthinkable becomes thinkable there; an impossibility, possible. The axiom which commands to the event, “we, slaves, have the right to return home”; the fidelity to the event is to convert this statement, everywhere and always, into effective possibility. The Law arises there in universal civic *rule*. In *Right*.

5. What is important here is to repair the ontological fault of Agamben’s reasoning, and maybe also of all Italian political philosophy ([Antonio] Negri notably, with his tote-bag of “Empire”<sup>19</sup>). What Agamben betrays here is not going far enough in the assumption of the irreducibility of the *multiple* in our epoch; and that his reasoning can only be entirely aporetic *without* this assumption. For Agamben, as for Negri, political thought acts as if there was only *one* world. *Homo Sacer*, the Jew of the 30s, the ancient slave, the Palestinians of today (not to mention the Indian pariah, the Haitian zombie, in other cultures than pagan-o-judeo-christianity): there are always *worlds*, in state occurrences, and *Homo Sacer* is not simply the “excluded,” who can always travel to another world (certain undocumented immigrants “can” return “back home” free of charge, but the majority cannot). This is the eternal paradigm of the “wandering Jew”: *he who, from the universal figure of the one who can travel in all worlds, switches and becomes one that can no longer be received in any*. This is what we once tried to define for ourselves as the trickster, a sort of universal “wall climber,” an “ecstatic player” susceptible of wearing all masks without identifying with any of them; without even considering the reverse of the “curse” which might risk punishing his game of “divine trickery” (2002).

6. The transcendental structure of the game is that which shows us how, within the frame of the strict repetition of the rules, which rigorously define, so that the game can be one, that which is “beyond-the-game,” how the “Law” returns to the *interior* of the rules: in the figures of the “winner” and the “loser.” Everywhere we must bypass the decreed rule to make the Law, and it is that which the game teaches us, and this alone. Antic tragedy, for example, which is that which has best nourished the meditations of philosophy concerning the question of the Law, cannot teach us this; neither can any form of art. There is the contemporary resort of the becoming-aesthetic of the game, and of the becoming-game of the aesthetic; the fact itself that the actual phase transition, and again over a very long term, of nihilism, cannot but pass by the form of pure “games” with rules. But this exceeds the aesthetic domain, and begins, with fruition, to penetrate the field of the political, for better and for worse. For example, one can sue a journal for defamation, and it is that which defines the democratic civic rule; but journals quite frequently bypass the rule to denigrate someone from elsewhere more effectively, and sometimes make, with total “democratic” impunity, of someone a *Homo Sacer* reduced to a bestiality worse than

that of the worst dictatorships, because it is without appeal, and, like for the *sacer*, in withdrawing from Death all value for any person whomsoever, for any memory whatsoever.

Or, a “positive” example this time, when 5,000 farmers gathered together in order to revindicate the devastation of transgenic corn fields, they make Law in bypassing the rule, which punishes such acts with harsh penalties; such that the “victims” of such exactions can never punish the guilty. More interesting again, in a spirit inspired by situationism and contemporary art, would be to test an existing Law (that which we call, thus, a rule) which stipulates that if up to 49 people rob a bank, it’s a robbery, but beyond this, it is a riot. What would a knowingly willed and demonstrative performance, say, of contemporary artists and intellectuals, of militants and occasional adventurers, who would unite in order to voluntarily rob this bank with more than 50 people be? To test the jurisprudence to the point of failure: we shall in return test the relevance of its metaphysical background, in posing the question of what an act is, a will, with respect to the Law and the rules.

This question of the game with the Law (with the decreed rules) will certainly be the principal of political action in the future: a political action, an event, testing the civic rule *to its limit*. We will see that this question (“ludic”) in reality reactivates the Trotskyist (and, we will see, metaphysically “Islamic”) question of the precession of the event by its “general repetition.”

7. The event is the interruption of a game by the imposition of another. The event is the irruption of a world in another. Profanation has the structure of a cheating; it imposes its Law on the rule, deactivates the rule through a ruse, but stays, like cheating, entirely dependent on the rule it profanes. This is what the philosopher wanted to say in showing that desire is always submitted to “the Law”: they meant to say, lacking the conceptual distinction law-rule, to the rule (of the game).

Once more, the event—political to be sure, and nothing else here—seems to *confound itself* with profanation.

## Biographies

Mehdi Belhaj Kacem (b. 1973) is a Franco-Tunisian philosopher, writer, and actor. His first novel, *Cancer*, was published in 1994. Among his most recognized philosophical works are *Événement et Répétition [Event and Repetition]* (2004), *L’esprit du nihilisme, une ontologie de l’Histoire [The Spirit of Nihilism: An Ontologic of History]* (2009), and *Après Badiou [After Badiou]* (2011).

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## Notes

1. Part 1 covers pages 223-35; Part 2 (235-53) will be published in 2025 in *Janus Unbound*.
2. “Profanation, however, neutralizes what it profanes. Once profaned,

- that which was unavailable and separate loses its aura and is returned to use” (Agamben 2007, 77) [trans].
3. “We must keep in mind that *jouissance* is prohibited [*interdite*] to whoever speaks, as such—or, put differently, it can only be said [*dite*] between the lines by whoever is a subject of the Law, since the Law is founded on that very prohibition. ... But it is not the Law itself that bars the subject’s access to *jouissance*—it simply makes a barred subject out of an almost natural barrier. For it is pleasure that sets limits to *jouissance*, pleasure as what binds incoherent life together, until another prohibition—this one being unchallengeable—arises from the regulation that Freud discovered as the primary process and relevant law of pleasure” (Lacan 1966, 821).
  4. “The protagonist of this book is bare life, that is, the life of *Homo Sacer* (sacred man), who *may be killed and yet not sacrificed*, and whose essential function in modern politics we intend to assert” (Agamben 1998, 8) [trans].
  5. The Sarkozy bill both redefined prostitution and transformed policy, making solicitation, previously a minor offence, a serious offence [*un délit*] (up to six months imprisonment initially, but amended to two), with stiffer fines, and brought back “passive” solicitation as a crime (Wikipedia N.D., Article 50).
  6. Whom you can literally *enjoy without hindrance*.
  7. Cf. Adorno (1997) and Lacoue-Labarthe (1999).
  8. See *Ironie et Vérité* (Kacem 2009) [*Irony and Truth*, trans].
  9. Reference to the conversion of Egypt to Atenist monotheism under the Pharaoh Akhenaten (circa 1340 BCE) [trans].
  10. Moods/feelings [trans].
  11. The properly *canonical citation* to which Agamben has frequent recourse in the source material of Walter Benjamin: “Capitalism is probably the only case of a non-expiatory yet guilt-ridden cult ... a monstrous guilty conscience which ignores redemption transformed into a cult not in order to expiate its failure, but in order to make it universal ... and to finish by taking God himself into the failure. ... God is not dead, but he was incorporated in the destiny of man” (translator’s version, from Benjamin (2004)).
  12. This is why, from Plato to [Immanuel] Kant, the birth of mathematics is hailed as one of the primordial events, if not the event *par excellence*, in the foundations of humanity: they are all in their entirety the appearance of Being. This is exactly why, inside themselves, they do not know any event. And it is from this redoubtable paradox, insoluble in appearance and containing in germ the ruin of all subtractive construction, that is the end we must finally account for.
  13. Kacem’s portmanteau neologism of cult and cultural [trans].
  14. “Through a strict parceling out of the contaminated space, through the invention of a technology for imposing order that would affect the administration of cities, and through the meticulous inquests which, once

the plague had disappeared, would serve to prevent vagrancy (the right to come and go enjoyed by ‘men of little means’) and even to forbid the right to disappear, which is still denied us today, in one form or another” (Foucault and Blanchot 1990, 84) [trans].

15. This book, quite far from being as mediocre as its numerous adversaries would say, has the great merit of explicitly assuming the doctrinal hegemony of the last three decades, that is to say, the placid and “pacifist” assumption of Capitalism as the “best in the world” by and for all (one wonders where the overwhelming humanoids who don’t “profit” from it have gone, not to mention the “humanity” “at its best” that unfolds as Capitalism in the United States, for example, or Japan). Fukuyama structures the rest of his decree like a wise theologian, a sort of atheosophical St. Augustine, who identifies in California the celestial Jerusalem, and the last word of humanity. The part of this thought, coming from [Alexandre] Kojève, that must be taken very seriously, is in effect the hypothesis of “the end of History,” that is to say, of a post-war, post-political humanity, having nothing further to which to devote itself except the *jouissance* of games, of sexuality, and of luxury. It already exists in Western Europe, in Canada, and in Japan. The shadow of this “pretty” tableau (or on the contrary totally despairing, since post-historical humanity would just “return” to a sort of pacified animality), it’s evidently the phenomenon of subjective unification of the human species, vulgarly named “globalization”: and thus the leading dialectic, of the United States, which we have not mentioned among the others as they still find ways of assuming the historical, thus warlike, dimension of their planetary domination, of which one knows quite well that the ecological question, or the large scale return of famine, for example, is entirely the responsibility of the countries which consume the most and thus “soar,” at the risk of manic-depressive fallout in the paradise of the end of History.
16. Cf. also Agamben (1993) [trans].
17. The chapters of this book that we retroactively consider successful and useful are “eXistenZ,” “*De l’ontologie du lieu à l’appropriation du jeu*” [“From the Ontology of Place to the Appropriation of the Game”], and with reservations which this book clarifies, “*L’événement impossible*” [The Impossible Event].
18. Cf., for example, Heidegger (2013) [trans].
19. Kacem is referencing Empire as Negri’s apparatus, not the Hardt-Negri (2000) book exclusively [trans].

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