

# REBELLION: A NOTE ON AGAMBen'S RECEPTION OF DOSTOEVSKY IN *THE OPEN*

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## 520 I. "THERIOMORPHOUS": IVAN KARAMAZOV AND THE PERTURBED PROMISE OF HARMONY

In "Theriomorphous," the opening chapter of *The Open: Man and Animal*, Giorgio Agamben makes a rather puzzling reference to Dostoevsky in a discussion of an illumination from a manuscript of a Hebrew Bible in the Ambrosian Library in Milan. The illustration depicts the righteous seated at the messianic banquet at the end of history, represented with animal heads. At the very end of the chapter, Agamben surmises that this unusual representation might allude to the messianic prophecy in Isaiah 2:6 of the ultimate reconciliation between human and animal nature, "which," as he adds in a parenthesis, "so pleased Ivan Karamazov" (*The Open* 3). He further quotes the prophecy "the wolf shall live with the sheep, / and the leopard lie down with the kid; / and the calf and the young lion shall grow up together, / and a little child shall lead them" (*The Open* 3). "It is not impossible, therefore," Agamben continues, "that in attributing an animal head to the remnant of Israel, the artist of the manuscript in the Ambrosian intended to suggest that on the last day, the relations between animals and men will take on a new form, and that man himself will be reconciled with his animal nature" (*The Open* 3). Later in the book, Agamben attempts to conceive of this new form of reconciled, peaceable relationship between animals and men as "the open."

Having presented a prospect of messianic reconciliation, Agamben then leads the reader through a detailed analysis of Western discourse, exemplified in its last historical instance by Heidegger's notion that the human and the animal are always interconnected, but in a way that turns out to be hierarchical and oppressive.

Agamben calls this type of interconnection the “anthropological machine.” In its ideological procedure of articulating and re-articulating the “caesurae” (*The Open* 13) between human and animal, the anthropological machine is prone to produce an empty zone of exception for its operational remnant, which is “neither an animal life nor a human life, but only a life that is separated and excluded from itself—only a *bare life*” (*The Open* 38).

By the end of the book, “with Benjamin *ex machina*” (Durantaye 7), Agamben suggests a very different relation between human and animal nature, which he describes with the French word *désœuvrement*, or inoperativity. This inoperativity presupposes a disentanglement of human and animal nature that would bring to a halt the persecution and oppression that are implicit in the interlocked dual model. Such a reconciliation through separation would fulfill Isaiah’s prophecy; the image of the righteous—not just *any* people, but specifically the Righteous—with animal heads at the messianic banquet adumbrates the possibility of such a neutralization of the anthropological machine.

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In regard to the ultimately conciliatory goal of Agamben’s book, its introductory reference to Isaiah’s prophecy would be smooth and beautiful, were it not for its unsettling parenthetical association with Ivan Karamazov’s endorsement. The problem is that not only did Ivan Karamazov not like this prophecy, but he rejected it emphatically and indignantly. Most readers, if they notice the parenthesis at all, probably take it as an error and pass it by or silently correct it in their minds; here, I argue that it is worth taking seriously and examining in a broad, if implicit, Dostoevskyan context of ideas. Whether it is ironic, or merely a slip of memory, Agamben’s reference immediately disturbs the promise of Isaian reconciliation set out at the beginning of the book. But it is precisely through this disturbance that Agamben’s project in *The Open* acquires its ultimate ethical relevance.

## II. IN THE STEPS OF DOSTOEVSKY: IVAN’S “SOVEREIGN POWER” VERSUS ALYOSHA’S “GREAT IGNORANCE”

Ivan Karamazov’s rejection of Isaiah’s prophecy appears in the famous chapter of Dostoevsky’s last novel, *The Brothers Karamazov* (1880), entitled “Rebellion” (Part II, Book Five, Chapter 4). In this chapter, Ivan tells his saintly, Christ-like brother Alyosha about the suffering of little children who have been tortured to death, such as a little girl flogged to death by her educated parents, the Turks throwing Slavic babies in the air and impaling them on their swords in front of their mothers, and a boy hunted down by a pack of dogs. As if to invert Isaiah’s prophecy, Ivan makes the “little child,” not a crown of harmony, but the cornerstone of his rejection of any form of redemption or reconciliation. Why, then, does Agamben refer to Ivan Karamazov as an ally, or a quasi-ally, at the beginning of a book that is supposed to advance a

possibility of a non-destructive, non-hierarchical, non-ideological relation between human and animal nature? To answer this question and to explore what may be at stake here, we must consider the context of Ivan Karamazov's discussion of Isaiah's prophecy, which is also crucial to *The Open*.

Agamben discusses his intentions for *The Open* as follows:

In our culture, man has always been thought of as the articulation and conjunction of a body and a soul, of a living thing and a logos, of a natural element and a supernatural or social or divine element. We must learn instead to think of man as what results from the incongruity of these two elements, and investigate not the metaphysical mystery of conjunction, but rather the practical and political mystery of separation. What is man, if he is always the place—and, at the same time, the result—of ceaseless divisions and caesurae? It is more urgent to work on these divisions, to ask in what way—within man—has man been separated from non-man, and the animal from the human, than it is to take positions on the great issues, on so-called human rights and values. And perhaps even the most luminous sphere of our relations with the divine depends, in some way, on that darker one which separates us from the animal. (*The Open* 16)

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Agamben's analysis of the divisions and separations between man and non-man in both their luminous and dark aspects was a theme already explored by Dostoevsky, especially in *The Brothers Karamazov*. The two models of relation between man and animal that Agamben counterposes in *The Open*—the model of the oppressive anthropological machine versus the model of mystical reconciliation through peaceful separation (both being based on a logic of division and separation)—reproduce the two paradigms of human and animal nature represented in Dostoevsky's novel by Ivan and Alyosha Karamazov. Ivan's discourse is an instance of the anthropological machine. He regards the relationship of man and animal in terms of exclusion and inclusion, or in terms of subordination and hierarchy. Agamben argues that this type of discourse is all-pervasive in Western science, philosophy, and anthropology. Such discourse is often manipulated in order to dehumanize, to produce the condition of "bare life," and thus to justify murder as a hygienic operation. Alyosha's discourse is, on the other hand, a religious evocation of a dialogically open relationship between man and animal, and of their reconciliation in a stance of peaceful, though melancholy, separation. His discourse parallels the model of mystical reconciliation that Agamben adopts from Walter Benjamin. The dialogue between Ivan and Alyosha, usually understood as a dialogue between science and religion, atheism and belief, evil and good, is by implication also a dialogue between the two models of the relationship between man and animal that Agamben observed.

The dialogue between these two paradigms of the human/animal relationship in Dostoevsky is evidently of great interest to the philosopher. By mentioning Ivan's alleged acceptance of Isaiah's prophecy, Agamben strangely substitutes Alyosha's model of peace for Ivan's model of war, as it is his intent in *The Open* to replace war with peace. However, would it not, in that case, make more sense to replace the name "Ivan" with the name "Alyosha" and thereby lift the burden of an irreconcil-

able irony? To answer this question, we must first note that Ivan is a theoretician of "sovereign power" and of its powerless corollary, "bare life." Ivan is introduced as the author of an article on "the subject of ecclesiastical courts and the scope of their rights" (*Brothers Karamazov* 60), which argues that the Church should contain the State, and criminal law, within itself. The ultimate goal of this suggestion is total punishment of body and soul. Ivan's argument is that "[i]f everything became the Church, then the Church would excommunicate the criminal and the disobedient and not cut off their heads" (*Brothers Karamazov* 63). What at first glance may seem a suggestion driven by mercy is in fact not, if one considers it closely. According to Ivan's reasoning, the excommunicated man "would then have to go away not only from men, but also from Christ. For by his crime he would have rebelled not only against men but also against Christ's Church" (*Brothers Karamazov* 63).

What Ivan contemplates here is a totalitarian system of punishment that would strip the criminal not only of his civil rights and social identity, but also of his humanity as such: "to go away from Christ," to lose God's image in which man was created, amounts to being reduced to "bare life." In Christian belief, the image of God in man stands not just for the external appearance of the human being but also for the whole cognitive and perceptual apparatus that connects human beings to the external world in both its physical and meta-physical dimensions. The image of God is ultimately what differentiates human from animal.

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Ivan is also the author of the poem "The Grand Inquisitor," which discusses mankind's fear of the freedom of choice that Christ has given them (Part II, Book Five, Chapter 5). As a result of mankind's fear and weakness, the institution of the church takes absolute power over human destiny into its own hands. The poem can also easily be read as Ivan's conceptualization of sovereign power and its absolute dependence on "bare life." The absolute sovereign, in the figure of the Grand Inquisitor, meets with the figure of the absolute victim, Christ, who reappears on Earth. The Grand Inquisitor imprisons Christ in order to execute him again, but visits him on the night before the execution in order to explain his theory of what Agamben would call sovereign power. Ivan's perspective strips Christ's sacrifice of any redemptive dimension. Instead of redeeming mankind, he is killed as an instance of "bare life," since his death brings about the exclusive sovereign power of the Church, with its unlimited control over the life and death of its members, a power that continues to assert itself by means of the Inquisition.<sup>1</sup>

In the meta-text of Dostoevsky's novels as a whole, Ivan Karamazov can be seen as a further development of Raskolnikov, the protagonist of *Crime and Punishment* (1866), who theorizes sovereign power in a much more obvious, and cruder, way. Raskolnikov's model of superiority is none other than the autocratic power of Napoleon (*Crime and Punishment* 260). His decision to assert his own superiority requires the extermination of a life that is not worth being lived, the bare life of the pawn-broker Alyona Ivanovna, who is compared in the novel again and again to "a louse" (*Crime and Punishment* 65); and, as Raskolnikov says, she should be killed as

one. Unlike Raskolnikov, Ivan Karamazov is involved with crime only ideologically, but Ivan's rhetoric, based on the oppressive model of the anthropological machine, is similar to Raskolnikov's. For example, Ivan does not intervene in the fatal conflict between his father and his brother Dmitri, saying that he does not mind "two vipers eating each other up" (*Brothers Karamazov* 143). Not only do Dmitri and his father have a financial dispute, but they also compete for a woman, which makes matters worse.

At one point in the novel, Ivan realizes that his father's life depends on Ivan's physical presence and therefore becomes his personal responsibility. When the jealous son Dmitri attacks his father, it is only Ivan's intervention that rescues the old man from certain death. When Ivan confides to Alyosha that only his presence saved their father from being killed, Alyosha is shocked:

"God forbid!"—"Why 'forbid?'" Ivan continued in the same whisper, his face twisted maliciously. "Viper will eat viper, and it would serve them both right!" Alyosha started. (*Brothers Karamazov* 143)

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Later in that same scene, Alyosha and Ivan continue:

"Brother, let me ask you one more thing: can it be that any man has the right to decide about the rest of mankind, who is worthy to live and who is more unworthy?"

"But why bring worth into it? The question is most often decided in the hearts of men not at all on the basis of worth, but for quite different reasons, much more natural ones. As for rights, tell me, who has no right to wish?"

"But surely not for another's death?"

"Maybe even for another's death. Why lie to yourself when everyone lives like that, and perhaps even cannot live any other way? What are you getting at—what I said about 'two vipers eating each other up'? In that case, let me ask you: do you consider me capable, like Dmitri, of shedding Aesop's blood, well, of killing him? Eh?"

"What are you saying, Ivan!—The thought never entered my mind! And I don't consider Dmitri..."

"Thanks at least for that," Ivan grinned. "Let it be known to you that I will always protect him. But as for my wishes in the matter, there I reserve complete freedom for myself." (*Brothers Karamazov* 143)

This brief exchange effectively compares and contrasts Ivan's and Alyosha's personalities and their worldviews. Alyosha's "great ignorance" of evil is so profound that the very thought that one of his brothers could kill his father has never entered his mind. Ivan, on the other hand, knows all about the evil drives of men, including himself. At the crucial point in the conflict between his father and his brother Dmitri, Ivan ultimately chooses to withdraw his protection from their father by simply letting events take their own course. Ivan's non-interference and ideological instigation make their father's murder possible, and in the end he holds himself responsible for what, in Agamben's case, Thomas Wall called "radical passivity."

### III. THINKING TO THE END: IVAN'S DILEMMA IN *THE OPEN*

Although he is no saint, Ivan is a thinker of absolute, radical honesty, who knows all about the evil that is present in the human condition, the ultimate biological determinism of power, and its dependence on the anthropological machine. His honesty compels him to follow his analysis of evil to its ultimate, mythical end, or rather, dead end, as he communicates with the devil himself, whom he despises but understands. Ivan's inability to convince himself of any positive solution to or reconciliation of the premises of his ultimate knowledge of evil drives him mad. With this in mind, the single reference to Ivan Karamazov in *The Open* signals Agamben's involvement with the complex of ideas in, and sensibility of, his *Homo Sacer*, a book that reaches the sinister, paralyzing conclusion, thoroughly in the spirit of Dostoevsky's unbearable truths, "that the inclusion of bare life in the political realm constitutes the original—if concealed—nucleus of sovereign power" (*Homo Sacer* 6).

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Alyosha Karamazov, the brother with whom Ivan debates the reasons for his disbelief, is, like Ivan, a writer. He writes a biography of the Elder Zosima, a holy man who is his spiritual father, and whose teaching, as described by Alyosha in a chapter of Zosima's *vita* called "Of Prayer, Love, and the Touching of Other Worlds," is centered on the peaceful relationship between human and animal:

Love the animals: God gave them the rudiments of thought and an untroubled joy. Do not trouble it, do not torment them, do not take their joy from them, do not go against God's purpose. Man, do not exalt yourself above the animals: they are sinless, and you, you with your grandeur, fester the earth by your appearance on it, and leave your festering trace behind you—alas, almost every one of us does! [...] Love children especially, for they too, are sinless, like angels, and live to bring us to tenderness and the purification of our hearts and as a sort of example for us. (*Brothers Karamazov* 319)

Elsewhere in the *vita*, Alyosha inserts an anecdote in which Zosima meets a peasant bird-catcher who knows the birds' language, and says to him:

Look at the horse, that great animal that stands so close to man, or the ox, that nourishes him and works for him, so downcast and pensive, look at their faces, what meekness, what trustfulness, and what beauty are in that face. It is even touching to know that there is no sin upon them, for everything is perfect, everything except man is sinless, and Christ is with them even before us. The fearsome bear that wanders in the forest is terrible and ferocious, and not at all guilty for that. (*Brothers Karamazov* 295)

The bird-catcher, thanks to his understanding of the birds' language, is himself a symbol of the boundary between human and animal.

The Elder's teaching is based on an affirmation of Isaiah's prophecy, the very vision of a future which inspires Agamben's attempt at a reconciliatory gesture in *The Open* through his introduction of Benjamin's mysticism. Zosima's understanding of the relationship between man and animal involves both "great separation" and "great

ignorance.” One example of such a “great separation” can be seen in the story Zosima tells about the great Russian saint Sergius of Radonezh and a bear that came to him while he was living in a little hut in the forest: “The great saint felt tenderness for the animal, fearlessly went out to him and gave him a piece of bread, as if to say: ‘Go, and Christ be with you.’ And the fierce beast went away obediently and meekly without doing any harm” (*Brothers Karamazov* 295). This is, of course, an instance of the open, of a mystical (non)communication between man and animal.

By contrast, the perfect figure of “great ignorance,” of a righteous man with an animal head, is Dostoevsky’s famous idiot, Prince Myshkin, the protagonist of *The Idiot* (1869). Myshkin tells a gathering of his friends, a mother and three daughters, the story of his recovery from the mental torpor of idiocy:

I completely awoke from this darkness, in the evening at Basle, on entering Switzerland, and what woke me up was the hee-hawing of a donkey in the town market. The donkey gave me a dreadful shock and for some reason greatly appealed to me, and at the same time it was as if everything in my head suddenly cleared. Since then I’ve had a dreadful soft spot for donkeys. There’s even a kind of sympathy between us. (*The Idiot* 66)

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In response to this story, the girls laugh, and the mother says, with an angry glance at the laughing girls, “A donkey? That’s strange [...]. Though actually, there’s nothing strange about it, one of us might easily fall in love with a donkey” (*The Idiot* 66). Examples of “great ignorance” in Dostoevsky such as these are similar to Agamben’s intent in *The Open*, but they do not come from Ivan Karamazov, who is not capable of ethical innocence himself. This incapability, as mentioned above, drives him straight into insanity.

In an interview in *Libération*, Agamben says of his discovery of Heidegger’s philosophy that “every great work contains an element of darkness and poison—for which it does not always offer an antidote” and further confesses, “Benjamin was for me the antidote that allowed me to survive Heidegger” (Durantaye 7). Through a mixture of Kojève’s post-historical remnant of “art, love, play” (qtd. in *The Open* 9) and Benjamin’s Jewish mysticism, Agamben attempts to advance a redemptive model for man and animal in place of the anthropological machine. However, his invocation of Ivan Karamazov changes the matter. Though Ivan and Alyosha are placed in opposition to one another as figures of, respectively, dominance and reconciliation, it cannot be forgotten that Ivan also attempts a model of reconciliation inspired by the medieval and early modern redemptive tales of Mary’s forgiveness, such as *Le bon jugement de la très sainte et gracieuse Vierge Marie*, or *The Mother of God Visits the Torments* (*Brothers Karamazov* 247). Like Agamben, Ivan regards this reconciliation as a “great separation,” as seen in the end of “The Grand Inquisitor.” The end of the poem depicts a separation between persecutor and victim, as Christ stays silent during the Inquisitor’s monologue, then rises and kisses him on the cheek. The Inquisitor is moved, opens the door, and lets him go into the night, a gesture that seems to prefigure Benjamin’s “saved night” implicit in Agamben’s “open.” The persecutor and the victim forgive each other and part in peace. Christ goes his own way,



while the Grand Inquisitor stays behind with his power structure left unchallenged, maybe even blessed. If read along the lines of Agamben's interpretation of Benjamin's "saved night," Ivan's imagined reconciliation has a sinister dimension:

The "saved night" is the name of this nature that has been given back to itself, whose character, according to another of Benjamin's fragments, is transience and whose rhythm is beatitude. The salvation that is at issue here does not concern something that has been lost and must be found again, something that has been forgotten and must be remembered; it concerns, rather, the lost and the forgotten as such—that is, something unsavable. The saved night is a relationship with something unsavable. (*The Open* 82)

Applied to Ivan Karamazov's poem, Agamben's reading suggests that the "saved night" consists not of restaging Christ's redemptive sacrifice that has been lost and forgotten and must be remembered, but in entering a forgiving relationship with Christ's very failure to save and redeem, and his "unsavable" death as "bare life." However, the "saved night" is also implicit in Christ's own forgiving relationship to the unredeemable inquisition machine, the sovereign power, the church. Christ's fleeting kiss touching the Inquisitor's cheek translates into a melancholy, disenchanting disengagement, a "mastered relation," between them. It is no coincidence that for his model of reconciliation, Ivan chooses the form of a philosophical poem, a form of aesthetic fiction, as Agamben would choose the form of a philosophical essay for *The Open*. For writers such as Benjamin and Adorno, the philosophical essay was a realm in which subjectivity could become a form of individual resistance to totalizing systems, an open form *par excellence* in which the subject can approach the object in a playful, non-instrumentalizing, and non-exhaustive way. The essay as form offers a harbour to those who try to flee the suffocating clutch of systematic determinism. Ivan's philosophical poem, essentially, constitutes his attempt to redeem himself through a non-dialectical remnant of "art, love, and play," as Kojève, Bataille, and Agamben tried to envision these at the end of history.

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However, Ivan's attempt at reconciliation in the legend "The Grand Inquisitor" is immediately preceded by the chapter "Rebellion," in which Ivan radically rejected Isaiah's prophecy on the basis of the unredeemable suffering of children. These two chapters are logically linked together in a way congenial to Agamben's juxtaposition of *Homo Sacer* and *The Open*, or of the anthropological machine and the mystical separation. The chapter "Rebellion" can be read as an introduction or a preface to the legend. In this chapter, Ivan imagines the child—the victim of unjustified, irrational violence—in a manner astonishingly similar to Agamben's "bare life." The child is, paradoxically, neither human nor animal, or both at once. Ivan characteristically begins his tale of the tortured children with an invocation of Nekrasov's poem of a horse brutally flogged "on its meek eyes" (*Brothers Karamazov* 241) by its drunken owner. Elsewhere Ivan says, "Children, while they are still children, up to the age of seven, for example, are terribly remote from grown-up people, as if they were different beings, of a different nature" (*Brothers Karamazov* 238). Thus, the child is excluded from the grown-up world. Because of their innocence, children stand close to ani-



mals in Dostoevsky's world, which makes them easy victims. The child has no rights or social identity of his/her own, and is totally at the mercy of his/her parents, which is why, in one of Ivan's examples, the court pardons the parents who have killed their young daughter in their educational fervour. This non-sacrificial and unredeemable suffering is the reason for Ivan's rejection of any positive program of reconciliation. Dostoevsky presents Ivan's rebellious rejection of reconciliation "in real life" in contrast to his attempt at reconciliation through aesthetic fiction or philosophical essays, as a figure of dissonance.

#### IV. RECONCILIATION AND ITS DISCONTENTS

528 The conflict between Ivan Karamazov's desire for Isaian reconciliation and his inability to accept it reappears in Agamben's philosophical meta-text. Against the backdrop of Ivan's conflict, Agamben's reconciliatory figure of "great ignorance" in *The Open* as a response to *Homo Sacer* indicates a similar exercise of philosophical good will. Agamben offers us an example of the open, or of *désœuvrement*/inoperativity, in Titian's painting *The Nymph and the Shepherd*, as a calculated departure from the content of *Homo Sacer*. It is an image of a disenchanted but reconciled couple of lovers in a post-coital condition of peace, with a bold goat grazing peacefully in the background. However, the voluptuous nymph in the painting lies on a leopard's skin. Agamben discusses the bliss of the goat, an animal who is finally left alone by people, as a sign of reconciliation, or openness between animal and human nature. For the leopard's skin, he offers nothing but an art-historical comment that this is "a traditional symbol of wantonness and libido" (*The Open* 85) that have now been appeased.

The leopard's skin can also be read as a direct trace of cruelty, of the torture and murder of an animal, on the basis of which redeeming sexual fulfillment was *de facto* achieved. With this silent memento, "bare life" is still present even in the reconciliatory project of *The Open*, haunting it exactly as does Ivan's rebellion.<sup>2</sup> The skin stretched on the ground would thus belong to the very leopard who was supposed to lie down with the kid in Isaiah's prophecy; instead, it pays the price of "great ignorance." The skinned animal is, in fact, an analogue to Ivan Karamazov's tortured child. Comparing the child's suffering to Isaiah's prophecy, Ivan draws the following conclusion:

I don't want harmony, for love of mankind I don't want it. I want to remain with unrequited suffering. I'd rather remain with my unrequited suffering and my unquenched indignation, even if I'm wrong. Besides, they have put too high a price on harmony, we can't afford to pay so much for admission. And therefore I hasten to return my ticket. And it is my duty, if only as an honest man, to return it as far ahead of time as possible. [...] It's not that I don't accept God, Alyosha, I just most respectfully return him the ticket. (*Brothers Karamazov* 245)

These words of Ivan Karamazov are usually quoted as one of the most famous ethical proclamations in world literature. It is in response to this declaration that Alyosha remarks, "That is rebellion."

Agamben's inversion of Ivan Karamazov's famous response to Isaiah's prophecy reveals *The Open* as an intellectual enterprise driven by a dynamic of self-questioning congenial to that of Dostoevsky's character. As Antonio Negri points out in his review of Agamben's *The State of Exception* (2003), "How can someone like Agamben, who has always borne death in mind in his phenomenological descriptions, positively construe the idea of redemption? It is on this project that Agamben's theoretical path presented increasingly evident jolts." One such jolt is the philosopher's attempt at redemptive thinking of "art, love, and play" as a poetic response to terrible truths. It forges its path, however, via Ivan's dissonant ethical quest. Ivan Karamazov's radically failed attempt at reconciliation constitutes a powerful subtext of *The Open*, in Agamben's own words, its "unsaid" (*Kingdom and Glory* 7). Agamben's enlistment of Ivan as an ally in a reconciliatory project makes Ivan's rebellion reverberate all the more powerfully in the essayistic paradise of *The Open*, giving the book its uncanny ethical dimension.

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## NOTES

1. In a series of books that followed *Homo Sacer*, Agamben conducted a systematic examination of the theological premises of Western power. His uncovering of the entanglement of Western political theory and ethics with the rituals and offices of the Catholic Church in *The Sacrament of Language* (2010), *The Kingdom and the Glory* (2011), and *Opus Dei* (2013), for example, can be read as an elaboration on Ivan Karamazov's thought-experiment in which the key to totalizing power is hidden in the Church's ideological embrace of the State.
2. In "Picturing the Messianic: Agamben and Titian's *The Nymph and the Shepherd*," Paolo Palladino points out yet another figure of the suppression of "bare life" in Agamben's interpretation of Titian's painting. He argues that Agamben's concept of "bare life" is implicitly present, not overcome, in the redemptive image of sexually fulfilled or "evacuated lovers" (96).

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