THE INVISIBLE FLIGHTS OF THE BIRDS

EXTINCTION AND MUSE-ECOLOGY

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That which can never be first let him glimpse, in its fading the glimmer of a beginning.

Giorgio Agamben, *Idea of Prose* (34)

In *Language and Death*, published in 1982 and based upon a seminar that took place over eight days in winter 1979 and summer 1980, Giorgio Agamben advances a philosophical critique of negativity, that, as indicated by the subtitle of the book ("The Place of Negativity"), is waged in terms of the problematic of place.[1] For Agamben, negativity is not only the *force* but also the *place* through which the metaphysical tradition structures the relation between language and death, often in terms of the ineffable or silence. The problem then, is one that not only pertains to negativity, but also to place, and Agamben critically addresses and comes to redress this problem by turning to the notion of a "no-place (nowhere) without a not" that he derives from the Eighth Elegy of Rilke's *Duino Elegies*, and that is echoed by Heidegger in paragraph 40 of *Being and Time* (*Nirgends ohne nicht,* "nowhere without nothing").

[1] Agamben, Giorgio. *Language and Death: The Place of Negativity*. Translated by Karen Pinkus and Michael Hardt. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991 (originally published as: *Il linguagggio e le morte: Un seminario sul luogo dell negative*. Einuadi, 1982).

The "no-place without a not" is, at once, not a place and without negativity. Instead it is the mood, disposition, and attunement (*Stimmung*) of *Dasein* (i.e. being-the-Da or being-the-there). An open directionality, disenclosure, or exposure to the Outside that is without terminal destiny or completion. I want to argue that this attunement can be further understood as the spacing of separation, in which separation is in turn understood to be not the place of negativity, but the absolute patency of existence and its sense. The *Da-* of *Dasein* is in no place, it is nowhere, it is the no-place without a not. Which is to argue that the spacing of separation is more originary than the place of negativity, and as such only can be shared or destroyed but not negated (e.g. dialectically *placed*).[2] As I see it, the only way in which one might concede to a language of negativity in the context of this discussion of the *Stimmung* of *Dasein*, would be in terms of the unemployed negativity that we inherit from Georges Bataille, and that intimately and deeply resonates—even though he refuses to see it—with Agamben's own notion of in-operativity.

Access to this disposition (*Stimmung*), that is, to "this being delivered to [self] that which refuses itself,"[3] is via a call that takes the form other than that of a voice, Voice (*Stimme*) or utterance, yet also other than Heideggerean "conscience." Instead, it is simply the demand or exigency of existence in its opening and shared exposure and separation. It is the original/ontological disenclosure of being as *Da-sein*, and thus marks what I take to be an essential

[2] See: Jean-Luc Nancy, "The Indestructible," in Nancy, Jean-Luc. *A Finite Thinking*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2003: 78-88.

[3] Heidegger, Martin. *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude*. Translated by Nicholas Walker and William McNeil. Studies in Continental Thought. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995: 140-151.

and irreducible separation, dis-articulation, or dis-connection that structures being in the world.

For Agamben, "voice" is the natural or "mere" voice from which humans are estranged in their acquisition of language. The human is without a word or language that would be its voice similar to that of the animal for whom its voice is its only sounding (e.g. the chirp of the cicada, the hoot of the owl, etc.).[4] The only "voice" of the human is language, and language is the distancing from the very taking place of language as the purely sayable or Voice. The latter (capitalized) Voice, is, for Agamben, the withdrawal from the mere voice of animality, a retreat that opens up a division between the linguistic and the non-linguistic, the merely sonorous and articulate speech.

As Agamben makes clear in a recent essay on "Vocation and Voice," *Stimmung* is anterior to conscious knowledge or sensible perception and is more originary than voice (*Stimme*). Since as he reminds us, *Stimmung* "originally belonged to the sphere of musical acoustics"[5] and not to the realm of

[4] In hearing the voices of animals, humans also hear their own lack of access to this mere voice, to this freedom from presupposition and capture in history, tradition and language.

[5] "The word *Stimmung*, as is evident in its proximity to *Stimme* (voice), originally belonged to the sphere of musical acoustics…This musical signification develops, without ever completely losing contact with the original sense, into the modern meaning of mood…It deals, namely, with a word whose meaning has been displaced, in the course of time, from the sphere of the acoustic-musical—to which it is bound by its proximity to the voice—to that of psychology" Agamben, Giorgio. "Vocation and Voice." Translated by Kalpana Seshadri. *Critical Inquiry* 40, no. 2 (Winter 2014): 493. Even further, as Agamben has argued in several texts, the psychological is the antithesis or absence of ethics. See, most notably: Agamben, Giorgio. *Profanations*. New York: Zone Books, 2007, and the chapter "The Author as Gesture," which ends with the following lines: "A subjectivity is produced where the living being, encountering language and putting itself into play in language without reserve, exhibits in a gesture the impossibility of its being reduced to

the psychological, we can say that the attunement (*Stimmung*) that we are interested in here, is existence's sonorous resonance—its mood, mode and rhythmic modulation—which is other than a place, and closer to the *rhuthmos* (rhythm) of an *ethos* (i.e. no place without a not).[6]

As Agamben writes in "The Eighth Day" of *Language and Death*:

> To exist in language without being called there by any Voice, simply to die without being called by death, is, perhaps, the most abysmal experience; but it is precisely, for man, also his most *habitual* experience, his *ethos*, his dwelling…perhaps only beginning with the eclipse of the Voice, with the no longer taking place of language and with the death of the Voice, does it become possible for man to experience an *ethos* that is no longer simply a *sigetics*" [silence]. [7]

As Heidegger told his students (including Agamben) during the seminar at Le Thor in summer 1968: the self cannot see its own limit, including the outer limit of its thought. A limit that, years later in *The Coming Community*, Agamben will find in the figure of the halo.[8] Only the other can bear witness to the intimacy of this outer limit, for instance by calling the other by name (as in the vocative case). It is in the other's testimony of my limit, that is, in the vocative address (being called) of the other to me, that I come to bear the sense of my vocation—

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this gesture. All the rest is psychology, and nowhere in psychology do we encounter anything like an ethical subject, a form of life" (72).

[6] "We could say then that more than being itself in a place, *Stimmung* is itself the place of the opening of the world, the place of being itself." Agamben, Giorgio. "Vocation and Voice." Translated by Kalpana Seshadri. *Critical Inquiry* 40, no. 2 (Winter 2014): 494-95.

[7] Agamben, Giorgio. *Language and Death: The Place of Negativity*. Translated by Karen Pinkus and Michael Hardt. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991: 96.

[8] Agamben, Giorgio. *The Coming Community*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993: 53-56.

my calling (*Bestimmung*). Vocation, precisely in response to the demand for *virtue*, which, as Agamben argues, is the ethical category of the exigent self.[9]

For Agamben, this is never a matter of destiny or a conclusive end. Instead, as he writes in the chapter "The Idea of Vocation," in his book, *Idea of Prose* (1985): "This attitude, this reverse embrace of memory and forgetting which holds intact the identity of the unrecalled and the unforgettable, is vocation."[10] For Agamben, to sustain the unrecalled and unforgettable as that which is unrecalled and unforgettable, is justice, which he defines as the ethical category of the existent. In other words, justice is precisely not forgetting that there is forgetting–of that which remains unforgettable in every monumental or memorial remembrance. Such that in the chapter on "The Idea of Justice," he writes: "The Forgotten…[is] not be delivered over to memory or language, but to remain immemorable and without name…[thus, as he goes on to say] justice…is born not as a discourse to be passed over in silence or made widespread, but as a voice; not as a testament in one's own hand, but like a heralding gesture or a vocation."[11] It is based upon this, that Agamben arrives at the startling and bracing insight as to "why every attempt to envisage history as a court of justice fails" (ibid).

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[9] "That which is in question in *Stimmung*, that which one stages in the passions, is, we could say, the *in-vocation* of language, in the double sense of situation in a voice and of the call, of the historical vocation that language addresses to man [sic]. Man has *Stimmung*, he is impassioned and anxious because he holds himself without a voice in the place of language. He [sic] is in the opening of being and of language without any voice, without any nature; he is thrown and abandoned in this opening and of this abandon he must make his world, of language his own voice." Agamben, Giorgio. "Vocation and Voice." Translated by Kalpana Seshadri. *Critical Inquiry* 40, no. 2 (Winter 2014): 498 (emphasis in original).

[10] Agamben, Giorgio. *Idea of Prose*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995: 45.

[11] Agamben, Giorgio. *Idea of Prose*. Translated by Michael Sullivan and Sam Whitsitt. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995: 79.

To briefly summarize: virtue is what is demanded, justice is the state of the world in the sense of that which remains in-appropriable (justice = "just the world"), and the value of virtue and justice lies in ethical vocation. In turn, the ethics of vocation lies precisely in in-operative use, that is, in the tiny displacement by which the outer limit or halo of bodies, places, and things is affirmed as in-appropriable. Which is also, at the same time, the affirmation of the essential incompletion and inevitable disappearance of whatever singularities. This is the opening and spacing by which the admixture of singularities is possible and that comes to constitute a sense of the common as separated (ethical decision), rather than being the sacred inclusion of exclusion or the sovereign ban that is the place of negativity.[12]

In the seventh and final excursus in *Language and Death*, Agamben makes clear that, "the *ethos*, humanity's own, is not something unspeakable or *sacer* that must remain unsaid in all praxis and human speech. Neither is it nothingness, whose nullity serves as the basis for the arbitrariness and violence of social action."[13] Rather, *ethos* is the virtuous and just vocation that finds value in disappearance, in something like the animal in flight. Not the tracks or footprints of the animal, but the animal as the very path of the *intractable*,

[12] Drawing from Heraclitus's definition of "*ethos anthropo daimon*," that he argues should be translated as "'Ethos, the habitual dwelling place of man, is that which lacerates and divides,'" Agamben makes clear that division, decision, distance, and separation are names for the shared spacing (or habitual dwelling place/ethos) of ethical decision (119). Another word for this spacing is *chôra*.

[13] Agamben, Giorgio. *Language and Death: The Place of Negativity*. Translated by Karen Pinkus and Michael Hardt. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991: 106.

precisely as that which is leaves without leaving a trace, path, or tract—i.e. disappearing without negativity.[14]

By excavating a remnant of the Latin term *cogitare* (thought) in the word *intractable*, Agamben beautifully articulates the audible and therefore traceless path of disappearance that is thinking.

> We walk through the woods: suddenly we hear the flapping of wings or the wind in the grass. A pheasant lifts off and then disappears instantly among the trees, a porcupine buries in the thick of the underbrush, the dry leaves crackle, as a snake, slithers away. Not the encounter, but this flight of invisible animals is thought.[15]

Foucault, Marcus Aurelius, and Loving the Disappearing Sparrow

In 1982, the same year that Agamben published the seminar on the place of negativity, Michel Foucault was completing his lectures at the Collège de France

[14] This is where Agamben leaves the reader in the Epilogue of *Language and Death*, dedicated to Giorgio Caproni. Caproni was an Italian poet, and his poem "Ritorno" was discussed during the Eighth Day of the seminar on the place of negativity.

I returned there
where I have never been.
Nothing has changed from how it was not.
On the table (on the checkered
tablecloth) half full
I found the glass
which was never filled. All
has remained just as
I never left it.

[15] Agamben, Giorgio. *Language and Death: The Place of Negativity*. Translated by Karen Pinkus and Michael Hardt. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991: 108.

on "The Hermeneutics of the Subject." In the first hour of his lecture on 24 February 1982, Foucault embarks on a close reading of Marcus Aurelius' *Meditations*, in order to develop an argument for the virtue and value of disappearance.[16] As Foucault makes clear, the Roman emperor's spiritual exercise—distinct from what, in the wake of Descartes, will become the "intellectual method"—consists of three moments. The first is the analysis of the reality, complexity and temporal fragility of the thing, via the two-pronged definition and description of the object, whose image appears in the mind. The second entails assessing the *value* of the thing specifically in terms of its use and usefulness (*chresis*). The third moment consists of decomposing the thing as nothing but discontinuous moments.

It is here, in an indifference to the thing—the reality of which exists in a series of discontinuous moments and the eternity of their passing—that the spiritual value and ethical virtue of disappearance can be most readily perceived, including as an opening onto freedom. As Foucault explains, "*value* is the place, relations, and specific dimension of things within the world, as well as their relation to…the human subject insofar as he is free."[17] This, in turn, is not only a matter of the multiplicity, discontinuity, and incommensurability of each whatever singularity, but also of the latter's in-appropriability in its very disappearance. Hence it is any one singularity's *inestimable value*, which is also to say, its capacity to be loved.

[16] Foucault, Michel. *The Hermeneutics of the Subject: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1981-1982*. New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2005: 289-314.
[17] Foucault, Michel. *The Hermeneutics of the Subject: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1981-1982*. New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2005: 308.

For example, as Marcus Aurelius stated: "If we take to loving one of those sparrows flying past, it has already vanished from our sight" (ibid). We might read this as saying that the love we have is not for the sparrow itself (or not only), but for its vanishing when, in its flight, it passes in the sky and from our sight. We love the departing sparrow; we love that it goes—and hence this is how we, virtuously, come to value it.

Regardless of any actual correspondence, the turn to images of birds in flight on the part of these two thinkers, within the same year or so, is quite remarkable. Including as these scenes of disappearance are taken to be topoi for the ethical adventure of love, defined as the relation to the inaccessible and unattainable. That is to say, to the *nothing* (no thing) that is shared in and as the space of intimacy—the *no-place without a not*. More broadly, Marcus Aurelius' *Meditations* point to a fundamental ethical principle that wholly pertains to life and its extinction, given that, for the emperor, *pneuma* and *anima* are nothing more material and lasting than breathing's momentariness—its rhythmically syncopated inhalation and exhalation; its respiration, inspiration and expiration.[18]

[18] Foucault glosses the latter as follows: "As body, even as *pneuma*, we are always something discontinuous in comparison with our being" (304). As Foucault goes on to explain, Marcus Aurelius' spiritual exercise introduces "an important inflection in Stoicism," (in particular distinct from that of Seneca). One that shows the extent to which the identity of any self consists only of "singular, distinct elements, which are separate from each other, and [thus] basically we are dealing with a false unity" (306-307). This corresponds fairly closely with the position that I, Agamben, and Bersani, in our different respects, take to the question of the self. For each of us, it is this discontinuity and expropriation of self ("the dissolution of individuality," 307)—opposite the continuous, appropriating and unitary identity of self—where ethical virtue is located. If there is still something of eternity here, it belongs to the infinity of finitude.
Finally, in *Idea of Prose*, Agamben, relates an anecdote from the emperor Justinian, that combines these motifs of breath, image, conclusion, halo, and something other than a place: "And so it was that as he was writing one night the image suddenly sprang to mind that would

Intrusion and an Ecology of Sense

No doubt it was more than simply the etymological link between *experience* and *expiration* that lead Agamben, in an early essay, on "the destruction of experience," and a thinking towards what it might mean to have one, to turn to two fabled incidents in which a philosopher accidently had his breath knocked out of him.[19] I am referring of course, to the anecdote that Montaigne tells in the second book of his *Essays*, of being knocked down off his horse by the rider of another, and the story related by Rousseau in his *Reveries of a Solitary Walker* of being knocked down, out and senseless by a large dog that unexpectedly bounded across his path. Both of these are stories about coming to oneself, not from out of oneself, but from out of a sudden, accidental and entirely unforeseen intrusion from the outside. This "coming to" is part of the inner sense to which Daniel Heller-Roazen's masterful reading is dedicated of these stories in his book *The Inner Touch*.[20] It is the sentiment or aesthesis of existence that is an incomparable feeling, a seemingly first sensation, birth, burst, and affective

guide him—so he thought—through the conclusion of his work. It was not, however, an image, but something like the perfectly empty space in place. Or, rather, it was not even a space, but the site of a place, as it were, a surface, an area absolutely smooth and flat, [a *halo* as he writes further on] on which no point could be distinguished from another." Agamben, Giorgio. *Idea of Prose*. Translated by Michael Sullivan and Sam Whitsitt. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995: 33.

[19] Agamben, Giorgio. *Infancy and History: The Destruction of Experience*. Translated by Liz Heron. London: Verso Books, 2007: 43-47.

[20] Heller-Roazen, Daniel. *The Inner Touch: Archaeology of a Sensation*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2007.

moment, precipitated by the movement and momentum of a force from the Outside.[21]

The precise moment of "coming to" is an intermediary state of awareness on the verge or zone of indistinction between consciousness and unconsciousness; a state that is without object or subject and consists of something other than the knowledge of the cogito. It is what Agamben understands by *experience*, and what in the essay from 1978, he will theorize as "infancy." In relation to the question of voice and language that Agamben takes up here and in *Language and Death* and that remains to this day one of his principal philosophical-political preoccupations, but also in light of my own previous work on the mouth, sleeping and drooling,[22] it is intriguing to note that Montaigne describes this moment as though "it held on to me only just at the edges of my lips." That is, right there on the very rim of his mouth, similar, as he writes, to the feeling "felt by those who let themselves slide into sleep."

Rousseau also speaks of such an edge experience, when he describes himself sitting on the shore of a lake in Switzerland where, as night fell, he listened to the undulating sound of the waves. It was this rhythmic ebbing and flowing that resonated with his inner sense, and the feeling of pleasure at the

[21] This "coming to oneself" corresponds with Foucault's reading of the Stoics on the "conversion to self" and the "return to the self," outlined in, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, in particular the first hour of the lecture on 24 February 1982. In turn, the intrusion of the horse and the dog here, are stories of what Amitav Ghosh might describe as "the urgent proximity of non-human presences." Ghosh, Amitav. *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016.

[22] Ricco, John Paul. "Drool: Liquid Fore-Speech of the Fore-Scene." *World Picture* 10, no. Abandon (Spring 2015).

sense of his very own existence. Rousseau wants to claim that this sense was in relation to nothing external to him, but clearly this was not the case. It is, as Heller-Roazen concludes, "a matter of a psychic topography," yet one that I want to further define not as the inner depths of psychology, but as the openness of the exposed edge of the aesthetic-ecological, there where one is never oneself yet does not coincide with another alterity either.[23]

There is then, no such thing as a solitary walker, especially in the conventional sense of solitude in which the latter is confused with a state of isolation or radical autonomy. For the walker is the intruder, and as Rousseau's experience affirms, the intruder always stands the chance of being unexpectedly intruded upon. When that happens, when the walker-intruder is trespassed against, when the animal comes crashing into its path only then to disappear, the walker stands the chance of experiencing the pleasure of the sensation of coming to himself. Which is to say, of having an experience, including of thought.

Muse-ecology

Aesthetic experience, as part of what Foucault began to elaborate, based upon his reading of ancient Roman texts as an "aesthetics of existence," is the pleasurable reception of the world's intrusion or trespass.[24] What I theorized

[23] This shift from the psychological and even psychoanalytic subject to the aesthetic subject, has been theorized by Leo Bersani in his essay, "Psychoanalysis and the Aesthetic Subject," originally published in *Critical Inquiry* 32 (Winter 2006) and reprinted in *Is the Rectum a Grave?* 139-153.

[24] In writing about his deceased father, Karl Ove Knausgaard brings together trespassing and breathing when he writes: "He no longer poached air, because that is what you do when you

years ago as the logic of the lure,[25] is the experience of being drawn out of oneself by the force of withdrawal and potential disappearance of the other. And thus of wandering—inconclusively (in-operatively)—in the non-negative space of the unintelligible and the non-evidentiary (i.e. without a trace).[26] Here thought bears upon an ecology of sense rather than an anatomy of mind, and as Leo Bersani has recently framed it, is tied to ontological loss rather than epistemological gain (i.e. appropriation).[27]

This past summer, Gail Bradbook, one of the founders of Extinction Rebellion, was speaking to protesters in central London. As reported in *The New Yorker* magazine, seen wearing "a large earring fashioned from a sparrow's wing," Bradbook said: "'I absolutely fucking love sparrows…House sparrows were in packs in my parents' garden.' Since the seventies, British house-sparrow populations have declined by half. 'Every time I think about it, I want to cry. I miss them so deeply. It's really unhinging and unsettling when you're in the middle of it. Love has a cost, and it is grief. Because we will always be separated from

breathe, you trespass, again and again you trespass the world." Quoted: Hägglund, Martin. *This Life: Secular Faith and Spiritual Freedom*. New York: Pantheon Books, 2019: 118.

[25] The logic of the lure is opposite the deductive logic of the idea. See: Ricco, John Paul. *The Logic of the Lure*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002.

[26] In his reading of *What is Philosophy?*, Leo Bersani enumerates the terms by which Deleuze and Guattari define logic as a form and a force: as that which is without a scientific function (in the Cartesian sense); is not a logical proposition; doesn't belong to a discursive system; and doesn't have a reference. See "Staring," in *Receptive Bodies*: 125-26.

[27] "The inherent otherness of thought to itself is what prevents it from being fully realized." Bersani, Leo. "'I Can Dream, Can't I.'" *Critical Inquiry* 40, no. Autumn 2013: 33. "The incessant vanishing of mental events is inseparable from the multiplication of virtual connections" (ibid. 39). In an early essay, "Sociability and Cruising" (1992), Bersani names what I am theorizing here as "metaphysical sociability," which he suggests we call "an ecological ethics, one in which the subject, having willed its own lessness, can live less invasively in the world." Bersani, Leo. *Is the Rectum a Grave?: And Other Essays*. London: The University of Chicago Press, 2010: 62.

things we love. That's the nature and price of life, right? But, when you love something deeply, then you're courageous."[28]

Existential ethos lies in an aesthetic and auditory attunement to the sonorous sound of the invisible flight of the animals. The latter of which, as provocation and inspiration (i.e. muse) for thought, is less a trace than it is a call before speech, voice, and language. This is what Agamben has named *museic*. To listen to this *museic* would be to respond to a call that is the exigency of the ecological. It would return us to dwelling in the world, absent the place of metaphysical negation, and finally alert to the real extinction that is taking place. At that point, ecology becomes muse-ecology.

If, following Agamben, Foucault, Marcus Aurelius and others, thought has always equaled the invisible flight of the birds, then in the midst of the sixth great extinction (i.e. now), we are called upon as our vocation and in the name of climate justice, not only to think about the innumerable die-offs and extinctions of species, but to understand and fully embrace the extent to which disappearance, including in the form of extinction, is the provocation for thought—precisely in its inoperative and inconclusive force.[29] In this way it is not

[28] Knight, Sam. "Does Extinction Rebellion Have the Solution to the Climate Crisis?" *The New Yorker*, July 21, 2019. https://www.newyorker.com/news/letter-from-the-uk/does-extinction-rebellion-have-the-solution-to-the-climate-crisis.

[29] Towards the end of his essay, "Staring," Leo Bersani asks: "why not welcome the pleasure in repeatedly failing to conclude—in our thinking, in our writing, in our sexuality? Essayistic writing does not develop and push to its conclusion a critical or a philosophical argument. It moves speculatively." Bersani, Leo. *Receptive Bodies*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2018: 128.
For Bersani and Agamben, and I, thought relies upon its essential inconclusive incompletion and im-potentiality—as does aesthetics, love, and intimacy (to name just a few). The temporality of which pertains to the moment (stillborn or aborted) and the contemporary (in-actual, irrelevant).

a matter of simply thinking about extinction, but to become—through the provocation of disappearance that is thought—the one who is becoming extinct in the very practice of one's thinking.[30]

Which is to say that thought lies not only in the capacity to develop but also in the potential not to be developed to the point of conclusion. In this regard, each thought is always on the verge of being the last thought, its present being enunciated as "now no more." For the latter formulation, see: Khalip, Jacques. *Last Things: Disastrous Form from Kant to Hujar*. New York, N.Y.: Fordham University Press, 2018.

[30] In other words, this would be something like "meditating extinction" similar to the Stoic's meditating death. If, as Foucault defines it, the psychagogical is "the transmission of a truth whose function is not to endow any subject whomsoever with abilities, etcetera, but whose function is to modify the mode of being of the subject," then we might argue that the ecological in general and what of ecology is tied to extinction, is psychagogical (and hence pedagogical). Foucault, Michel. *The Hermeneutics of the Subject: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1981-1982*. New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2005: 407.

Yet here are the very important distinctions between what I am proposing and Stoicism. The Stoic seeks to eliminate the passions that he suffers from loss and vulnerability, in order to reach a conclusive and eternal peace of mind. Whereas I am interested in the passionate sustaining of those very feelings as the ethical attunement to the finitude of existence in its very inconclusiveness (secular faith) and the affirmation that this is what matters and hence is of value in itself. Hence unlike the Stoics, this is an ethics structured in terms of contingency and a certain dependency on others and other things—of non-detachment (yet without being an ethics of attachment either). Against Augustine and his advocacy of only loving infinite and eternal things, this is an ethics that calls for the love of finite things and to find singularities lovable in their very finitude as being always on the verge of disappearance.

Finally, even though I am arguing against negativity, this is not equivalent to the opposed position taken by the Stoics to negativity. The difference is that for the Stoics, loss, vulnerability, perishing, disappearance is taken to be negative, whereas I want to think about them in ways other than dialectically or metaphysically, yet without resorting to the apathetic, which would bring us back to Stoicism. In other words: my position is closer to that of Hegel in his critique of Stoicism and his commitment to the finitude of being—including its retreat and withdrawal—yet without Hegel's negative (dialectical) reserve. See: Hägglund, Martin. *This Life: Secular Faith and Spiritual Freedom*. New York: Pantheon Books, 2019: 45-46.

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