

Agamben, G. (1996) "Form-of-Life" in P. Virno and M. Hardt, eds. *Radical Politics in Italy: A Potential Politics*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Form-of-life is life from which you cannot isolate an abstract naked life. It is life that is bound up necessarily with the concrete forms that life takes.

Naked life is life that is not yet subject to the protection of the sovereign and thus is in the state of nature, and is in constant danger of encountering the power to kill.

Agamben makes the distinction between *potenza* (possibilities of life) and *potere* (sovereign power).

Potenza applies to humans as beings who have the power to do or not do, a potentiality, beings for whom happiness is at stake in their living.

Potere is founded on the *separation* between naked life and the concrete forms that life takes. (This replaces, for Agamben, Marx's old man-citizen division). **Political life** is life that exists under the protection of the sovereign. As Hobbes says, the political legitimacy of the power of the sovereign (*potere*) is based upon his ability to protect naked life. That is why *potere* needs to separate our naked life as an idea, to conceive of a life in the state of nature, and to define it as unacceptable, so that we all will choose political life, life under the protection of the sovereign, instead.

This argument is important: Agamben says that *potere* today can only legitimate itself by claiming **emergency**. This resonates with, for example, Parenti's global warming (we need the State to solve the global warming problem, then we can junk it), or the old model of using the State to abolish class and then it will wither away.

We must found a **new conception of political life**: a life directed toward the idea of **happiness**, a life in which we cannot separate out naked life from the forms that life takes, a life that is in **exodus** from sovereignty. A non-Statist politics requires a form-of-life in which naked life and the concrete forms of life are inseparable, in which *potenza* is emancipated.

Thought/intelligence is the nexus in which form-of-life can take shape. In which the possibility of power, of becoming other, has not yet been closed off, enacted. Thought is always the experience of a common power. [Community is always to come; it is always its own potential to arrive, to come into being (R's politics). It is never the enacted partition of things (R's police).] **General intellect** is **thought** proper, experience of common power. The human potential for thought is always collective, always functions as a collective work of mankind. So this general intellect is the power that joins naked life with the many concrete forms of life into forms-of-life. It is *potenza*, the anti-state-power. It is thought, this general intellect, this *potenza*, this exodus from sovereignty, this form-of-life, that must form the basis of the politics to come.