

Human-Animal Dialectic in Giorgio Agamben

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The human-animal discretion marks a noteworthy dialectic in Agamben's philosophical corpus that connotes the conception of human's interconnection with the animal other has established anthropological features as inherently encountering the systemic networks of power that underlies the social echelons. The incomprehensible biblical image of the righteous symbolized with animal heads after the Day of Judgement creates a plinth for Agamben to survey the manifold means in which the anthropological machine of Western intellect impact the privileging of the human over the animal. *Homo Sapiens* as an anthro-sociological category is an apparatus that identifies the centrality of human beings involving a mobility that furnishes the human-human dialectic configuring the third form of life, a bare life that dismantles the machine but the neither human nor nature are allowed to subjugate the other but represent a dialectical harmony, a "dialectic at a standstill" from a Benjaminian point of view that distances the non-happenstance.

I

Agamben views history from a Hegelian perspective where reason expands from a philosophical stand point but clarifies those notions like human, animal, language and science as a timeless trend. Bringing in Heideggerian stance on *Being and Time*, he explains how the animal does undergo death as an unconstructive experience but dying does not bring into animal a death but a stoppage of life where the animal voice encompasses the death of the animal recognizes that history has to comprise the animal. Evolution, though not involved, seems subjective where the voice is mislaid when the animal dies. He constitutes a significantly convoluted theoretical ontology without being distinguishing between various forms of beings, humans-animals that are explicated in an open space that discards historical and cultural elements contributing to the making of a being through consciousness. Thus, Agamben's version of Being is closely akin to that of Heidegger in his adherence of a possible propinquity in humans and animals.

Homo sacer becomes the parting border between humans and animals, the animal is the wolf-human where a close proximity is involved. The werewolf is closer to that of a bandit, an outlaw, in the medieval ages. Medieval law describes the bandit as posturing a wolf's head. The bandit is one who is banned from the city and prohibited by the law. The werewolf exemplifies a form of life that correlates to that demotes to a condition prior to a principle of edict. However, bare life is neither human nor animal but the differentiation move beyond human-animal dialectic through its substantial dynamics. Animal being is exclusive of the political encompassing a sphere of apolity, a condition of exemption, manifesting an opposition to human dynamics and potentiality, the being

that exists in *zoe/bio* binary. However the indifference that formulates the being of human underlines an ontological difference, a form of requirement animality positions the unfilled negativity of human. Agamben writes: "Insofar as the animal knows neither beings nor nonbeings, neither open nor closed, it is outside of being; it is outside in an exteriority more external than any open, and inside in an intimacy more internal than any closedness. To let the animal be would then mean: to let it be outside of being" (*Open* 91). Such exclusion marks animal by privation by which negativity is depicted within the establishment of animality.

Agamben's anthropogenesis deferral of its disinhibitors and the animals becomes incompetent of negativity suspending the sphere of human proximity. However the animal being is seen previously as being outside of the concept of being where natural life as opposed to political life which becomes life marked with exemption. Considering the idea of animality as a perceptive of natural life Agamben's dialectic lingers a humanist enterprise. Animal being within Agamben's corpus emerges as an outside and the position that encourages the consequent expression of human. Outside, nevertheless, is not an essential differentiation of externality but inherent anthropogenesis where animal being is confined and ciphered within an anthropogenic course and deferred in the becoming of human as wholesome potentiality, the ability to be wearied. Heideggerean foundational ontology recognizes a link between animal and Dasein, the world-forming. Animal as dispossessed and refuted anticipates only a sense of probability of being.

Agamben's human - animal, speaking - living being, *bios* - *zoe* presumes a fundamental unity in its essence. His notion of "bare life" that he seeks to explicate from *Homo Sacer* differentiates between *bios* from *zoe*, life that is general to all living beings. Agamben does not show interest to challenge or adhere with the evolution theory to promote the link between human and animal as of Aristotle or to endorse the disruption between the human and animal association like Descartes and Heidegger but brings in fresh treatment to *zoe* (Durantaye 333). He anticipates a rationale of ontological accord and historical advancement that intimates the present burlesques of divisions by congealing the anthropological apparatus that is threatening contemporary societies. Agamben's *The Open* brings in Aristotelian notion of life designating a negative substance but encompasses the movable limits within the existence of human life. Conveying the concept of life beyond the classical philosophy, he designates a humanistic perspective but entailing the futures of the human but that which lacks in the animal. The human-animal is a same fold entity as they are "the jewel set at the centre" (*Open* 68). The ability to differentiate human from animal lies in the potential to dangle the animal captivation permitting freedom. The life lays in freedom from a reincorporating life and not through diminishing the dichotomy. Therefore the uniqueness of humanity comes from the Heideggerean zone of irresolution through which the animal and the human are harmoniously accorded and distinguished through the relation between confinements. As Lewis maintains, "Unlike the human world with its potentiality for uniqueness and authentic responses to particular situations, the animal environment is closed to the openness of being, producing a state of captivation or predetermined behavioural reflexes to fixed stimuli" (n.pag). The biopolitical condition of *zoe* provides certain segregate

realm of the sovereign as the citizen moves into *bios* for its political mode. The manner of lie that pre-empts certain universal living being is the subject of politics making dignity as part of modern discourse. Agamben brings to our notice the resentments and uncertainties of clarifying human in relation to animal being. 'Life' in Aristotle's *De Anima* entails an exclusivity of nutritive life from which the order of life is systematized giving way to the probability of a dichotomy between the higher and lower faculty of life scheduling an aporetic relationship between human and animal being.

Bare life entails sovereignty constituting life "included in the political order in being exposed to an unconditional capacity to be killed" (*Open* 85). Therefore biopolitical validations become indissoluble from autonomous power because the configuration of the political realm involves the constitution of life. Anthropogenesis is a coercion that excludes the originary to make the possibility of a Dasein. It is through this conduit and disclosure of the probability of moment the departure of animality ensues in a human being. However it also makes us think if Agamben's differentiation between human and animal appeals a segregate of "indistinction" between human and animal (LaCapra 166). The undisputed presumption is that a being is the derivation of the openness due to a human being exists as an ontic essence that is consequently inherent and coetaneous with being. The animal captivation that points to an openness of the probability in Dasein is a strength that deals with the authentic captivating supremacy of the animal's environment to be triggered. Therefore, it allows us to inform the nontruth that is analogous to the originality of truth, the undisclosed center of truth as *aletheia* is a timeless encounter between openness and veil which characterizes the human world. Agamben attempts to consider "animal life insofar as he locates the problem of animal being as that of living being, *zoe*, in the direction of the human, a development that is not supported by Heidegger's analyses of animality from which Agamben claims to have derived his assertions" (Gustafson 13). The metaphysical medium that forms the kernel giving rise to the idea of human as a strained interconnection between animal and human existence.

II

The "anthropological machine," that connotes with the craft of human being and the innate instinct to counter systemic execution of power at various levels and forms that pursue to oppress, consociates with Foucault's critical-intellectual encounter with power and the haphazard of biopolitics. The biopolitical machine attempts to elucidate the human in its alliance to the animal from a bare life perspective. Durantaye observes that "It is this menace, which the work of Foucault helped to move to the centre of Agamben's interests, that leads Agamben to undertake an investigation of the reigning conceptions of *life*—and of the way human life is distinguished from animal life, the way qualified, categorized life is distinguished from a merely animalic life, a "bare" and "unprotected" life" (Durantaye 334). In order to impede the tackle that administers the idea of human is to dependably exhibit the key emptiness and gap that distinguishes the human from the animal. Therefore it is not the human or animal but from "open space between the two"

becomes the key to the sustenance of the society. The inherent self-identifying notion of anthropological machine imports the idea that some of the animals are distinguished within the category of humans in opposition to another category named animals. Anthropological machine as a systemic category analyzes and explicates each other exclusively:

Insofar as the production of human through the opposition human/animal, human/inhuman, is at stake here, the machine necessarily functions by means of exclusion (which is always already a capturing) and an inclusion (which is also always already an exclusion). Indeed, precisely because the human is already presupposed every time, the machine actually produces a kind of state of exception, a zone of indeterminacy in which the outside nothing but the exclusion of an inside and the inside is in turn only the inclusion of an outside. (*Open* 37)

The anthropological machine dominates our perspective of human through an immediate enunciation of the animal and the human though the idea predicates upon a link between the two. Agamben's contribution to biopolitics is the legitimacy he endorses to the interconnection of politics to violence and the interconnection between human and the non-human animal life, the base for any activity. Agamben maintains that "In our culture, the decisive political conflict, which governs every other conflict, is that between the animality and the humanity of human. That is to say, in its origin Western politics is also biopolitics" (*Open* 80). Agamben's view is close to Foucault's statement "modern human is an animal whose politics places his existence as a living being in question" (143). However, in Agamben the dispute between human and animal should form as the base for biopolitics as a formative distinction. The positioning of life within sovereignty constitutes the life as distinguished from a life constituted by law or divinity. The association between human and animal is historical and an altered method of fabrication comes to pass in the modern period eliminating the self-being through animalizing the human and by prohibiting the non-human in the being. The anthropological machine schedules "the non-human produced within the human" (*Open* 37) because it functions in a proportioned manner where "the inside is obtained through the inclusion of an outside, and the non-human is produced by the humanization of the animal" (*Open* 37). The humanization of animal proliferates in the configuration of oppression that produces colonies and slaves making their affinity to animal legitimized. Agamben writes, "If there is no animal politics, that is perhaps because animals are always already in the open and do not try to take possession of their own exposition; they simply live in it without caring about it. That is why they are not interested in mirrors, in the image as image" (*Means* 92.3). Human beings disconnect images from objects and christen them as they identify themselves to take control of their own appearance. Thus, they alter the open into a world full of political encounters and struggle whose object is truth, the name of that truth is History.

The Open discusses primarily about the anthropological machine that impact humanized animal and the animalized human pre-dating the modern forms of being. The historicity of language is influenced by the anthropological machine aiding humans to renovate the faculty to decide. The interconnection between human beings and animals

fabricate itself a different form when diminishes into bare life where the anthropological machine delivers inoperative. The barrenness and the gap within human being differentiate human and animal to menace the being into such barrenness. Agamben's re-narration of infantile dynamics in animals emphasizes a fresh relation between human beings and animals through experience of language. Agamben brings in the example of *axolotl*, a Mexican freshwater amphibian to establish its neoteny. *Axolotl* preserves its juvenile gills all through its maturation instead of shedding its juvenile features to grow adult features. Humans, according to Agamben, evolve from a young primate with early reproductive faculty. As a result, the temporary features in primates become perfect in flesh and bone, the category of the eternal child. The eternal child is disposed of its state of infancy declining any destiny but with potentialities that is autonomous, alive and being. Agamben's presentation of *axolotl* is inquisitive that reflect and consolidate the infantile dynamics autonomously re-narrating the premature experiences of language. The altering relationship between human and animals is anticipated to concentrate on the susceptible reliant on the perilous interconnections of the experiences of language. The "ape-human" is located at a stage of *huhuman* that heralds language that is natural and essential without which *huhuman* "neither truly exist nor be thought of as existing. Either human has language, or he simply is not" (*Open* 36). The naturalness of human soul is lost as it presumes an inference from the previous stages. Consequently, it is not the human alone; the animal also advances through language from animality to humanity. Evolutionary theory fails to underline the capacity of speech as a link between animals and humans. The differentiation between animals and humans, for Agamben, is language which informs an innate advanced psychophysical configuration in human beings. However, he discards the anthropological machine attributing language as a unique human capacity.

The detachment between language and speech becomes the prerequisite for the historicity of humans whereas "animals do not enter language, they are already inside it" but human "splits this single language and, in order to speak, has to constitute himself as the subject of language" (*Infancy* 59). It suggests that "if human is the animal that has become bored and becomes a speaking being, this specific "becoming" that Agamben designates as anthropogenesis must itself derive from something which both exceeds and is more originary than these conceptual doubles—more originary realm that the human is capable of interrupting or suspending" (Gustafson 10). The animal voice is expanded to inform the language of human where the truth is expressed through objects and the ability of language of human beings as opposed to animals demonstrates the ontological aspect. As Hegarty observes the voice, as explained by Agamben, is "not the human discursive voice, but the voice that lies between animal voice and discourse; it is 'no longer the experience of sound, and not yet the experience of meaning'" (17).

The animal that seems not to be burdened by any particular trait experiences the social. Language/voice is key to Agamben's understanding of socio-polity where the process of signification and other procedures of language production come into play. The paradoxical space that the animal occupies presents the impact of philosophy and religion that offers human being an indeterminate feature of humanity. The splintered nature of

human is recognized as animal where the presumption of severance conveyed into human culture covering in the form of biopolitics and dogmas. If humanity is discussed from a perspective of non-language, the particularity of extermination of humanity in the veiling of language and the replacement by simulation could be compared to animals. Therefore, humanity as described from the perspective of a non-language, for Hegel is an exchange of apotheosis but Agamben insists on the individuality and the probability that underlines the continuation of language. Thus, “human is the only animal with discursive language, echoing the self-reflexivity or awareness that only it has, and the essence of that is the transition where language is nothing, where the threat of death is all” (Hegarty 19). The demarcation between Agamben’s human-animal by a default encounter with language is contemplatively legitimizing a distinction formed on the nonhuman within the human.

Only the word puts us in contact with mute things. While nature and animals are forever caught up in a language, incessantly speaking and responding to signs even while keeping silent, only human succeeds in interrupting, in the word, the infinite language of nature and placing himself for a moment in front of mute things. The inviolate rose, the idea of rose, exists only for human. (*Idea of Prose* 113)

Agamben differs with the classical notion that it is the ability of human beings to use the language makes them exceptional from that of animals. It is the capacity of human beings to make language perceptible that is unique. The faculty to segregate the language of nature from the object, the mute object permits human beings to develop into object-orientation, or the Heideggerian ‘world-forming.’ Consequently, animals do not evolve into world-forming beings because they are inoperative of the nature that isolates the construction of nature.

Agamben suggests that within the profound boredom we distinguish the propinquity that characterizes animal essence and the moment of boredom is the moment that exposes animal captivation. Captivation is not a condition where the substance of the being is revealed but the affinity of the substance is convoluted bringing in certainty in freedom beyond rationale. The deficiencies of the world the animal experiences is the unresponsiveness involving the mobility from the animal to the human not as an appendage but as a process that is started towards the temporal. Agamben explains: “In captivation the animal was in an immediate relation with its disinhibitor, exposed to and stunned by it, yet in such a way that the disinhibitor could never be revealed as such. What the animal is precisely unable to do is suspend and deactivate its relationship with the ring of its specific disinhibitors. That animal environment is constituted in such a way that something like a pure possibility can never manifest within it” (*Open* 68). The animal is able to perform in response to particular stimuli during captivation and the animal survives as a dynamic entity in an ambience to differentiate itself from human beings through a sublime reestablishment. The dynamics that exist within living beings can evoke a mobility whereby the animals invoke its own impotentiality setting the standard of gauging the potentiality of the human becomes dependent on the chasm of human impotentiality. Thus as Lewis notes it is “the animal that enables our potential-to-be, and it is the human that enables our potential-not-to-be:

thus the site of indistinction between the two is precisely the location of potentiality itself (as both the capability to be and not to be simultaneously)” (n.pag). When the animal responds to the stimuli of its existing ambience and the human to the world, the void sets up the dynamics of potentiality where the operative frees itself to exist between the ability and incapacity become identical.

Agamben’s idea of animal being follows Heidegger’s scheme of animal life through a critique of the supposed ontological superiority of Being in boredom where the affinity of human to animal is explicated. In Heideggerean view point the animal is isolated within the sphere of disinhibitors consistent with the environment of the conscious world. Captivation is presented as the method of imbibing the fundamentality of animal being. The animal is entranced by its disinhibitor whereby the animal acts itself to respond to the stimuli (behaviour). Agamben, however, views that the being is commenced negatively into animal environment by a denial which is ambiguous. Thus “the essence of the animal’s relation to world is not simply that of pure deprivation, but simultaneously one of lack, an assertion that rests on the concept of animal captivation” (Gustafson 6). Captivation fetches the substance of the animal being from an essential openness and soaked up by an ambience that denies. Such a opportunity of being involves a disinhibition that is evident in the animal causing a interruption into the substance of the animal. Captivation is not “a sort of fundamental *Stimmung* in which the animal does not open itself, as does Dasein, in a world, yet is nevertheless ecstatically drawn outside of itself in an exposure which disrupts it in its every fiber” (*Open* 62). Thus the human world is understood solely through an interconnection to the revelation with openness that embodies animal being. The openness of the human world can be sought by a manoeuvre that relates the animal world, the profound boredom that a human being’s basic regulatory mechanism that congregates upon animal captivation.

Dasein, as Agamben views, is distributed to that which denies itself as of animal in its captivation where the refusal of the totality is configuratively into a world of its concern and unrevealed. Moreover the animal is incapable of postponing and disengaging its interconnection with the sphere of its disinhibitors and hence profound boredom manifests as a metaphysical operative where the “passage from poverty in world to world, from animal environment to human world, is realized; at issue here is nothing less than anthropogenesis, the becoming Da-sein of living human” (*Open* 68). Agamben traces the link between human and animal from an entangled encounter between unconcealedness and concealedness, the Heideggerean world where the domestic struggle between human and animal is located. Consequently Dasein is merely an animal that has trained to be bored and stimulated ‘from’ its own captivation ‘to’ its captivation. This initiation of the living being to its ‘own being-captivated’ to be the human. The impact of world is scrutinized from becoming-human that relies on the captivation of animal being. Captivation as the means of link with its ambience is corresponds to an open-close access to being. Agamben’s reading of boredom through *Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics* discloses the affinity between Dasein and the animal. Dasein rivets autonomy similar to that of animal captivation with a possibility in boredom. Thus profound boredom acting as a metaphysical operator offers a passage from animality to humanity through what

Agamben defines as the “becoming Da-sein of the living human.” The becoming Da-sein occurs through an Heideggerean inclusive exclusion that veils the animal other in the core of Dasein predicating upon an open human-animal dialectic.

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