

УДК: 32.01:1Foucault M.+1Agamben G.  
Примљено: 2. априла 2010.  
Прихваћено: 25. маја 2010.  
Оригинални научни рад

Српска политичка мисао  
број 2/2010.  
год. 17. vol. 28.  
стр. 13-26.

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## BIOPOLITICS AND (POST)HUMANISM

### *Summary*

In this article the author discusses the relation between different conceptions of biopolitics in Foucault and Agamben and the idea of humanism inasmuch as it relates to the question of becoming of new subjectivity. In tracing how the differences in understanding of biopolitics in Foucault and post-Foucauldian approach of Agamben influence not only the forms of critique of biopolitics as anti-politics, but also their relation towards a possible new humanistic discourse, the author underlines the specificities of Foucault's approach, arguing in direction of the idea that Foucault's *homo politicus* presents the possibility of a new unique synthesis between ethics, politics and philosophy. The author concludes with building the argument that it is exactly a genealogy of the present of contemporary phenomena of biopolitics, as a continuation of Foucault's approach, that can theoretically enable the possibility of new humanism inasmuch as it arises as a *sine qua non* of political subjectivity.

*Key words:* biopolitics, humanism, genealogy, critique, political subjectivity, ethics, Enlightenment, possibility, creation.

While it is the case that biopolitics emerges as one among few popular discourses of contemporary (especially left-oriented) thinking in political philosophy, disagreements around its concept, let alone answers to its theories and practices that involve a rethinking of the political, seem to be even more strengthened when the issue becomes as to weather and how an idea of „humanism“ comes forth in and through the critique of biopolitics. By all means, understanding of biopolitics in

different authors such as Foucault and Agamben<sup>1)</sup> in many ways influences their responses to the question of possibility and articulation of new political subjectivity and in such respect in an explicit or implicit way the relation between philosophy, politics and ethics as well.

In that context, every analysis that attempts to say something about biopolitics - either in the form of identifying it with liberalism (Foucault's characterization), or with the power of sovereignty (Agamben's determination) or even by building a thought of "positive biopolitics" of the multitude against empire (as is the case with Hardt's and Negri's articulation), or in the sense of Agnes Heller's writings on biopolitics as "politics of difference" (Heller:1996) – necessarily says something also about humanism, precisely in the sense and because biopolitics in any and every case represents the process of "*politization of life*". The differences in understanding *how human life is taken as an object, instrumentalized and politicized*, the differences therefore in articulation of the concept of *biopolitics as anti-humanism* (which is practically the only point of agreement among different authors) at the same time bring forth with themselves emergence of discourses that can either be comprehended as more humanistic or post-humanistic in structure, depending on how they answer to the relation between politics, ethics and philosophy and situate themselves in the framework of the general debate between Modernity and post-Modernity, and then in relation to philosophical tradition overall.

We will exemplify this in a (unorthodox) interpretation of Foucault, where not only the role of *critique* in Foucault but his entire project of *genealogy of power* - inasmuch as it appears as *genealogy of biopolitics* (history of liberalism) - is taken as a project of articulation of *homo politicus*, of a possibility of *new political subjectivity*, which comes forth with rethinking of philosophy and ethics as well. Moreover, we will argue that it is exactly Foucault's concept of biopolitics (in difference to post-Foucauldian approach Agamben), that appears as more suitable for analysis of contemporary phenomena of biopolitics, and that it is precisely this type of analysis that is required in answering the question "*What humanism can mean today?*".

Foucault's project – and not just in works from his 1978-1979 lectures at College de France (later published as *The Birth of Biopolitics and Security, Territory, Population*), but also in works such as *Society Needs To Be Defended, Discipline and Punish* and *The History of Sexuality* – introduces into philosophy *the concept and theme of biopolitics* as

1) The works of other authors such as Antonio Negri, Roberto Esposito or Mauricio Lazzaretto, that doubtlessly needs to be included in analysis of contemporary reflections on biopolitics in philosophy, remains a task for further investigations.

something addressing very different matters, from *the market, economy, techniques of governing, prisons, madness, sexuality, life and death*, and especially different processes of „normalization“ and *governing over life*. Biopolitics or biopower appears for Foucault as a “regime of truth” or „practice of truth“ that manifests itself in different phenomena, most importantly, however, signifying the transition in history and *genealogy of power* in which power becomes a matter of *not only controlling individuals but also of controlling subjects as members of a certain population*. Moreover, Foucault’s greatest challenge lies in demonstrating how modern *biopolitics generates a kind of counter-politics, an anti-politics* that simultaneously appears as a challenge for ethics and philosophy as well. Philosophy must begin as *critique* and it must begin as *a critique of biopolitics* which manifests its power in all areas of human life. This is to say that for Foucault philosophy as political philosophy (which is reflected in the knowledge-power relation), presents an *engagement with a particular “regime of truth” of biopolitics as liberalism, as a possibility of Modernity* realized in series of historical practices and government techniques. Foucault makes the strongest possible claim, namely, that as a specific possibility of relation between knowledge and power, localized and expressed through the body and in different ways of politicization of life, biopolitics appeared “*as the new discourse of the West*”.

Although, however, Foucault’s theme of discourse and decline of the West might sound rather nietzschean or heideggerian (or even postmodern at times), its articulation, as well as critique of biopolitics unfolds in a manner of a *unique political rationalism* that brings with itself other and different possibilities of thinking of power and the political. This would be to say that Habermas’s critique of Foucault<sup>2)</sup> does not appear as legitimate and justified concerning its very foundation, for it can hardly be argued that Foucault entirely dismisses Modernity, in a similar way in which Foucault, strictly speaking, gives no reason for rejection of humanism on normative grounds. As Richard Bernstein argues, most of critiques of Foucault are wedded exactly in the set of binary oppositions that Foucault subverts, such as normative/empirical, liberation/domination, universal/relative and rational/irrational.<sup>3)</sup> If this though, however, was to be taken further, Foucault’s genealogical project itself could be recognized *as the very attempt to affirm the idea of legitimacy* (as taking up an unfinished project of Modernity), as its

2) See Habermas, J. “The Critique of Reason as an Unmasking of the Human Sciences: Michel Foucault” in *Critique and Power*, ed. Kelly, M. The MIT Press, Cambridge, 1994.

3) Bernstein, R. „Critique as Philosophical Ethos“, in *Critique and Power*. p. 221.

critical response that brings with itself *a possibility of new political-ethical subjectivity*.

Foucault argues that the significant transition in genealogy of power occurs with transformation of power from power of sovereignty to power of biopolitics (that as a strategic relation arises as a process of fragmentation and dissolution of sovereignty), with the appearance of an entirely new horizon of “microphysics of power” or “capillary power” and its new “microstrategy” that brings the body into the political field. Foucault writes:

*“The condition of possibility of power is not to be looked at in a previous existence of some central point, in a unified place of sovereignty, from which other forms are derived. Power is everywhere, not because it is all encompassing but because it comes from everywhere. Power is not one institution or one structure, it is the name for a complex strategic situation in a certain society.”<sup>4)</sup>*

Foucault articulates that the object of such power can be the individual, group, class, people, nation, and all of this at once, and ways of manifestation different, underlining that the exemplary case of power of biopolitics are relations of war in specific sense. By this Foucault aims to articulate how the inversion of Klauzewitzc’s formula (*Society Needs To Be Defended*), politics as war continued by other means, signifies exactly the transformation in the field of governmentality in which *war becomes the code for peace*, focusing on the moment that

*“such discourse in the West is maybe the first historical-political discourse opposed to the philosophical-legal discourse. It is a discourse in which truth clearly functions as a tool for a certain victory. It is an unclearly critical discourse, but also a strongly mythical discourse. By its substantial elements it is foreign to the great tradition of philosophical-legal discourse. To philosophers and lawyers it is necessarily awkward and foreign.”<sup>5)</sup>*

For Foucault, this line of differentiation is of decisive importance, for exactly as such it presents the difference between two historical possibilities (as two possibilities of Modernity), of which one was realized as biopolitics, in the movement from liberalism to neoliberalism. (This also refers to the next difference between what Foucault will call “revolutionary course” of French Revolution and “utilitarian course” of English „radicalism“, as the difference between law and „state practices“ that have usefulness as their final criteria, from which *two concep-*

4) Foucault, M. *The History of Sexuality, I*. Vintage Book Editions, Random House, New York, 1990, p. 106.

5) Foucault, M. *Society Needs To Be Defended*, Picador, New York, 2003, p. 75.

tions of freedom appear as well, as „positive“ and „negative“ freedom, a „freedom from“ or „freedom for“). What is important to understand is reflection on the qualitative character of these differences, that as such refer not only to different possibilities of power but of knowledge-power and in that sense of the political and new subjectivity.

Foucault illustrates this thought in the example that new discourse of the West divides society in a binary way, as a “*war of races*”, precisely along the lines of various forms of becoming and appearance of “politics of difference” (and Foucault speaks of Nazism and Stalinism as well), emphasizing that racist discourse appears as a phase, as a specified and localized episode of the discourse of war, but *as a phase in which governmentality of biopolitics as politization of body and life emerge in paradigmatic way*. Foucault further writes that “racism, in a literary sense, is a revolutionary discourse turned upside-down”, continuing that such governmentality “can no longer be separated from the question of slavery and freedom.”<sup>6)</sup>

This is how the question of *freedom* finds itself as, for Foucault, the first question of political philosophy, most central and most immanent to the political, toward which his project of critique is directed, and on the basis of which critique and new subjectivity need to be rethought together. In opposition to biopolitics (as power of “giving life and letting die”), that with appearance of “population” manifests itself in regulation of processes of natality, mortality, length of life, demography, diseases, food, conditions of living and so forth<sup>7)</sup>, subjectivity for Foucault appears as relational, exterior and immanent in a specific sense in which it can emerge as a new possibility of freedom. If from the *History of Madness* to *History of Sexuality, Discipline and Punish, Society Needs To Be Defended* to *The Birth of Biopolitics* Foucault analyses different phenomena through which the transformation of knowledge-power took place, then this *transformation is exactly one of subjectivity* and, moreover, such that it speaks of new possibilities of different subjectivities as well.<sup>8)</sup>

Foucault emphasizes that for the most part, biopolitics functions as a combination of disciplinary and regulatory mechanism, as realiza-

6) Foucault, M. *Society Needs To Be Defended*, p. 105.

7) Foucault, M. *Securite, teritorie, population*, p. 341-370. In this context Foucault difference between „scientific knowledge“ and „knowledge of the people“, and introduction of genealogy as the way that encompasses both, should be analyzed as well.

8) Were Foucault’s project not one of recognizing great differences and possibilities of realization of knowledge-power-subjectivity, the entire project of genealogy would be impossible, for it would fall into the one and the same principle of truth, knowledge, power and subjectivity.

tion of both moments, exemplifying this in sexuality (which he posits exactly between the body and population as political anatomy of human body and biopolitics of population) and Nazism, as the *par excellence* examples in which both power of discipline and power of regulation are expressed. The key, however, for understanding different phenomena of madness, sexuality, political economy delinquency, illness, for Foucault rests in *comprehending the practices of liberalism as biopolitics*<sup>9)</sup>, as instrumentalization of events in which truth is „produced“ – which is to say that with biopolitics a new form of (utilitarian) rationality is established. In this sense Foucault writes:

*„What I mean is this: in a society such as ours, but basically in any society, there are manifold power relations which characterize and constitute the social body, and these relations of power cannot themselves be established, consolidated, nor implemented without the production, accumulation, circulation and functioning of a discourse.“*<sup>(10)</sup>

Foucault's complex and twofolded reflection on power - especially in the context of two possibilities of freedom of which only one appears as realization of positive freedom in intersubjective events – manifests itself significantly as relational, as including otherness and presupposing subjectivity as its condition of possibility. When these moments are taken together with Foucault's idea of „care of the self“ (*epimeleia heautou*), then his „ethical turn“ appears exactly in the sense of rethinking the possibility of becoming of new subjectivity in and through freedom and otherness. Foucault's „care of the self“ and „care of the soul“ emerge as deeply interrelated with his rethinking of practice and subjectivity as practical subjectivity, even more strengthened by emphasis that the first relation of subjectivity is one towards itself, its self-relation which is not primarily characterized by knowledge and theory, but by orientation in realization of something, *orientation toward action and creation as the par excellence impulse of the political in the heart of subjectivity*.

This is to say that contrary to what it first might appear, Foucault's idea of „the care of the self“ presents *a radical form of engagement*, an involvement in the world – subjectivity as becoming of *homo politicus*

9) Foucault is explicit in saying how the appearance of population manifested itself as a significant economical and political issue: „This biopower was a necessary element for the development of capitalism: capitalism could have been secured only with the price of controlled investment of the body into the field of production and with the help of adapting the phenomena of population to economic processes. But capitalism wanted more than that, it needed the growth of both, their strengthening and their usefulness, it needed methods of power that could raise the strengths, capabilities, life of people in general, but in such a way that it does not make harder to govern over them.“ Foucault, M. History of Sexuality, p. 157.

10) Foucault, M. „Two Lectures“ in *Critique and Power*, p. 31.

from which a possibility of different power comes forth. Practical philosophy, as politics and ethics, appears in this sense not only as „the first philosophy“ for Foucault, but it emerges as the very possibility of freedom, understood as creation of subjectivity. This is the way in which *philosophy of power* becomes a *philosophy of freedom*, where „care of the self“ realizes itself as relation-toward-others, as a specific form of power of subjectivity and subjectivity of power. Doubtlessly, this has a lot to do with Foucault’s idea of resistance of well, as not having much to do with „liberation from power“ but still having a lot to do with „power of freedom“, as structurally different not only from, to use Foucault’s terms, „two pathological forms of power“, „two diseases of power – Fascism and Stalinism“<sup>(11)</sup> but at the same time different from *civil-liberal society* through which *the history of biopolitics emerges*.

The question, however, remains what such power that would be opposed to power of biopolitics as anti-politics, and anti-humanism inasmuch as it always presents „politization of life“, would look like? What does Foucault mean when he speaks of the need for new power relations, and in saying that the „present struggles revolve around the question „Who we are?“ (*The Subject and Power*)? Again, the matter of becoming of new forms of power appears as above and beyond all the question of subjectivity:

*„The target nowadays is not to discover what we are, but to refuse what we are. We have to imagine and to build up what we could be to get rid of this kind of political „double bind“ which is the simultaneous individualization and totalization of modern power structures. The conclusion would be that the political, ethical, social, philosophical problem of our days is not to try to liberate the individual from the state or from the state’s institutions“, rather, Foucault continues „We have to promote new forms of subjectivity through the refusal of this kind of individuality which has been imposed on us for several centuries.“<sup>(12)</sup>*

In this sense, Foucault’s political philosophy and thinking of the political arises through several acts and types of practices, of refusal as dismissal (as the first *par excellence* political and existential act), of imagination and opening the space of possibilities and creation as the space of human freedom, and as practice of building up and realizing new possibilities. According to Foucault, this realization has a specific target, it aims at liberation from both „individualization“ and „totalization“ of power, which is to say that it aims against liberal (and post-modern) individualism as well as against models, forms and projects

11) Foucault, M. „The Subject and Power“ in *Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, p. 209.

12) Foucault, M. „The Subject and Power“, p. 216.

of totalizing that both characterize biopolitics. Moreover, Foucault's argument that such task is „political, ethical, social and philosophical“ implies a thinking of the political that at the same time presents a becoming of ethics and philosophy, in a unique discourse of political rationalism.

It is no less significant, in rethinking the possibility of Foucault's „humanism“ (of which the first value is human freedom), that it be understood that such humanism has nothing to do with what Foucault calls „humanitarian rhetoric“, ascribing it to the Western discourse of biopolitics and articulating it as a par excellence form of depolitization, in which the space for the „humanitarian“ is created so as to remove and dismiss the political. (For Foucault this also has to do with the way in which practices of biopolitics cross over and against law in different ways.) On the other hand, and in relation to this, Foucault is explicit in articulating biopolitics as direct violence: *„Wars are now being led in the name of life of all. Governing over life and survival, bodies of people and race, many wars were led and can be led. The atomic situation today came to the last point of that course of power that an entire nation is exposed to death so that another nation is ensured in the life survival. The principle: to be possible to kill in order to live became now the principle of international strategy and the survival now is not the legal survival of sovereignty but the biological survival of a certain population.“*<sup>13)</sup>

If this figures as the leading trace of biopolitics even in its contemporary forms, the question remains how normativity according to Foucault is to be justified. In difference to Habermas, Foucault argues that what we need to preserve of the Enlightenment is the very question of that event and its meaning that must now be kept present in our minds as what must be thought, in the sense in which Enlightenment itself appears as a principle of critique, investigation and creation. This refers also to the way in which Foucault posits the question of subjectivity as the question of identity, where the decisive question of the 18th century appears as the question *„Who are we in a time that is ours?“*<sup>14)</sup> For Foucault, this appears not only as the key question which has repeatedly been put forward from Kant, Hegel to Heidegger and

13) Foucault, M. *Society Needs To Be Defended*, p. 154. If one remembers here the very justification for numerous wars and series of military interventions (and „humanitarian interventions“), as well as terrorism and wars „against terrorism“ led by the West in the last two decades, it becomes clear that they appear exactly as struggles for life and survival of a certain population, and in opposition to a different population, such that one nation is exposed to death (the enemy).

14) Foucault, M. „La technologie politique des individus“, *Dits et écrits*, Gallimard, Paris, 1994. pp. 813-828.

the Frankfurt School, as the very moment of *self-critical, responsible and rational articulation*, but in his own project of genealogy and critique of biopolitics manifests itself significantly through the idea „*how are we indirectly constituted through exclusion of some others*“<sup>15)</sup>, articulating that way different forms of exclusion in contemporary liberal societies. In response to this, Foucault writes:

„*The problem is not of trying to dissolve relations of power in the utopia of a perfectly transparent communication, but to give oneself the rules of law, the techniques of management, and also the ethics, the ethos, which would allow these games of power to be played with a minimum of domination.*“<sup>16)</sup>

This is to say that Foucault's theory moves along the lines toward a conception of a, strictly speaking, minimalistic, yet sustainable humanism, where the possibility of becoming of future politics is viewed through becoming of new subjectivity that comes forth from a different type of (genealogical) knowledge and as such carries the idea of *ethos* as a specific responsibility of and for human freedom.

It might be asked is not such line of thinking exactly continued and expressed in a similar way in Agamben's *The Coming Community* where it is written that „if human beings were or had to be this or that substance, this or that destiny, no *ethical experience* would be possible...Human beings have to be something, but it is the simple fact of one's own existence as the possibility or potentiality.“<sup>17)</sup> Agamben's idea, however, unfolds through what he calls „subjectivity without subject“, as singularity that can belong only to an „innesential community“, and is therefore opposed to the very ideas of state, law, sovereignty against which a „future community“ stands. Agamben's discourse, in this sense, appears as a discourse of contemporary neo-anarchism, accompanied by postmodern and liberal ideas of *individualistic ethics and politics*, on the basis of which his critique of biopolitics resembles more a *post-humanistic approach*, which is at the same time (and as such)

15) Ibid.p. 815.

16) Foucault, M. „The Ethics of Care“, p.18. In this respect it should also be underlined that Foucault insists that „liberalism, surely, does not come forth more from a certain juridical thought but from a certain economic analysis.“ Foucault writes that „it did not come forth from the idea of political society, based on social contract“ continuing to say that „neither democracy nor legal state were not necessarily liberal, nor was liberalism necessarily democratic or faithful to legal forms“, concluding in *The Birth of Biopolitics* that „one now ought to analyze the way in which the specific problems of life and populations were put forward within the technology of governing.“ Foucault, M. *The Birth of Biopolitics* pp. 436-440.

17) Agamben, G. *The Coming Community*, University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1993, p. 42.

significantly post-Foucauldian, in respect to the meaning of biopolitics as well as in rethinking *a new humanity*.

The way in which a series of decisive differences between Foucault and Agamben arise in this context, can be traced in their attitudes toward Modernity, especially in Agamben's refusal of Foucault's genealogical analysis (that presents biopolitics as a historical „regime of truth“ that has its birth in the discourse of liberalism)<sup>18)</sup>, in contrast to which Agamben traces biopolitics all the way to Aristotle, articulating it as the power of sovereignty expressed in practically entire philosophical tradition – which is to say no less than that politics for Agamben is always already biopolitics (since the political is constituted by the state of exception, in which bare life is produced). Building such a project in which biopower and sovereignty are equalized, and where Modernity is not marked by a break with the historical tradition, but only as something that generalizes what was present from the beginning of politics, claiming a structural link between sovereignty and biopolitics (as between bare life and legal existence), as Andreas Kalyvas argues makes Agamben extremely vulnerable to critiques for ahistoricity coming from the lack of differentiations between ancient Greek and modern thought, and from this bringing into question his conception of biopolitics as well. From *Homo Sacer* (1998) and *Remnants of Auschwitz* (1999) to *State of Exception* (2005) Agamben declares that the biopolitical paradigm is „the camp“<sup>19)</sup>, and in such respect not only fails to make significant theoretical (and historical) differentiations but with his conceptual tools misses out on some of major aspects of biopolitics itself.

Moreover, what brings Foucault's analysis of power much closer to investigations of contemporary power relations, contemporary forms of biopolitics (and in answering the question how is it that politization of life happens in the present moment), in difference to Agamben, which is another and different problem for Agamben's theory, is that Foucault argumentatively argues that the power of biopolitics has nothing to do with power of sovereignty (nor with the legal-discursive framework and contrary to Agamben's endorsement of legalistic concept of biopolitics), for contemporary power relations appear as diffused and decentralized (power is everywhere except in sovereignty). For this rea-

18) Let alone to say that, coming from Foucault's discourse on biopolitics, Agamben's analysis would appear as a par excellence example of such thinking. This would be to say that Agamben subscribes exactly to the juridico-discursive concept of power that Foucault has shown to be insufficient for the analysis of modern biopolitics (Lemke:2004).

19) Agamben's view of „the camp“ refers not only to concentration camps of the Nazis but in principle denotes every single space that systematically produces bare life: „The camp is the space that is opened when the state of exception begins to become the rule“, Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, p. 168.

son it is also practically impossible to to argue that Agamben's concept of *homo sacer*<sup>20)</sup> is either a continuation of Foucault's model of panopticon or its development in a contemporary context<sup>21)</sup>, along the same lines in which Agamben's decisive distinction between *zoe* and *bios*, bare life and political existence, between natural existence and the legal status of the human being (*Homo Sacer*) has nothing in common with Foucault's reference to the power of biopolitics.

Third and specific problem with Agamben's thinking of biopolitics as sovereignty arises from the moment that sovereignty is one-sidedly taken in the aspect of „indefinite suspension of law“, more precisely as a permanent *zone of anomy* and as such (originating from Agamben's reading of Yan Thomas) in final implication as the „power to kill“. This is the reason why – especially because Agamben does not focus on different aspects of „normalization“ and „politization of life“ but on death – that biopolitics in such sense appears as „*thanatopolitics*“ (Fitzpatrick: 2001, Werber: 2002),

Moreover, if something important, therefore, is missed in Agamben's characterization of biopolitics, from which it does not appear as most suitable for analysis of an entire spectre of contemporary phenomena of biopolitics that ranges from terrorism to „wars led in the name of life“ and some major features of Western political practices in doctrine on interventionism in international affairs (where Agamben's „paradigm“ as a movement „from particular to the particular“ misses out exactly on character of event's it attempts to comprehend), on the other hand this is no less the case with Agamben's post-subjectivity. As post-subjectivity, Agamben's singularity is one of post-humanity as well, although it attempts to articulate itself as a decision for or against humanity and inhumanity. This is even more striking when kept in mind that this very sort of decision is something that Agamben ascribes to the history of metaphysics (paradigmatically exemplified in thinking of Carl Schmitt to whom, paradoxically, Agamben owes more than to Michel Foucault), as a matter of his severe critique and a discourse to be avoided at all costs. Nonetheless, Agamben in *Means Without Ends* writes explicitly on the idea of a *pure humanity*: „There is no autono-

20) For Agamben the obscure figure of „*homo sacer*“ marks the flip side of the sovereign logic. As the sovereign is in a position above the law, bare life signifies a domain beyond his competence while at the same time it provides the basis for the rule of sovereignty.

21) Agamben explicitly refers to his idea of „the camp“ as „the paradigm“ as coming from Foucault's model of panopticon in *Discipline and Punish*: „By paradigm I mean something very precise, some kind of methodological approach to problems like Foucault takes for example the panopticum as a very concrete object while at the same time treating it as a paradigm to explain the larger historical context.“ Agamben, G. „Das unleilige Leben. Ein Gespräch mit dem italienischen Philosophen Giorgio Agamben“ in *Literaturen*, No.1. pp. 16-22, 2001.

mous space in the political order of the nation-state for something like the *pure human in itself*, that is evident at the very least from the fact that, even in the best of cases, the status of the refugee has always been considered as a temporary condition.<sup>22)</sup>

Leaving aside the moment that the ultimate carrier of Agamben's „pure humanity“ is found in the postsubjectivity of refugees, that comes forth from his idea that Fascism and Nazism have still not been surpassed and that we are still living under their shadow (*The Coming Community*), the problem that emerges in respect to biopolitics (and answer to it) is precisely the idea of „pure humanity“, as exclusive and excluding in character, as insensitive for otherness and in that sense as the very feature Agamben himself wishes to stand against. Moreover, what is at stake here is not only a presupposition of a „pure humanity“ but a movement that comes close to its substantialization, especially in the sense of its appearance as the one and only possibility of politics and ethics.

Strictly speaking, politics for Agamben should be replaced by ethics. But contrary to what one first might think, in reference to his idea of „pure humanity“, this new discourse of ethics-politics, has not only nothing to do with Aristotle's thinking on politics and ethics, but also explicitly distances itself from the idea of democracy and idea of the people<sup>23)</sup>, as well as from any notion of „good life“. On contrary, Agamben speaks of a „happy life“ (instead of „good life“), as the life of many singularities whose „ethical responsibility“ - as Agamben explicitly writes in *The Coming Community* - *does not have much in common with responsibility*.<sup>24)</sup> In such future community of postsubjectivities, and precisely because of it, there is no more sense of ideas such as identity, guilt or responsibility.<sup>25)</sup> Furthermore, even Agamben's „happy life“ is not all to happy for, aside from the rare occasions on which he introduces this term, what prevails is what Thomas Lemke calls „a catastrophic endpoint of a political tradition that originates in Greek antiquity and leads to the National Socialist concentration camps“ (Lemke:2004).

22) Agamben, G. *Means Without Ends*, p. 19.

23) Agamben, G. *State of Exception*, p. 78. and Agamben, G. *Means Without Ends*, p. 25.

24) Agamben, G. *The Coming Community*, p. 62.

25) In this sense, Agamben's concept of „ethical responsibility“ has no similarity to concept of „ethical responsibility“ as it is articulated in the work of Emanuel Levinas. Agamben writes that „ethics is a sphere where there is no guilt or responsibility in the usual sense of the word, but it refers to the doctrine of happy life.“ Agamben, G. *Remnants of Auschwitz*, p. 24.

In conclusion, let us say that the way the term „biopolitics“ is more and more frequently used (especially as in scientific literature and journalist texts) is mostly as a neutral notion or generally category to point out the social and political implications of biotechnological interventions. Such technology centered approach ignores the *historical and critical dimension of Foucault's notion of biopolitics, how technological developments are embedded in more global economic strategies and political rationalities*. On the other hand, the exception to this trend toward a simultaneous generalisation and depoliticisation of the concept of biopolitics that can be found in the work of Giorgio Agamben misses out to examine the relational, decentralised and productive aspects of power, and remaining within the horizon of law fails to see that even decisions on life and death are less the explicit results of legality<sup>26)</sup> and more and often appear in opposition to it. Moreover, analysis of biopolitics cannot remain limited to those without legal rights – such as Agamben's refugee or the asylum seeker – but must confront all those who are confronted with social processes of exclusion, even if they may be formally enjoying full political rights. Agamben's concept of biopolitics appears at the same time too broad in its explanatory scope and too narrow in empirical complexity. For this reason he also does not take into account an entire field of practice of scientific consultants, economic interest groups, civil mediators that define the beginning, end and value of „life“ in various expert commissions. Finally, if the possibility for rethinking humanism is to be looked upon today, then it would have to begin from articulating a genealogy of the present and different forms in which contemporary biopolitics manifests itself, as the possibility for new political and ethical subjectivity.

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26) By concentrating on questions of law and the figure of the sovereign ban, Agamben ignores central aspects of contemporary biopolitics. In taking for granted that the state of exception is not only the point of departure for politics, but its essence and destination, politics is reduced to the production of *homines sacri*. Bare life, however, is no longer simply subject to death, if falls prey to a bioeconomical imperative that aims at the increase of life's value and the optimisation of its quality. Lemke (2004), Brockling (2003).

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## Богдана Кољевић

### БИОПОЛИТИКА И (ПОСТ)ХУМАНИЗАМ

#### Сажетак

У овом чланку аутор разматра однос између различитих концепција биополитике код Фукоа и Агамбена и идеју хуманизма у мери у којој се она тиче питања постајања новог субјективитета. Истражујући како различита разумевања биополитике код Фукоа са једне стране, и унутар пост-фукоовских приступа са друге, утичу не само облике критике биополитике као антиполитике, него такође на њихов однос према потенцијалном новом хуманистичком дискурсу, аутор подвлачи специфичности Фукоовог приступа, аргументишући у правцу идеје да Фукоов *хомо политикос* представља могућност нове јединствене синтезе између етике, политике и филозофије. Аутор закључује аргументом да управо генеалогичка садашњих феномена биополитике, као наставак Фукоовог приступа, теоријски може да омогући потенцијални нови хуманизам, у смислу у којем се он појављује као *sine qua non* политичког субјективитета.

Кључне речи: биополитика, хуманизам, генеалогичка, критика, политички субјективитет, етика, Просветителство, могућност, стварање.