

## ***Telos of the Camp***

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### Abstract

In this paper author presents Hannah Arendt's warning that totalitarian solutions may outlive totalitarian regimes and Giorgio Agamben's thesis that Auschwitz and Omarska are essentially the same. If they were right, as Kurelić tries to show, the reincarnations of totalitarian spirit are the exact opposite of what the European Union was designed to be. The prevention of the WW II type horrors on the continent was one of the self-understood foundations of the entire project. We now know that, as far as preventing wars in Europe goes, the project is seriously flawed. In that respect the European failure should serve as a troubling example for those who think about global prevention of anti-human behavior. Kurelić argues that evil is the unintended *telos* of the camp, and that Arendt's theory of totalitarianism still explains more than Agamben's predatory biopolitics.

Key words: concentration camp, sovereignty, radical evil, biopolitics, state of exception

At the end of her famous book *The Origins of Totalitarianism* Hannah Arendt warned that totalitarian solutions might survive the fall of totalitarian regimes. Giorgio Agamben lives and writes in the world in which Arendt's prophecy has come true. In this paper I will compare Arendt's and Agamben's attempts to understand concentration and extermination camps, and especially their importance for the way in which modern liberal democracies function nowadays. For Arendt the camp was an appearance of radical evil which revealed the essence of totalitarianism. It was the most important institution of totalitarian regimes. Nazism and Stalinism share the ability to exterminate millions of innocent human beings for no utilitarian reason. What they share is not a set of institutions or the mode of production but the camp, the place in which humanity itself is put into question, the place in which a new form of evil comes into existence. With the collapse of totalitarian regimes and the closure of camps we got rid of radical evil, but not of totalitarian solutions which can bring it back.

Giorgio Agamben tells a different story. In his narrative Arendt's theory plays a big role but his question is focused on the world in which we live. His question is not just how Auschwitz was possible, but how Omarska and Rwanda were possible in a post-totalitarian world. For Arendt, the appearance of a totalitarian regime capable of opening

Auschwitz was the result of the collapse of European civilization which happened during the World War I and the Big Crisis. For Agamben, Auschwitz is the most radical materialization of the deadly potential of European states hidden in the transformation of politics into biopolitics.

This paper consists of four segments. In the first one I will briefly present Heidegger's understanding of technology. The reason for starting a paper on the camps with Heidegger's essay on technology is simple. I would like to show that both Arendt and Agamben struggle with the *telos* of the camp when they try to explain what actually happened in Auschwitz. Arendt holds that the ultimate *telos* of the camps is the destruction of humanity, while Agamben thinks that the *telos* of the camps is the production of living corpses, *the Muslims, Muselmänner*.

In the second segment I present Agamben's understanding of politics focused on the state of exception. Agamben argues that the camp is not a thing of the past but a 'hidden paradigm' of the political space in which we live. This means that contemporary liberal democracies, which present themselves as the most desirable form of government for all peoples and cultures on earth, are tainted by totalitarian solutions themselves.

The third segment discusses the similarities and differences in Arendt's and Agamben's understandings of the extermination of the Jews, while in the final segment the focus is on Agamben's idea that Omarska and Auschwitz are essentially the same. I will argue that an arendtean understanding of Omarska would be that it is a reappearance of radical evil and that the radical evil story paradoxically explains more than biopolitics.

The purpose of this paper is to discuss Agamben's provocative claim that the post-Cold-war New World order may become the worst tyranny ever created. I will do that by comparing his solutions to Arendt's ideas. She would not disagree, but her explanations of the causes and potential remedies would significantly differ. We do not live in a post-genocidal world order but in one in which the most atrocious genocidal crimes against humanity are in-calculated, televised and sometimes even partially prosecuted.

## I.

In *Remnants of Auschwitz* Agamben points out that the extermination of Jews was described by Martin Heidegger as the "fabrication of corpses". Arendt also mentions the "fabrication of corpses" in her interview with Gunter Gaus in 1964. Extermination camps are often described as 'death factories' as if there was something technological in the fabrication of corpses. For this reason I start the paper with a brief presentation of Heidegger's essay *The Question Concerning Technology*. The other reason is the fact that both Agamben and Arendt, were strongly influenced by his philosophy in general.

*The Question Concerning Technology* wants to answer what technology is. Technology is usually understood as a means to an end, as something instrumental. "Wherever ends are pursued and means are employed, wherever instrumentality reigns, there reigns causality."<sup>1</sup> To ask about technology we must ask about causality, so the four causes are a logical beginning of thinking on causality. Heidegger's example is a silver chalice. The first cause is the *causa materialis*, the material in which the chalice is made. The second

<sup>1</sup> Martin Heidegger: *The Question Concerning Technology*, Harper Torchbooks, New York, 1977, p. 6.

one is the *causa formalis*, the shape into which the material enters. The third is the *causa finalis*, the end, the religious rite in which it fulfils its purpose and the fourth cause is the *causa efficiens*, the silversmith. Heidegger believes that in our time the *causa efficiens* dominates. Cause is understood as something which brings something about, obtains effects and sets the standard for all causality. In Greek thought the concept of causality was understood in a completely different way, points out Heidegger, for them it had nothing to do with bringing about or effecting. “What we call cause (*Ursache*) and the Romans call *causa* is called *aition* by the Greeks, that to which something is indebted... The four causes are the ways, all belonging at once to each other, of being responsible for something else.”<sup>2</sup> The silversmith would not be understood as the *causa efficiens* by Aristotle. Heidegger explains: “The silversmith considers carefully and gathers together the three aforementioned ways of being responsible and indebted. To consider carefully is in Greek *legein*, *logos*. *Legein* is rooted in *apophainesthai*, to bring forward into appearance.”<sup>3</sup> The essence of causality unites them from the beginning, and Heidegger calls it “occasioning”. “But in what, then, does the playing in unison of the four ways of occasioning play? They let what is not yet present arrive into presencing. Accordingly, they are unifiedly ruled over by a bringing that brings what presence into appearance... It is of utmost importance that we think bringing forth in its full scope and at the same time in the sense in which the Greeks thought it. Not only handcraft manufacture, not only artistic and poetical bringing into appearance and concrete imagery, is a bringing- forth, *poiesis*. *Physis* also, the arising of something from itself, is a bringing- forth, *poiesis*. *Physis* is indeed *poiesis* in the highest sense.”<sup>4</sup> *Techne* belongs to *poiesis*, and it is not only the name for the different skills of craftsmen, but a mode of revealing (*aletheuin*). Heidegger wants to show that *techne* should be understood as revealing rather than as manufacturing because it like nature brings- forth. *Techne* as a mode of revealing is, strictly speaking, not instrumental. For Heidegger, modern technology is also a mode of revealing but not in the sense of *poiesis*. He explains: “The revealing that rules in modern technology is a challenging (*Herausfordern*), which puts to nature the unreasonable demand that it supplies energy that can be extracted and stored as such.”<sup>5</sup> This is essentially new. The old windmill depends entirely on the wind’s blowing, it does not “unlock energy” from the air in order to store it. Unlocking and storing are ways of revealing. “We now name that challenging claim which gathers man thither to order the self-revealing as standing-reserve: ‘*Ge-stell*’ (Enframing).”<sup>6</sup> *Ge-stell* is the essence of modern technology. Man participates in the ‘activity’ of revealing, man is asked to reveal the real as standing reserve. Human activity turns nature into potential energy. A river is potential electricity and so are the atoms. There is nothing subjective in modern technology and therefore nothing instrumental. In Heidegger’s philosophy *Ge-stell* is the ontological situation of modern man; it is therefore given and not changeable by human action.

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2 Ibid., p. 7.

3 Ibid., p. 8.

4 Ibid., p.10.

5 Ibid., p. 14.

6 Ibid., p. 19.

I will return to Heidegger's ontological understanding of technology in the third segment, especially in relation to the *causa finalis*, the end, the *telos* of the camp, but first I would like to present Agamben's original theory in which the camp is "the hidden matrix and *nomos* of the political place in which we are still living."<sup>7</sup>

## II.

Agamben's book *Means Without End* is the best collection of provocative ideas later developed in the Homo Sacer trilogy (*Homo Sacer, State of Exception, Remnants of Auschwitz*). The essays published in *Means...* were written between 1990 and 1995 in the post-Berlin-wall Europe in which short-lived optimism faced the reality of a war on the continent. Agamben does not celebrate the alleged historical triumph of liberal democracy because everywhere he looks he sees corrupted European states which lost their legitimacy; his native Italy being the best example. Agamben says: "I believe that one of the few things that can be declared with certainty is that... all the peoples of Europe... have gone bankrupt. We live after the failure of peoples."<sup>8</sup> The same can be said for the western nation states. "The homes – the "fatherlands" – that these states endeavored to build revealed themselves in the end to be only lethal traps for the very "peoples" that were supposed to inhabit them."<sup>9</sup> The post-Cold-war Europe realized that the East and the West are barely distinguishable. The East adopted capitalist consumerism and got rid of the Leninist party, while the West renounced the balance of power and real freedom of thought in the name of totalitarian "electoral machine of majority vote" and "media control over public opinion."<sup>10</sup> Agamben finds the type of political order which was on the horizon after 1989 unacceptable. The contact of the corrupt West and the defeated East is not likely to produce a functioning global democracy but a supranational police state. Agamben started working on a book designed to criticize the new planetary order, but ended up with more.

*Homo Sacer, Sovereign Power and Bare Life* is a book that tries to rethink the European political tradition by using a set of concepts never before used in Agamben's way. He writes about the refugee, the state of exception and the concentration camp to show how the differences between the public and the private, the law and the power, the human being and the citizen and even between the judiciary and the executive are all put in question in the state in which we live. Traditional understanding of politics cannot recognize the fundamental problem of our civilization, *the biopolitical attempt to manage the survival of humanity*. Agamben's thesis is that we live in a world which does not recognize that even the so-called liberal democracies function in a way close to totalitarianism, that the state of exception has become a rule in them, and that the camp is not an institution belonging exclusively to defeated totalitarian regimes but the "matrix of political space" in which *we* live. He tries to explain this thesis in a number of ways; however, in the context of this paper the most important is his attempt to reinterpret the

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7 Giorgio Agamben: *Homo Sacer*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1998, p. 166.

8 Giorgio Agamben: *Means Without End*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 2000, p. 142

9 Ibid., p. 140.

10 Ibid., p. 81.

concept of sovereignty, and to make a creative fusion of Arendt's research on totalitarianism and Foucault's biopolitics.

Agamben's understanding of sovereignty is strongly influenced by Schmitt's ideas presented in *Political Theology*. For Carl Schmitt the sovereign is the one who decides on the state of exception. The sovereign is the person who can suspend the laws of the state in order to protect the political order. In Schmitt's theory this is important because it shows that the regulated system of laws cannot survive without the introduction and intervention of genuine political power. The sovereign who declares the state of exception stands outside the judicial order and tries to save the order by temporarily suspending it. Agamben goes one step further and argues that the state of exception, which is for Schmitt still something exceptional, usually declared in the times of war, in modernity becomes a rule. In his opinion our understanding of sovereignty derived from the idea of a social contract in which the sovereign is the people who create the state, misses the predatory character of the state in which we live. Hobbes' sovereign, Leviathan is designed to escape the state of nature. The state of nature is the state of potential war and therefore the state of exception. In Agamben's interpretation Hobbes' sovereign stays outside the juridical order in order to protect it, so, to avoid the state of war Hobbes introduces a permanent state of exception within the state. Consequently, the state is not something that is simply created in opposition to the state of nature; rather, it is a form of sovereignty which contains nature in itself as the state of exception. To protect the state from falling back into the state of war, the sovereign can ignore the laws of the state. The true meaning and the true danger of this kind of a sovereign power becomes obvious when one unveils the original contact between the sovereign power and bare life. This is why Foucault's biopolitics plays one of the key roles in Agamben's argument.

In *The History of Sexuality* Foucault wrote that modern man was "an animal whose politics calls his existence as living being into question". Foucault holds that the modern era introduces biopolitics as a way of control of bodies and bodily functions of citizens. Agamben explains: "According to Foucault, a society's "threshold of biological modernity" is situated at the point at which the species and the individual as a simple living body become what is at stake in a society's political strategies... In particular, the development and triumph of capitalism would not have been possible, from this perspective, without the disciplinary control achieved by the new bio-power, which, through a series of appropriate technologies, so to speak created "docile bodies" that it needed."<sup>11</sup> Agamben insists on the Greek distinction between *zoe* and *bios*, in which *zoe* means the simple fact of being alive, while *bios* is a way of life as in *bios politicos*. So, biopolitics introduced by Foucault actually shows that the modern mechanisms of the state and society focus on *zoe*, on the naked existence of human body. According to Foucault, the original sovereignty had the formula 'to make die and to let live'. Once the sovereign was the one who had a power to legitimately kill a person, after the introduction of biopolitics the formula changed into 'to make live and to let die'. As it is, Foucault's concept does not show the predatory character of modern sovereignty and certainly does not explain how the camp became the hidden *nomos* of our political world. The argument is completed with the reinterpretation of Arendt's theory of totalitarianism.

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<sup>11</sup> Giorgio Agamben: *Homo Sacer*, *ibid.*, p. 3.

Agamben tries to make a creative fusion of Foucault's criticism of biopolitics and Arendt's criticism of totalitarianism and argues that concentration camps are the ultimate playground of biopolitics. Arendt is important for Agamben for a number of reasons, but two are fundamental. With her help he wants to explain the collapse of European political order, and the birth of camps as a result of that collapse. However, unlike Arendt, he wants to show that both phenomena are biopolitical. This is how the two key concepts of Agamben's theory come into play – the refugee and the camp. Both concepts play the central role in the famous ninth chapter of *The Origins... 'The Decline of the Nation-State and the End of the Rights of Man'*. A refugee is a person who, after being forced to leave one nation-state, tries to find refuge in another. The problem is that a human being who allegedly has human rights as a human being finds out that human rights are protected only within nation-states, so, to be thrown out of the state means to be thrown out of humanity altogether. Refugees lose 'the right to have rights', they lose a community in which they can be political. A camp is a place for the unwanted. This became dramatically obvious for thousands of Europeans after the World War I, and for the Jews before and during the World War II. The post-WWI situation shows how nation-states in decline, the states based on the trinity of state-nation-territory, do not have a solution for the stateless people. Arendt points out that the internment camp became a standard solution for the problem of displaced persons prior to the WWII.

Agamben agrees. He wants to show that the internment camp represents a place in which human life is reduced to bare life. This is something that never occurred to either Arendt or Foucault. This is how *Homo Sacer* became the key figure of the book. As the title suggests, *homo sacer* is the character in which the sovereign power and bare life meet.

*Homo sacer* is a figure from the Roman criminal law, a guilty person who is put in a unique situation; he cannot be sacrificed, but if someone kills him, this will not be seen as homicide. *Homo sacer* is alive but can be killed without any legal consequences by anyone at any time. He is alive but as good as dead, he is doomed to death, a living corpse. *Homo sacer* is a living representation of bare life. The sovereign is the one who decides when a man becomes a *homo sacer*.

Now all elements for Agamben's story are in place. He is saying that we live in a world in which the original understanding of sovereignty 'to make die and to let live' has returned via modern biopolitics. This time the sovereign is not a king or a despot but the contemporary state. The damage was done in a few key moments of European history. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century biopolitics was introduced with the care for the life and health of the subjects and combined with the science of police. It became essential for the functioning of the modern state which is the nation state. The continental nation state system collapsed during and after the WWI and this triggered a new phase in the relationship between the sovereign state and biopolitics. After the WWI the state of exception became the rule and the camp was added to the original trinity (state-nation-territory) of the nation state. The camp takes care of the stateless and unwanted, whether they come from the outside, like refugees, or from the inside, like the Gypsies and the Jews.

The most provocative aspect of Agamben's theory is his idea that biopolitics secures the continuity between democratic and totalitarian states. The very fact that the state was

biopolitical before the WWI makes it potentially totalitarian, and deadly. The step from the standard ‘make live and let die’ biopolitics’ to the Nazi thanatopolitics of the concentration camp was made when the state got involved in euthanasia. The decline of the nation state turned into a lasting crisis, the state of exception became the rule, and the state decided to assume care for the nation’s biological life. The state tries to cure the “biopolitical fractures” of the people, the cracks within a nation derived from ethnic, racial or class differences. Biopolitics has to produce a single unified people. When that happened a lonely figure of *homo sacer*, a person who cannot be sacrificed but can be killed by anyone, became identical with a citizen of the state. In the beginning only the refugee in the camp was reduced to bare life, but eventually all citizens were at mercy of their own state. Agamben explains:

“Modern totalitarianism can be defined as the establishment, by means of the state of exception, of a legal civil war that allows for the physical elimination not only of political adversaries but of entire categories of citizens who for some reason cannot be integrated into the political system. Since then, the voluntary creation of a permanent state of emergency (though perhaps not declared in the technical sense) has become one of the essential practices of contemporary states, including so-called democratic ones.”<sup>12</sup>

In Agamben’s opinion all camps have something fundamental in common. Dachau, the internment camp, Auschwitz and the refugee camp are all created in a legal lacuna outside juridical order, which is (the lacuna) at the same time included in the system of the state power. It is a place in which pure political power can act unbothered by law. Seen from this perspective, the football stadium in Bari, in which Albanian illegal immigrants were held, Guantanamo and Auschwitz are essentially the same. They are all places in which detainees are completely unprotected and reduced to bare life. Agamben writes:

“Not only do the Taliban captured in Afghanistan not enjoy the status of POWs as defined by the Geneva Convention, they do not even have the status of persons charged with a crime according to American laws. Neither prisoners nor persons accused, but simply “detainees”, they are the object of a pure de facto rule, of a detention that is indefinite not only in temporal sense but in its very nature as well, since it is entirely removed from the law and juridical oversight. The only thing to which it could possibly be compared is the legal situation of the Jews in the Nazi *Lager*, who, along with their citizenship, had lost every legal identity, but at least retained their identity as Jews.”<sup>13</sup>

The biopolitical essence of the state of exception in which the sovereign power meets bare life is not only something that is shared between dramatically different places like Bari and Dachau, it is also something shared between dramatically different regimes like the

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<sup>12</sup> Giorgio Agamben: *State of Exception*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2005, p. 2.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4.

Nazi Germany and the modern democratic state. This essence is the “hidden paradigm” of the world in which we live.

This completes wicked philosophical sarcasm. While the West talks about human rights, the sacredness of life and the rule of law it puts refugees and enemies in a place which is, formally speaking, indistinguishable from Dachau. In which they are as good as dead, and in which their lives are as sacred as *homo sacer*.

It is very likely that both Agamben’s favorites, Arendt and Foucault would disagree with his argument. In the following segment I will try to show a few key differences between Arendt’s and Agamben’s understanding of the camp.

### III.

In her reply to Eric Voegelin’s review of *The Origins of Totalitarianism* Arendt explains why the title of the book should be changed into ‘The Elements of Totalitarianism’. Arendt realizes that the origins could be mixed up with the causes and this is not what her book is about. In her words, the book gives a historical account of “the elements which crystallized into totalitarianism”. When Arendt started writing her book, it was not about totalitarianism but about the appearance of radical evil in Auschwitz. She tried to comprehend something beyond comprehension, and realized that the horrors of Nazism are the outcome of total bankruptcy of the European civilization. The structure of the book: Antisemitism, Imperialism, Totalitarianism unveils that the inability of bourgeois politics to solve economic problems caused by imperialism created the space in which elements like antisemitism, the appearance of the masses and the mob, eugenics, racism, pan-movements and conspiracy theories crystallized into totalitarianism. Nazism offered radical solutions for the problems created before its appearance. The only way in which Stalinism can be brought into this story is by comparing Auschwitz and Gulag, and this is how the camp became the central institution of totalitarianism. Russia was obviously not a part of European history responsible for the birth of Nazism, but the non-utilitarian way in which human beings were killed during Stalin’s rule and the extermination of the Jews are essentially the same. The non-utilitarian aspect of those crimes, the destruction of innocent life for no rational reason, is what makes them radical.

Agamben does not use the concept of totalitarianism very often and there is a good reason for this. For him the camp is not something that the Bolsheviks and the Nazis have in common, but something that liberal democracies and totalitarian regimes have in common. So, the camp is not the *differentia specifica* of totalitarian regimes but the shared hidden *nomos* of modernity. Obviously there is a fundamental difference in his and Arendt’s understanding of the camp. When Arendt formulated her theory of totalitarianism she argued that the link of the two quite different regimes is their previously unseen ability to unleash the radical evil. This kind of evil is present on earth only in extermination camps and in Gulag. For Arendt Dachau is not a totalitarian type of concentration camp because the violence exercised there is utilitarian. Totalitarian terror starts in Germany after 1938 and in Soviet Union after 1930. In Arendt’s theory Lenin’s regime was not totalitarian.



Agamben's understanding of the camp is dramatically different because for him it is a space in which pure power meets bare life, so there is no difference between Dachau and Auschwitz, both places being the examples of the state of exception which became the rule. This means that the totalitarian camp is for Arendt something essentially new, while for Agamben the difference between Dachau and Auschwitz is not essential, but gradual. He, of course, goes much further and actually says that in essence all camps are the same because they are all biopolitical states of exception. Only in that sense can the camp be the hidden matrix of the political space in which we live.

This raises a fundamental question of the *telos* of the camp. What is the *telos* of Auschwitz for Arendt and Agamben?

Now it is time to return to Heidegger's essay on technology. What would be the *causa finalis* of an extermination camp? The expected answer would be extermination but neither Arendt nor Agamben give this answer. The camp is for them an experiment. Arendt writes: "The camps are meant not only to exterminate people and degrade human beings, but also serve as the ghastly experiment of eliminating, under scientifically controlled conditions, spontaneity itself as an expression of human behavior and of transforming the human personality into a mere thing, into something that even animals are not; for Pavlov's dog, which, as we know, was trained to eat not when it was hungry but when a bell ring, was a perverted animal."<sup>14</sup>

The camps are the experimental ground for the realization of totalitarian ideologies, the ideologies which believe that anything is possible.

"The concentration camps are the laboratories where changes in human nature are tested, and their shamefulness therefore is not just the business of their inmates and those who run them according to strict "scientific" standards; it is the concern of all men. Suffering, of which there has been always too much on earth, is not the issue, nor is the number of victims. Human nature as such is at stake, and even though it seems that these experiments succeed not in changing man but only in destroying him, by creating a society in which the nihilistic banality of *homo homini lupus* is constantly realized, one should bear in mind the necessary limitations to an experiment which requires global control in order to show conclusive results."<sup>15</sup>

This simply means that the real *telos* of the camp goes beyond extermination. It is actually the redefinition of human nature through the destruction of freedom, nativity and above all spontaneity.

Agamben carefully read these sentences and recognized the biopolitical character of the experiment. His theory is in a way a biopolitical reconstruction of the origins of Auschwitz. And this is precisely why *the Muslim*, *Muselman* is the central character of his book *Remnants of Auschwitz*. *The Muslims* were inmates of the camp who were reduced to bare life, the living dead, persons who lost all will and all consciousness. *The Muslim* is a stage of existence between an inmate and death. Agamben argues that *the Muslim* reveals the biopolitical essence of the camp. In his opinion the camp is the most

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14 Hannah Arendt: *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Harcourt Brace & Company, New York, 1979, p. 438.

15 Ibid. ,pp. 458-459.

absolute biopolitical space ever. If the camp is a laboratory for creating sub-humans, an experiment in destruction of spontaneity, then *the Muslim* is a biopolitical result, and a biopolitical proof of Arendt's thesis. However, there is a significant difference. The experiment is radically evil because like an abyss it sucks everyone in. It is not a utilitarian search for the humanity without spontaneity but a space in which the idea that everything is possible makes the end of humanity possible. The Bolsheviks did not make *the Muslims* but the evil unleashed by them was just as radical. The radical evil makes Auschwitz and Gulag the same and Auschwitz and Dachau different. To use Agamben's vocabulary, there was no biopolitical fracture to heal in purges in which members of the same party, i.e. the same *People* are eliminated for no rational reason. This is, of course, one of the reasons why Agamben stays away from Arendt's original concept of totalitarianism. Auschwitz is a part of the story of the West. Agamben writes:

"Biopolitical caesuras are essentially mobile, and in each case they isolate a further zone in the biological continuum, a zone which corresponds to a space of increasing *Entwürdigung* and degradation. Thus the non-Aryan passes into the Jew, the Jew into the deportee, the deportee into prisoner (*Hafling*), until biopolitical caesuras reach their final limit in the camp. This limit is the *Muselmann*. At the point in which *Hafling* becomes a *Muselmann*, the biopolitics of racism so to speak transcends race, penetrating into a threshold in which it is no longer possible to establish caesuras... It is then possible to understand the decisive function of the camps in the system of Nazi biopolitics. They are not merely the place of death and extermination; they are also, and above all, the site of the production of the *Muselmann*, the final biopolitical substance to be isolated in the biological continuum,"<sup>16</sup>

In this sense death becomes an epiphenomenon. *The Muslim* is the *telos* of the Nazi camp. The Nazis reduced the Jews to bare life and this reduction of a human being to a sub-human is biopower's supreme result and a hidden ambition.

Agamben's attempt to biopolitically interpret Arendt's understanding of the camp as an experiment in destruction of humanity shows that the fundamental problem of this idea which they share is its *telos*. Why would the camp be the space in which humanity itself is attacked consciously?<sup>17</sup> The destruction of humanity is what actually happens after 1938 in Germany and after 1930 in Soviet Union, not something that was planned from the beginning. The humanity was not destroyed on purpose but the camps realize a phantom world in which the essence of human beings, as understood by Arendt, is destroyed. If she wants to keep the concept of totalitarianism, and the camp as a link between the two different regimes, she has to give up the camp as an experiment. Agamben does not have

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16 Giorgio Agamben: *Remnants of Auschwitz*, Zone Books, New York, 2002, pp. 84-85.

17 Arendt was struggling with this question? In 'The Image of Hell' (1946) she writes: "Once inside the death factories, everything became an accident completely beyond control of those who did the suffering and those who inflicted it. And in more than one case those who inflicted the suffering one day became the sufferers the next." (Hannah Arendt: *Essays in Understanding*, (ed. Jerome Kohn) Harcourt Brace & Company, New York, 1994, p. 198-199.) This certainly does not sound like an experiment. In *The Origins ...* she says: "To be sure, totalitarian dictators do not consciously embark upon the road to insanity. The point is rather that our bewilderment about the anti-utilitarian character of the totalitarian state structure springs from the mistaken notion that we are dealing with a normal state after all." (op. cit., p. 411)

this problem. It looks as if in Arendt's argument the *telos* of the camp was the destruction of humanity but she knows that it was not understood in that way by the Nazis, and certainly not by the Bolsheviks. Arendt unconsciously introduces the distinction between the real *telos* of the camp (Auschwitz and Gulag) and the end of the camps as understood by totalitarians. Occasioning is in Heidegger's language the essence of causality. The four *causas* let what is not yet present appear on earth. The Jews who were killed, the killers, the end of killing as explained by ideology, and the corpses in which the Jews were turned are the four *causas* that allowed Evil to arrive into presence. Technically speaking, the camps fabricate corpses, but they do not reveal the possibility of the Jews to be killed or to become corpses, they reveal our potential to be radically evil without consciously wanting it. The unlock evil without storing it. Arendt is saying that the radical evil is what happened in the end even if the totalitarians did not intentionally released it. While they were dedicatedly actualizing their ideologies in which everything is possible, unutilitarian, pure horror appeared on earth. The *causa finalis* for the Nazis, who are the *causa efficiens*, is not the final solution, but a new world order in which the Aryan race rules. The fabrication of corpses does not have its own purpose. The camp is not a place in which anything is fabricated for its own sense. Agamben, who biopolitically interprets Arendt's camp as an experiment in destruction of human beings, faces the same problem. From the position of biopolitics *the Muslim* the sub-human, the walking bare life is the end, the *causa finalis* of the camp. This consequently means that the *telos* of biopolitics and the *telos* of the camps as understood by Nazis is not one and the same. The hidden *nomos* is hidden to everyone. *The Muslim* is for the Nazis an epiphenomenon of a death camp, an annoying step between a Jew and a corpse. To say that the Aryan life was produced through the creation of *the Muslims* would be unthinkable for Hitler. That would be like saying - tigers are produced by the reduction of worms to sub-worms.

For Arendt and for Agamben the real *telos* of the camp is not known to the *causa efficiens*. However, their understandings of the horror which happened in the camp are in the end different. In the final segment of this paper I will show how an Arendtean interpretation of Omarska significantly differs from Agamben's.

#### IV.

Arendt would recognize the appearance of rape/concentration/extermination camps in Bosnia as the realization of her prophecy from *The Origins...* The fact that she later started thinking of the banality of evil is of no consequence for my paper. In the original story one of the key elements necessary for the success of totalitarian regimes was the appearance of masses, the people who do not recognize their political interests, who do not want to be represented by the existing parties and who are ruined by the crisis. The radical movement politicized masses by telling them that everything was possible. The collapse of socialist regimes was not as dramatic as the Big Crisis but it created the masses. The totalitarian ideology was replaced by nationalism, which secured the horizon for political action. The post-Cold-war Europe did the rest. When the conflict started the entire continent was a "bystander" in Arendt's meaning of the word. The camps that were established in Bosnia should not be understood as experiments or laboratories outside the

normal penal system, but as a “phantom world” which was this time allowed to materialize in Bosnia. In *The Origins...* Arendt writes:

”Everything that was done in the camps is known to us from the world of perverse malignant fantasies. The difficult thing to understand is that, like such fantasies, these gruesome crimes took place in a phantom world which, however, has materialized, as it were, into a world which is complete with all sensual data of reality but lacks that structure of consequence and responsibility without which reality remains for us a mass of incomprehensible data...(T)he totalitarian hell proves only that the power of man is greater than they ever dared to think, and that man can realize hellish fantasies without making the sky fall or the earth open.”<sup>18</sup>

The rape camp is a materialized phantom world, not a materialized biopolitical laboratory, and there is something radically banal in rape, which is that it can be done for its own sake, unlike the fabrication of the *Muslims* or the destruction of spontaneity. Agamben thinks that Omarska and Auschwitz are essentially the same, but not because both places secure the space in which evil appears. They are examples of the most developed state of exception which is not exceptional. The camp is in Arendt’s theory a rare and unique place of evil, while in Agamben’s argument it is a rule. Agamben does not look for the reasons why Omarska was established in the collapse of socialism, the collapse of former Yugoslavia and the post-Cold-war economy and politics. He does not search for the elements which crystallized in a regime capable of running a rape camp, but recognizes the common origin of modern political violence, the common origin of all camps. In *Means Without End* Agamben writes:

“It is from this perspective that we need to see the reappearance of camps in a form that is, in a certain sense, even more extreme in the territories of the former Yugoslavia. What is happening there is not at all, as some interested observers rushed to declare, a redefinition of the old political system according to new ethnic and territorial arrangements...Rather, we note there an irreparable rupture of the old *nomos* as well as dislocation of populations and human lives according to entirely new lines of flight. That is why the camps of ethnic rape are so crucially important. If the Nazis never thought of carrying out the “final solution” by impregnating Jewish women, that is because the principle of birth, which ensured the inscription of life in the order of the nation-state, was in some way still functioning, even though it was profoundly transformed.”<sup>19</sup>

A few important points are made in this paragraph. It is obvious that Agamben thinks that Arendt’s approach from ‘The Decline...’ would not work in the case of former Yugoslavia and that Omarska is an example of unrestrained biopower, the final solution Serbian style. He is wrong. When a multinational federation collapses the minorities are created automatically in the same way in which they were created after the collapse of the

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18 Hannah Arendt: *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Harcourt Brace & Company, New York, 1979, pp. 445-446.

19 Giorgio Agamben, *Means Without End*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 2000, pp. 44-45.

Austro-Hungarian monarchy. There is no new explanatory value in the idea of biopolitical fracture. The political consequences are the same. Ethnic cleansing is a radical solution for the problem of minorities in the state of war. “The lines of flight” are indistinguishable from the post-WWI ones, because the cleansed peoples either try to reach the mother nation’s state/republic, or go abroad and become a refugee population. The camps of ethnic rape are something entirely new. For some of the rapists it was the final solution without the complete extermination of the Bosnian Muslims. Agamben insightfully recognizes the biopolitical character of organized rape because it by brute force controls the bodily functions of the raped person and creates a non-Muslim baby. However, he is wrong when he believes that biopolitics can be traced down to the origins of the nation state and its attempt to create a seamless people. Former Yugoslavia was a multinational federation which fractured along national lines; to say that the new set of biological fractures was created is nothing other than recognizing the problem of new minorities. Some nationalisms are racist and some are not and this has nothing to do with Foucault’s understanding of biopolitics. The reason why the Serbs raped Muslim women and the Germans did not rape Jewish women has nothing to do with the principle of birth and national order in Germany, but with a fact that in the Nazi type racism Jewish women were not seen as human beings worthy of rape, which was not the case with the Serbs. However, rape is an expression of pure violent power and has a sadistic quality that should not be overlooked. Omarska did not happen in a secured place beyond juridical order of a certain nation state but in the middle of Europe in broad daylight and on global TV. Agamben is at his best when he argues that the state of exception, as the state of nature is in-calculated in the New World Order; that the state of war is in the city, accepted in the *nomos* of exception. He is saying, loud and clear, that the extermination and rape camps can be established within the existing international order and can do their business for months or even years interrupted only by humanitarian operations. So, the current situation is neither ‘to kill or to let live’, nor ‘to make live and to let die’ but ‘to let kill and to stop killing’. The global sovereign is the one who decides when the camps should be closed. The problem for Agamben is that the sovereign runs his own camps.

Arendt did not trust organized humanity, she explicitly says: “It is quite conceivable, and even within the realm of practical political possibilities, that one fine day a highly organized and mechanized humanity will conclude quite democratically – namely by majority decision – that for humanity as a whole it would be better to liquidate certain parts thereof.”<sup>20</sup> She can imagine humanity operating as Agamben’s sovereign. Agamben himself does not tell us how to go beyond the camp as a global *nomos* other than to think about politics in a new way. He slips into politico-ontology whenever faced with a policy recommendation.

It seems, however, that humans living on this planet will have to find new ways to govern the earth very soon, because Arendt’s prophecy has come true, and large parts of it are correctly interpreted by Agamben. Let us find the way to close rape camps and death camps first; evil is their unintended *telos*. This would be a promising start, the one we thought we would never have to make.

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20 Hannah Arendt: *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Harcourt Brace & Company, New York, 1979, p. 298.