



Means Without End: Notes on Politics

Giorgio Agamben , Cesare Casarino (Translator) , Vincenzo Binetti (Translator)

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An essential reevaluation of the proper role of politics in contemporary life. A critical rethinking of the categories of politics within a new sociopolitical and historical context, this book builds on the previous work of the distinguished political philosopher Giorgio Agamben to address the status and nature of politics itself. Bringing politics face-to-face with its own failures of consciousness and consequence, Agamben frames his analysis in terms of clear contemporary relevance. He proposes, in his characteristically allusive and intriguing way, a politics of gesture—a politics of means without end. Among the topics Agamben takes up are the "properly" political paradigms of experience, as well as those generally not viewed as political. He begins by elaborating work on biopower begun by Foucault, returning the natural life of humans to the center of the polis and considering it as the very basis for politics. He then considers subjects such as the state of exception (the temporary suspension of the juridical order); the concentration camp (a zone of indifference between public and private and, at the same time, the secret matrix of the political space in which we live); the refugee, who, breaking the bond between the human and the citizen, moves from marginal status to the center of the crisis of the modern nation-state; and the sphere of pure means or gestures (those gestures that, remaining nothing more than means, liberate themselves from any relation to ends) as the proper sphere of politics. Attentive to the urgent demands of the political moment, as well as to the bankruptcy of political discourse, Agamben's work brings politics back to life, and life back to politics.

Giorgio Agamben teaches philosophy at the College International de Philosophie in Paris and at the University of Macerata in Italy. He is the author of *Language and Death* (1991), *Stanzas* (1992), and *The Coming Community* (1993), all published by the University of Minnesota Press.

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Means Without End: Notes on Politics Details

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Viktor says

Nok det mest usammenhængende af Agambens værker, som jeg endnu har læst. Nogen steder virker det også noget redundant, når man har læst Homo Sacer I. Dog er det dele som Noter om gestus og Randnoter til "Kommentarer til skuespilsamfundet" som gør Agamben så skøn at læse. Denne samling af tekster fungerer også godt som konkret eksemplificering af hans filosofi, da han tager udgangspunkt i adskillige historiske og - for datiden (1990erne) - samtidige begivenheder. Dette er nok også det mest direkte normative værk læst af ham, med konkrete opfordringer til, hvad mennesket og samfundet burde stræbe efter (ahem, en fuldstændig lykke; udlevelse af menneskets potentialitet). Jaja...

Carmel Ramos says

Boa introdução a Agamben.

Elsie says

I loved this book. It is the first book that I truly loved (and had time to finish) in grad school. People have criticized him to me (I guess he is politically uninvolved), and I hear that his work is way too trendy (an intellectual commodity), but I loved this book. So. (Still the problem of thinking the refugee from the European model.)

Mohammad Mirzaali says

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Andy says

I mainly read this volume for the essay on Guy Debord - the great under-appreciated theorist of late 20th century Europe. It seems that Agamben is one of the few philosophers who has seriously engaged Debord's corpus. The other essays are excellent as well - Agamben, or at least his English translators, are masters of a crystalline prose.

Alfonso de Castro says

Giorgio Agamben es probable el filósofo más interesante que he leído desde hace mucho. Lector y traductor de Benjamin, su erudición es tremenda. Medios sin fin es un conjunto de textos, notas sobre la política, "verdaderas iluminaciones en las que se encuentran quizá algunos de los más felices y penetrantes enunciados de la vasta investigación del autor en este territorio". Una lectura a veces difícil pero al final muy gratificante.

Jacob says

A book of essays by Agamben. Not really that necessary in light of his other writings. However, his essay on the refugee is on point, and very important in today's political climate.

and says

WOAH! excuuuuuse me mr. George. Sorry i'm not Heideggerean enough for you. [funny, lolcats would spell Heidegger 'Haidegger' maybe okkkkkk not funny] This text has a lot of stuff in it. The first part seems to be a nexus of the liminal stages of Homo Sacer. Of interest were his remarks on Debord- he expands the spectacle to include language, which was good up until the point he did some weird Heideggerean shit with it. I guess I just don't ever see these sort of postmodern ideas ever manifesting themselves corporeally. They are interesting critiques, and sound great, but i'm not so sure how we're ever going to become being-in-language or whatever the hell he's talking about. It's actually probably mostly my lack of inexperience with the Hyde man. The essay on Gesture is also really good, where he fleshes out his idea of politics as means without ends. This essay did require a couple of readings, as his logic seems a bit corybantic in this essay. The opening essay, Forms-of-life will help you if you're dying to be [like myself] one of those cool intellectual anarchists that understands tiqqun. This is a good book, make sure you've read your Benjamin and Heidegger and you'll be fine.

Nicholas says

Mostly decent. The last essay though ('In this Exile...') is spectacular.

Alfonso de Castro says

Qué es un pueblo? y Qué es un campo? son dos escritos sensacionales. Y no son los únicos de este volumen.

Corbin says

A collection of essays and thoughts from the early '90s, this book is a nice refresher in Agamben's main

concepts and concerns. For those completely unfamiliar with his ideas, he doesn't do a lot to elucidate his jargon or justify his aims. But even for those with a minimal familiarity will gain a lot from the examples, anecdotes, and applied analyses presented here. Some of the pieces are accessible without any background in Agamben's thought, and none of them belabor his conceptual apparatus too much. But some of the moves are more suggestive than argumentative, and as plausible as I find his views, they won't convince the critic or satisfy the curious. Still, I really enjoyed this collection and recommend it heartily to those who want a refresher in his early works or who are only familiar with his later stuff.

jessi lee says

for class.

okay, i went into this book more interested in agamben's ideas about gesture, but i found those to be pretty unsatisfying. he talks about all politics as being gesture, and the kind of vacuousness (vacuity?) of contemporary politics. but then also seeing some kind of potential there. i don't totally get it...

where he's good, it seems to me, is when he's talking about refugees and camps--states of exception to the rule of the nation-state, and kind of deconstructing the term people as always already having kind of foucauldian cracks through it. and he talks about how naked life & political life have been divorced from each other, and how that leaves a space where people can have their political life denied, and just be in this state of naked life. like in camps (think guantanamo, concentration camps, etc).

but definitely don't read this unless someone is making you do it, and going to talk about it with you afterwards.

Olesya Vartanyan says

A combination of early works by Agamben. Should not be his first book to read. Better to start with sth more well-established by him. But still an interesting read for those, who are trying to understand our modern statehood and why it produces so many disappointments and protests.

Matthew Balliro says

This is a good book of essays, but not necessarily essential Agamben. If you've read most of his major book-length studies, there's a lot of repetition here (bare life, bios and zoe, the camps, state of exception, etc.); some passages seem to be torn directly from other books. But there are some good expansions and more detailed explanations of some ideas, like the idea that we're "still in the camps." Also good essays on refugees and languages, states, and people. A must-read only if you're really into Agamben.
