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Living through Terror and Terror through Living: The Biopolitical Dimensions
of Religion, Security and Terrorism

A Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of the University of Denver and the Iliff School of
Theology Joint PhD Program

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In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

By

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June 2018

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Abstract

Recent emphasis and attention by thinkers, media pundits, and politicians on terrorism requires new, critical evaluation of the processes by which terrorism is understood. By investigating the concept of biopolitics, as developed specifically through Michel Foucault and Giorgio Agamben, new insights into the interactions between terrorism, politics, and religion can emerge. Most notably, the attempts to explain terror as simply an economic problem, an excessive form of violence, and/or as religious fervency gone awry rely on embedded biopolitical concepts. The continual attempts to solve terrorism through increased biopolitical strategies, thereby making terrorism a problem *for* biopolitics, only further substantiate the crisis that biopolitics brings about in the first place. Carefully investigating the relationship between biopolitical theory and religious concepts uncovers those very motivations of defining terrorism in certain forms (economically problematic, excessively violent, religiously passionate), and the continued insistence that terrorism is another problem to be solved, like any other political issue. Instead, I propose that by taking the religious concepts of biopolitics seriously, we can reimagine terror as heresy,

requiring a different political calculus articulating terrorism not as a problem *for* biopolitics to fix but instead as a problem *of* biopolitics.

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Introduction: The Power of Terror

In March of 2014, a group¹ dressed in all black and using knives and swords rushed into the Kunming Railway Station killing twenty-nine civilians and injuring approximately 140 more. Police subsequently killed four of the assailants, and arrested one, while the other attackers were captured days later by authorities. In the immediate aftermath, no known terrorist organizations took responsibility for the attack, but many in the media quickly reported that those who perpetrated the attack belonged to the community of Uyghur Muslims. While a minor terrorist incident by strictly numerical standards, the repercussions of this attack provide insights into central issues within terrorist studies and contemporary geopolitics. Amidst the tragedy and loss of life, a provocative dialogue of the event rose to the surface regarding the classification of the Kunming attack as either terrorism or something else.

The New York Times in March of 2014 detailed the transition by the US State Department as they officially adopted the language of terrorism.² In the words of Jen Psaki, a spokesperson for the State Department,

¹ Some put the number of attackers at 8 while other sources say 10.

² Didi Kristen Tatlow, "After Prodding, U.S. State Department Labels Kunming Attack 'Terrorism'," *New York Times*, March 4, 2014, accessed March 25, 2014,

Well, we acknowledge that China has characterized the incident as a terror act. We extend our condolences for the loss of life. We of course oppose terrorism in all of its forms, and based on the information reported by the Chinese media, this appears to be an act of terrorism targeting random members of the public. We don't have any other independent information, but again, we of course deplore violence intentionally directed at innocent civilians in any case, regardless of whether — regardless of the cause. So that is where we are.³

The article continues with a Beijing reporter questioning Psaki on the hesitancy of the US to officially label the Kunming attack as “terrorism.”⁴

Additionally, an article from the China's state press agency Xinhua speaks of world leaders joining in condemnation of the attacks, and while this news agency pressed the point of terrorism fairly heavily, none of the world leaders cited specifically called the act terrorism.⁵ In fact, in a convoluted statement, Russian president Vladimir Putin called the Kunming attack a “criminal act,” while simultaneously promising further partnerships in counterterrorism efforts.⁶

The eventual concession by the State Department in calling the act terrorism only generates further turmoil regarding the nature and scope of terrorism in modern international discourse. First, it highlights the reality that

<http://sinosphere.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/03/04/after-prodding-u-s-state-department-labels-kunming-attack-terrorism>.

³ Ibid.

⁴ For a full transcript of the conversation between Jen Psaki and Bingru Wang, see “State Department Daily Briefing,” March 3, 2014, <http://iipdigital.usembassy.gov/st/english/texttrans/2014/03/20140304295315.html>.

⁵ “International Community Condemns Terrorist Attack in China,” March 2, 2014, accessed March 25th, 2014, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2014-03/02/c_133154326.htm.

⁶ Ibid.

we possess no representative definition of terrorism, in either domestic or international form. This is even more unnerving when put into the context of an ongoing global “War on Terror” that lacks a fundamental and comprehensive means of defining the very object of this war. Second, the international community lacks any comprehensive and objective way by which to differentiate “acts of terror” from terrorism.⁷ Are the two related in some meaningful way, or separated by political, theoretical, or rhetorical lines? Third, what conditions, ideas, and strategic consequences motivate the hesitancy or confidence for naming an act “terrorism?” On the one hand, one can ignore these questions as unnecessary parsing of the terminology and claim that Chinese and American relations are strained for a variety of complicated reasons, resulting in a general attitude of suspicion. On the other, the US and other human rights groups have continually cited China’s treatment of the Uyghur people as notably atrocious, intimating that this attack serves as a horrific reminder of the capability of those who have been repressed in such extreme ways to resort to violence.⁸

Ignoring these questions and concerns as unproductive nitpicking has its attraction. However, we are still left with some mystery surrounding this attack and its consequences; most notably why China remains so adamant this was, in fact, terrorism. This unwavering insistence on the act being terror suggests

⁷ One might be reminded of the Clinton administration’s failure to call Rwanda a genocide, and instead opting for the less declarative claim that they were “acts of genocide.”

⁸ Hannah Beech, “Deadly Terrorist Attack in Southwestern China Blamed on Separatist Muslim Uighurs,” *Time*, March 1, 2014, accessed March 25, 2014, <http://time.com/11687/deadly-terror-attack-in-southwestern-china-blamed-on-separatist-muslim-uighurs/>.

political capital accompanying the label of terrorism in a way unlike criminality or simply an “act of terror.” The naming of an act as “terrorism” imparts discursive coding about human rights, political action, military justification, and so on.

The Kunming attack underscores a central issue in the world of terrorism studies: The failure of defining terrorism produces unintended political consequences. The definition of terrorism, and acts that constitute it, carries profound political power. The ability to enact new political partnerships or justify violence occurs when the governing officials and political elites label an act terrorism. As a side effect, such naming power also carries the ability to constitute other activities and then codify appropriate actions in response. Should something be merely criminal, as the case may be regarding Kunming, a certain set of actions are permissible. While claiming something as terror not only constitutes and codifies what one may do in the face of terror, but simultaneously co-constitutes other violent acts as criminal, hate crimes, narcotics related, domestic violence, etc. Each act of naming closes off and opens new discursive territories for a litany of other related terms and claims.

The term “terrorism” constitutes something special vis-à-vis other things such as criminality or even hate crime. Terrorism represents a central and substantial organizing tool for politics. It is like a strainer through which disparate political discourse and ideas pass.

It is not surprising that in the run-up to the 2016 presidential election, democratic hopeful Bernie Sanders made several comments during debates that

connected terrorism with climate change.⁹ Likewise, in a speech following the attack on a nightclub in Florida Donald Trump made the following remarks:

A radical Islamic terrorist targeted the nightclub not only because he wanted to kill Americans, but in order to execute gay and lesbian citizens because of their sexual orientation. It is a strike at the heart and soul of who we are as a nation. It is an assault on the ability of free people to live their lives, love who they want to and express their identity. It is an attack on the right of every single American to live in peace and safety in their own country. We need to respond to this attack on American as one united people – with force, purpose and determination. But the currently politically correct response cripples our ability to talk and think and act clearly.

He continues even more emphatically, “The bottom line is that the only reason the killer was in America in the first place was because we allowed his family to come here.”¹⁰ Trump connects the ideas of terrorism to sexual identity, to the right of security, to the debates around political correctness, and to questions surrounding immigration.

Terrorism is not merely a “hot button” issue, rather, terrorism has become a central point by which we organize and distribute meaning across the entirety of the political spectrum. Every potential political issue can attach to the purview of terrorism in some way: financial markets, drug trade, free movement of goods, migration, security, war, climate change, food distribution, and biological studies all intersect with terrorism.

⁹ Nick Gas, “Sanders Doubles Down: ‘Climate Change is Directly Related to the Rise of Global Terrorism,’” Politico November 14th, 2014, accessed April 11th, 2015, <http://www.politico.com/blogs/live-from-des-moines/2015/11/bernie-sanders-climate-change-terrorism-215874>

¹⁰ “Donald Trump Addresses Terrorism, Immigration and National Security,” <https://www.donaldjtrump.com/press-releases/donald-j.-trump-addresses-terrorism-immigration-and-national-security> This press release has since been taken down from the official website.

Rather than attempt (and fail) at providing yet another definition of terrorism, changing the way in which we examine the topic provides insight into this most nebulous and prolific field. Instead of asking how people become radicalized, or the ways in which religion leads to violence, *we should be asking a set of questions of why and how terrorism has come to dominate the field of politics in such a far-reaching fashion.* I contend that the nature of neoliberal politics in recent years contributes to this phenomenon, particularly the rise to dominance of organizing political power around the management of life in the most abstract form. By managing life, biopower centralizes terrorism as a primary and fundamental problem for ongoing political institutions of all varieties. Yet, biopolitics ultimately cannot solve the problem of terror, because terror exposes and undermines the foundational aspects of biopower. Biopower makes terrorism a problem that can be overcome, yet I argue that terrorism only arises because of a series of paradoxical issues embedded in biopolitical motivations, actions, and philosophical organization. Biopolitics regards terrorism as a problem for which solutions are available, yet I hope to show how terrorism is, in fact, a problem *of* biopolitics.

Carl Schmitt's declaration that the political ultimately comes down to the friend and enemy divide provides some basic parameters in attempting to uncover why terrorism has arisen to such political prominence in contemporary biopolitical formations. Obviously, in this moment of history the figure of the terrorist serves as *the* defining enemy for the West. Likewise, the emboldened citizens who seek war against this nefarious force come to constitute the "friend" within Schmitt's model. However, the enemy does not arrive independent from

the confines of history. No concept of enemy exists detached and abstracted from real human experience. Rather, there are series of historical enemies, which over time take on an essential category. At different times this concept of enemy has taken on demonstrably different meanings: The Communist, the Fascist, and so forth. One could trace a series of historical moments all defined by different enemies, with different agendas and political properties. Every people, nation, city, and community goes through a series of enemies, never abstracted and always continuously subject to historical context.

This contemporary enemy (terrorism) has much in common with previous incarnations of the enemy while at the same time producing new and contrasting elements. For one, the general and globalized element of this enemy is not new. This was a common theme throughout the Cold War. Yet this form of globalization takes on a new element because of the contemporary enemy lacking a specified or even symbolic geographic region. For Communism, the U.S.S.R. served as the symbolic spatial center of the far more abstract Communist ideology. It was tethered to geographic conditions. Terrorism, on the other hand, completely lacks a spatial center, symbolic or otherwise.

In response to this new historical iteration we must ask the historical situation whereby this thing “terror” arises as the primary form of the enemy and as a related question, what other enemies consequently have been ignored. To respond we need a thorough exploration of the general discursive climate and the circulation of ideas that attempt to explain the importance of terrorism.

Terrorism highlights unique elements of biopolitics and the subsequent neoliberal state. Through first examining the narratives that have come to

dominate terrorism, as a field of inquiry, I show that many of those narratives rely on a central disavowing of the religious tendencies of biopolitics. This disavowal produces a series of narratives that mischaracterize and misunderstand the complicated relationship between terrorism and neoliberal states. Instead of allowing such mischaracterizations of this relationship to continue, I insist on highlighting the religious dimensions of biopolitics in a way that allows for new insights into the ongoing war on terror. By viewing terrorism, and the ongoing struggle against terror, through the lens of heresy I open new possibilities of understanding terror, and more importantly, new possibilities for understanding biopolitics and the neoliberal state.

Explanations of Terror

The first characterization and explanation of how terror has come to define the “enemy” in contemporary politics sees terrorism as a purely negative force in an otherwise positive (economic) globalized world. In this response, the excessiveness of violence takes on less importance than the negative and catastrophic consequences of terrorism over and against an otherwise peaceful and positive globalizing economy. For those who perpetuate this characterization, terrorism often becomes equated with a struggle against globalization. In such a view globalization equates with increased democracy and financial stability for developing and developed world alike, creating a sphere of security. External to this sphere of security resides a world plagued by insecurity and chaos. The U.S. state department’s list of travel alerts and

warnings represents one way of envisioning the borders of these opposing spheres. Such countries as Mali, Libya, Sudan, and Somalia come with a fair number of warnings. The state department defines a travel warning occurring:

when we want you to consider very carefully whether you should go to a country at all. Examples of reasons for issuing a Travel Warning might include unstable government, civil war, ongoing intense crime or violence, or frequent terrorist attacks. We want you to know the risks of traveling to these places and to strongly consider not going to them at all. Travel Warnings remain in place until the situation changes; some have been in effect for years.¹¹

For the proponents of this characterization, the basic formula works around ideas of destabilization. The securitized world of global capital represents stability, while those areas, often associated with terrorism, represent a fundamental instability. The value of stability over instability would appear as natural, and the two are mutually exclusive.

The second characterization asserts that terrorism has become so important, and the dominant form of the enemy at this point in history, due to the extreme and perverse level of violence terrorists employ as their primary method. Of course, no one sees terrorists as *merely* violent, but the level of violence represents something special in the world today. For example, in 2015 during the rise of the “Knife Infitada,” John Kirby, a representative of the Obama administration, made statements indicating that Israel, in response to the Palestinian violence, was possibly engaging in terrorist activities. The primary determining factor in referring to these activities as terrorism revolved around

¹¹ “State Department Travel Warnings,” <https://travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/alertswarnings.html>

the excessive violence Israel employed.¹² The excessiveness of violence brings about a visceral reality for individual citizens, not only fearful for their security but fearful of a peculiar type of security that terrorism threatens. Of course, criminality is violent, but the distinguishing characteristics of a criminal act hinges on a legal definition of those acts. Terrorism, on the other hand, while certainly illegal in nature, does not take meaning from its illegality but by the visceral and raw reality of something excessively violent in nature. The importance, the threat, and the visibility of terrorism arises out of its excessively violent nature.

Finally, a third provocative but haphazard approach characterizes the prominence of terrorism as a mismanaged type of religious fervor. This view relies on a dichotomous vision of society whereby the public and private are two separate and distinct spheres of social life. Terrorism, for those who espouse this type of response, represents a failure of the demarcation of these spheres; citing a violation of the public sphere by something that should, if functioning correctly, remain within the private sphere. This view largely relies on traditional ideas of secularism and as such the religious has a certain place in society that terrorism fundamentally usurps, the attention given to terrorism is not the consequence of violence exactly, but rather as a consequence of religion that functions in irreligious ways.

¹² Kelan Howell, "Obama Administration Accuses Israel of Terrorism, 'Excessive Force,'" in *The Washington Time*, October 15, 2015, accessed April 16th, 2015. <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2015/oct/15/obama-admin-accuses-israel-terrorism-excessive-for/>

These characterizations and ways of thinking provide examples of the social, legal, and political regulations surrounding terrorism. Only by taking these answers seriously, even if they are haphazard, and investigating their regulative function in the ongoing study of terrorism, can one begin to unpack the formative biopolitical concepts that undergird and support such answers. They do not arise on their own, as formed ahistorical ideas of enemy making. These answers serve to describe and make real the contemporary enemy, and since they serve to the make the enemy real, they rely on various rules and philosophical claims founded on an insistence of life as the primary object and mode of contemporary politics.

Such haphazard characterizations of the contemporary enemy do two things. First, it maintains simplicity where nuance and complication are necessary. Second, such answers obscure the root biopolitical ideas supporting and maintaining their claim to truth. The functional and strategic value of such answers lies in their apparent common sense. Of course terrorism relies on violence. Of course terrorism is destabilizing. Of course terrorists often invoke religious ideas and tropes. However, reducing the activity down to one of these three haphazard answers covers over a series of interconnected ideas in circulation that make such common sense so common. They provide the appearance of being natural, while obscuring the very biopolitical discursive foundations of truth making that makes something appear instinctive.

To uncover “the how” of terrorism rising to such political prominence one must engage in a “genealogical” study of terrorism itself. Michel Foucault, in an

interview in 1978, described this genealogical approach to punishment in the following way,

In order to get a better understanding of what is punished and why, I wanted to ask the question *how* does one punish. This was the same procedure as I had used when dealing with madness: rather than asking *what*, in a given period, is regarded as sanity or insanity, as mental illness or normal behavior, I wanted to ask *how* these division are effected. It's a method that seems to me to yield – I wouldn't say the maximum of possible illumination – at least a fairly fruitful kind of intelligibility.¹³

In accordance with this description I am attempting to answer a question of what makes something “terrorizing.” The larger implication of this strategy insists terrorism, as a particular set of events, remain as events. By this insistence on the “eventization” of particular occurrences, Foucault keeps these things as discontinuous moments, not subject to larger metahistorical movements that reduce the particulars into overarching patterns of the movements of history.¹⁴

Each of the three ways of understanding terror - as repulsively violent, as purely negative, and as excessively religious, insist on understanding terrorism within the scope and framework of larger historical continuities. The first envisions a history whereby people are becoming less violent over time. Society, within this framework of historical continuity, sees violence as a harbinger of earlier points in historical progress, where violence was a medium by which disputes could be resolved, and has since gone away in favor of political options for resolving such disputes. History moves us to a less violent situation. The

¹³ Michel Foucault, “Question on Method,” in *The Essential Foucault*, (New York: The New Press, 2003) 247.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 250.

problem, as I will point out, is not so much that violence has been reduced but rather the nature and “look” of violence has transitioned under biopolitical demands.

The second historical continuity insists that history naturally progresses along a line of efficiency. Society demands usefulness, often measured within economic means. Terrorism represents a force that seeks to destabilize and undermine usefulness, and again points to an earlier time in history where usefulness was not realized in the way it is today. Like the less violent process of history, the usefulness concept of history envisions terrorism as a source of frustration over against this process, and something to be dealt with so that usefulness can again be realized.

The third continuity relies on an understanding of secularization through the historical process of differentiation. The religious sphere and the political sphere are slowly moving apart over the course of history. In this moving apart, political activities become the dominant form of the public sphere, while religious activities have come to reside in the private sphere. Terrorism then is seen to rupture this slow differentiation, bringing back into the realm of the public the private concerns of religion.

By evaluating these three common tropes in response to terrorism I am attempting in many ways to restore the genealogical method to the question of terrorism, and what prompts the experience of terror.

A series of intersections that are impossible to ignore between terrorism and biopolitics lies at the heart of this approach. In the most forceful terms

possible, terrorism is that anomaly that calls into question the entire biopolitical paradigm, in its fundamental inability to solve the problem.

The first chapter focuses on the religious and theological processes embedded in biopolitics and biopower. Utilizing two thinkers, Michel Foucault and Giorgio Agamben I map the historical and genealogical process by which biopolitics and biopower dominate political discourse, rely on religious concepts, and the ruptures that terrorism poses to these developments. This is not to revert to the re-instantiation of terrorism into a metahistorical process whereby biopolitics and terrorism somehow represent a culmination of larger historical movements. Rather, my thesis insists that terrorism in its most contemporary form cannot be understood apart from a primordial theological and political insistence (and distinction) on life.

Foucault and Agamben are at the heart of this project. While much scholarship has been spent to parse out the respective differences between the two thinkers, this project focuses on the points in which they converge and speak to each other. Some have accused Agamben of doing something completely anathema to Foucault's approach by highlighting his attempts to uncover "origins" in the contemporary political situation through a turn to theological discourse. It is not that I am overtly opposed to such criticisms as much as these criticisms simply do not matter for what I am doing here. I also believe they fail to consider Agamben's own comments on methodology, and I show the points of similarity to Foucault's concepts of genealogy throughout this first chapter, focusing on convergence rather than divergence, namely Foucault's shared

reliance on religious concepts to articulate his version of biopolitics and biopower.

In the second and third chapters I explore the three haphazard answers given to explain the rise in ideological prominence of terrorism, with a critical investigation to each of these answers: repulsive violence, hyper-instrumentalization, and excessive religiosity. I critically exam each of the three answers commonly provided to explain the rise of terrorism as a political category. Finally, I will engage in a new line of inquiry that questions terrorism outside the boundaries of mere political categories, paying attention to the religious elements of biopolitics, and thereby envision terrorism within the framework of the religious category of heresy.

My general methodology relies on two related philosophical concepts: genealogy, and biopower/biopolitics. However, I first want to make clear what I am not doing. This is not only a necessity from a theoretical perspective, but also politically necessary. The weight with which people use the word “terrorism” demands an apology for introducing it again under a very particular set of circumstances. I do not intend to offer a definition of terrorism. I do not intend to offer yet another political, military, or religious solution to the problems of terrorism. Likewise, I do not defend the use of terrorism or violence for political or religious ends, yet I simultaneously recognize that violence appears in a myriad of forms with different uses in different contexts. Most importantly I am not trying to locate a political, psychological, social, economic, or religious justification for terrorism. Any attempts to answer the previous questions would run counter to a genealogical project in their attempt to locate an origin or

essence of terrorism, something I am intentionally avoiding. Such an attempt at locating the origins of terrorism would ultimately be, in Foucault's words, "an attempt to capture the exact essence of things, their purest possibilities, and their carefully protected identities; because this search assumed the existence of immobile forms that precede the external world of accident and succession."¹⁵

I am merely looking at one instance, one moment in a longer genealogical study of the enemy itself. The enemy does not arrive from some original primordial confrontation of the other. Rather the enemy, and enemy making, takes place through a series of accidental encounters between different peoples at different times. The current form of the enemy for biopolitical states appears as terrorism, but this enemy could have easily been some other figure. Terrorism, while having a certain level of connection to prior enemies ranging from the Cold War to the more abstract War on Drugs, also possesses unique elements that require special and articulation. Terrorism does not merely repeat history with a new shape. A proper genealogy recognizes these similarities but likewise insists on following the differences and tracing the differences that have arisen.¹⁶ The haphazard characteristics given to terrorism as excessively violent, economically negative, and inappropriately religious rely on the repetition of a past and stable history, an insistence on "original" thinking regarding the enemy. By exploring each of these haphazard characterizations in depth I attempt not only to dislodge such "original" thinking, I also show the differences and errors

¹⁵ Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History" in *The Essential Foucault*, 353.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 355.

that each produce in the search for the truth of terrorism. Or, again, in Foucault's words:

The search for descent is not the erecting of foundations: on the contrary, it disturbs what was previously considered immobile; it fragments what was thought unified; it shows the heterogeneity of what was imagined consistent with itself.¹⁷

This defines my precise goal in approaching terrorism, to take those characteristics often provided as the truth of terror – the violent element, the economically negative element, and the religious element – and disturb the immobility of these common-sense explanations. Finally, I show how the reality of these common sense approaches to terrorism lies not in merely covering over the fundamental architecture of the truth of biopolitics, but how each truth betrays a series of anomalies embedded in the fabric of biopolitics itself. In summation, this project argues that articulating terrorism as a problem *for* biopolitics rather than a problem *of* biopolitics produces a serious paradoxical effect in contemporary politics.

¹⁷ Ibid., 356.

Chapter One: Biopolitics A Religious Concept

Biopolitics, generally the politicization of abstract life, as with any theoretical concept has its own historical development and exists in different forms for different thinkers. One could potentially trace this historical development in several different ways, arriving at varied constructions of the term that focus on phenomena within the social and political world. Deciding then to focus upon Michel Foucault and Giorgio Agamben above others may seem arbitrary. However, Foucault and Agamben provide convincing accounts of the political realm in relation to the contemporary issue of terrorism.

Biopolitics for Foucault is not synonymous with biopolitics for Agamben, but some important similarities exist between the two, namely the theological and religious dimension present in each. Consequently, the decision to focus upon these two thinkers reduces and diminishes other voices systematically utilizing biopolitics to describe and assess politics. However, as I will show, some of these voices miss the religious dimension present in both Foucault and Agamben. The Theological Dimensions of Agamben's Biopolitics:

The Theological Dimensions of Agamben's Biopolitics

I begin with Agamben, due to his contributions appearing the most overtly religious and thereby setting the stage for the comparison between the two thinkers at the center of this project. His most deliberate work on the topic of biopolitics comes from the first two volumes of his *Homo Sacer* series, which spans over 9 volumes written over 21 years and concluding in 2016. Within both *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* and *The State of Exception*, Agamben develops an illuminating account of biopolitics derived from multiple sources throughout the history of western thought and philosophy. An account of three of these figures provides a helpful explanation of the religious elements bound up in Agamben's biopolitics: Aristotle, Carl Schmitt, and Georges Bataille.

One cannot discount the influence Aristotle has over political philosophy. In many ways, outside of the *Republic*, Aristotle serves as the very root of the entire branch of philosophy focusing upon politics and the organization of people. This ability to organize and form political unions resides definitively in human linguistic capabilities. Humans alone use language, and because of this ability, can engage in self-examination.¹ By examining ourselves we uncover our fundamental weakness and fragility, particularly in isolation. As a result, we form partnerships, and in turn further develop these into increasingly complex arrangements. In 1.2 of the *Politics*, Aristotle traces these partnerships from the

¹ Aristotle, *Politics* I.2, 1253a8-19, trans. Terence Irwin and Gail Fine.

foundational male and female to the formation of the family, the combining of families into a village, and finally several villages into a city.

The larger and more complex the social associations, the more they demand the use of language, and as a result the biological reality of our fragility in isolation becomes increasingly opaque. In the formative stage of our partnerships, survival is more precarious and more biologically immediate. The biological threat to our survival coupled with the realities of procreation demand relationships and partnerships with others. Second, more socially complex associations and partnerships require language to name things as evil and good, just and unjust.² The ability to make partnerships and agree together on the nature of those partnerships requires the establishing of rules through language.

Aristotle goes so far as to compare the city to a body, arguing for its prominence among associations, showing that without the body, intact and entire, there would be no need for the individual arm. Similarly, the family (the “arm”) must take secondary status to the larger more necessary collection of the whole (the body) in the city. This city likewise offers a diverse skillset among the members. Each person serves a different role, some farming and others making pots. But bringing together such diverse talents, drives, desires, and fears requires some mediating force that can decide on how these arrangements will be made fair. Language enters as the means to make these decisions known and shared by all who take part in the partnerships. Ideas like fairness, justice, crime, citizenry, and so forth emerge from these primordial linguistic notions and

² Aristotle, *Politics*. I.2 1252a25-1252b20, trans. Terence Irwin and Gail Fine

demands. The political realm exists as a possibility due to the biological precariousness of the human and the unique capability to put into words demands and restrictions. Language uniquely belongs to the human, and the use of language defines the human in comparison to other creatures. The more we use language, the more unlike other animals we become. The polis as a refuge from the threats of nature exists because of language, and language as a definitive marker for humankind pushes us further into the polis and away from nature. The human only comes about in the city because the city only comes about from language, and engaging in language most makes us human.

Giorgio Agamben highlights a paradox arising out of this unique relationship of language to the city. In overcoming our biological reality and pushing away the dangers of nature we rely upon language. Language takes us further and further away from the threats of the natural world and the internal biological reality of our own animality. As we speak we become less and less like the wolf. We are in the process of excluding the animal, the biological element, through using language and the subsequent development of the political. We of course know we are still animals and biological, subject to the same existential fate of all the other animals. As much as we are unique through our use of language, we are still the same living things that will one day die. We take this linguistic capability and make partnerships to protect ourselves against this existential threat. The paradox can be summarized in this way the more political we become the more we push out the biological, yet the biological is what pushed us to become political in the first place.

The animal part of us, the part subject to the grip of death, motivates humans to develop language, the most un-animal part of us. The paradox lies here, in the way we construct and imagine the remaining animal portion. The fear and terror bound up in that animal part pushes us to further distance ourselves from that biological reality in attempts to postpone death for as long as possible. Politics serves this purpose from its very outset, and continues into the contemporary situation. The biological and visceral reality of death forces politics to focus upon life and its preservation. The uniqueness in our ability to use language always ends up linking our politics back to the fundamental negativity of death.³

But this part of us, the included/excluded animal and biological part, retreats from the power of language.⁴ Because the passage into language represents such a fundamental distinction between ourselves and animals we articulate the primordial biological reality Agamben calls “Bare Life.” Or put more simply, experiencing the world through language makes it impossible to cognitively apprehend a situation prior to language. Bare life resists language because bare life exists completely and entirely outside of the political sphere, or prior to all political arrangements, generating a crisis within a political system which makes its foundation in the very unspeakable reality of biology and bare life. Agamben distinguishes between a certain type of political life and bare life

³ Giorgio Agamben, *Language and Death: The Place of Negativity*, trans. Karen Pinkus and Michael Hardt (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), xi-xii.

⁴ Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller Roazan (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), 18.

through the Greek terms *bios* and *zoê*. *Bios* entails a certain kind of life, particularized and manifested in certain forms, while *zoê* indicates life devoid of specificity, abstract and bare.

One representation of this crisis is sovereignty and its expression through the regulation of the law. Agamben relies heavily on Carl Schmitt's assertion that the sovereign only appears as sovereign when it decides upon the exception. In certain moments and during certain events the law itself, and the entirety of the legal order, can come under threat through some internal or external force. During normal circumstances the law maintains strict regulation of the polis, but during these exceptional moments where the threat increases to such severity, normal procedures cannot be maintained. That which can declare the exception to the normal progression of rule and order is the sovereign. Because of this ability to suspend the law the sovereign always exists in relation to the law as simultaneously inside and outside. In the right situation, the sovereign steps beyond the legal order, and it is through this stepping beyond the legal order the sovereign appears as sovereignty.⁵

In the normal situation citizens are defined as citizens through a legal proscription. The status of citizens designates a series of legal claims and orders (a form of life, *bios*). Citizenship though, unlike other legal proclamations, bounds the very availability and possibility of the law to that individual. There can be no legal recognition without the primacy of citizenship bestowed upon the individual. Though this bestowal of identity can be suspended, by sovereign

⁵ Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception*, trans. Kevin Attell (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005), 1.

decision, returning the individual back to a situation of bare life (*zoê*) prior to those political partnerships defined and outlined by Aristotle. The citizen can only have recourse to the protection of the law if they are citizens, recognized by the law as such, and if they are denied citizenship all legal processes cease to be meaningful for them. Like the sovereign, those reduced to this status of bare life are simultaneously included and excluded from the legal order.

The figure of the *homo sacer* represents, as a paradigmatic form, this inclusion and exclusion in relation to the law, and reduction to bare life. This figure can be killed without being murdered, and, in addition, they cannot die in a sacrificial manner. The second part retains as much importance as the first, especially in an analysis of Agamben that focuses upon the religious dimensions of biopolitics.⁶ To be killed without being murdered makes the death of the *homo sacer* possible, but if one were to kill him or her such an act would not be considered legally as murder. Murder entails a crime with serious legal ramifications and consequences; a murderer violates the state's basic and primary monopoly on violence. However, as the legal order excludes the *homo sacer* as a non-political figure without any legal protections, prior to all politics, the killing of that individual does not violate the state's prerogative to protect its citizens from the violence of others because the *homo sacer* thoroughly and fundamentally lacks citizenship and inclusion in the state, having been reduced to bare life.

⁶ Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 83.

The second part of the definition of the *Homo Sacer* claims an inability to be subject to a ritual sacrifice, and it requires a bit more explanation and some analysis of Agamben's reading of George Bataille. Agamben initially seems to discount Bataille's contribution to the subject, accusing him of relying too heavily on fear and respect of the sacred in his work.⁷ However, Bataille's concept of the intimacy of animality⁸ has remarkable similarities to Agamben's distinction between *zoê* and *bios*. Bataille poetically envisions the experience of the animal eating another animal and the shocking intimacy between the two, one animal not recognizing the distinction between itself and the thing it eats.⁹ The most profound human action for Bataille is recognition and division, namely between the human self and other things external to the human. The ability to speak and name the things around us as different from us and different from other things completely contradicts the animal's vision of the world as radically undifferentiated. Language enters here as an important element in the endeavor to divide the world of things up, naming each to set it apart from others. We of course can only vaguely and inexactly imagine this animal way of envisioning the world because such a return to pre-linguistic and pre-political ways of thinking remains inaccessible to the political and linguistic human. However,

⁷ Ibid., 112.

⁸ Georges Bataille, *Theory of Religion* (New York: Zone Books, 1989), 17.

⁹ Ibid., 19.

Bataille views the law not as progress of the good, bringing about a harmonious society, but instead the law merely establishes and maintains the order of things.¹⁰

Bataille offers a theory that places this animal intimacy in close contact with the sacred realm. This animal existence, completely foreign to the political human, and like the sacred realm with an ambivalent quality, vacillates between something demanding profound respect while also being a tremendous source of horror.¹¹ The threat and respect element of the sacred realm, and similarly the animal realm, makes us more and more comfortable with the order the profane realm offers, a realm we can order ourselves and therefore control. That animal/sacred realm reminds us, as does bare life, that we are still natural living things and as a result are subject to death. The distinction between the profane and sacred realms is a distinction between the realm of ordered life and the realm of death.

We can offer sacrifices to this other realm of the sacred, but we can only sacrifice out of the realm we control and have given meaning over. The things we control, name, and distinguish are those things which are available to sacrifice and hand over to the realm of undifferentiated. We only name and identify as unique those things which are useful to us and as a result useful things are made available for sacrificing. Ritual sacrifice serves as the process by which some object or thing is brought forth out of the realm of mere things and transported into the sacred realm. The sacrifice extends beyond the object and

¹⁰ Ibid., 67.

¹¹ Ibid., 36.

offers the removal, if only for a moment, of those who offered up the sacrifice out of the profane realm as well. As Bataille explains, "The first fruits of the harvest or the head of livestock are sacrificed in order to remove the plant and animal, together with the farmer and the stock raisers, from the world of things."¹² Sacrifice removes all usefulness of the thing or object. For example, an animal sacrificed in a ritualized manner does not in turn serve as food. Killing an animal for food involves a different process with differing ritualistic overtones than killing an animal for sacrifice. The death of the animal and refusal then to eat the animal results in a rearrangement of the instrumental value of the thing sacrificed. Bataille writes of the one who offers up the sacrifice in the following way:

Intimately, I belong to the sovereign world of gods and myths, to the world of violent and uncalculated generosity, just as my wife belongs to my desires. I withdraw you, victim, from the world in which you were and could only be reduced to the condition of a thing, having a meaning that was foreign to your intimate nature. I call you back to the intimacy of the divine world, of the profound immanence of all that is.¹³

This consequence of the sacrifice brings about a community of people through the festival surrounding that sacrifice. People remain faithful to the sacrifice by returning to the world of things, using and sharing those things and ordering the profane realm. The sacrifice serves as the political center of the community, bringing people together and binding them in communion through the sacrificial act.

¹² Ibid., 43.

¹³ Ibid., 44.

This sacrifice and setting something apart from the regular mundane order of things, allows for the perpetual continuation of that very order. This concept shares remarkable similarity to the paradox at the center of Agamben's reading of Aristotle and the metaphysical ordering of the political Agamben unpacks. The *homo sacer* in its inability to be sacrificed carries the connotation of the sacrifice being part of the foundations of the communal and political possibility of the legal order itself.

The sacrifice does not merely bring the community together through the festival, but a series of prohibitions around the sacrifice and its ordering forms the fabric of the legal order through historical development. Bataille argues that a process emerges within the logic of sacrifice moving from the sacrifice of human slaves to an eventual moral prohibition against human sacrifice. Eventually, religious and theological solutions were proposed whereby God, in his ultimate goodness and nobility, would maintain the order of things on behalf of humanity. Of course, this God maintaining the order makes itself useful and instrumental, and consequently subject to the possibility of sacrifice. The Christian culmination and fulfillment of this process has God sacrificed and through the sacrifice establishes a stable divine realm where intimacy can be recovered in a purified form (bodies that will not age).

The *homo sacer* cannot be sacrificed because the *homo sacer* has no place in the general order of things, and their death then cannot be made meaningful because of the profound non-meaning embedded in its identity. It is a figure beyond meaning and outside of the order of meaning, serving as a limit point and return to the intimate animality, in the words of Bataille, or the pre-linguistic

and pre-political *zoê* in Agamben. They come to form a politics of the pre-political situation, or more directly it comes to form biopolitics.

Unlike Bataille, who renders this pre-political intimate animal inaccessible to the human, Agamben retains accessibility of this reduction to bare life through biopolitics. In the sacrifice, the complete reduction of all instrumental value brings the thing out of the world of things into the divine and intimate realm, but Agamben maintains some connection between the internal political sphere and the external pre-political/biopolitical sphere. The reduction of bare life does not occur in an instant, but the political order maintains the expulsion from the legal order. This tension between the internal and external, central to Agamben, only plays out in Bataille through the tension inside the divine realm, the threshold between horror and respect demanded by the sacred. But for Agamben the threshold and tension gets bound up in the figure of the *homo sacer*.¹⁴

The inability to murder the *homo sacer* shows the tension in the legal and juridical exception of the *homo sacer*, related to the exclusion of the sovereign through the decisive act of the exception to the legal order.¹⁵ Both the sovereign and the *homo sacer* stand inside and outside the law simultaneously. Even constitutional law, which at a cursory glance appears rather distinct from classic models of sovereignty expressed in one monarchic individual, retains this ability to suspend the law itself. Agamben shows how constitutional orders still contain some element of potential suspension of the constitutionally defined legal order

¹⁴ Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 84.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 110.

for the sake of protecting said constitution.¹⁶ The suspension of the law still includes the law as a decisively excluded juridical order, likewise the *homo sacer* maintains some connection to the interior political system through its exclusion from that juridical order. The sovereign and the *homo sacer* both reside in a zone of indistinction relative to the interior and exterior of the juridical order. They are both included through their exclusion.

However, the *homo sacer* does not remain merely political, as it takes on a religious dimension when connected to the idea of sacrifice through Bataille. It simultaneously cannot be sacrificed and therefore enter a divine economy and spiritual redemption through being put to death, and the death of the *homo sacer* cannot act as a foundational act of community making. Sacrifice, for Bataille, always has instrumentality as its goal and condition. The usefulness of the sacrificed thing allows for the availability of sacrifice for the thing. Sacrificial logic transcends the world of thingness. Biopolitics, in its examination of the sacrificial element, thoroughly invests the concept not only with juridical and legal meaning, but religious as well. Biopolitics for Agamben, through his reading of Bataille, is a thoroughly religious concept made political, particularly in the presence of the “camp.”

The camp most viscerally exposes this internal and external tension. For Agamben the camp denotes both the classic tangible representation through the horrors of places like Auschwitz, but it also denotes more abstract, divergent,

¹⁶ Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception*, 11-22.

and unexpected forms.¹⁷ In the camp, which lacks the strict boundary of the nation state, bare life finds the height of its negative expression. Life reduced to *zoê*, indistinguishable and lacking coherent identity, becomes the pure modern and contemporary form of biopolitics. Life reduced in such a way enacts the sovereign exclusion of life from the political sphere, simultaneous to the construction of *homo sacer*, or that which can be killed without being murdered or sacrificed.

The camp, like the *homo sacer*, serves as a paradigm for his biopolitical project. Agamben articulates both his genealogical project of the biopolitical, the *homo sacer*, and the camp, in addition to Foucault's concepts of biopolitics and biopower, by using the paradigm. He writes:

At this point, I think it is clear what it means to work by way of paradigms for both me and Foucault. *Homo sacer* and the concentration camp, the *Muselmann* and the state of exception, and, more recently, the Trinitarian *oikonomia* and acclamations are not hypotheses through which I intended to explain modernity by tracing it back to something like a cause or historical origin. On the contrary, as their very multiplicity might have signaled, each time it was a matter of paradigms whose aim was to make intelligible series of phenomena whose kinship had eluded or could elude the historian's gaze. To be sure, my investigations, like those of Foucault, have an archeological character, and the phenomena with which they deal unfold across time and therefore require an attention to documents and diachrony that cannot but follow the laws of historical philology...Archaeology, then, is always a paradigmatology, and the capacity to recognize and articulate paradigms defines the rank of the inquirer no less than does his or her ability to examine the documents of an archive.¹⁸

There are six elements to the paradigm within the work of Agamben:

¹⁷ Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 166-169.

¹⁸ Giorgio Agamben, *The Signature of All Things*, (New York: Zone Books, 2009), 31-32.

1. A paradigm is a form of knowledge that is neither inductive nor deductive but analogical. It moves from singularity to singularity.
2. By neutralizing the dichotomy between the general and the particular, it replaces dichotomous logic with a bipolar analogical model.
3. The paradigmatic case becomes such by suspending and, at the same time, exposing its belonging to the group, so that it is never possible to separate its exemplarity from its singularity.
4. The paradigmatic group is never presupposed by the paradigms; rather, it is immanent in them.
5. In the paradigm, there is no origin or arche; every phenomenon is the origin, every image archaic.
6. The historicity of the paradigm lies neither in diachrony nor in synchrony but in a crossing of the two.

Paradigms and paradigm shifts are most often associated with the work of Thomas Kuhn, someone Agamben cites regularly in his own description of paradigmatic thinking. Though unlike Kuhn, Agamben does not articulate a robust explanation of the way paradigm shifts occur in thought. Instead, he focuses on the presence of singularities in paradigmatic thinking, and how these singularities remain attached to other singularities, as the paradigm is not a meta-concept outside of singular expression.

This conversation of the paradigm provides important context for understanding the way the camp, the sovereign, and the *homo sacer* are simultaneously theological and political concepts. Returning for a moment to Carl Schmitt, the statement that all contemporary political concepts are

secularized theological concepts begins to make sense in Agamben's work when thought through the paradigm. Taking seriously the use of paradigm provides some explanation for the way Agamben sees this shift from the theological to the political evident in Schmitt's writing. The switch from a religious epoch (with its own paradigm) to a secular epoch (with its own paradigm) does not provide a fundamental break between the two, but a shift in the singularities within each. Through time and different divergent modes of thinking the religious categories transition away from overt religious actions, such as sacrifice, into political and juridical activities. The epochs are not thoroughly, finally, or radically separate from each other but rather different singular instances of the same fundamental structures of order, law, and the maintenance of the polis. Foucault does something similar, though does not use the language of paradigm, and rather than focusing upon categories of sacrifice he focuses on the pastoral element within biopolitics, yet like Agamben still retaining a thoroughly religious condition.

The Theological and Religious Dimensions of Foucault's Biopolitics

Scholarship on Foucault's concept of biopolitics tends to focus almost exclusively on the political processes moving power structures between what he describes as a discipline society and a security society. While an important transition within Foucault's biopolitics, such scholarship often foregoes the religious dimension in Foucault's work. Some remedy to this diminishing of the religious material is in order, though still beginning with the discipline society.

In *Discipline and Punish* Foucault articulates the way in which society attempts to procure peaceful relationships between individuals, but does so through covert military-like organizational systems. The institutions in society aim to produce peaceful citizenry through processes of segmenting individuals into groups, enclosing spaces, partitioning of people, ranking and creating hierarchies within the social order, and the serializing of individuals. These processes are rooted in militarized practices and forms of organization that seek to make effective soldiers.¹⁹

Other institutions beyond the military reproduce these practices in their own structures and activities.²⁰ The school utilizes a series of hierarchies in the form of grades, and encloses students within individual classrooms and desks, measuring them through a complex system of grading.²¹ Another example would be the regimenting of daily activities of patients by hospitals, along with charting and serializing a complex nexus of patient information, and enclosing the sick in segmented areas of the hospital.

Foucault describes the ways in which the human body comes under disciplines so that, in the end, the human will discipline themselves in accordance with the larger structural goals of the society. The schools, clinics, and most notably prisons serve the function of providing a model to the

¹⁹ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage, 1995), 155.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 137.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 157.

individual that they can then take into their life and carry out similar regimentations.

This theme of disciplining the body gets taken up in Foucault's later work *The History of Sexuality* and the recently translated series of lectures *Society Must be Defended*. However, in these writings, the militarization strategy, endemic to the discipline society, changes its intended focus from the individual body to the body politic. Foucault develops an acute awareness of the way in which the population can come to look and appear strikingly like an individual body. As such, the same militarized technologies that work so efficiently at regimenting the individual, also regiment and mobilize a larger population. Like an individualized body, a larger population produces spontaneous needs and desires, and technologies could develop to calculate, control, and manage this larger body composed of individual bodies.

Central to the process of discipline, management and segmentation strategies functionally correct, control, and mobilize the larger populous.²² This shift of focus from the individual body to the larger population does not erase the internal militarized machinations within disciplining the individual. The goal of the military strategies Foucault originally introduced sought to make a good soldier. If the institutions provide proper disciplining structures then individuals could reproduce the desired behaviors without the oversight of the institution, effectively becoming a better soldier. Similar strategies applied to a

²² Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 139.

larger population produce docility at the macro level, making it possible to raise an entire population to wage war against any threat.²³

The war a population makes appears as notably different from other wars, in that a population does not fight over traditional issues such as territorial disputes. Motivating an entire population, civilians included, requires a different set of criteria. Julian Reed astutely observes:

In the earlier text Foucault understands war exerting an influence indirectly via the influence of tactical models of military organization as a kind of projected social schema for the creation of a logistical order among an otherwise disordered multitude. In the *History of Sexuality*, alternatively, Foucault starts to develop an argument as the ways in which war invests the order of political power as a kind of immanent force. The influence of war upon society does not refer simply to the discrete influence of an institutionalized military and its bodies of tactical knowledge, but to the 'multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate and in which constitute their organizations.' Here Foucault is developing a conception of war as the source of specific forms of force relations that are constitutive of power relations. War is the source that accounts for the forms of life that generate power relations rather than being the source influenced by proxy through military institutions and discourses with wield power over the life of individual bodies.²⁴

This development of war, highlighted by Reed, serves as the formal distinction between the concepts of "strategy" and "tactic." Disciplinary power focuses exclusively on tactics that divide and individualize bodies towards docility and efficiency. Strategies, on the other hand, taken up in biopolitical regimes seek to combine and bring together, defining forms of life in the process and creating a sense of belonging and identity. This sense of belonging does not merely

²³ Ibid., 137.

²⁴ Julian Reed, *The Biopolitics of the War on Terror* (New York: Manchester University Press), 32.

provide a place for the individual at the level of community, but instead gives the individual a sense that they belong to the whole of humanity.²⁵

Enacting power over the population has certain consequences. Most pressing of these consequences is the possibility that some forms of life simply will not fit or comply with the goals and dynamics of a given population. In the later lectures of *Society Must be Defended* Foucault introduces this issue within the context of a new form of racism founded on the distinction between worthy and unworthy forms of life.²⁶ This form of racism, notably different from previous iterations that focused upon ethnic boundaries between groups, determines that certain forms of life threaten the extinction of the abstract body of living individuals. Divergent lifeforms potentially cause such profound destabilizations for the population, and in turn the entirety of the human-race, that they simply cannot be tolerated. Biopolitics determines which lives can be understood and defined, while simultaneously translating ethnic differentiation into biological racism. As a result, populations wage war on behalf of the species.²⁷

Racism, and the resulting novel forms of war, changes the scope and nature of violence. Rather than utilizing violence for tactical goals, whereby contested territories may be won and controlled, this new form of violence seeks to eradicate entire groups of humans that present a possible threat to the larger

²⁵ Ibid., 33.

²⁶ Michel Foucault, *Society Must be Defended: Lectures at the Collège De France 1975-1976* (New York: Picador, 2003), 255.

²⁷ Ibid., 256.

continuation and preservation of life. The goals of violence shift in accordance with these changing perspectives of life and its protection.

[E]nemies who have to be done away with are not adversaries in the political sense of the term; they are threats, either external or internal, to the population and for the population. In the biopower system, in other words, killing of the imperative to kill is acceptable only if it results not in a victory over political adversaries, but in the elimination of the biological threat to and the improvement of the species or race.²⁸

In the same way that Agamben describes the *homo sacer* as both a political and juridical figure as well as a religious one (that which cannot be sacrificed), Foucault likewise develops the concept of biopolitics and violence through both a juridical and religious perspective. Protecting the species does come about on its own, but follows a religious and theological pattern of thought bound to the pastorate. This pastorate has roots in both the Hebraic pre-Christian east, and then further developments in Christianity.²⁹ Foucault articulates the pastorate through the analogy of the shepherd overseeing a flock of sheep. He writes:

The shepherd's power is not exercised over territory but, by definition, over a flock, and more exactly, over the flock in its movement from one place to another. The shepherd's power is essentially exercised over a multiplicity in movement. The Greek god is a territorial god, a god *intra muros*, with his privileged place, his town or temple. The Hebrew God, on the other hand, is the God moving from place to place, the God who wanders.³⁰

Foucault contrasts the power of the Greek gods to the Hebrew monotheistic God. The Greek idea of a god prioritizes sovereignty above all else, particularly sovereignty over stationary and clearly defined territory. Territory

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, 123.

³⁰ Ibid., 125.

defines the scope and reach of the divinity's power, additionally, this power cares little for what resides within the territory only for the territory itself. Additionally, the Greek conception works as a negative force within that territory, by removing threats and opposition, rather than acting as a positive force guiding or instructing the individual inhabitants.³¹

The Hebraic idea of God exercise power in a different way, reducing the emphasis on the territory. Power in this form does not enact force over terrain, but guides and instructs a group within the terrain. Unlike the Greek power of the god, this Hebraic idea does not negatively remove threats, but practices a benevolent and positive management of the group within. The form of power in this model is, "entirely defined by its beneficence; its only raise d'être is doing good. In fact, the essential objective of pastoral power is the salvation of the flock."³²

Elsewhere, Foucault provides a series of qualities that further define the form of power bound up in the shepherd and flock relationship. Continuing the theme of a power that oversees a group as opposed to a territory, this power brings together and leads the flock to salvation. Through bringing together a divergent group into harmonious union, this notion of power does something more than merely protect against threats and hostilities. In addition, the shepherd provides a means of salvation for the flock. Everyone within the flock falls under the care of the shepherd, who meets their individual needs. Finally,

³¹ Foucault, *History of Sexuality Vol. 1*, 135.

³² Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, 126.

Foucault describes the shepherd's connection to duty, who as leader of the group has a duty and role of service to the individuals that make up that group.

Because of duty, the leader continuously keeps watch over the flock, ensuring everyone's perpetual safety and prosperity, not to the benefit of the shepherd but for the individuals within the flock.³³

The Hebraic notions of power are not isolated, and exist in other cultures, religions, and regions. By looking specifically at Christianity, and how Christians theologically develop and augment the shepherding model of power, Foucault provides an analysis of how biopower and biopolitics have some important religious and theological elements. He provides an analysis of the Christian development of power in four forms.³⁴

First, Christianity expands the salvific responsibility of the shepherd. The level, depth, and complexity of responsibility greatly increases, moving from a generalized well-being to an overt account of the actions of everyone. Foucault describes this deepened responsibility: "In the Christian conception, the shepherd must render an account – not only of each sheep, but of all their actions, all the good or evil they are liable to do, all that happens to them."³⁵ The ability to manage and account for each individual sin and good deed committed by the members of the group expresses the success or failure of the shepherd of that group.

³³ Michel Foucault, "Omnes et Singulatim" in *Power: The Essential Works of Foucault 1954 – 1984 vol. 3* (New York: The New Press, 2001), 301-303

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 308.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

Second, the Christianization of the shepherd model of power entails a stronger allegiance between the flock and the shepherd. The flock does not merely benefit from the power of the shepherd, their entire well-being thoroughly depends on the shepherd. The relationship involves deep dependence and reliance on the shepherd and, as Foucault describes:

In Christianity, the tie with the shepherd is an individual one. It is personal submission to him. His will is done, not because it is consistent with the law, and not just as far as it is consistent with it, but, principally, because it is his *will*.³⁶

Third, a certain form of knowledge arises out of the Christian concept of pastoral power connecting the increased responsibility of the shepherd over the flock with an increased accumulation of knowledge through accounting for the actions of everyone. These actions, deeds, thoughts, sins, and inclinations must be tracked, tabulated, and recorded. To meet this goal the pastoral power develops the confessional, whereby members of the flock render an account of their activities to the shepherd as part of their devotion.³⁷

Fourth, while the responsibility of the shepherd extends to the entirety of the flock, individuals can only attain salvation on their own behalf. The shepherd, while ultimately responsible for the flock, cannot in isolation bring anyone to salvation, as individuals pursue this on their own behalf. Foucault describes this process as a “mortification in this world. Mortification is not

³⁶ Ibid., 309.

³⁷ Ibid., 310.

death, of course, but it is a renunciation of this world and of oneself, a kind of everyday death – a death that is supposed to provide life in another world.”³⁸

The development of this analysis of pastoral power has strong and formative connections to the specifics of biopolitics in Foucault’s larger body of theoretical work. This model of power, in conjunction with the Greek emphasis on the city and sacrifice on behalf of the city, comes to model conceptions of legitimate use of political power. Foucault connects this to modern politics:

We can say that the Christian pastorship has introduced a game that neither the Greeks nor the Hebrews imagined. It is a strange game whose elements are life, death, truth, obedience, individuals, self-identity – a game that seems to have nothing to do with the game of the city surviving through the sacrifice of citizens. Our societies proved to be really demonic since they happened to combine those two games – the city-citizen games and the shepherd-flock game – in what we call the modern states.³⁹

Both Agamben and Foucault share a conviction that underneath or in connection to our modern secularized political systems, theological elements exist. Modern forms of government and the instrumental utilization of political power does not come about in isolation, but instead follows a lengthy path of theological and religious development and influence. Obviously, overt forms of political power relying on theological and religious language wanes; however, what remains crucial for understanding the religious dimensions of biopolitics is the shared insistence of underlying theological material that helps carry forward and give structure to modern political projects.

³⁸ Ibid., 311.

³⁹ Ibid.

Nevertheless, there are distinguishing characteristics between Agamben and Foucault. On the one hand, Agamben theoretically preserves the idea of the sovereign as a critical entrance into understanding politics, while Foucault overtly avoids sovereignty in articulating the contours of biopolitics. Foucault makes this hesitancy and suspicion of sovereignty clear on several occasions:

Rather than looking at the three prerequisites of law, unity, and subject - which make sovereignty both the source of power and the basis of institutions - I think that we have to adopt the threefold point of view of the techniques, the heterogeneity of techniques, and the subjugation-effects that make technologies of domination the real fabric of both power relations and the great apparatuses of power. The manufacture of subjects rather than the genesis of the sovereign: that is our general theme.⁴⁰

These distinctions are necessary for understanding the work of both Foucault and Agamben in isolation; however, when it comes to the religious and theological element, both share the idea that modern politics has some debt to pay.

In summation, Agamben relies on the exclusion of bare life, while Foucault centers on the way in which political discourse arises and comes to be recognized as such. Both approaches provide a biopolitical analysis with special attention to the religious dimensions involved. Both work together making possible a unique analysis of modern politics, by first questioning the negative assertion of bare life and creation of a politics through this exclusion, and then through a series of ideas about what we become after such an exclusion occurs.

Further, while a hesitancy to approach sovereignty exists in Foucault, this hesitancy is the consequence of sovereignty evolving, not disappearing.

⁴⁰ Foucault, *Society Must be Defended*, 46.

Sovereignty evolved beyond an essential connection with territory, delinked from needing some established zone that it can exercise sovereignty over.

Agamben shares this evolution with Foucault, as he focuses less on the relationship between territory and sovereignty, and instead on the *nomos* of the “camp.” The camp in this form of exclusion plays a similar role in Agamben as the concept of racism for Foucault. Both the camp and racism involve producing a “we” over and against an unrecognizable (politically and biologically) other.

Finally, one further crucial connection between Foucault and Agamben bears mentioning. By focusing on sacrifice in Agamben, we see the role instrumentalization plays and the crisis signified through the sacrifice of abstract life. I disagree with Foucault on one point, as he writes:

The theory of right basically knew only the individual and society: the contracting individual and the social body constituted by the voluntary or implicit contract among individuals. Disciplines, for their part, dealt with individuals and their bodies in practical terms. What we are dealing with in this new technology of power is not exactly society (or at least not the social body, as defined by the jurists), nor is it the individual-as-body. It is a new body, a multiple body, a body with so many heads that, while they might not be infinite in number, cannot necessarily be counted. Biopolitics deals with the population, with the population as a political problem, as a problem that is at once scientific and political, as a biological problem and as power's problem. And I think that biopolitics emerges at this time.⁴¹

The focus on population is a result of biopolitics, not its beginning. Foucault captures the reality of the contemporary situation quite well in his notions of racism and war waged on behalf of life paradoxically relying on a more fundamental capability of a military technologies that could potentially eradicate all life. Due to the possibility of species annihilation a new politics that seeks to

⁴¹ Ibid., 245.

articulate and define what constitutes life and its subsequent management arises. Understanding biopolitics from this perspective seems much more in conjunction with Foucault's often quoted remark, "For millennia, man remained what he was for Aristotle: a living animal with the additional capacity for a political existence: modern man is an animal whose politics places his existence as a living being into question."⁴²

The capacity to eradicate life and sacrifice life opens the central biopolitical moment and most immediate crisis. That which constitutes life remains contested while the ability to eradicate life has actualized. A biopolitical analysis must attend to this fundamental crisis – a crisis recognized and focused upon by both Foucault and Agamben. In this crisis we can begin to detect the unique problem which terrorism presents. The threat of terrorism forces the related issues of exclusion and racism to the forefront precisely because terrorism threatens life at such a profoundly deep level.

Other Uses of Biopolitics

The work of Michel Hardt and Antonio Negri, most notably in their *Empire* trilogy, highlight concepts of biopolitics that dramatically diverge with both Foucault and Agamben. Their work focuses prominently on means of resisting current political formations, and situating biopower as a remedial force against political stagnancy and rigidity within modernity. The movement from

⁴² Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality Vol. 1*, 143.

modernity to postmodernity signals profound and serious shifts in the language of politics. With very few exceptions, modern politics articulates power as formally bound to sovereignty that stands over and rules the social sphere. Postmodernity breaks apart this notion of power as a transcendental force from outside the social realm of lived experience.

One of these breaks between the modern and postmodern comes in the form of labor. For the modern period, labor was instinctively conjoined with the material production of things, objects, food, shelter, and other tangible artifacts. The laborer would go to a factory or shop and manufacture a material product. As a result, one could easily measure labor through the matrix of output and profit. If a certain number of objects were made, profit would directly align with the surplus value of each object produced beyond the costs of covering raw materials. However, in new forms of economic production, work and labor have evolved beyond the measurable production, distribution, and consumption of particular objects, as work transitions into a socially encompassing process whereby the products made are intricately attached to the “life” of the laborer. Works shifts to encompass more than the factories and workshops and considers more abstract ideas such as mental labor, personal labor, and relationships. As new forms of labor arise, new forms of monetization simultaneously arise. As Negri writes:

Today, ‘work’ refers to the entirety of social activity. In order to understand this mutation we must keep in mind the struggles and transformations of organization of labor since 1917, an insurrectional challenge on the part of the workers that, for the long term (what some, precisely, have labeled the ‘short century’), plunged the whole of organized labor into crisis. The first response to the aggression of living work towards the capitalist system took the form of the *New Deal*, and then developed as the general spread of the *welfare state* in the central

regions of the planet, through the imposition of biopolitical forms of organization and exploitation of both society and the state.⁴³

Because of this radically new form of labor and production, resistance to such deeply entrenched modes of production becomes infinitely more challenging. Foucault, in his work, certainly attends to pressing matters of economic change, however, for Hardt and Negri the economic aspects are central, and in many ways exclusively the content of biopolitics.

Biopolitics arises in response to these new economic challenges. Whereas biopolitics for Foucault primarily finds its impetus for action in the management of populations, and thereby subsumes economics under this larger managerial goal, for Hardt and Negri, biopolitics directly confronts the economic system, providing a necessary resistance to the shifting and often debilitating realities of a pervasive economic reality. In fact, Hardt and Negri criticize Foucault for his lack of available strategies for resisting this new form of politics. They remedy this lack through introducing the concept of the “multitude.”

They derive this idea of the multitude from the work of Spinoza, Negri writes:

Spinoza’s *Political Treatise* is the work that founds, in theoretical terms, modern European democratic political thought. The assertion is a rigorous one, one that in the first place rules out the generic reduction of the modern idea of democracy, based on the concept of the *multitude*, to the idea of democracy proper to ancient, specifically Greco-Latin, thought. In Spinoza, the specific and immediate basis of the idea of democracy, and even more so the concept of the *multitude*, is human universality. In the democratic thought of the Ancients this is not given, the freedom is the attribute of the citizens of the *polis* only. On this score Spinoza distinguishes himself from the other democratic thinkers of his historical

⁴³ Antonio Negri, *The Porcelain Workshop: For A New Grammar of Politics*, trans. Noura Wedells (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2008), 21.

era: in other currents of modern democratic thought, the idea of democracy is not in fact conceived in terms of the immediacy of political expression, but rather it is defined in the form of the abstract transfer of sovereignty and the alienation of natural right. On the contrary, the revolutionary character of Spinoza's political proposal consists in the conjuncture of the concept of democracy and a radical constructive theory of natural right...he elaborates not mere elements but rather democratic thought in its entirety – and at the level, as yet still larval, of mass capitalist society.⁴⁴

This form of democracy, living through the multitude, significantly differs from the concepts of biopower and biopolitics introduced by Foucault. For Hardt and Negri the core of biopolitics does not reside in the management of some population, but in its allowing for new possibilities of political resistance in conjunction with Spinoza's idea of the "multitude."

One such difference from Foucault lies in the way they distinguish between biopolitics and biopower. For Foucault, biopower signifies the essential condition whereby sovereignty shifts and focuses less on maintaining the power over a territory but maintaining and applying power to the very fabric of life. Biopolitics then is simply the different mechanisms, institutions, and formations of this more fundamental form of biopower. For Hardt and Negri, conversely, biopolitics does not convey the means to achieving biopower's goal, but as a point of potential alternative subjectivities with revolutionary tendencies set to resist biopower's seemingly totalitarian grip on life.⁴⁵ Biopolitics is a struggle of freedom internal to the system of biopower.

⁴⁴ Anotonio Negri, *Subversive Spinoza* (New York: Manchester University Press, 2004), 9-10.

⁴⁵ Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Commonwealth* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 57.

The multitude, according to Negri's reading of Spinoza, is life. It is not life caught up in the tensions of the biopolitical practice of exclusion/inclusion as outlined in Agamben, but life in a much more immediate sense, life prior to the polis. As much as the regimes of biopower may try, they can never legitimately capture and control the life of the multitude, because such life, such pure democratic immediacy, will always exceed the strict boundaries of biopower. Put differently, bare life exceeds and resists the docile codifications of life made political. This excessive capability is precisely the essential structure of the biopolitical. Borrowing from Deleuze and Guattari, they insist on the nomadic function and character of life, always resistant to and uncontainable by the form and workings of biopower.⁴⁶

Terrorism may seem to conform to this system and even participate as part of the revolutionary work of the multitude. In many instances, Hardt and Negri speak about the multitude as a warring force, but they make a distinction between this warring democratic multitude and outright terrorism, arguing that terrorism works against biopower as a symmetrical or asymmetrical force. By directly attacking the system of power in a way that borrows from that power's understanding of war and violence, it ends up replicating and reproducing the same violence.⁴⁷ The proposed concept of a warring multitude always wages a

⁴⁶ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 358-59.

⁴⁷ Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude*, 346.

war against war itself, demonstrating the very ineffectuality of violence.⁴⁸ This type of warring against war attempts to counteract biopower not by direct opposition or by using the forms of war that are part of Biopower. It attempts and hopes to be radically different. Terrorism, something they vehemently resist and criticize as ultimately impotent, does not function in the framework of this democratic war because it simply borrows the failed techniques of biopower, rather than formulating something new and affirmative.

Further, democratic violence for Hardt and Negri can only be legitimate when serving a defensive end, and never an offensive one. Violence can protect what the multitude creates, but it can never be the foundation of that creative impulse. Democratic violence “does not initiate the revolutionary process but rather comes only at the end, when the political and social transformation has already taken place, to defend its accomplishments.”⁴⁹

Terrorism then would fail the litmus test provided for articulating democratically legitimate violence because it seeks to found something creative and revolutionary through the violent act. But this notion of defensive violence does not appear to be essentially or even substantially different from the type of violence Foucault introduces through the concept of racism. This violence finds justification through the defense of life itself against forces that seek to undermine or destroy life. This racist form of violence introduced in Foucault would appear as thoroughly appropriate within the framework of defensive

⁴⁸ Ibid., 342.

⁴⁹ Ibid, 344.

violence established by Hardt and Negri. As such they simply fail to fully consider the problem terrorism presents to modern political and biopolitical institutions. By disregarding terror as creative and thereby a misuse of violence, they end up supporting the violence Foucault finds alarming.

Hardt and Negri are of course not alone in defining terrorism as ultimately impotent. Many scholars from a variety of political perspectives share in this general view. Contrary to this position, there are those that offer something that appears in many ways to be praise for terror as the only method of resistance still available within a pervasive biopolitical system. Jean Baudrillard falls into this category.

Baudrillard invokes the term terror in connection to a global power that terrorism hopes to unravel. Globalization involves not just economics but a robust symbolic exchange facilitated by technology, cohesive markets, and rapid informational distribution. Universal human rights, freedom, culture, and democracy all get subsumed within this globalizing force, a force which continuously grows in power. This process transforms universal values such as these into commodities, which can be valued, exchanged, regulated, and consumed like other any other commodity.⁵⁰ As a result of this vigorous transformation, democratic processes and protections mutate into mechanized and instrumentalized monstrosities of their previous forms.

As globalization grows in power and scope, Baudrillard cautions against entering a moment in which no alternative to this ubiquitous influence remains.

⁵⁰ Jean Baudrillard, *The Spirit of Terrorism* (New York: Verso, 2002), 89.

Biopolitics then is a type of historical limit point, and upon passing it we can find no lesser version than the completely pervasive power over life. In this situation, the significance of the singular vanishes, even singularity of experience becomes a symbol interchangeable with other experiences. Terrorism offers a resistance to this perverse symbolic exchange, remaining something totally and completely negative in the terms of symbolic value. Terrorism is anti-value and as such anti-symbol. It is not merely a religiously motivated act, or competing system of ideas but instead a foundational disruption of a system that transforms everything into commodity by being a singularity which it cannot transform, and which it cannot give value.⁵¹

Baudrillard envisions 9/11 as an “absolute event” because it is a “pure event uniting within itself all the events that have never taken place.”⁵² This terror attack, unlike anything before it, exposes the system of globalization to something genuinely novel. He continues:

When global power monopolizes the situation to this extent, when there is such a formidable condensation of all functions in the technocratic machinery, and when no alternative form of thinking is allowed, what other way is there but a terroristic situational transfer? It was the system itself which created the objective conditions for this brutal retaliation. By seizing all the cards for itself, it forced the Other to change the rules. And the new rules are fierce ones, because the stakes are fierce. To a system whose very excess of power poses an insoluble challenge, the terrorists respond with a definitive act which is also not susceptible of exchange. Terrorism is the act that restores an irreducible singularity to the heart of a system of generalized exchange. All the singularities (species, individuals and cultures) that have paid with their deaths for the installation of a

⁵¹ Ibid. 99.

⁵² Ibid., 4

global circulation governed by a single power are taking their revenge today through this terroristic situational transfer.⁵³

Terrorism does not produce or establish something other or beyond the global biopolitical order, and it offers nothing hopeful or redemptive. It provides no ideological backing and does not try to change the world into a better place. It can only ever hope to, “radicalize the world through sacrifice.”⁵⁴ Baudrillard offers up the helpful claim that if, in fact, Islam did rise to take a global position of power terrorism would revolt against it. Terrorism goes beyond Islamic or religious duty, and simply serves as a pure counter to the global order of symbolic exchange. It lacks all instrumentalization or basic utility and instead serves as the complete and infinitely destructive opposite of all possible utility. We continue to search for meanings or a series of causes behind an act of terror when terrorism precisely and fully represents the very meaninglessness and absence of all causality.

Terrorism creates a vacuum at the center of global power because it does not directly confront global power but instead allows global power to unravel itself around this center point of absolute meaninglessness. The tools global power uses in approaching terrorism are the tools of power, and as a result only work to undo power rather than undo the damage of terrorism. Global power ends up undoing itself, attacking itself, and diminishing its own substantive ideas of freedom, law, and justice. In the end our solutions, or more precisely

⁵³ Ibid., 8-9.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 10.

the very idea of a possible solution becomes the primary force of terror. As Baudrillard asserts:

There is no remedy for this extreme situation, and war is certainly not a solution, since it merely offers a rehash of the past, with the same deluge of military forces, bogus information, senseless bombardment, emotive and deceitful language, technological deployment and brainwashing. Like the Gulf War: a non-event, an event that does not really take place. And this indeed is its *raison-d'être*: to substitute, for a real and formidable, unique and unforeseeable event, a repetitive, rehashed pseudo-event. The terrorist attack corresponds to a precedence of the event over all interpretative models; whereas this mindlessly military, technological war corresponds, conversely, to the model's precedence over the event, and hence to a conflict over phony stakes, to a situation of 'no contest'; War as a continuation of the absence of politics by other means.⁵⁵

While Baudrillard continually insists both in language and ideas on “globalized power” and never uses the terms biopolitics or biopower, some clear connections exist between these concepts. Global order is about a series of symbolic exchanges. Everything is given symbolic meaning and easily substituted in the larger system of exchange operations. Death however has not been given symbolic placement in this system of exchanges, but according to Baudrillard has been pushed out.⁵⁶ Baudrillard then does provide a truly unique theoretical position on biopolitics as the commodification of life in the abstract.

Finally, the work of Roberto Esposito attempts to remedy some of the overly optimistic tendencies in Hardt and Negri and the more pessimistic elements of Agamben, but in a way that fails to address some of the deepening global political crisis biopower and biopolitics tend to elucidate. Esposito begins his three-part work by examining the foundation of the community, and

⁵⁵ Jean Baudrillard, *The Spirit of Terrorism*, 34.

⁵⁶ Foucault makes a similar observation in *Society Must be Defended*, 248.

upending communitarian reliance on the dialectic between common and proper. Communitarian definitions think of the community in terms of what they hold in common versus what they hold properly as individuals. This commonality could be anything from ethnicity to shared values, or anything that brings individuals, as individuals, together, and then belonging to a totality “produced by their union.”⁵⁷ Instead Esposito investigates the etymological elements of *communitas* with intense focus upon *munus*, and the idea of obligation.⁵⁸ Rather than envisioning and articulating community along the lines of what individuals hold in common, Esposito offers an account of the community through what individuals owe. Individuals owe to the *communitas* their identity and subjectivity. The community, “expropriates them of their initial property (in part or completely), of the most proper property, namely, their very subjectivity.”⁵⁹ This proper owing of the subject exposes the individual to the contagion of living alongside and in relation to others. In so much as the community exposes the individual to contagions it likewise offers exemption and immunization for certain members. Through this immunization, as the removal of certain obligations for certain individuals, a way of thinking through and organizing this removal of obligations arises, what Esposito labels the immunization paradigm.

⁵⁷ Roberto Esposito, *Communitas: The Origin and Destiny of Community*, trans. T. Campbell (Stanford: The Stanford University Press, 2010), 2.

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 4.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 7.

In reading Hobbes, Esposito focuses upon the biological reality of death serving as the engine for Hobbes' theory of the contract. What humans share, according to Hobbes, is the fear of no longer being alive, and this fear of death allows for the common practices which assure or assist in warding off this most "powerful passion."⁶⁰ The focus on self-preservation finds fulfillment in the contract as the threshold between the state of nature and civil society. For Hobbes the contract, the binding and willful agreement between the individual and sovereign, allows for specific modes of protection of the self that grant self-preservation. Esposito views this as the essential modern political project, transforming natural inclinations of self-preservation into juridical and private endeavors, mediated by a sovereign. The agreements and the demand of the gift between individuals vanishes as the contract obliges submission to a sovereign in total, rendering the interaction between individuals unnecessary. Those interactions can be done through the immunization of further contracts, legal practices, economic engagements, and bureaucratic precision.⁶¹

Esposito reevaluates and interrogates this immunized self-preservation introduced by Hobbes for the sake a more robust, but risky, contagion inducing interaction between individuals. An affirmative biopolitics, and a community

⁶⁰ Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan: Or the Matter, Forme and Power of a Commonwealth Ecclesiastical and Civil*, ed. By M. Oakshott (London: Collier Macmillan, 1962), 100.

⁶¹ Roberto Esposito, *Bios: Biopolitics and Philosophy*, trans. T. Campbell (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 30.

substantiated through the gift and not through immunization, requires the risk of contamination by coming into genuine and intimate contact with others.⁶²

The reality of our situation further accentuates this contagion-centric view of community. Even in the work of Michel Foucault, the dominant view envisions bodies as completely discrete and impassable. However, reality continually passes over the threshold of the body through a variety of bio-techniques, including things such as transplants and vaccinations. We have entered a historical period where bodies are shared and scattered globally, shared with other bodies in ubiquitous ways, an entire bioeconomy.⁶³

Esposito offers a unique and thrilling interpretation of the biopolitical. Presenting not so much the overt affirmative biopolitics of Hardt and Negri, but at the same time not seeing the final fulfillment of biopolitics in the thanatopolitics endemic of Agamben's work. Esposito offers the possibility of an affirmative situation within the reality and presence of risk. Contagion and contamination entail a risk between individuals, as the giving over of a gift entails real possible loss. The affirmative possibilities are not inevitable, and as such paying attention to the starkness of that risk, something both Agamben and Foucault return to time and time again in their work, remains an important endeavor in any investigation of the biopolitical.

Hardt and Negri, Baudrillard, and Esposito do not exhaust all the theoretical work and concepts of biopolitics; however, by examining each some

⁶² Roberto Esposito, *Communitas*, 124.

⁶³ See, Nikolas Rose, *The Politic of Life Itself: Biomedicine, Biopower, and Subjectivity in the Twenty-First Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).

summary of the divergence that biopolitics has undergone in recent years is made possible. Many theorists now use this term in hopes of better understanding the contours of a politics that has gone farther and produced more institutions than previous formations of governmental power. I return to Foucault and Agamben as a primary and advantageous way of understanding the concept, particularly as it relates to terrorism for a few reasons. Most importantly, Agamben and Foucault both attend to the formative and necessary elements of religion within their respective definitions and genealogies. Often, biopolitical theory avoids or ignores the religious dimensions of the current political age, or misappropriates religion as somehow external to biopolitics. This miscalculation can have disastrous effects in how we come to understand the problem of terrorism, as I will show later. In using both Foucault and Agamben's outline of biopolitics I arrive back at the primary distinguishing characteristic of this biopolitical age: terrorism presents a unique problem for biopolitics precisely because biopolitics addresses terrorism as a problem to be overcome through further accentuations of biopower. A crisis and paradox remain: a crisis and paradox that terrorism highlights.

Thinkers point out different ways the fundamental political crisis of our time shows itself. Bare life, the thing which politics always separated itself from since Aristotle, has been brought into the realm of the political. But the political realm cannot house something so excessively large, so abundantly and infinitely impossible to name, symbolize, and control. Terrorism, in targeting life explicitly, re-announces the fragility of life and radically undermines the attempts to

preserve life in diverse ways. In response, the biopolitical project attempts to hide this fragility and the related failure to account for life.

This is the nature of the crisis of the biopolitical, beginning with this fundamental crisis of instrumentalizing life, and then further by analyzing social practices through this lens. Terrorism mimics and betrays this central crisis of the biopolitical. It is possible there is no such thing as terrorism and instead there are simply acts of violence, with varying degrees of political or religious rhetoric attached to them, that come to be known by biopolitical institutions as “terror.” But this field and set of phenomena we call terrorism is only called such in so much as it participates in this system of instrumentalization. Terrorism, as a discreet set of activities, partnerships, networks, and violence only exists within the realm of global power. Global power creates terrorism through its definitions and brings this meaningless act, according to Baudrillard, into the system of symbolic exchanges and therefore gives it meaning. Kunming attests to this. To name it a terrorist attack gives it a certain value in the system of exchanges, a system essentially defined by the biopolitical paradox.

If there ever was such a thing as terrorism, 9/11 was quite possibly the last act of terror, as it genuinely resisted such symbolic making and stood outside this system of hyper-instrumentalization. But since, as one would expect from a system that instrumentalizes and compartmentalizes everything, even life itself, terrorism has come to be caught up in the same system of exchanges and used to continue this crisis project.

The process of constructing terrorism, which mimics and repeats the instrumental crisis of biopolitics, comes about as the product of security. In the

coming chapters I will look at three specific forms of explaining terror-as excessively violent, as corrupted religion, and as a negative economic force-and show how each attempt to protect the crisis of biopolitics ends up only reaffirming the ideas presented here.

Chapter Two: Defining Terrorism: Economics, the Border, and Biopolitics

The Definitions of Terrorism

Terrorism is a problem *of* biopolitics and not a problem *for* biopolitics. Much of the reason for this lies in the ways biopolitical institutions and neoliberal governments define and confront terrorism. Defining terror grounds the possibilities of confrontation, while at the same time, the confrontation with terror produces definitions. These concepts interact with each other in contemporary political theory and media portrayals of the ongoing war on terror.

In whatever definition and confrontation with terror, biopolitical regimes are hopelessly destined to fail, because terrorism is not a problem which biopolitics can solve. Rather the ways it defines and confronts terror reaffirm the processes of biopolitics, namely the management of populations and the attending race wars, the reduction of political life to bare life, and the exclusion/inclusion mechanisms. Additionally, because biopolitics relies on religious and theological concepts it further exacerbates a deeper religious schism in the contemporary world.

To show this reaffirmation of biopolitics through confrontation and definitions of terror I focus on three of these definitional/ confrontational forms. First, contemporary discourse often describes terrorism as a problem of economic destabilization. Terrorism takes away from an otherwise smooth global market where everyone would eventually prosper, or conversely, if economic prosperity was attained in certain areas of the globe terrorism would subsequently vanish. Second, the definitions offered claim terrorism is excessively violent. The definition and confrontation here focuses on the ways in which terrorism produces terror because of just how violent it is, especially when compared to state forms of violence. Finally, contemporary discourse articulates terrorism as religious fervor gone awry.

While these definitions and confrontational frameworks do not exhaust all possibilities, they do provide a helpful way of organizing and codifying the variety of definitions available for terrorism. Definitions are difficult as they serve as representations for a wide variety of potential actions, motivations, and justifications within the mind of the terrorist. But by examining definitions employed one can see the repetition of these three general themes.

For example, the 1994 United Nations General Assembly Resolution 49/60 defines terrorism in the following way:

1. The States Members of the United Nations solemnly reaffirm their unequivocal condemnation of all acts, methods and practices of terrorism, as criminal and unjustifiable, wherever and by whomever committed, including those which jeopardize the friendly relations among States and peoples and threaten the territorial integrity and security of States;
2. Acts, methods and practices of terrorism constitute a grave

violation of the purposes and principles of the United Nations, which may pose a threat to international peace and security, jeopardize friendly relations among States, hinder international cooperation and aim at the destruction of human rights, fundamental freedoms and the democratic bases of society;

3. Criminal acts intended or calculated to provoke a state of terror in the general public, a group of persons or particular persons for political purposes are in any circumstance unjustifiable, whatever the considerations of a political, philosophical, ideological, racial, ethnic, religious or any other nature that may be invoked to justify them.¹

Part one emphasizes the way terrorism destabilizes otherwise friendly actions in an efficient economy. Part three emphasizes violent capabilities connected to a broad series of motivations for that violence, with religion included both implicitly and explicitly.

A similar definition from the Arab Convention on the Suppression of Terrorism focuses on the way terror spreads a unique agenda as:

any act or threat of violence, whatever its motives or purposes, that occurs for the advancement of an individual or collective criminal agenda, causing terror among people, causing fear by harming them, or placing their lives, liberty or security in danger, or aiming to cause damage to the environment or to public or private installations or property or to occupy or to seize them, or aiming to jeopardize a national resource.²

This definition more directly focuses on harm to natural resources, showing the connection of excessive violence to the economic negativity of terror.

The European Union offers a definition of terrorism both as an abstract act and intention. Terrorism is

¹ "United Nations General Assembly Resolution 49/60: Measures to Eliminate International Terrorism," December 9th, 1994, accessed May 12th, 2014, <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/49/a49r060.htm>.

² "The Arab Convention on the Suppression of Terrorism," April 22, 1998, accessed May 12th, 2014, https://www.unodc.org/tldb/pdf/conv_arab_terrorism.en.pdf.

seriously intimidating a population, or unduly compelling a Government or international organisation to perform or abstain from performing any act, or seriously destabilising or destroying the fundamental political, constitutional, economic or social structures of a country or an international organization.³

It then continues with a list of specifically restricted behaviors that *may* constitute terrorism:

Attacks upon a person's life which may cause death; attacks upon the physical integrity of a person; kidnapping or hostage taking; causing extensive destruction to a Government or public facility, a transport system, an infrastructure facility, including an information system, a fixed platform located on the continental shelf, a public place or private property likely to endanger human life or result in major economic loss; seizure of aircraft, ships or other means of public or goods transport; manufacture, possession, acquisition, transport, supply or use of weapons, explosives or of nuclear, biological or chemical weapons, as well as research into, and development of, biological and chemical weapons; release of dangerous substances, or causing fires, floods or explosions the effect of which is to endanger human life; interfering with or disrupting the supply of water, power or any other fundamental natural resource the effect of which is to endanger human life; threatening to commit any of the acts listed.⁴

Again, this definition focuses on violence and the threat of resources.

Finally, the United States government often relies on legal definitions of terrorism, primarily used by governmental institutions such as the Federal Bureau of Investigations:

18 U.S.C. § 2331 defines "international terrorism" and "domestic terrorism" for purposes of Chapter 113B of the Code, entitled "Terrorism":
"International terrorism" means activities with the following three characteristics:

³ European Union: Council of the European Union, "Council Framework Decision 2002/475 on Combating Terrorism," June 13, 2002, accessed May 12th, 2014, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/3f5342994.html>.

⁴ Ibid.

- Involve violent acts or acts dangerous to human life that violate federal or state law;
- Appear to be intended (i) to intimidate or coerce a civilian population; (ii) to influence the policy of a government by intimidation or coercion; or (iii) to affect the conduct of a government by mass destruction, assassination, or kidnapping; and
- Occur primarily outside the territorial jurisdiction of the U.S., or transcend national boundaries in terms of the means by which they are accomplished, the persons they appear intended to intimidate or coerce, or the locale in which their perpetrators operate or seek asylum.

"Domestic terrorism" means activities with the following three characteristics:

- Involve acts dangerous to human life that violate federal or state law;
- Appear intended (i) to intimidate or coerce a civilian population; (ii) to influence the policy of a government by intimidation or coercion; or (iii) to affect the conduct of a government by mass destruction, assassination, or kidnapping; and
- Occur primarily within the territorial jurisdiction of the U.S.

18 U.S.C. § 2332b defines the term "federal crime of terrorism" as an offense that:

- Is calculated to influence or affect the conduct of government by intimidation or coercion, or to retaliate against government conduct; and
- Is a violation of one of several listed statutes, including § 930(c) (relating to killing or attempted killing during an attack on a federal facility with a dangerous weapon); and § 1114 (relating to killing or attempted killing of officers and employees of the U.S.).⁵

Largely speaking, these definitions show the political ways of understanding terror in terms of similar characteristics: a focus on violence that has some excessive element and some threat to an otherwise efficient economic

⁵ Federal Bureau of Investigations, "Definitions of Terrorism in the U.S. Code," accessed May 12th, 2014, <http://www.fbi.gov/about-us/investigate/terrorism/terrorism-definition>.

force. Outside the realm of governmental agencies and offices, in the world of critical theorists, political philosophers, and religious scholars, other definitions exist but, again, they share in the above-mentioned common traits of economic negativity, excessive violence, and religious fervency. For example, James and Brenda Lutz offer the following definition:

Terrorism involves political objectives and goals. It relies on violence or the threat of violence. It is designed to generate fear in a target audience that extends beyond the immediate victims of the violence. The violence involves an organization and not isolated individuals. Terrorism involves a non-state actor or actors as the perpetrator of the violence, the victims, or both. Finally, terrorism is violence that is designed to create power in situation in which power has previously been lacking (i.e. the violence attempts to enhance the power base of the organization undertaking the action.⁶

They go on to emphasize the overt political aims of terrorism as the essential characteristic of terrorism vis-à-vis other forms of violence. While political in its foundation, Lutz and Lutz offer different formations terrorism can take: communal terrorism, ideological terrorism, pragmatic/instrumental terrorism.⁷

A project that combined 73 definitions of terrorism covered in 55 different articles offered the following definition of terrorism: "Terrorism is a politically motivated tactic involving the threat or use of force or violence in which the pursuit of publicity plays a significant role."⁸ Uniquely, these authors used

⁶ James M. Lutz and Brenda J. Lutz, *Terrorism: Origins and Evolution* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 7.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 11-12.

⁸ Leonard Weinberg, Ami Pedahzur, and Sivan Hirsch-Hoefler, "The Challenges of Conceptualizing Terrorism," *Terrorism and Political Violence* Vol. 16, No. 4, (2004): p. 786.

publicity within their definition, but publicity and notoriety would be outside the bounds of normal economic functions.

To this point, most of the definitions have emphasized the negative economic force of terrorism or the overt, unique, and excessive violence and tended to minimize or ignore the religious element. However, there are many definitions of terror that explicitly focus on the religious dimensions.

The work of Mark Juergensemeyer and Reza Aslan both subsume the economic and violent elements under the umbrella of a certain type of religious fervency. Juergensemeyer's well-known book *Terror in the Mind of God* and many of his articles express the idea that terrorist acts are motivated primarily, if not entirely, through the religious framework of "Cosmic War."⁹ This concept of cosmic war not only gives it a distinctly religious shade, it does so by overtly contrasting itself with those more political definitions. As Juergensemeyer writes in one article:

In the contemporary political climate, therefore, religious activists have provided a solution to the perceived insufficiencies of Western-style secular politics. As secular ties have begun to unravel in the post-Soviet and postcolonial era, local leaders have searched for new anchors to ground their social identities and political loyalties. What is ideologically significant about these religious movements is their creativity. Although many of them have reached back in history for ancient images and concepts that will give them credibility, theirs are not simply efforts to

⁹ See Mark Juergensemeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, (Los Angeles: The University of California Press, 2003); Mark Juergensemeyer, "Religious Antiglobalism," in *Religion and Global Civil Society*, ed. Mark Juergensemeyer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); Mark Juergensemeyer, "Martyrdom and Sacrifice in a Time of Terror," *Social Research: and International Quarterly* Vol. 75 Issue 2 (2008); Reza Aslan, *Beyond Fundamentalism: Confronting Religious Extremism in the Age of Globalization* (New York: Random House, 2009).

resuscitate old ideas from the past. They offer contemporary ideologies that meet present-day social and political needs.¹⁰

For cosmic warriors, religion offers a corrupted alternative to other political institutions. Cosmic war theory outlines this perversion of religion in a few ways. First, cosmic war arises out of a sense of urgency and the need for immediate action in the world.¹¹ The adherents of selective religious visions of the world see our time in history as radically at risk. Second, the idea of victory in a cosmic war lies in a world exterior to this one.¹² Within this worldview, material reality provides a disadvantageous lack of military or economic power to the religious adherent. Western liberal democracy, and its attending globalized economy, spread so rapidly and is such an overwhelming force that as a result religious conceptions of the world envision a metaphysical stage for the struggle. Juergensmeyer calls this process “Satanization.” Enemies are seen to be potentially anywhere and everywhere.¹³ In a traditional form of war, enemies are known and objectively recognizable, but in a cosmic war, it may be harder to locate the enemy because Satan can take many diverse forms. Further, opposing the process of “Satanization” justifies actions of the religious terrorist through participation with a deity.¹⁴ The deity confirms and sanctions the

¹⁰ Mark Juergensmeyer, “Religious Antiglobalism,” 6.

¹¹ Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, 148-149.

¹² Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, 162.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 175.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 146.

terrorist's activities because they are directed at a metaphysical enemy; the religious terrorist participates alongside the divine, while the enemy participates with Satan.

The result of defining the enemy as participating in the actions of Satan allows the cosmic warrior to partition the world into binary categories of good and evil.¹⁵ This partitioning prohibits any middle ground between the two extremes and consequently justifies violence against anyone, even children.¹⁶ The ability to distinguish combatant from civilian erodes as a consequence of the cosmic warrior's logic; a logic that categorizes everyone into warring camps regardless of the individual's will or desire.

The starkness of this binary division makes any peaceful negotiation impossible.¹⁷ In the mind of the cosmic warrior any enemy, as a participant on the side of Satan, lies and cannot be trusted to adhere to the outline of a peaceful settlement. Also, compromising in a cosmic war could put the warrior outside the graces of the divine figure, and therefore subject to metaphysical punishment.

Finally, this binary division between those on the side of the divine and those on the side of Satan gives meaning to suffering.¹⁸ The root cause of any

¹⁵ Reza Aslan, *Beyond Fundamentalism*, 5; Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, 148.

¹⁶ Reza Aslan, *Beyond Fundamentalism*, 5; Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, 175.

¹⁷ Reza Aslan, *Beyond Fundamentalism*, 5-6; Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, 177-178.

¹⁸ Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, 185.

suffering experienced by the cosmic warrior lies in the actions of the enemy. Suffering and the enemy eternally coexist as partners and as pollutants in the divinely intended order of the world, resulting in a situation whereby ending the enemy provides the only means of ending suffering.

Such religiously grounded definitions allow alternative strategies for confronting terrorism. As Reza Aslan writes,

It is within such 'identity vacuums' that Global Jihadism thrives. For kids like Hasib Hussain, whose religious and cultural affinities have been cast by their societies as *other*, Jihadism is more than an alternative form of identity - it is a *reactionary identity*, a means of social rebellion. It is an identity formed through the deliberate linking of local and global grievances - both real and perceived - to create a single, shared narrative of suffering and injustice. And only by severing that link, and disrupting the narrative, can Global Jihadism be defeated.¹⁹

Increasingly, theorists and policy advisors within areas that traditionally reproduce political definitions of terror are taking heed of such religious definitions. One example, an article by Heather S. Gregg a professor at the Naval Postgraduate School, argues that changing the way western democracies think about terrorists with respect to religion and cosmic warfare, will allow for new strategic options in dealing with terrorism. As she suggests:

Broadly, U.S. policy should aim to depolarize the Manichean thinking of these cosmic warriors and not play into it. Specifically, the U.S. government should stray away from making this a war of values, which mirrors the rhetoric of Al Qaeda's ideology and feeds the logic that both sides are locked in a zero sum battle of right versus wrong, where the other side want to take away the other's way of life. Describing the GWOT as a battle where the terrorists 'want to take away our freedom'

¹⁹ Reza Aslan, *Beyond Foundationalism*, 157.

and other values, places the conflict in the spiritual realm, making it ripe for cosmic war.²⁰

Beyond the examples and definitions given, there are those who think outside of both the political and religious frameworks as they define terrorism, offering a more critical approach. These theorists borrow from a wide variety of academic disciplines such as anthropology, sociology, economics, religious studies, philosophy, and political theory to articulate new and different ways of understanding this phenomenon. Two examples expanding the field of terror studies are *Rethinking the Roots of Terrorism* by Jason Franks and the article “The Case for a Critical Terrorism Studies” by Richard Jackson, Jereon Gunning, and Marie Breen Smyth.

Jason Franks expands and provides for a more sophisticated reading of terrorism than what he calls “orthodox terror studies.”²¹

The study of terrorism has not progressed beyond the realist positivist state-centric approach because it is a discourse created and employed with the express purpose of providing the state with an understanding of terrorism that is based upon a relative legitimacy. This allows the state to deal with terrorism without engaging in a roots debate, as it perceives terrorism as a threat to its security. It can therefore employ whatever means it chooses against whomever it wishes.²²

By focusing on the covert power structures that influence the ways official governmental agencies come to recognize terror, Franks attempts to uncover entrenched political patterns. He still defines terrorism as lethal, political

²⁰ Ibid., 203.

²¹ Jason Franks, *Rethinking the Roots of Terrorism* (New York: Palgrave, 2006), 7.

²² Ibid., 5.

violence but expands the motivations for this violence beyond simple definitions provided in more traditional forms of terrorist studies. Traditionally defined, terrorism undermines a state-centric model of governance, but by moving away from state-centric approaches and seeing terrorism within a framework of conflict, he shows the way terrorists may have legitimate political claims that the state ignores. He then provides four different perspectives for holistically investigating terrorism: the state, the non-state actor, the systemic issues, and the individual.

At the level of the state, Franks shows the way official governmental programs, policies, and agencies exacerbate and motivate terrorism through its responses to terror.²³ The non-state actor potentially has legitimate grievances regarding valid socio-economic needs and because of this disenfranchisement they may strive for legitimacy through violence. This requires the state to recognize the role of non-state actors in global politics.²⁴ Systemic issues may also contribute to the motivations of the terrorist, in that cultural or historical narratives could escalate violence when conflicts arise. Franks argues that ignoring the historical and cultural background of the non-state actors could result in missing important elements within the reasoning behind committing acts of violence. Such background influences can arise in the form of ideology or religious conviction. Finally, the use of violence can be the consequence of

²³ Ibid., 94.

²⁴ Ibid., 98.

extremely private concerns of a lone individual.²⁵ He offers these different perspectives in hope of providing new solutions to the problems terrorism presents, arguing,

The aim of this study is to relocate terrorism out of this relative moral quagmire of 'subjective' politics and into the realm of conflict where it can be seen simply as an act of violence within a wider context. This will allow the understanding of terrorism to develop alongside changes in contemporary conflict and will provide it with access to a roots debate and the whole spectrum of multi-dimensional techniques available for conflict resolution.²⁶

Critical Terrorism Studies brings together an eclectic interdisciplinary group of theorists to describe the limitations of current research on terrorism, and in response, provide a different approach to the problem. From this initial project sprang a journal series, *Critical Studies in Terrorism*, that serves as the primary medium for unique critical perspectives on the issue.

Both the initial project and the resulting journal share the same fundamental idea regarding much of the work within the field of terror studies. Describing the contemporary situation, the editors write:

More recently, it has been possible to detect a growing sense of unease from many different quarters with both the state of much current terrorism studies research output and the practical outworking of Western counterterrorism policies - which are often rooted in, or at least legitimised with reference to, the orthodox terrorism studies literature...Similarly, the mixed achievements of the global war on terror, together with its morally disturbing and counter-productive aspects such as foreign invasion, the Guantanamo Bay internment camp, extraordinary

²⁵ Ibid., 107.

²⁶ Ibid., 92.

rendition, the use of torture, and erosion of civil liberties, has engendered a growing sense of political disquiet dismay.²⁷

Like Franks, the assertions here expand the scope and reach of research into terrorism, taking more seriously systemic issues of globalization, identity, and socio-economic factors.

In general, the critical approach to terrorism resists orthodox approaches to understanding terrorism and seek out new possibilities of engagement through critical theory. Not all the theorists within this approach agree, as some tension comes about over the term “critical.”²⁸ Even so, the general goal of finding solutions to the problem remain, even if the debate shifts to focus on uprooting tacit assumptions that the field relies upon.

Regardless of the type of definition offered, whether from a policy and agency perspective, a religious perspective, or a critical perspective; all agree on some essential difference between western liberal forms of violence and acts of terrorism. While critical terrorism studies attempt to unpack the forms of state violence that may exacerbate or motivate terrorists, it still maintains a fundamental division by insisting that terrorism is a problem with possible solutions.

My approach seeks to define terrorism not as a distinct and dichotomous form of violence separate from western liberal forms violence; due to the fact

²⁷ Richard Jackson, Marie Breen Smyth, and Jeroen Gunning, “The Case for Critical Terrorism Studies,” in *Critical Terrorism Studies: A New Research Agenda*, ed. Richard Jackson et al. (New York: Routledge, 2009), 1.

²⁸ Jacob L. Stump and Priya Dixit, *Critical Terrorism Studies: An Introduction to Research Methods* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 4.

that, within the biopolitical epoch, terrorism is not an exterior problem with a solution. Instead, it comes about as the secretions and manifestation of a fundamental crisis within biopolitics. This crisis manifests in a few distinct, but overlapping, forms of defining terror as offered above: first, terrorism as a negative economic force in an otherwise smooth global ordering of goods and services; second, as excessively violent; and finally, as religion gone awry.

Initially focusing on the economic issues of terrorism demands some reduction in scope. The global economy is a vast, tangled and complicated phenomenon, but much can be detected about the interactions between biopower and terror by taking into consideration the role and presence of the border.

The Border

As a preliminary claim, the narrative around terrorism emphasizes a negative economic consequence of terror. By looking at the complicated relationship between the border and economic trade, a counter narrative arises that shows the productive elements of terrorism connected to the globalized economy.

This counter narrative begins with the movement of goods and services across a globalized landscape and the requirement of borders over which these goods and services travel. At first glance, the border serves as an ideal type of heterotopic space described by Michel Foucault, as borders bring into one place several unique factors. The border acts as component of culture making, bordering off one cultural milieu from another, and the movement over the

border presents a deviation from that cultural norm. The border provides the internal citizen stability and political identification and at the same time, they are spaces where individuals in transition exist not as singular political subjects, but as a subject between identities.²⁹ Additionally, borders bring together varied historical processes into a single recognized formation, and are the spaces where cultural ideas evolve. Wars are waged to fortify or expand borders and function in different ways: as porous or rigid depending on the societal shifts over time. The border also brings together into a single space things that are generally incompatible.³⁰ For example, they bring into contact two very distinct sets of codes and laws. The border not only spatializes the relationships between two national territories, it affirms the entire international order. Finally, the border both opens and closes, it can be crossed and it can prohibit movement.³¹ The process, codes, and laws of the border allow and disallow crossing under a variety of different conditions and with complex consequences. As Foucault writes, these spaces,

look like pure and simple openings, but that, generally, conceal curious exclusions. Everybody can enter into those heterotopian emplacements, but in fact it is only an illusion: one believes to have entered and, by the very fact of entering, one is excluded.³²

²⁹ Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," in *Heterotopia and the City: Public Space in a Postcivil Society*, ed. Michiel Dehaene and Lieven De Caeter (New York: Routledge, 2008), 17.

³⁰ Ibid., 19.

³¹ Ibid., 21.

³² Ibid., 21.

As we can see from Foucault's conception of heterotopias as applied to the border, these spaces define much of our political lives, while remaining hopelessly fragile and impotent as the points of transgression. Economies demand porous borders, while at the same time demanding rigidity as protection from potentially negative elements. The challenge for state institutions is the management of such a paradoxical condition. In response to this challenge, some states have opted for more stringent regulation and the production of visible signs of those regulations through the spectacle of the wall. Wendy Brown speaks of this proliferation of wall building, highlighting three central paradoxes made evident in the flurry of fence building:

First, even as those across a wide political spectrum – neoliberals, cosmopolitans, humanitarians, and left activists – fantasize a world without borders (whether consequent to global entrepreneurship, global markets, global citizenship, or global governance), nation-states, rich and poor, exhibit a passion for wall building. Second, within the ostensibly triumphant universal political form, democracy (heralded by European post-Marxists, Islamic secularists, or American neoconservatives, even if each inflects democracy differently), we confront not only barricades, but passageways through them segregating high-end business traffic, ordinary travelers, and aspiring entrants deemed suspect by virtue of origin or appearance. Third, in a time featuring capacities for destruction historically unparalleled in their combined potency, miniaturization, and mobility, from bodies wired for explosion to nearly invisible biochemical toxins, these deadly but incorporeal powers are perversely answered by the stark physicalism of walls. So, three paradoxes: one featuring simultaneous opening and blocking, one featuring universalization combined with exclusion and stratification, and one featuring net worked and virtual power met by physical barriers.³³

³³ Wendy Brown, *Walled States, Waning Sovereignty* (New York: Zone Books, 2010), 20.

Internal and External Boundaries

One can easily reduce the paradox down to a question of simply identifying friends from enemies, repurposing Carl Schmitt's primary definition of the political.³⁴ But the relationships are more complicated, as Aihwa Ong shows through adopting Agamben's notions of biopolitics. She argues that borders are simultaneously permissive and regulative, and individuals are subject to a multiplicity of borders and spaces of exclusion *within* the bordered nation-state. Tensions at the border between opposing states, also exist *inside* the border, making the friend/enemy distinction more complicated.

Classic models of political sovereignty focus on exterior and interior relationships demarcated by national boundaries. Contemporary biopolitical forms of governance additionally demarcate the interior of the nation with different levels and modes of sovereign activity for different populations within the territory. If a certain segment of the population generates economic growth, less restrictions and disciplinary powers are placed on those populations, particularly when it comes to passing over the border.³⁵ On the other hand, should a population antagonize or detract from perceived economic growth, disciplinary power increases, especially as it comes to passing over the border unhindered. The interior national territory does not possess a homogenous form

³⁴ See Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2007).

³⁵ Aihwa Ong, *Neoliberalism as Exception: Mutations in Citizenship and Sovereignty* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 77.

of sovereignty, and instead has different types of sovereign action upon different populations, creating a patchwork of different governmental policies within the same national boundary.³⁶

This patchwork results in complications with international arrangements regarding borders. While Agamben tends to focus on negative exceptions to the law, those figures excluded from the legal order, Ong reverses this proposition, focusing on positive exclusionary practices. National boundaries, sovereign independence, and trade restrictions may be suspended for the sake of economic growth and development.³⁷ As a result, individuals supersede normal functions of the law at the border, and can move freely through international zones provided they offer some special economic advantage. Regular legal maintenance and penalties at the border still apply to those who offer little or no economic advantage.

Ong and Brown both demonstrate the ways in which internal and external boundaries contribute to smooth flowing economies. Etienne Balibar, on the other hand, argues that in addition to the economic factors involved, borders produce identities. By producing stable identities within a border, it reduces potential complexities between various groups.³⁸ This allows increased management by the state over a homogenous grouping of citizen-subjects, and accurately measures the populations within that border. Borders allow for an

³⁶ Ibid., 78.

³⁷ Ibid., 101.

³⁸ Etienne Balibar, *Politics and the Other Scene* (New York: Verso, 2002), 77.

epistemological goal of recording each individual citizen-subject, organizing the territory and maintaining a stable but porous border. Within Bhabha's articulation, borders do more than offer a point of crossing but help construct a larger international collection of sovereignties that manage and continually produce the border. Further, such borders do not mean the same thing for everyone: for certain populations the border may represent an exotic vacation while for others the border produces anxiety and fear of potential legal retribution.

Biometrics: The Movement of Bodies

Advancements in the field of biometrics, which transform the body into a series of biological data points, also contribute to the inclusion and exclusion practices at the border. However, biopolitics and the taking up of life as an issue connected to the border does not only exist in the Agambenian form of inclusion and exclusion, but also in the actual organization and maintenance of biologically lived bodies. Btihaj Ajana offers a three-part definition of biometrics that references some key features of biopower. First, biometrics literally measure bare life. It is a technology that takes up biological information like fingerprints, facial patterns, and vocalizations to identify and verify a person's identity.³⁹ While these tools utilized in identity and verification are relatively new, the general approach by governments of measuring and cataloging the body has a

³⁹ Btihaj Ajana, *Governing Through Biometrics: The Biopolitics of Identity* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 3.

long history, bringing old concerns into contemporary capabilities. Perhaps the most primordial of these techniques was anthropometry, a written description of the physical characteristics that could assist in the securing the identity of a suspect. These later developed into the more common “mugshot,” which state agencies employ still today. From this initial activity other technologies arose, such as fingerprinting. Biometrics in contemporary society are not something new, but are a modern variant of long sought after processes of fixing, measuring, and establishing identity.

While the technologies today greatly increase biometric capabilities, many older technologies are still very much a part the contemporary situation. Fingerprints are still readily used by governmental agencies in attempts to diminish and stop crime, including terrorism. For example, the most common identifying element for a terror attack is the fingerprint left on bomb making materials. The current database used by the FBI contains 110 million individual print records, while the Department for Homeland Security possesses 156 million records.⁴⁰ These numbers may appear rather large, but are relatively small when compared to the ongoing biometric Aadhaar project in India, with a goal of enrolling 1.2 billion participants, or the entire population of India.⁴¹

Charlotte Epstein offers a similar description of biometrics as that of Ajana, but with some additions to issues of risk. She writes:

⁴⁰ Ben Iannotta, “Biometrics” in *C4ISR* (May 2013), 22.

⁴¹ Elida K.U. Jacobsen, “Unique Identification: Inclusion and Surveillance in the Indian Biometric Assemblage.” in *Security Dialogue* 43, (2012), 458.

(Biometrics) identify a person: these constitute sets of measurements derived from the print or photo of distinctive body parts (face, finger, the hand, the iris) or a behavioural trait (voice, signature or even keystroke) that constitute markers of individuality. Access is granted to that person once she has been correctly identified ('authenticated', in the engineering lingo). They are risk-based surveillance systems, where the risk-to-be-managed is the penetration into the secure space by an unauthorized or undesirable body.⁴²

While such systems claim to eliminate or diminish personal human error from the process of recognition, they do have some limitations. Currently, there is not a complete catalog available that would be able to establish the identity of all individuals, as they can only test particulars against a database of identities already collected. Many fall outside of available databases and therefore have no way of verifying identity. This serves as the endpoint for database structuring goals, the goal being the creation of a database reducing unknowns and errors down to zero by collecting, measuring, and cataloging every member of the global population.⁴³

Epstein offers other insights into the way biometrics and biopolitics interact. For one, biometrics provides a measuring technique based on the living body. It simultaneously provides information on the larger population, subject to management, through the processes of individualizing technology (looking at the single lived body). In addition, travelers who wish to pass over borders must submit to the scrutiny of biometrics. This results in reducing the traveler to a

⁴² Charlotte Epstein, "Embodying Risk: Using Biometrics to Protect the Borders," in *Risk and the War on Terror* ed. Louise Amoore and Marieke De Goede (New York: Routledge, 2008), 180-181.

⁴³ Ibid.

mere body, purely biological and subject to measurement and analysis to determine the riskiness of that individual. The transition between spaces of travel necessitate the reduction of the traveler to bare life.

Biometric endeavors do not only restrict, control, and securitize borders, they can also be used for other goals. For example, some research indicates the possibility of utilizing biometrics to eliminate fraudulent behavior in financial transactions. Additionally, biometric identification could allow individuals proof of identity allowing access to governmental institutions, benefits, or to eliminate voter fraud. These could open new avenues for the inclusion of otherwise excluded populations. For example:

A number of reports on financial inclusion of the poor have been produced in tandem with the establishment of the UID⁴⁴ system, mapping their income, economic patterns and access to credit. The main focus of these documents has been to ensure a rapid inclusion of the poor into the formal banking and insurance system. The biopolitical imperative to govern life is thus further rearranged in the logics of the assemblage. Here, biopolitical management of the population is combined with the various globalizing forms of self-entrepreneurship fostered by the 'global form' of neoliberalism. The mechanisms and characteristics of biopolitical 'security' thereby turn into a concern for the entirety of a population and the optimization of its productive potential.⁴⁵

Whether one considers the inclusive elements of biometrics highlighted above, or the exclusive practices of restricting the movement of certain bodies across borders, the decisions made remain obscured by a wall of technological anonymity. No single individual makes the decisions over whether a person should be denied entry at a border, instead the decisions are made by invisible

⁴⁴ Unique Identifier

⁴⁵ Ibid., 465.

algorithms detached from single figures. Considering this reality in relation to ongoing immigration programs highlights some interesting characteristics of modern politics. No single person can ever take the responsibility for either deportations or amnesty. A series of internal mechanisms, biometric checkpoints, and abstract policies regarding populations funnel and direct real human beings through a series of governmental institutions and programs. The promises of political progress toward increased amnesty, or initiatives toward more rigid practices of deportation always remain separate from individual actors. In a strange paradoxical way, the technologies involved in biometrically hyper-individualizing humans simultaneously allow a complete non-individualization when it comes to such decisions.

The Risk of Borders

Even amidst such a paradox, the reality of biometrics, a uniquely biopolitical practice at the border, only happens because of increased anxieties from the internal state about the potential arrival of certain bodies. Bodies present risks to the biopolitical state as a contaminant. Benjamin Muller refers to this contamination risk in the following way:

The biometric risk state speaks to altered imaginations and relations between liberty and security, and how these play out in/at various sites, such as increasingly prevalent 'virtual borders', is of central interest. Like the changing dispositif of security asserted earlier, the biometric state involves an odd mixture of the geopolitical and the biopolitical, as well as increasing reliance on the mechanisms and technologies of risk. In this case, such technologies of risk are applied directly to the reference object of species life itself. In other words, it is particular forms of life that read

as risky, or bodies that are not readable represent vulnerability to the biometric state and its obsession with digital life.⁴⁶

The border then serves as a filter to eliminate the risk of certain bodies, while freely allowing other bodies to enter. As a result, a spectrum arises measuring each body that approaches the border in terms of the risk they present. This spectrum interacts with Foucault's concept of racial wars in remarkable ways, as biometrics moves beyond the individual body to identify entire risky populations. For example, the Global Public Health Network monitors a variety of data spanning all sorts of media sources across the globe for indications of biological breakouts. These biological breakouts produce new populations that increase in position on the risk spectrum. The breaking down of individual bodies to the molecular level undergirds the racial wars fought in protection of the species. As Bruce Braun states:

While it may be true that in industrialized liberal democracies this model of the 'somatic' self holds sway, there is another dimension to the molecularization of life that has received far less attention. This has to do with the conceptualization of the body in forms of its *displacements* within wider molecular fields. That is, at the same time that molecular biology and genetics have given us a body known at the molecular scale, and thus made the physical mechanisms of 'life' available to political and economic calculation in new ways, they have also, in conjunction with the science of immunology and virology, given us another way to conceive of our biological existence, no longer in terms of a self-contained body whose genetic inheritance is to be managed and improved, but in terms of a body embedded in a chaotic and unpredictable molecular world, a body understood in terms of a general economy of exchange and circulation, haunted by the specter of newly emerging or still unspecifiable risks.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Benjamin Muller, "Securing the Political Imagination: Popular Culture, the Security *Dispositif* and the Biometric State" in *Security Dialogue* 39, (2008), 208.

⁴⁷ Bruce Braun, "Biopolitics and the Molecularization of Life" in *Cultural Geographies* 14, (2007), 14.

Those bodies with increased risk open the possibility of expungement or elimination within the protected population. Too close of contact with certain animals, eating certain foods, or partaking in certain practices all warrant a heightened possibility of exposure to unwanted biological agents and may increase the risk to life. Biological decisions must be made for the security of life and these decisions occur at both the molecular level and at the level of populations.

This breaking down of the body into constituent parts at the molecular level attempts to predict, manage, and address a risk that has not yet arrived. Following Deleuze⁴⁸, Braun envisions this risk as virtual, yet to occur but still foundational to the conditions of the present. The conditions of the present produce virtual threats that must be reduced, managed, and, if possible, eliminated for the sake of securing life. The threats, at least within the view of biosecurity, arrive in strict relation with those new technologies that allowed for the molecularization of the body in the first place. Just as the border and the movement of goods and services demand a paradoxical increase of both openness and rigidity, so also the body demands both the freedom to move while simultaneously reducing risk.

⁴⁸ See Gilles Deleuze, *Bergsonism* (New York: Zone Books, 1988).

Digitized Borders

To this point, the border has only been described in terms of actual spaces, but to realize the true complexity of the border, and from this the global economy, requires thinking beyond space. Gilles Deleuze, in his formal writings on the “control society,” offers such an understanding of borders. Within a control society,

the key thing is no longer a signature or number but a code: codes are *passwords*, whereas disciplinary societies are ruled (when it comes to integration or resistance) by *precepts*. The digital language of control is made up codes indicating whether access to some information should be allowed or denied.⁴⁹

This creates a situation where a border is not merely a heterotopic-spatial product where goods, services, and people cross but, in addition to the spatial, the border can also be non-spatial and virtual. In new globalized economies, the border as both a spatial and virtual reality often replicates and reproduces the challenges faced by more traditional sovereign and spatial forms of the border. For example, people still demand a free-flowing and deregulated virtual space while simultaneously demanding security over the privacy of their personal information, financial records, and internet use. The new forms of virtual borders transition from the strict movement of people and goods, to the passage of data, but the same demand of porousness and rigidity remain.

The non state-centric models of the internet generate massive obstacles for regulatory policies over these virtual borders. The internet does not belong to

⁴⁹ Ibid., 180.

any nation or group, and the borders between virtual users lack the clear definitions often associated with traditional spatial borders.⁵⁰ These difficulties in policing virtual borders have consequences not just for governmental agencies, but also for the private sector. Users of the popular online streaming service Netflix recently discovered that if one used software they could mask their geographic location and effectively tell Netflix servers they reside in parts of the world where they do not. This results in accessing programs that may not be available in one geographic region, but are in another.⁵¹

The Netflix example demonstrates that often virtual borders and geographic borders intermingle in unpredictable ways. Virtual space, and access to information, can depend on our geographic location, while at the same time, geographic spacing can be augmented by virtual interaction.

To this point, focus on the border has demonstrated its importance in the movement and exchange of economic positives. The complexities of the border, along the lines of biopolitical inclusion and exclusion practices maintain an economic global order, whereby the border, whether virtual or geographic, demands a paradoxical porousness and rigidity at the same time. The porousness of the border centers on the economics involved, as the movements of goods, services, and even data all make for economic advantage and growth.

⁵⁰ Maryann Lawlor, "Guarding Virtual Borders," *Signal* 52, (2003), 31.

⁵¹ See Michael Oliveira, "Netflix Aims to Unplug Virtual Border-Crossers," *Edmonton Journal*, January 6, 2015.

Risk, on the other hand, demands the borders be rigid and propel threats away from the homogenized and managed interior.

In response to potential threats, the U.S. implemented and developed “smart border” technologies:

The Smart Border plan is premised on bilateral cooperation that enables the United States to deploy information technology to practice risk management targeting of vehicles, shipments, and travelers, and to push the United States’ ‘borders out,’ while at the same time it attempts to minimize the impact of border controls on trade and travel.⁵²

Overly simplifying borders as social constructions, while accurate, misses key elements. They are socially constructed, but with very particular needs in mind. Borders technologically control and manage the risk to an internal population, while simultaneously demanding the free movement of goods, services, and data. They are bound networks and informational passages that layer the world through a series of coded entry and exit points, regulating and protecting an internal order while participating in a larger external series of international arrangements.

Terrorism, among other things, threatens the integrity of porous borders. As a result, territories regulate negative potentialities at the border, prohibiting and controlling movement and thereby producing new forms of movement in response. To bypass the border new creative endeavors are introduced by terrorists, resulting in new securitizing measures, and then responses to those measures. Making the border both porous and rigid creates a cycle of responses

⁵² Rey Koslowski, “Smart Borders, Virtual Borders or No Borders: Homeland Security Choices for the United States and Canada” in *Law and Business Review of the Americas* 11 ¾, (2005), 530.

and counter-responses. The internal strategies employed to rigidify the borders frame terrorism as a thoroughly negative impact to the otherwise free movement of goods, services, and data across borders.

The 2014 Ebola crisis serves as a fruitful analogy to the problem of terrorism and the border. During the summer of that year the Ebola crisis reached its zenith, as at least 65 individuals infected with the disease began arriving in the United States and Europe from Western Africa. Attempting to contain the problem and curtail public panic, Senator Ted Cruz along with others, proposed eliminating all flights into the U.S. from Western Africa.⁵³ Those in agreement with this proposal argued that by eliminating movement at the border and making it more rigid, the threat would diminish. In response, the Obama administration and others argued that allowing flights to continue would make it easier to track and monitor the movement of people believed to be infected. The results of a rigid border would be an increased creativity in the ways people would move into the territory undetected, and thereby minimized the government's ability to track, monitor, and confront the disease.

This entire episode highlights the economic issues connected to the biological reality of the disease. The often understated but secretly pervasive counter-argument to Cruz was the diminished revenues airline industries would face in the rigidifying of the border.

⁵³ See Ted Cruz, "Roll Call: Ted Cruz asks FAA about Ebola Flight Ban," <http://www.cruz.senate.gov/?p=news&id=1783>

Regardless of the political, biological and economic implications of this crisis, one central point arose from this ordeal. The very same channels utilized for the movement of goods, services, and data can produce the demise of the groups who maintain those channels. Ebola was not only a medical and biological risk, it was an economic risk.

Shared Paths: Terrorism and Economic Movement

Arguments against the neoliberal order of a globalized economy whereby the movements of goods, services, and data freely move over transnational borders, often miss the point that those channels by which those things move are not solely devoted to the movement of those things. Many different possible items such as biological contaminants, people, currencies, slaves, destructive ideologies, and weaponry rely on the same recognized, authorized, and monitored networks. The positive economic elements and negative elements travel the same paths simultaneously, sometimes aware and sometimes unaware of their co-travelers.

This reality goes both ways. Groups like al Qaeda hypocritically rely on the networks they seek to resist:

This grafting of entirely modern sensibilities and techniques to the most radical interpretation of holy war is the hallmark of bin Laden's network. One of his Afghan training camps during the late nineties was named al-Badr, after a key seventh-century battle fought by the Prophet Muhammad, yet al-Qaeda members training there were tutored in the use of high-tech explosives such as RDX and C4. Members of al-Qaeda perform *bayat*, a quasi-medieval oath of allegiance to their emir or leader. But while based in Sudan in the early nineties, they also drew monthly paychecks and supported themselves with a wide range of legitimate

businesses. When bin Laden declared war on Americans in 1996, he described U.S. soldiers stationed in the Middle East as ‘the Crusaders,’ as if the crusades of the Middle Ages were still being fought, and signed his declaration ‘from the peaks of the Hindu Kush mountains of Afghanistan,’ a place barely touched by the modern world. That declaration of war was written on an Apple computer and then faxed or e-mailed to supporters in Pakistan and Britain, who in turn made it available to Arabic newspapers based in London, which subsequently beamed the text via satellite, to printing centers all over the Middle East and in New York. Thus, a premodern message was delivered by postmodern means.⁵⁴

Private corporate interests securitized through neoliberal governments are not separate from the things which those security mechanisms hope to eliminate. In fact, they co-participate in the very same networks alongside each other, often with incalculable effects. The cases of both Ebola and al Qaeda demonstrate the possibilities of this network sharing along the routes that move goods, services, labor, and data. The demand for porous borders and the free movement of goods, services, labor, and data contributes to the in-securitizing effects that in turn produce demands for more rigid borders.

An entire industry has arisen to meet the paradoxical demands of both open and closed borders. Security consultants, military installations, checkpoints, biometric scanners, risk assessment specialists, and even insurance actuaries all participate in the process to keep the movements happening while still protecting against the potential threats initiated by terror groups. By maintaining and ordering the pathways along which goods, services, labor and data, move this security industry makes those pathways even more efficient. The increased efficiency of those pathways, like those travelers who would still

⁵⁴ Peter L. Bergen, *Holy War Inc.: Inside the Secret World of Osama bin Laden* (New York: Touchstone Publishers, 2001), 49.

find entrance into the U.S. should airlines stop arriving from West Africa, find new and increasingly efficient ways to produce terror. Increased technology produces increased vulnerability. It is for this reason that Didier Bigo and others lament the security industry as the (in)security industry.⁵⁵

The war on terror then does not produce an economic negative, but in fact participates and generates economic activities. The demands for a porous border to move things creates a situation of vulnerability which then demands a securitizing response, which makes the networks of movement more efficient, which then opens new possibilities for terrorism which then creates new securitizing demands. They work together, terror and security, supporting and justifying each other in a myriad of unpredictable and economically fruitful ways.

There are those who see this interaction between the war on terror and the globalized economic order and provide some nuanced ways of understanding the codependency between the two. First, some see the war on terror as a way of expanding neoliberal economic activities into geographic regions where the power structures in place prohibit or hinder economic expansion. Gordon Lafer examines this dynamic, arguing:

I believe that, in its broadest logic, the war [on terror] must be understood as a means of advancing the neoliberal agenda of global economic transformation. Both abroad and at home, the pattern of administrative behavior reflects an ambitious and aggressive drive to restructure the economy in line with neoliberal dictates.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ See Didier Bigo and Anastassia Tsoukala, eds., *Terror, Insecurity and Liberty: Illiberal Practices of Liberal Regimes After 9/11* (New York: Routledge, 2008).

⁵⁶ Gordon Lafer, "Neoliberalism by Other Means: The 'War on Terror' at Home and Abroad" in *New Political Science* 26:3, (2006), 324.

By using the invasion of Iraq as an example, Lafer continues,

The choice of Iraq as the target of invasion and occupation was no doubt driven both by Iraq's vast oil reserves and its potential to substitute for Saudi Arabia as the market maker in the global oil exchange. Apart from the Saudis, Iraq is the only country whose reserves are large enough that it could regulate world prices by choosing to expand or contract production at strategic points in the price cycle. This strategic value of Iraqi oil – above and beyond its straight economic value – explains why, within one month of capturing Baghdad, US overseers raised the prospect of pulling Iraq out of the OPEC consortium. Control of Iraqi oil offers the potential to exercise critical leverage over the economies of the Middle East, Russia, China and other oil-dependent nations.⁵⁷

For Lafer, the war on terror offers an economic opportunity for the dominate powers in the world, at the expense of the Iraqi population. Military interventions arrange global markets in beneficial ways for certain countries, while destabilizing others. The war on terror does not challenge global economic stability but instead further entrenches forms of economic control for certain actors while exploiting others. Lafer concludes by describing the war on terror as “neoliberalism by other means: what could not be achieved by trade or treaty will be imposed by military force.”⁵⁸

Others see the war on terror as a co-participating force in the larger global economic trends. Christopher Hughes points to the ways in which globalization, of the economic variety, contributes to and creates situations for the spread of terrorism. He defines globalization through three functions, first as

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 325.

liberalization, then convergence, and finally as deterritorialization.⁹⁹

Liberalization lowers the borders through deepening cooperation around mutual interests between independent nation-states. Convergence is the process of political, social, and economic activities that take on broader global dimensions beyond limited expressions of cultures. While the process of convergence intends to go beyond cultural domination, in reality it often just expresses dominant Westernized or Americanized interests. Finally, deterritorialization changes and transforms social space, bringing people together regardless of physical location and bypassing the rigidity of borders. By examining globalization through this process Hughes articulates a contemporary world unbounded by the organization of nations. While at one time nation-states played an integral role in organizing markets, corporate interests, and territorial integrity, they no longer do. Additionally, security evolves to meet the new demands of a deterritorialized world no longer attached to a single nation, it now protects international networks, often having to protect the nation-state *from* globalization.

The shifting organization of the world results in new political identities that challenge the nation-state often through direct confrontation and violence.

As Hughes writes:

[G]lobalisation has manifestly also facilitated the actual terrorist activities of al-Qaeda. Globalisation, again in conjunction with the effects of decolonisation and bipolarisation, has eroded the sovereignty of states, and it is in the areas where the sovereign control of states is weakest – most notably Afghanistan and Somalia – where terrorist networks have accumulated. For such states are where the remit of the central

⁹⁹ Christopher W. Hughes, "Reflections on Globalisation, Security and 9/11" in *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 15:3 (2010), 423.

government often fails to run and where groups can practise illicit activities relatively free from interference....Globalisation as economic liberalisation and the transcendence of sovereign control over social interaction, spurred on by improvements in transportation and information technology, has enabled trans-national crime and terrorist organisations to mimic the behaviour of transnational corporations (TNC's) and to move with greater ease across deregulated economic and territorial spaces.⁶⁰

Ulrich Beck, on the other hand, conceives of terror as an antithesis to the globalized economic order, contrasting the liberal process with that of terror. Yet terrorism, even for Beck, is not a pure economic negativity. Instead, it mimics those neoliberal and globalized processes, but in a deformed and perverse form.

As he describes it:

With the horror images of New York, terror groups have with one blow established themselves as new global actors in competition with states, economies and civil societies. The terror networks have become 'NGO's of violence'. They act like nongovernmental organizations: deterritorial and decentralized; thus, on the one hand, local, on the other, transnational. While, for example, Greenpeace has the lead in respect to the environmental crisis and Amnesty International in respect to the human rights crisis when contrasted with states, the terrorist NGO's repeal the monopoly on violence previously enjoyed by states. However, this means, first, that this kind of transnational terrorism is not limited to Islamic terrorism, but can associate itself with any possible aim, ideology or fundamentalism; and, second, that one must differentiate between the terror of national liberation movements, which are territorially and nationally bound, and the new, transnational terrorist networks, which are deterritorial – that is, beyond borders – and which as a result of their actions depreciate with a single blow the national grammar of military and war.⁶¹

Some themes appear similar between Hughes and Beck: for the former terrorism arises because of globalized economic systems, where for the later terrorism

⁶⁰ Ibid., 431.

⁶¹ Ulrich Beck, "The Silence of Words: On Terror and War" in *Security Dialogue* 34, (2003), 259-60.

undermines the globalized economic order but in a reciprocal mimicry of that order.

Even more controversially, others imagine the neoliberal economic order as a form of competing terrorism without the label. Vandana Shiva, a proponent of such a radical view, expresses it this way:

Terrorism will not be stopped by militarized minds that create insecurity and fear. The 'war against terrorism' will create a vicious cycle of violence: It will not create peace and security. Terrorism can only be stopped by cultures of peace, democracy, and people's security. It is wrong to define the conflict as a war between 'civilization and barbarism': It is a war between two forms of terrorism that are mirror images. Both sides can only conceive of monocultures that must erase diversity, the very precondition for peace. They share the dominant culture of violence. Both sides are clones of each other and their victims are innocent people everywhere.⁶²

Shiva, unlike the others previously mentioned, sees no distinguishing and essential separation between global economic forces and the forces of terrorism. The only difference between al Qaeda and a Monsanto are the motivations. The neoliberal order, with the power of state militaries, follow the same patterns of violence and a desire to universalize their vision of the world that many terror groups employ. Elsewhere Shiva writes about the way neoliberal forms of power rooted in biopolitics grow into bioeconomies, where the market itself seeks to shape and control life. The economy no longer looks only at renewable resources like oil, but now seeks to control, augment, and privatize the very processes of life. Using the example of intellectual rights over seeds by companies like Monsanto, Shiva highlights the disparities between the

⁶² Vandana Shiva, "The Other Face of Terrorism," in *Earth Island Journal* 17, (2002), 48.

developed and developing worlds through these novel and destructive bioeconomies.⁶³

Describing terror as a negative force on the economy ignores the realities and nuances between the way terror and neoliberal forms of globalization operate. Terrorism does not produce a negative economic impact, and as a result, even as much as biopolitical governments may render terrorism as a phenomenon to overcome, those governments rely on terror as a participant and motivation for economic activities. Terrorism results in economic growth and development, through the matrix of securitizing activities. Security, and the process of securitization that rely on the biopolitical notions of inclusion and exclusion at the border, and the management of populations, end up implicated in the very thing it hopes to protect against. Biopolitics then cannot solve terrorism as it participates, economically, in the activities of terror.

⁶³ Vandana Shiva, "The Daily Violence of Globalization" in *Turning the Tide* 14, (2001), 1.

Chapter Three: Violence, Religion, and Terror

Definitions from the previous chapter provided three ways of understanding how contemporary neoliberal state actors, a variety of theorists, and organizations frame definitions of terrorism. In addition, I showed the way biopolitics inhabits and informs the first of these definitions: terrorism negatively impacts economic productivity. By looking closely at the border and its role in security, terrorism, and trade, one sees the paradoxical biopolitical demands of simultaneous inclusion and exclusion, along with population management. In addition to this framing of terror two others came from examining the definitions: first, that terrorism is excessively violent, and second that perverse religious passion motivates terror.

Most imagine terror involving bombs, gunfire, and attacks on innocent civilians. Equating terror with violence does not provoke much disagreement, but the nature and scope of violence can be a bit more complicated. In a video released August of 2014 entitled, "A Message to America," images interspersed and spliced together depict a story of violence perpetrated by, and against, the Islamic State. The video culminates in the beheading of James Foley by a man who came to be known throughout popular culture and the media as "Jihadi John." In response to the video, then president Barack Obama said the following:

The terrorist group known as ISIL must be degraded and ultimately destroyed...In the most horrific crimes imaginable, innocent human beings have been beheaded, with videos of the atrocity distributed to shock the conscience of the world. No God condones this terror. No grievance justifies these actions. There can be no reasoning – no negotiation – with this brand of evil. The only language understood by killers like this is the language of force. So the United States of American will work with a broad coalition to dismantle this network of death.¹

David Cameron, also responding to the video stated:

We've all been shocked and sickened by the barbaric murder of American journalist James Foley and by the voice of what increasingly seems to have been a British terrorist recorded on that video. It was clear evidence – not that any more was needed – that this is not some foreign conflict thousands of miles from us that we can hope to ignore.²

In a *Washington Post* article in 2014, Terrence McCoy explains the success of the Islamic State through the spectacle of violence they employ. He writes,

[T]he acts of terror have been wildly successful. From beheadings to summary executions to amputations to crucifixions, the terrorist group has become the most feared organization in the Middle East. That fear, evidenced in fleeing Iraqi soldiers and 500,000 Mosul residents, has played a vital role in the group's march toward Baghdad. In many cases, police and soldiers literally ran, shedding their uniforms as they went, abandoning large caches of weapons.³

These responses share in their insistence of excessive and brutal violence as a primary reason for the deployment of counterterrorism measures. Barbarity and viciousness of the violence used by these groups prompts a response and

¹ Barack Obama, "Remarks to the United Nations General Assembly in New York City" September 2014.

² David Cameron, "Threat level from international terrorism Raised," August 29th, 2014 <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/threat-level-from-international-terrorism-raised-pm-press-conference>

³ Terrence McCoy, "ISIS Beheadings and the Success of Horrifying Violence" *The Washington Post* last modified June 13th, 2014. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2014/06/13/isis-beheadings-and-the-success-of-horrifying-violence/>

elicits fear. While the beheading of journalists undoubtedly demands a response, what is not clear is what makes the violence especially undue. Under what metric can we measure violence and categorize it as either reasonable or not? What essential quality allows for the determination of one thing as more or less violent than another?

Terrorism certainly involves violence. To be terrifying requires violence, as it needs to remind the victim of their fragility and vulnerability. All humans instinctively react in extreme ways to images of burning, mutilation, beheadings, dismemberments, and other such acts. However, defining terrorism entirely in conjunction with violence raises serious questions about proportionate and disproportionate responses. The actual statistical risk to the average citizen shows that the attention given to terrorism as a potentiality might be exaggerated in relation to the actuality of attacks. A report prepared for the State Department of the U.S. found that during 2014 there were 13,463 unique global terrorist attacks, with a total fatality of 32,727. However, of those 32,727 fatalities, 19% (6,200) were the preparators of the attack.⁴ During the same year, the Center for Disease Control shows the number of suicides in the United States alone at more than 39,000 and homicides at 17,000.⁵ Only 36 of the fatalities of terrorism occurred within the United States. The amount of attention given to terrorism, both socially and politically, outweighs the raw number of victims, especially in comparison to other violent activities.

⁴ START, *Annex of Statistical Information: Country Reports on Terrorism 2014*, June 2015.

⁵ National Violent Death Reporting System, NVDRS.

In contrast, Simone Molin Friis identifies the special nature of terroristic violence not in the numbers but in the visual spectacle. The sheer visibility of the Islamic State in media and social media contributes to the sense of excessive violence. This video, clearly displaying the beheading of a single human, produced much higher visibility than other forms of violence that groups like IS regularly utilize as part of their approach, even including other beheadings. Friis writes of the James Foley video,

ISIS's beheading videos are said to show that ISIS is unique in its brutality and beyond anything we have ever seen. Yet this interpretation—unfortunately—seems to have less to do with the actual frequency of this form of violence and more with the way in which beheadings—and the violence in Syria more generally—have tended to disappear from view, or never appear at all, in the West. The *exceptionality* of ISIS is thus partly established through a process in which ISIS's beheadings are made exceedingly visible across media platforms, whereas other similarly gruesome acts of violence, including beheadings carried out by other warring factions, are reduced to more marginal visual sites.⁶

It does not appear that the visibility of death makes the videos special, so much as the means of achieving the death. The video impacts the viewer not merely as a depiction of the loss of life, but as a depiction of a particularly brutal act, and the horrific nature of the act popularizes and makes visible the video. If the violence were not striking in some way, the video would certainly be less pervasive. Talal Asad observes something similar regarding suicide bombing:

Western reports of Tamil suicide bombers in Sri Lanka and even of the many suicide bombers in occupied Iraq attacking fellow Iraqis do not display the same horror—or evoke it in a Western audience. All of this

⁶ Simone Molin Friis, "'Beyond anything we have ever seen': Beheading Videos and the Visibility of the Violence in the War against ISIS," *International Affairs* 91: 4(2015): 725-746.

may be true, but still doesn't tell us why *horror* is expressed, when it is genuinely expressed, and what it consists in.⁷

Asad then later describes horror as the consequence of violence that threatens something more than the individual, such as a way of life, a community, or a population.⁸ If horror comes about because of a threat to the way of life of some people, then what specific "way of life" is threatened?

Blaming media saturation and a demand for elicited content on television only provides for part of the explanation. The choices in content work both ways: the consumer demands images of certain types of violence for reasons beyond simply the media feeding them those images. The representations of violence shown, in either reporting or entertainment, speak to the general cultural attitudes of acceptable and unacceptable forms of violence. The way of life Asad refers to defines, cultivates, and demands certain parameters on violence either as acceptable to that way of life, or not.

Victims play an important part in this defining of the way of life, particularly the methods for making decisions between victims and non-victims. Using certain groups, such as a police force or military, allows for demarcating lines within the social order between combatants and non-combatants. Shannon French argues that the excessiveness of violence, beyond what a way of life would consider appropriate, results from targeting specifically noncombatant

⁷ Talal Asad, *On Suicide Bombing*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 67.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 68.

victims.⁹ Of course, that way of life provides the lines between appropriate and inappropriate targets, that others may or may not agree with.

Others argue terrorism does not require violence to be horrifying, as it need only have, “the ultimate end of getting the subject to act in the particular way the agent wants him to act.”¹⁰ Responses to fear make terrorism excessively violent, not the actual victim or method of violence. In this case the victim plays an important role, but only in so much as terrorism can target their potential choices and behavior. Terrorism exists in the consequence of augmenting decisions victims make about things like where to go for entertainment, about which politicians to vote for, and about sentiments regarding foreign policy.

The Strategy of Violence:

Part of the problem with terroristic violence is the lack of justification. Responses by victims often involve some plea for rationality for the atrocity, indicating that the lack of strategic goals somehow makes the violence particularly troubling. A *Washington Post* article from 2014 describes the general conditions of the Islamic State:

Death was everywhere in the sacked city of Mosul, a strategically vital oil hub and Iraq’s largest northern city. One reporter said an Iraqi woman in

⁹ Shannon E. French, “Murderers not Warriors: The Moral Distinction between Terrorists and Legitimate Fighters in Asymmetric Conflicts,” in *Terrorism and International Justice*, ed. J. Sterba (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 31-46.

¹⁰ Liam Harte, “Must Terrorism be Violent?” in *Torture, Terrorism, and the Use of Violence*, ed. Jeremy Wisniewski (Newcastle : Cambridge Scholars 2008), 111.

Mosul claimed to have seen a 'row of decapitated soldiers and policemen' on the street. Other reports spoke of 'mass beheadings,' though the Washington Post was not able to confirm the tales.

It later continues,

The stories, the videos, the acts of unfathomable brutality have become a defining aspect of ISIS, which controls a nation-size tract of land and has now pushed Iraq to the precipice of dissolution. Its adherents kill with such abandon that even the leader of al-Qaeda has disavowed them. 'Clearly, [leader Ayman] al-Zawahiri believes that ISIS is a liability to the al-Qaeda brand,' Aaron Zelin, who analyzes jihadist movements for the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, told The Washington Post's Liz Sly earlier this year.¹¹

Part of the profundity of violence relies on the senselessness of its use. Strategic violence directed at some very specific goal in a direct confrontational struggle makes sense and can be justified, for example, conflict for the sake of a politically magnanimous end transforms suffering into a tragic necessity. However, the violence utilized by the Islamic State appears to lack such clearly defined goals and merely revels in violence for the sake of violence.

Some argue that excessive violence *is* the strategy. Hassan Hassan, an analyst at the Delma Institute and expert on the Islamic State argues that the group regularly seeks out repulsive forms of violence for a variety of strategic reasons. Fatwas issued on the public immolation of the Jordanian pilot Muadh al-Kasasbeh justify the extreme violence as a potential deterrent to other enemies.

He explains,

the Jordanian's capture provided a huge opportunity for it to humiliate the international coalition and send a strong message to Muslim countries participating in it. ISIS recognised that the act would alienate some Muslims, but believes it will deter many more. What ISIS gains from violence, it calculates, trumps any losses in popularity. This strategy was

¹¹ Terrence McCoy, "ISIS, Beheadings and the Success of Horrifying Violence," *The Washington Post*, June 13, 2014.

similar to the one followed by the group's founding father, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, himself a Jordanian, when he set the precedent of filming the slaughtering of an American captive, Nick Berg, in 2004. The killing, which the CIA said was carried out by al-Zarqawi, won him the nickname "the Sheikh of the Slaughterers" by fellow jihadists.¹²

However, viewing violence as the strategy might ignore some of the other internal justifications for that violence by prioritizing the external response (deterrent). Chetan Bhatt from the London School of Economics emphasizes the theological motivations for acts of violence, aside from purely political forms. He contrasts an instrumental view, which attempts to rationalize the violence within political and ideological intentions, against an internal theological view.¹³

Attempts to give meaning to violence, particularly political, may say more about those defining the violence than those perpetrating acts of ferocity. Focusing on the instrumental function of violence highlights some of the hyper-instrumentalization endemic to the biopolitical state. Considerable advancement in capabilities for violence by biopolitical states, produce new uncontained possibilities for those technologies of violence to be used against those states. The increased production and use of drones, for example, has created a situation where those same technologies are regularly employed by a variety of groups. The more knowledge gained on how to destroy bodies the more awareness of human biological fragility.¹⁴ Tensions then increase over the conceptions of

¹² Hassan Hassan, "ISIS has Reached new Depths of Brutality. But there is a Brutal Logic Behind it." *The Guardian*, February 7th, 2015.

¹³ Chetan Bhatt, "The Virtues of Violence: The Salafi-Jihadi Political Universe." *Theory, Culture, & Society*, Vol. 31(I) (2014): 33.

¹⁴ James Dodd "Violence and Nonviolence," in *Philosophy and the Return of Violence* Ed. Nathan Eckstrand and Christopher Yates, (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2011), 140.

violence, and the appropriateness of violence, by and with governments purportedly concerned with the flourishing of life. However, violence exists at the heart of these biopolitical states.

The neoliberal order, which promotes biopolitical measures to diminish violence through political means, requires a foundational act of violence at the heart of the political order itself. States maintain a threat of violence against those who would oppose this new code and order. Resistance may arise against the legal order in time, both collective and individual, but the law must remain intact for the maintenance of that founded political order. Threats against that foundational violence require permanent possibilities of retribution, while states must simultaneously confront and negotiate with a variety of new conditions in the overall legal landscape. New demands of justice require that the law constantly consider these new conditions and find any new modes of organizing and promoting legal order. Justice sits outside the law, as the law never quite reaches the fullness of the possibilities of justice, as some new condition may always come about that upends the previous idea of justice.¹⁵

Like justice, violence comes from outside the law, first as the foundation of that legal order, and then as the demands for progress. Violence visits and haunts the legal order, serving as a tool to remedy parts of the law that demand remedy, without nullifying the entire process. But the threat to nullify and then enact a completely new legal order through violence remains a continual possibility. Additionally, some forms of violence can also exist in a purely

¹⁵ Jacques Derrida, "Force of Law," in *Acts of Religion*, (New York: Routledge, 2002), 250.

narcissistic form, outside the search for justice or a new political order, and instead as a means toward self-gratification. For example, a murder committed in an act of selfish revenge, or the violent robbery of some institution for financial gain.

Regardless of the violence for the sake of justice, or violence for merely narcissistic gain, the law eventually takes up and uses that violence, folding it into its institutions in response and maintenance of the social order. Violence has political usefulness: like the economically positive responses to terrorism, violence can serve productive aims within the biopolitical state. At the very foundation of social contract theory Hobbes insists on the productive aspects of violence to, “conform the wills of them all to peace at home and mutual aid against their enemies abroad.”¹⁶ The militia under the control of the sovereign functions as the most important institute of social order, further indicating the essential quality of sovereignty is the monopoly on violence.¹⁷ Rousseau similarly envisions violence as a productive potential recourse for those who would otherwise ignore the order of the law. Though unlike Hobbes, Rousseau does not centralize violence under one authority, but disperses it across the entire body population calling all to arms should need arise.¹⁸ Even Thomas Paine in his suspicion of governance admits that violence may be used to remedy

¹⁶ Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 76.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 112.

¹⁸ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract* (New York: Penguin Books, 1968), Book II Chapter Four.

individuals lacking moral virtue and to prevent a threat by those individuals to the order of the law.¹⁹

The founding of the order of the law on violence and the subsequent maintenance of that law through the continued threat of violence does not monolithically dictate appropriate and inappropriate uses of violence. For example, appropriate violence looks radically different through the anthropologies of Locke and Hobbes. In Hobbes' account, humans in a "natural" state were constantly at war with each other and, as a result, perpetually fragile and at risk. The sovereign, with the exclusive rights to enact violence, does so to ward off any uprising of the state of nature and all the violence that comes with it. Locke, on the other hand, imagines a blissful state of nature where humans existed in perpetual natural freedom. The violence of the state only serves to protect the good of that freedom from those who would seek to harm it. After the foundational threat, the order that comes forth retroactively makes sense of the state of nature, giving meaning to it, and the violence that ruptured it and substantiated the new legal order. The law and the peace it brings makes sense out of the violence of its own inception, articulating its own meaning of violence and justifying that foundational violence through an instrumental explanation for violence both primordial and continual.

This process of violence and its own justification is remarkably analogous to the theological concept of the miracle. By erupting through a decision by the sovereign God, countering the establishment of natural law, the miracle appears

¹⁹ Thomas Paine, *Common Sense: On the Origin and Design of Government*. (Ohio: Coventry House Publishing, 2016).

like an exterior violent act. But external eruption alone does not make it a miracle; in addition, the miracle must provide some larger lesson regarding the metaphysical world. It must make meaning of the power over death and sickness, the fragility of the human condition, or the unconditional love of God. Failure to provide some lesson or instill some idea of power results in it not being a miracle, but merely a disturbance. The law with its demands and prohibitions must also provide some explanatory and justifying power for its role in the life of the citizen. If it fails to produce meaning out of its establishment and break with a previous order, it fails to be the law.

Violence and the establishment of the law can only make sense in the biopolitical epoch as a measure for sustaining life. Violence can only be used for the protection of life, otherwise it is meaningless and falls outside, as something unacceptable in its lack of instrumental value. Only within this framework of demanding profound instrumental violence for the protection of life can wars against objects (drugs, poverty, terrorism) have meaning.

Terrorism is a problem of biopolitics and not for biopolitics, because terrorism uses the foundational model of violence central to the biopolitical state, but in the most perverse way. It terrifies the biopolitical state through enactments of violence in non-instrumental forms. Any strategies that do exist within terrorism are not grounded in seeking out a new code of law, and therefore cannot be recognized as appropriate violence. No meaning can be made of the violence by the biopolitical state because it uses the very foundational act of the peaceful state in a reciprocal form, resisting all attempts then to define terroristic violence with any instrumental value. But by doing this

terrorism exposes something in biopolitics. By denying terrorism meaning within an instrumental system it also admits its own violent foundation even as it insists on the preservation of life. Terrorism exposes the fundamental lie of biopolitics, that it cannot fulfill its intended goal as it relies on the disrupted core of death and violence as its center.

Religious Fervor:

Finally, some of the attempts to outline terror rely on explanations focusing on extreme and passionate religious conviction gone awry. The biopolitical state allows for religious devotion, but only within certain parameters that terror fundamentally and irrevocably falls outside of. This view relies on a firm distinction between not only a religious and secular divide, but within the religious, proper and improper forms of devotion.

The distinction between the religious and secular are difficult to maintain particularly when considered in conjunction with the ongoing war on terror. Bruce Lincoln demonstrates this in his side by side readings of Osama bin Laden and George Bush's responses to 9/11. Both responses rely on a set of theological claims, and justify violence through religious idea of friends and enemies. For both a divide between political adversaries relies on a divide between the metaphysical categories of good and evil, providing a transcendently established, but imminently fixed, line between victims and perpetrators.²⁰ This

²⁰ Bruce Lincoln, *Holy Terrors* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 20016), 20.

flavor of binary religious language finds its way into a variety of discussion on terrorism beyond Bush and bin Laden alone, particularly when terrorism often blatantly attaches itself to religious symbols. While not overt, this binary thinking itself undergirds Samuel Huntington's idea of our new age marked by the clash of civilizations. Politics and ideology are slowly eroding, replaced instead by civilizational divides. Religious ideas take up residence deep within the histories of these civilizations.²¹

Since the time that Huntington wrote this in the 1990's the general climate today envisions more deeply a version of radical Islam in opposition to global civilization. My point is not so much to argue in support or against Huntington's clash of civilization theory, instead I contend that modern forms of secular neoliberalism rely on a theological paradigm, and this paradigm appears particularly vulnerable to terrorism.

While secular systems may rely on religious ideas, it is equally the case that religious thinking often relies on images of political power and violence. In an article for *Christianity Today*, author Timothy George shows how Augustine's response to the attack on Rome by Alaric and his followers resonates with contemporary terrorism, going so far as to compare Alaric with Osama bin Laden.²² George warns against the equation of any political state with the sovereign Kingdom of God, as each complement each other but are not the same.

²¹ Samuel Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations?" in *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 72, no. 3, Summer (1993): 31.

²² Timothy George, "Theology for an Age of Terror" in *Christianity Today*, Vol. 50, No. 9, (2006): 78.

Immanent political institutions have a finite amount of authority established by the infinite authority of God. George also offers some distinctions between Christian and Islamic theology on the issue, even if the proposed focus of the article is terrorism at large, and not rooted to any specific religious organization. God provides a sense of ultimate security which terrorism attempts to undo, but cannot, because true security lies in an infinite and not finite source. The attempt to render the world infinitely open to security, the explicit goal of the biopolitical takes shape within early Christian theological demands on political meaning.

This theological impetus drives a wedge in the world between light and dark. Julie Ioffe, in *Foreign Policy*, argues that this “Manichean” wedge motivates and produces religious terrorism in a variety of groups.²³ If the world becomes subject to such divisions, violence appears an inevitable outcome of protecting the light from the intrusion of the dark.

Ioffe draws focus upon an important element within the work of religious violence. Violence may relate to religion different ways. First, violence can be rooted in an overt religious narrative. Religious teachings important to a group may focus upon the violent images within the larger mythological system, and as a result call for specific violent actions in response to these teachings. Alternatively, a person may merely belong to a religious organization and commit acts of violence completely detached from the teachings of that group.

²³ Julia Ioffe, “If Islam is a Religion of Violence, so is Christianity.” *Foreign Policy*, June 14, 2016.

In either case, violence does serve a function in the larger mythological systems of religion.

Both Rene Girard and Walter Burkert provide examples of a larger body of theory that seeks to explain the apparent pervasiveness of violence in religious narratives and mythology. Both focus upon the ways in which sacrifice appears in religious thought. For Burkert sacrifice resonates with deep primordial drives to connect life and death.²⁴ Affirmations of life appear out of the violent sacrifice, particularly as what was sacrificed nourishes and continues life.²⁵ By looking at things like the practices of communion and Greek ideas of sacrifice, Burkert shows the ways death sustains and supports life. Killing for the sake of sacrifice symbolically frames the biologically pragmatic act of killing. The killing of small animals as a way of warding off evil spirits mimics the biological act of offering a predator an alternative meal through another, smaller animal. The practice of sacrifice involves,

active killing. The victim-to-be saves himself by becoming a killer in turn. In a way, this doubles the protection to be achieved, both assuaging and threatening the putative aggressor, in a practice that is most strongly felt to be efficacious.²⁶

Taking power over the natural world through the enactment of death informs the logic of the supernatural world, still demanding death to preserve life:

²⁴ Walter Burkert "Greek Tragedy and Sacrificial Ritual." *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 7, no. 2 (1966): 121.

²⁵ Walter Burkert. *Homo Necans : The Anthropology of Ancient Greek Sacrificial Ritual and Myth*. Berkeley (California: University of California Press, 1983), 342.

²⁶ Walter Burkert, *Creation of the Sacred: Tracks of Biology in Early Religions* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), 54.

In the situation of the herd vis-à-vis the carnivore – the zebras attacked by lions – when one individual is killed, the others feel safe for a time. The instinctive program seems to command: take another one, not me. This ancient program is still at work in humans, still fleeing from devouring dangers and still making sacrifices to assuage and triumph over anxiety. In this perspective sacrifice is a construct of sense that has proved almost universally effective throughout the history of civilization.²⁷

Rene Girard offers a similar concept of religious violence through his often cited “scapegoat theory.” Scapegoating relies on a mimetic anthropology that Girard outlines in *Violence and the Sacred*, stating that violence only occurs in response to the presence of a rival. Contrary to initial analysis, the rival does not compete for a single object which then must be decided through violent confrontation. Instead, the rival desires an object and through that desire establishes that object as valuable. As Girard describes it:

The rival desires the same object as the subject, and to assert the primacy of the rival can lead to only one conclusion. Rivalry does not arise because of the fortuitous convergence of two desires on a single object; rather, the subject desires the object because the rival desires it. In desiring an object the rival alerts the subject to the desirability of the object. The rival, then, serves as a model for the subject, not only in regard to such secondary matters as style and opinions but also, and more essentially, in regard to desires.²⁸

Desiring any object and competition for an object all rely on a mimetic relationship between humans, where we repeat the actions, motivations, and passions of others.

Only by understanding the mimetic anthropology can one understand the functional elements of his scapegoat theory. The relationship of rivalry produces

²⁷ Ibid., 55.

²⁸ Rene Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), 154-155.

an ambiguous self-identity as both the same as the rival, and fundamentally different from the rival. Desiring what the rival desires makes the two alike. However, they both want the object and the finite nature of the object makes them different. Elsewhere, Girard connects the issue of ambiguous self-identity with the large scale social persecution of certain groups. At both the individual and the social levels the inability to control the different conflicts that arise over the object demands a set of solutions. Introducing the sacred figure into the sacrificial act offers a solution:

Sacrifice plays a very real role in these societies, and the problem of substitution concerns the entire community. The victim is not a substitute for some particularly endangered individual, nor is it offered up to some individual of particularly bloodthirsty temperament. Rather, it is a substitute for all the members of the community, offered up by the members themselves. The sacrifice serves to protect the entire community from its own violence; it prompts the entire community to choose victims outside itself. The elements of dissension scattered throughout the community are drawn to the person of the sacrificial victim and eliminated, at least temporarily, by its sacrifice.²⁹

Burkert shares with Girard some elements of the scapegoat theory, as it functions in much the same way as his idea of offering up a part of something to protect the larger whole. But for Girard the scapegoat establishes the identity of the victim as unclean or guilty justifying the violence visited upon them. Burkert points out the way in which that victim may be “despised and worshipped at the same time.”³⁰ In this moment of ambivalence it may happen that memory and memorial come to be an element of the violence in that “gratefully we honor their memory, and make sure to remain attached to the tales recalling those

²⁹ Rene Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, 8.

³⁰ Burkert, *Creation of the Sacred*, 52.

thrilling events. Ritual language prevails in this context: there are victims, there is sacrifice.”³¹

For both, violence serves an instrumental function within the scope of the religious system and larger mythological structures. Burkert insists that violence carries forward, very literally, the continuation of life; while for Girard, violence sustains the peacefulness and functionality of the social order. Legal structures, as has been shown, provide justification for violence. In addition, within the religious order violence has a similar functional role. While Burkert and Girard share their views of violence possessing instrumental value, they are both helpful in articulating the ways religious violence interfaces with biopolitics. Violence serves a purpose of continuing life in each, and violence utilized by terrorists calls into question this continuation of life. Terror brings death back inside a system that expunged it through the instrumentalization of religious violence. Biopolitics, unlike terror, always seeks to hide violence under the cover of efficacy.

Biopolitics, Violence and Religion

Whether politically or religiously justified, biopolitical states demand functional and instrumental violence. Terrorism, on the other hand, contradicts that instrumental demand and instead makes a spectacle out of violence. Death was at one time a spectacle, but that has since changed as death is increasingly private and hidden away by a political system that insists on the preservation of

³¹ Ibid., 51.

life. Justifiable violence becomes synonymous with sterility, efficiency, and silence; rarely drawing attention to itself. Reversing this, terrorism makes death startlingly visible. As Achille Mbembe describes,

In a context in which decapitation is viewed as less demeaning than hanging, innovations in the technologies of murder aim not only at 'civilizing' the way of killing. They also aim at disposing of larger number of victims in a relatively short span of time. At the same time, a new cultural sensibility emerges in which killing the enemy of the state is an extension of play. More intimate, lurid, and leisurely forms of cruelty appear.³²

Biopolitics entails a certain justification for violence and a certain style of violence. Paul Virilio details the forms of violence in the contemporary state. Battlefields no longer rely on local experiences and interpretations of the strategies for combat as increasing uses of technology and digital representation of an ongoing war provide more accurate readings of the success or failure of strategies. In this reality images are more important than lived realities.³³ Due to the ubiquitous presence of digitizing technologies, cameras, and media interpretations of images, representations of violence are easily reproduced. Because of this ease of reproduction, local knowledges, objects, and experiences are rapidly vanishing, replaced by non-unique reproduced digital images.

The process of disintegrating local realities and experiences not only occurs in wars and battles, but these images and the loss of locality takes place on a global scale. For Virilio, globalization reduces and erases the local for the sake

³² Achille Mbembe, "Necropolitics," in *Biopolitics a Reader* ed. Timothy Campbell and Adam Sitze. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013), 168.

³³ Paul Virilio, *War and Cinema*, (London: Verso, 1989), 1.

of a globalized image and scaled pervasive gaze.³⁴ Transitioning into a fully globalized reality forces the individual to witness reality through a mediation of images and digitized reality that overtake local realities. Considering life caught in the circulation of images helps in understanding the role of terroristic violence. Some images, as Virilio points out, generate and produce fear in the viewer.³⁵ In a world saturated by images to make something noteworthy it must produce a spectacle of novelty, otherwise it would be lost in the sea of circulated images. Violence must stand out in some way for it to produce the intended fear:

The apparatus that manufactured this phantom of threat is a complex network of institutional authority with each node looking to expand or consolidate its power. Each piece in the network does not necessarily need be in collusion with any other piece. Each needs only to see possibility, and act accordingly, knowing that fear is one the most exchangeable and profitable signs in political economy. (Even the slowest of bureaucracies act quickly in its presence). Since all parties involved have a stake in taking their fantasy for reality and turning the most improbable into the most probable, the manufacturing process is nearly frictionless, and the rewards are tremendous.³⁶

Fear coupled with the instability of globalization justifies retributive violence by the state for the protection of the species. However, beyond this justification through fear and protection, biopolitical violence affirms life of one sort, even as it deals death. If the biopolitical state can successfully reproduce fear, or meet terror with the terror of "shock and awe campaigns," then it may deter future violence and end a war before it even begins. At the same time, state violence

³⁴ Paul Virilio, *The Information Bomb* (London: Verso, 2000), 22.

³⁵ Virilio, *War and Cinema*, 87-88.

³⁶ Critical Art Ensemble "Bioparanoia and the Culture of Control" in *Tactical Biopolitics: Art, Activism, and Technoscience* ed. Beatriz da Costa and Kavita Philip, (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2008), 422.

demands secrecy and efficiency, never reveling in the spectacle of gore but instead in the cold calculations of wars fought through drones and computer simulations. Terroristic violence exposes the struggle and competition over the power of the image, and in doing so biopolitical states betray their own internal logic regarding violence.

To justify violence, it must be useful; if it fails to affirm life and protect the species, then violence appears as unjustifiable. Terrorism disrupts by using violence completely lacking in usefulness. This lack of usefulness makes the spectacle of violence special and unique relative to biopolitical violence. It is not more violent in the raw numbers of those killed or injured, but it stands out against forms of violence that emphasize cold calculations and war from a distance. Terrorism, quite unlike biopolitical violence, embodies a lack of efficiency, and because of this inefficiency appears as a spectacle. The Islamic State's use of beheading, for example, is not an efficient way of enacting death on an enemy. It requires time, energy, and exertion that a drone or bomb does not, and limits the numbers of casualties to the number of people one can behead. The process is slow, tedious, and brutal. Certainly, a drone strike would produce more victims, but it lacks the visceral reality and intimacy with the body. Swords exude overt inefficiency in the modern world, and they bring into stark focus the fragility and permeability of the body. Terroristic violence uselessly engages in inefficient forms of violence, and this useless inefficiency makes it terrifying.

Terrorists know they cannot hope to defeat the overwhelming might of states, and as a result they seek violence of a different sort. By increasing the

symbolic aspects of violence terrorists increase the repetition of the images of violence, and produce more fear in response to the horrific and pervasive image. Kiarina Kordela demonstrates effectively the way suicide bombings engage in this struggle over the image with the biopolitical state. For her suicide bombings become “part and parcel of biopower.”³⁷

She first articulates terrorism as rooted in the production of horror, but horror for Kordela is a non-discursive, or pre-discursive, reaction to some event, falling outside the sphere of human activities fixed in the production of discourse. She relies on classic definitions of the human as uniquely discursive and rational, and horror produces something outside the boundaries of rational engagement. Language cannot adequately encapsulate the raw and bare reality of sheer terror, and can only be met with a scream. Horror, to be truly horrific, must exclude thought.³⁸

Kordela cites the work of Jacqueline Rose, who argues suicide bombings are troubling precisely because they cannot be understood in rational political and social terms. While such tactics kill far fewer people than other forms of violence, they do produce remarkable intimacy between the perpetrator and the victim, thereby producing more terror. By dying and suffering alongside the victims, and without gaining any political, financial, or social reward, the suicide bomber brings into a tight unity the victims to him or herself. The fearful response to such attacks

³⁷ Kiarina Kordela, “Monsters of Biopower: Terror(ism) and Horror in the Era of Affect”, in *Philosophy Today*, Volume 60 Issue 1, Winter (2016): 200.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 194.

stems partly from the unbearable intimacy shared in their final moments by the suicide bomber and her or his victims. Suicide bombing is an act of passionate identification – you take the enemy with you in a deadly embrace.³⁹

Horror lacks any formal linguistic or discursive arrangement, and therefore cannot be adequately expressed in political terminology. The conditions by which someone recognizes something as horrific may have discursive and political origins, but the response remains beyond language.

Kordela accentuates the inexplicability of horror and the prohibition against offering explanations in Rose's theories on suicide bombings. Terrorism produces something that fundamentally cannot be explained, and the political elites in the west, try as they may, cannot theorize away the truth of raw terror and horror as a response to the attacks. Making an act of violence subject to explanation, usefulness, instrumentality and thereby justification demarcates a line between a life worthy of protection and a life which is unworthy, or in Foucault's biopolitical terminology, a divide of biological racism. Kordela writes of this division:

The incitement to horror is a *discursive mechanism* that aims at the *construction of a racial divide* between humans and non- or subhumans around the *criterion of the presence or absence of, precisely, horror*. And the 'monstrous' designates that which (perhaps an admixture of childhood, madness, and sanctity?) must be met with horror.⁴⁰

The contours of racism for Foucault ultimately provide the criteria for justification of violence. If the political system which focuses upon the protection

³⁹ Jacqueline Rose, "Deadly Embrace," in *London Review of Books* (November 4, 2004), <https://www.lrb.co.uk/v26/n21/jacqueline-rose/deadly-embrace>.

⁴⁰ Kordela, "Monsters of Biopower," 197.

and sustaining of life needs violence to sustain that life, then violence may be enacted. The victims of that protective biopolitical violence must be separate from that life that violence seeks to protect.⁴¹ This form of biological racism changes over time, from the Nazi program to the Cold War, but it remains, for Foucault, detached from ethnic forms of racism. It exceeds the petty racial divisions between ethnicities, and instead makes a deeper racial divide at the center of the species. The reality of who falls on which side of that divide depends on unpredictable historical movements, transitions, and ruptures.

Kordela offers a new articulation of this dividing line between the human and subhuman, a line not drawn on ideological grounds, but a “division that falls between what can be at all discursively apprehended, and what cannot (or must not) and is instead supposed to elicit a purely *affective* reaction: horror.”⁴² The monstrous image of the terrorist fulfills a need embedded in the biopolitical system. This system needs horror because it gives meaning to the construction of the racial line between the human and subhuman. Terrorism performs a necessary biopolitical function in its providing something beyond language and political rationality that supports the very dividing line at the center of worthy and unworthy life.

Turning to psychoanalysis and the concepts of repression and foreclosure, Kordela shows why biopolitics cannot discursively apprehend the violence of terrorism. Repression and foreclosure function similarly to signification, as

⁴¹ Michel Foucault, *Society must be Defended*, 261.

⁴² Kordela, “Monsters of Biopower,” 198.

repression occurs because of some signifier and returns as a coded signifier the analyst and individual must de-code to understand the source of the repression. Foreclosure, on the other hand, does not return as signification but as an act against life, acting as a defense mechanism so that the original repressed signification cannot be decoded.⁴³ In a similar way, biopolitics does not wish to uncover and decode the original signification of foundational violence of the law. Terrorism functions in the exact same form:

I see the key to answering this question in the fact that, once we view suicide bombing as part and parcel of biopower, we cannot overlook a striking paradox at its core: the fact that it strives for a better life through an act that disregards not only the life of the victim but also that of the perpetrator – in short, all life. In suicide bombing the biopolitical goal of improving life passes through a moment at which life is treated as superfluous. Suicide bombing is the point at which it is revealed that the universal principle of biopolitics (life as object and objective) may also be based on its own exception (the superfluity of life). At first sight, one might actually be tempted to ascribe a kind of ‘natural’ affinity between suicide bombing and the ‘monstrous’ precisely because, however biopolitical its goal may be its means treat life as superfluous.⁴⁴

Kordela takes her analysis one step further, connecting suicide bombing to the larger activities and logic of biopower. By looking carefully at the internal justifications for violence by terrorist groups, she points out that many do not commit such atrocities out of strict religious piety. Religion only factors in as a response to more pervasive problems with the conditions of life experienced by the terrorist. Terrorists justify their use of violence by envisioning death as a better option than the continuation of life here and now, under these political,

⁴³ Ibid., 201.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 202.

social, and economic conditions. She connects the motivations of suicide bombing with biopolitics, writing,

It follows that, by aiming at better conditions of life, the strategy of suicide bombing is itself biopolitical. The fact that life, and a better life, is the primary objective is a *biopolitical principle that today transcends not only the distinction between Islam and the West but also the distinction between religion and secularity, and it is shared globally*. The so-called monstrosity of suicide bombing is not an exception to, but part and parcel of biopower.⁴⁵

This claim may reach a bit too far, as many suicide bombers and terrorists likely engage in violence for reasons other than the unbearable qualities of life, but her ideas remain instrumental in showing the way terroristic violence serves a thoroughly biopolitical end, bringing back into focus the central claim that biopolitics cannot solve the problem of terrorism. However, her argument remains convincing and relevant without the claim to a universal pursuit of a better life in some metaphysical transcendental world beyond death. I find that the complete lack of any goal, even one beyond this world, provides more horror in the act. By providing some meaning for the motivations of terror, Kordela seems to work against her insistence on the non-discursive realities of horror. The real problem for horror and terrorism lies in the complete inefficient and meaninglessness of it. The moment meaning enters, even in the form of desperation in the face of this life, some element of horror is lost. Terrorism can only be horrific when it profoundly lacks meaning, lacks explanation, and lacks articulation.

Terrorism reveals, in its enactment of meaningless and inefficient violence, the paradox at the center of biopolitics. The racial division creates the political

⁴⁵ Ibid., 200. Italics original.

criteria and justification for that which becomes the exception in Agamben's work. Not as mere idea or philosophical component of politics, but as actual real bodies who violence can visit with racial justification. Racism defines certain bodies as exceptional and subject to violence for protective reasons. Even the death of innocent civilians can be justified if the racial component maintains a line of distinction to all members of a given population. This line must continue forth, as it does not merely justify violence, but supports the entire biopolitical program. The primary and primordial act of the exception, between the friend and the enemy, the foundational violence that establishes the law, and terrorism all connect through their mutual pre-discursive, pre-juridical, pre-political moment. The core of biopolitics (all politics) rests on a moment of exception, of a division between the natural and the civil, of bare life and political life. But this exception, and the violence of its inception at its inception, remains pre-discursive. It can only be given political and discursive meaning after its establishment and in retrospect. In this way, it shares a strong relationship and correlation with the natural affective element that Kordela relies upon. Violence under the sovereign, and later the biopolitical racial exception, can always be justified but only by ultimate recourse to a pre-discursive and pre-political foundational violence.

Terrorism brings to the surface affective pre-discursive and pre-political violence. It reminds the biopolitical order, with its meticulous safety plans, emergency broadcasts, FEMA, Department of Homeland Security, etc. that all justifications for violence and protection of life remain thoroughly dependent upon a pre-political violence that insists on the superfluity of life.

Terrorism is a problem of biopolitics in that, like Kordela insists, it is part and parcel of biopolitics. It relates in a fundamental way to biopolitical violence, not in its seeking a “better life” even through the eradication of life, but that it uses violence without meaning. Symbolic forms of violence like beheading and suicide bombing utilize the most inefficient means of enacting violence from the perspective of contemporary military engagement. If it utilized the modern forms of warfare for some presupposed political purpose it would, by its very nature, cease to be terrorism. It would be violence certainly, but a violence which could be accounted for. Instead, terrorism is a violence that can never be accounted for and is in a perpetual state of competition with the biopolitical state, each falling short of really capturing terrorism. Terrorism is terrifying, it is a certain type of violence, because it is a violence which biopolitics cannot, and does not want to, give an account. It does not want to account for it because at the very core of its own exceptional justification it cannot account for its own enactment violence in the exact same way.

Chapter Four: Conclusion: Terrorism as Heresy

Terrorism is a problem of biopolitics and not for biopolitics. The inability by biopolitical regimes to disavow the religious center contributes to the basic ineffectualness of the larger biopolitical neoliberal project in dealing with terrorism. I have previously shown the ways that biopolitics uses religious features in its own constructions of power, dominance, and political institutions. However, in doing so it disavows those religious inclinations in favor of a broader secularized focus upon life. As a result, the power of sovereignty does not lie in the ordainment of individual leadership by a divine being. Political figures derive their legitimacy from consent, as opposed to divine decree. Instead, the focus and object of biopolitics is the secularized condition of life, abstracted from religious and metaphysical explanation. In this abstracted life, biopolitics covers over its internal religious mechanisms, hiding them from view.

Terrorism brings back into focus otherwise hidden and concealed features of biopolitics. First, it makes obvious the economic progress that happens as a response to terrorism. Neoliberal states wage wars against terror, yet rely on terror as a part of the economic progress of globalization. The massive investments into security infrastructure, biometrics, and border protections indicate the underlying economic growth made possible by the very thing

neoliberal biopolitical states unite resistance against, under the name of a race war. If biopolitics could solve the problem of terrorism in some final way, economics would undergo radical shifts in remedying those lost investments into processes of securitization.

More importantly, biopolitics cannot solve terrorism because terrorism betrays the inner metaphysical and religious tendencies endemic to biopolitics. First, it makes visible the violence foundations of the state, a state that declares as its central motivation, peace. It reminds the biopolitical regime of its own reliance upon violence, and exposes the justifications for violence as grounded in efficiency, precision, and instrumentality. Even more so, terrorism provides a robust and amorphous enemy by which the racial war, crucial to the biopolitical impetus to protect the species is required. Without terrorism, the edifice of the biopolitical demand to wage species protective war would crumble, leaving nothing but the raw exposed center foundational violence, rooted in the logic of sacrifice.

Defining, investigating, and critically analyzing terrorism within the larger context of biopolitics demands attention to the religious elements of the ongoing struggle and clash of universalisms. As I argued in the last chapter, religion and violence overlap in their mutual demands of instrumentality, something terrorism flagrantly violates. However, this violation of the instrumental demand of biopolitics does not leave terroristic motivations completely devoid of religious material. Internally, terrorist organizations may use religious ideas to justify, motivate, or demand violence. Looking at two

movements, the Islamic State and the Christian Identity movement demonstrates this reality.

Graeme Wood, in his lengthy article for *The Atlantic*, outlines a convincing argument that the actions of the Islamic State cannot be understood detached from their radical Islamic interpretation. Many within terrorist studies disregard the genuine theological underpinnings of the actions by the Islamic State, often accusing them of being an artificial or perverted religious form. Wood, on the other hand, insists on a deep and nuanced theological engagement, even if that engagement produces horrific consequences. The failure to appreciate and isolate the theological impetus embedded in the Islamic State comes from two tendencies in the West. First, the West often imagines “Jihad” as a monolithic endeavor, applying the same logic that al Qaeda employs to this new group that moves beyond those messages and ideas.¹ Additionally, the West overlooks the striking medieval religious nature of the Islamic State.

One of the primary distinguishing characteristics missed by the west’s description of the IS is the failure to appreciate the centrality of the Caliphate. By relying on the motivations of al Qaeda in their focus upon the distant enemy, Western descriptions of the IS fail to seriously consider their goal of establishing an internal, functioning, and robust Islamic kingdom. This Caliphate has two elements. First, it is undoubtedly a political exercise in its forming laws, regulations, prohibitions, and basic organizational institutions. Second, it is

¹ Graeme Wood, “What ISIS Really Wants,” in *The Atlantic*, March 2015. <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2015/03/what-isis-really-wants/384980/> 3.

religious in nature in the demands of worship and spiritual accountability of its actual and potential citizenry.

Wood provides three primary points of religious and spiritual accountability rooted in the establishment of the Caliphate. First, the kingdom demands devotion from would-be citizens. One must be a Muslim as an initial requirement to participate in this new kingdom. As a result, the U.S., along with other Western countries, do not present the greatest threat to the purity of the kingdom. Rather, al Baghdadi and other members of the Caliphate consider Muslims who fail to fully adhere to the harsh theological requirements of the Islamic State the greatest enemy. Leadership engages in the regular admonishment of certain Muslims and Islamic sects, declaring those outside the boundaries of the IS as heretics. Codes of purity and orthodox belief within the Islamic State demand much from adherents, as Wood describes the heightened regulatory practices:

Denying the holiness of the Koran or the prophecies of Muhammad is straightforward apostasy. But Zarqawi and the state he spawned take the position that many other acts can remove a Muslim from Islam. These include, in certain cases, selling alcohol or drugs, wearing Western clothes or shaving one's beard, voting in an election – even for a Muslim candidate – and being lax about calling other people apostates. Being a Shiite, as most Iraqi Arabs are, meets the standard as well, because the Islamic State regards Shiism as innovation, and to innovate on the Koran is to deny its initial perfection. (The Islamic State claims that common Shiite practices, such as worship at the graves of imams and public self-flagellation, have no basis in the Koran or in the example of the Prophet.) That means roughly 200 million Shia are marked for death. So too are the heads of state of every Muslim country, who have elevated man-made law above Sharia by running for office or enforcing laws not made by God.²

² Ibid., 9.

Second, the rigid theological demands of leadership over the Caliphate appear impossibly stringent, yet al Bagdhadi still claims legitimate leadership over this kingdom. His role as leader does not derive from charisma or political power alone, but a robust theological claim predicated on precise understanding of Sunni law. These requirements are that the leader must be an adult male seen by the community as a moral guide, having integrity, and possessing religious authority. The kingdom must possess some territory to establish its rule, and the ruler must be from the genealogical line of the Prophet Muhammad. Third, the Islamic State presents a profoundly complicated and idiosyncratic apocalyptic vision, in which they play a primary role. In Woods words:

The Islamic State differs from nearly every other current jihadist movement in believing that it is written into God's script as a central character. It is in this casting that the Islamic State is most boldly distinctive from its predecessors, and clearest in the religious nature of its mission.³

Demands of devotion and adherence by the Islamic State differ from other terrorist and Islamist political organizations in their expressed lack of attention to bringing about yet another political situation, instead they focus on the bringing about of the actual end of the world. It is this apocalyptic narrative that makes IS so different from other jihadist organizations.

This apocalyptic and earth shattering goal, while certainly dramatic, provides helpful insights into the activities and strategies of the IS. Discerning apocalyptic tendencies in the organization produces tangible strategies for Western states in the ongoing struggle against the Islamic State's hold on the region. Fighting this organization demands a different set of tactics than those

³ Ibid., 23.

previously used with other terrorist groups, even groups that share some theological notions. As Wood explains:

Al-Qaeda is ineradicable because it can survive, cockroach-like, by going underground. The Islamic State cannot. If it loses its grip on its territory in Syria and Iraq, it will cease to be a caliphate. Caliphates cannot exist as underground movements, because territorial authority is a requirement: take away its command of territory, and all those oaths of allegiance are no longer binding. Former pledges could of course continue to attack the West and behead their enemies, as freelancers. But the propaganda value of the caliphate would disappear, and with it the supposed religious duty to jihad.⁴

Like the Islamic State, many recognize the Christian Identity movement less for the theological nuances and more for their overt acts of violence. The bombing of the Oklahoma City Federal building, the terrifying routine of mail bombs by Ted Kaczynski, the shooting in 1998 at the Nation's capital, the beating of a gay Wyoming college student, and the dragging and subsequent death of a black man in Texas provide only a handful of examples of infamous acts of violence perpetrated in the name of Christian Identity. However, while the actions have relative notoriety in the larger culture and media, the theological and religious claims that make the movement unique are often ignored. Yet, these acts of violence cannot be detached from the deeper theological ideas that motivate them.

This movement began in the 1940's with theological ideas that distinguish it from other forms of Christianity and Christian extremism. First, it supports and justifies much of its violence through an ongoing race war between white males and the rest of humanity. It establishes this idea of white superiority through a peculiar interpretation of Hebrew scriptures, arguing that the lost

⁴ Ibid.

tribes of Israel are in fact British, and that white English people are the true heirs of God's kingdom.⁵ Internal doctrinal statements attest to the importance and centrality of their self-perceived racial superiority evidenced through theological materials:

We believe the White, Anglo-Saxon, Germanic and kindred people to be God's true, literal Children of Israel. Only this race fulfills every detail of Biblical Prophecy and World History concerning Israel and continues in these latter days to be heirs and possessors of the Covenants, Prophecies, Promises and Blessings of YHVH God made to Israel. This chosen seedline making up the "Christian Nations" (Gen. 35:11; Isa. 62:2; Acts 11:26) of the earth stands far superior to all other peoples in their call as God's servant race (Isa. 41:8, 44:21; Luke 1:54).⁶

For the Christian Identity movement, multiple creation myths explain this vital racial differentiation. Humanity was not started as a single human, instead they utilize different accounts for the diversity of races in the world today. For example, they argue that blacks are not the children of Adam, but were created as a lesser race before the creation of Adam, and do not share in the image of God. Additionally, Jews are not part of the lineage of God's created order but the hybrid offspring of Eve and Satan, often depicting Cain as the descendent of the devil, and the Jewish people as his lineage.⁷ Hybridity of races, from their perspective, causes contamination, infections, viruses, and health calamities.⁸

⁵ For a larger explanation of the hermeneutical approach see Danny W Davis, *The Phinehas Priesthood: Violent Vanguard of the Christian Identity Movement*, ABC-CLIO, 2010.

⁶ "Kingdom Identity Ministries Doctrinal Statement of Beliefs," 1999

⁷ J. R. White "The road to Armageddon: Religion and Domestic Terrorism," *Quarterly Journal of Ideology*, vol. 13, 1: 11-21.

⁸ Stephanie Shanks-Meille, and Betty Dobratz "Sick Feminists or Helpless Victims: Images of women in Ku Klux Klan and American Nazi party literature," *Humanity and Society*, vol. 15, 1 (1991): 72-93.

This basic distinguishing factor between races supports the larger narrative of an ongoing struggle between the forces of true white patriots and a federal government corrupted by Jewish influences and conspiratorial power. *The Turner Diaries*, a fictional account written in 1978 by Andrew MacDonald (a pseudonym of William Pierce) details the struggles between a small band of vigilante Christian warriors against the Goliath of the American Federal government. After the passing of the Cohen Act, which outlawed the ownership of guns and other weapons, this small group revolted against the government, often resorting to the use of homemade bombs at the sites of Federal government buildings. While a fictional story, the book serves as a kind of manifesto for many within the movement who perpetrate violence, often eerily like acts depicted in the novel.

In general, the Christian Identity movement harbors severe suspicions of the government and retaliates against perceived conspiratorial plots that undermine white power. In their own words:

With the growth of mass democracy (the abolition of poll taxes and other qualifications for voters, the enfranchisement of women and of non-whites), the rise in the influence of the mass media on public opinion, and the insinuation of the Jews into a position of control over the media, the U.S. Government was gradually transformed into the malignant monster it is today: the single most dangerous and destructive enemy our race has ever known.⁹

Ongoing struggles against a corrupt and conspiratorial government justify the use of violence, particularly against federal buildings and abortion clinics. These violent activities are part of a larger narrative that envisions a coming

⁹ "National Alliance Goal Statement," 1996.

apocalyptic battle between the forces of white males and the lesser races, that will culminate in the overthrow of all secular governments and the establishment of a global Aryan Christian theocracy.¹⁰

Both the Islamic State and the Christian Identity movement share in a few key features. First, they share in the apocalyptic insistence of bringing the regular and mundane world to a cataclysmic end. Second, they both distrust the powers at work in the world today. Third, they justify violence through the corrupted political power in the world today. They share a general distrust of globalization and the economic elites who benefit from rapid economic expansion. Finally, and most notably, they share in a unique combination of theology and politics. Both movements insist religious law inherently contains more authority than secular laws. Each movement demands an apocalyptic overthrow of the secular state and the establishment of a theocracy, and attaining such goals stresses the use of violence.

Rendering the struggle between a religiously apocalyptic mythology and a rational secular legal order relies on an internal idea of the secular state as devoid of such spiritual, metaphysical, and theological tendencies. However, I have previously shown that biopolitics relies on theological and religious ideas at its very foundation (sovereignty and the Shepherd model of power), and as such this struggle between the two cannot be imagined as a struggle between theological fervency and apocalyptic visions against a cold, life-centered, detached rationality. Both are theologically invested in some universalized

¹⁰ T. J. Young "Violent Hate Groups in Rural America," *International Journal of Offender and Comparative Criminology*, vol. 34, 1 (1990): 15-21.

vision of the world, though terrorism's vision imagines a lack of production and progress, and a fiery end to the normal functional processes of the law.

The biopolitical order does possess a series of theological claims, as paradoxical as that may appear. Simon Critchley aptly describes contemporary political ideas of biopolitical theological sovereignty,

here we approach the paradox of sovereignty: it is only through the strangeness of the foreigner that the laws are seen to have authority and to be binding on an autochthonous people. On the one hand, the law is and has to be the free expression of the general will, the perfect interiority of a people to itself, but on the other hand, there has to be a lawgiver, someone who stands outside society by virtue of which the law has authority beyond the self-authorizing acts of the general will. The only legitimate law is one that we give ourselves, yet the law has to be given to us.¹¹

Neoliberal biopolitics demands an imminent law, established without reference to a divine authority, completely imminent. At the same time, it requires something that transcends the legal order, ensuring the law remains intact and enforceable. Legal prescriptions only have authority in so far as one can witness its enforceability. As pointed out earlier in the reading of Agamben, the sovereign figure that ensures the enforceability of the law stands both inside and outside. Sovereignty simultaneously enforces the law and yet stands outside of it through the availability to suspending the law. It has in it a theological conception, a divine sovereign figure that stands above and transcends the imminent law while maintaining the claim that the law only comes about from the collective agreement and manifestation of a symbolic contract between rational individuals.

¹¹ Simon Critchley, *The Faith of the Faithless: Experiments in Political Theology*, (New York: Verso, 2012), 62.

The paradox that Critchley observes is analogous to Walter Benjamin's "Mythic Violence." For Benjamin there are two distinct modes of violence within this title of mythic violence. First, it announces the arrival and foundation of the legal order itself, or the state. An example of this arrival of a new order might be the French Revolution, a violent affair certainly, but one with the expressed idea of establishing some new politically normative condition. Additionally, mythic violence preserves the legal order. Modern politics for Benjamin, is a

dialectical rising and falling in the lawmaking and law-preserving formation of violence. The law governing their oscillation rests on the circumstances that all law-preserving violence, in its duration, indirectly weakens the lawmaking violence it represents, by suppressing hostile counterviolence.¹²

However, divine violence disrupts and opposes this mythic violence from an exterior position. It competes with and undermines the regulatory power of mythic violence, in a way not unlike terrorism.

I brought up similar ideas in a previous chapter, but here I want to combine these ideas with the concept of heresy as a means of explaining and analyzing terrorism. A clash of competing orthodoxies exists between the biopolitical state, and the Islamic State or Christian Identity. By explaining the theological foundations of both examples of terroristic violence one can uncover the orthodoxy that founds both groups. There is a kind of mythic violence employed by terrorist organizations that founds their movements and regulates their activities, ideas, and theological concepts. Both the Islamic State and the Christian Identity movement have a regulatory concept of orthodoxy at work in

¹² Walter Benjamin, *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings*, (New York: Harcourt, 1978), 251.

their activities, institutions, and messages. Orthodoxy unifies disparate members. David Christie-Murray's work on Christian heresy opens with this point of unity, as he argues the Roman empire adopted the Christian faith out of a political desire for unity.¹³ Heresy, etymologically related to the Greek word for choice, indicates an intentional movement away from this unity, and a challenge to the regulatory power of orthodoxy. Similarly, the sovereign regulates and maintains a legal order which can be upended by the presence of terror, so the unity or orthodoxy finds itself questioned by heretical choices of intentional resistance.

In the groundbreaking work *Border Lines*, Daniel Boyarin proactively describes the rise of heresiology as the impetus and machine by which Christianity and Judaism came to define themselves as overtly distinct and different religious systems during the second century. In this mutual declaration of heretical ideas of the other, they end up co-constituting each other through self-reflexive antagonistic definitions. Through heresiology or "the science of heresies,"¹⁴ Christianity and Judaism establish and maintain an internally coherent identity predicated on definitions substantiated over and against the perceived internal theological failures of the other. As a result, the very notion of heresy constitutes the church, "Christianity, it would seem, or rather, the Church, needed 'Judaism' to be a religious other, and some maintained and reified this

¹³ David Christie-Murray, *A History of Heresy*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), 1.

¹⁴ Daniel Boyarin, *Borderlines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity*, (Philadelphia: The University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 2.

term as the name of a religion.”¹⁵ Declaring the other as heretical serves the power of differentiation to be productive rather than merely repressive. In a similar form, biopolitics needs the religious other of terrorist organizations to substantiate and define itself.

Continual problematic assertions of political and religious ideas by certain groups are not met with repression; those groups provide an internal stabilized identity for biopolitical neoliberal regimes to define themselves against, as intrinsically different from. In the declaration of something terroristic, a constructive self-identity, unbound to the claims of apocalyptic terrorism, arises. The naming of something as terrorism consequently declares an internal theological orthodoxy.

Biopolitical Orthodoxy:

Schmitt famously states that all secular concepts in politics are based on theological concepts, and in this claim the workings of internal orthodoxy already appear. While the contemporary world of biopolitics imagines itself detached from universal and transcendental concepts so common in theological claims, neoliberal forms of governance unwittingly rely on those very theological ideas, namely the transcendental idea of the sovereign and the shepherding model of leadership. The question then is how this process happens whereby theological concepts are expressed in secular political discourse.

¹⁵ Ibid., 10.

One version of this hidden theological material emphasizes the secularization process where language describes and articulates politics through secular categories, while the ideas themselves have religious content. In conjunction with this, Schmitt argues that liberalism, at its core, negates, rather than produces, politics. The primary political idea for Schmitt is the friend and enemy divide, yet liberalism negates this distinction in a few ways. Most noticeably, it imagines a universal humanity extracted from political divisions and subdivisions. Universal humanity undermines the possibility of an enemy by which political formations become available. However, liberalism ultimately fails at this ideological goal. Expanding the friend, and diminishing the enemy, through the universalization of humanity may, on the surface, appear to support peace, but the peace sought by this liberal agenda ends up producing more violence, suffering, and warfare. Rather than a distinct, direct, and objective enemy that the political establishes itself over against, everyone becomes a potential enemy. When these potential enemies do actualize, the liberal state attempts peaceful engagement in hopes of managing and solving the conflict. For example, economic sanctions are a central tool in the arsenal of modern neoliberal conflict. While having the appearance of a peaceful deterrent, they are in fact designed to have direct material consequences on the livelihoods of citizens. The threat of actual starvation and death are not logically detached from the power and force of economic sanctions. Schmitt concludes his book *The Concept of the Political* with a prophetic warning:

For the application of such means, a new and essentially pacifist vocabulary has been created. War is condemned but executions, sanctions, punitive expeditions, pacifications, protection of treaties, international police, and measure to assure peace remain. The adversary

is thus no longer called an enemy but a disturber of peace and is thereby designated to be an outlaw of humanity. A war waged to protect or expand economic power must, with the aid of propaganda, turn into a crusade and into the law war of humanity. This is implicit in the polarity of ethics and economics, a polarity astonishingly systematic and consistent. But this allegedly nonpolitical and apparently even antipolitical system serves existing or newly emerging friend-and-enemy groupings and cannot escape the logic of the political.¹⁶

The first co-constitutive orthodox claim by the biopolitical state envisions a universal human species, allowing for the racial war developed in a previous chapter, but it can also only be claimed over and against a system that names and identifies objective enemies. The orthodox claim of biopolitics denies all presence of an objective enemy, instead only declaring war against abstract ideas such as the war on drugs, the war on communism, and finally in its most recent iteration, the war on terror. Neoliberal biopolitical states do not fight wars against other objective states and peoples, but instead against ephemeral ideas detached from populations.

Heresy, then, appears in the formation and naming of an objective enemy. For both the Islamic State and the Christian Identity movement a real, tangible, objective enemy exists: Muslims who do not follow al Badghdadi's narrow prescriptive interpretations of the law, and anyone not white, respectively. The identity of the enemy matters little for the orthodox position of the biopolitical state, it could be any group; instead, the naming of a particular, objective enemy makes the essential heretical claim.

Previously I have argued that whether from the perspective of the economic factor, the excessive violence, or the religious fervency, terrorism fails

¹⁶ Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2007), 79.

to meet the biopolitical demand of instrumentalization. It resists, and simultaneously exposes by its very absence of meaning, the failure of its instrumentality. Upending the orthodoxy of usefulness demanded by the biopolitical state, terrorism presses a heretical position. Emphatically condemning terrorism as an economic negative betrays an internal messianic orthodoxy of biopolitics. As one author describes,

This contemporary clash of titans is the most recent remake of a very old, *fundamentally religious* scheme. Judaism and Christianity have, from their very inception, entertained the hope that this world could be uprooted and regenerated through and through by God's Messiah, by a message of liberation; and after Hegel's strained efforts to transform Christianity into a secular philosophy of the World Spirit, Marxism offered the secularized version of messianism and claimed that single-minded social struggle, propelled at all times by a 'chosen class,' would eventually make manifest the 'other world' in the form of classless, scarcity-less society.¹⁷

The economic markets of global trade, whether from a neo-Marxist perspective or a classical economic perspective share in the inherent messianic potentials of secularized political ideas. By engaging in acts completely devoid of messianic hopefulness and optimism, and instead apocalyptic ends, terrorism commits the heresy of uselessness. Demands for instrumental value only respond to acts with no instrumental value. In a larger discussion of Islamic heresy, the author John Henderson observes that many Muslim scholars are only polemical in their writings when some heresy comes about that demands response.¹⁸ Orthodox

¹⁷ Christian Anrsperger, "A Federation of Way of Life: Towards a Globalized 'Social Heresy,'" *Revue Internationale de Philosophie* Vol 61. No. 239, 2007, 84. Italics in original.

¹⁸ John Henderson, *The Construction of Orthodoxy and Heresy: Neo-Confucian, Islamic, Jewish, and early Christian patterns*. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), 11.

ideas of Allah or the nature of the Prophet only enter into the discussion as a response to some heretical counterpoint. Similarly, the naturalness of the messianic and optimistic instrumental insistence by biopolitical states does not require description and elucidation until something contrary and devoid of such usefulness arises.

New political formations can arise, even movements that respond to or are critical of biopolitical formations. Religiously speaking, we may refer to these new communities as schisms, rather than heresy. Within the larger field of heresiology the distinction between schism and heresy appears, as authors like Tertullian and Cyprian employ both, though the distinctions may be difficult to parse.¹⁹ However, while new radical political and religious groups can form under the political dominance of biopolitics, they must share the internal orthodoxic idea of instrumental value. Without some optimistic and rational goal of making the world better, rather than hurling the world into apocalyptic chaos, they will be dealt with by the state differently from terrorist organizations. Even in utilizing violence, the discourse and descriptions of those violent acts will lack the important political descriptor of terrorism.

Finally, heresy produces disharmony, and disharmony threatens the basic and fundamental demand of an easily managed population. Describing the conflicts between Catholics and Protestants in Paris during the 16th century, Dalia Leonardo, describes disunity in strikingly biopolitical language. She states:

The League's concern for the health of the religious and social body, and its adherence to an organic notion of society remained a mainstay of Catholic rhetoric through the Wars of Religion. Since Catholics' view of

¹⁹ Geoffrey Dunn, "Heresy and Schism according to Cyprian of Carthage," *The Journal of Theological Studies* Vol. 55, 2 (2004): 573.

community revolved around the metaphor of the body and the interaction of its various members, the advantages of participating in the Catholic liturgy provided numerous individual and communal benefits. However, by denouncing and mocking the fundamentals of Catholic orthodoxy, especially Christ's real presence and the sacrifice of the Mass, Calvinists had severed all ties to the Catholic community and were no longer members of the body of Christ. It was only natural that conviction in a corporeal metaphor would lead Catholics to view Huguenots as a disease corrupting religious and social bonds. To borrow a concept from an anthropologist, Mary Douglas, League rhetoric depicted the differences between Catholics and Huguenots as a contrast between 'holiness and abomination,' order and chaos, good and evil.²⁰

On the one hand, heresy frightens the orthodox with its apparent and overt disunity. Through distancing by explicit choice from the larger orthodox body, the heretic risks polluting and contaminating that body and throwing all into a perilous situation. Terrorist groups in their heterodox naming of specific and objective enemies, and the uselessness of their violence, risk contaminating the biopolitical project in substantial and frightening ways. The war on behalf of the species always takes the protection of the species from some contaminant as its motivation and justification for violence. The heretical element of terrorism contrasts with the pure, internal, easily managed orthodox population. On the other hand, internal orthodox opinion fears for the heretic's life, and potentially afterlife.²¹ Dismissing the orthodox opinion threatens the community certainly, but it equally exposes the heretic to divine judgement. Liberal care for the terrorist, and their economic conditions often revolve around this idea of heretical redemption. Solving for terrorism through increased economic viability

²⁰ Dalia M. Leonardo, "Cut off this Rotten Member: The Rhetoric of Heresy, Sin, and Disease in the Ideology of the French Catholic League," *The Catholic Historical Review*, vol. 88, 2, 253-254.

²¹ John Henderson, *The Construction of Orthodoxy and Heresy*, 8.

and even more globalization often use the logic of decreasing terrorism, while not taking seriously the internal religious and theological claims of terrorist organizations completely separate from an economic context.

Finally, the most obvious form of heresy in terrorism is the use of death. Biopolitics at its core, maintains a central orthodox concern over life, and its flourishing. Terrorism centers on the concept of death. It is not uncommon to hear the refrain attributed to Osama bin Laden and other terrorists, “We love death as you love life.” Olivier Roy adds,

Now, the terrorist’s death is no longer just a possibility or an unfortunate consequence of his actions; it is a central part of his plan. The same fascination with death is found among the jihadis who join Islamic State. Suicide attacks are perceived as the ultimate goal of their engagement.²²

At the center of terrorist violence resides the specter of death, the most anathema of concepts for the orthodoxy of biopolitics. Neoliberal biopolitical states go to great lengths to protect life, and demand the sacredness of life, while terrorist organizations flaunt and center death as a direct oppositional theo-political claim. Without death, terroristic violence would not level such a heretical claim over and against the biopolitical unity of an orthodoxy that insists on protecting life at all costs.

Showing the ways in which the biopolitical state constructs an orthodoxy in response to, and alongside, the heretical ideas of terrorism might provide an interesting intellectual exercise, but it does not yet provide distinct advantages over and against other ways of articulating terror. Arguing that terrorism might be better understood through the lens of heresy requires some description of the

²² Olivier Roy, “Who Are the New Jihadis?” April 13, 2017, *The Guardian*.
<https://www.theguardian.com/news/2017/apr/13/who-are-the-new-jihadis>

distinct advantages offered by this approach. This lens appreciates the ways in which the contemporary divide in the ongoing race war espoused by Foucault rely on deeply embedded heretical logic.

First, articulating terrorism as a type of heresy uncovers the ways in which terroristic groups respond to globalization. More specifically, many terrorist organizations attempt to return to a pristine and imagined past prior to the ills and consequence of globalization. Taking as an example the heresy of Pelagius, one encounters an argument for the sake of the pristine human. He adheres to an absence in the inherent sin nature, instead conceiving of sin through habitual action, and from this habitual activity one comes under the judgement of their sins. While condemned at the Council of Carthage in 318, other forms of this heresy continued after his death. At its core, Pelagius envisions an ideal human apart and detached from sin. He tries to remedy the more pessimistic view held by Augustine, whereby the human regardless of action is always tainted by the reality of sin. Making this analogy certainly does not advocate that terrorist organizations are good and without incredibly moral flaws, but it does make the point that many terrorist organizations imagine a world prior to the pollution and disenfranchisement of globalization. Like Pelagius, they imagine a condition prior to the entrance of some faulty idea, in this case globalization and economic disenfranchisement.

Heresy rarely springs up on its own accord, but often responds to some fault established by the predominant dogma at the time. Pelagius responds to the pessimistic insistence on the corruption of humanity, challenging the commonly held idea of an ontologically sinful human. He hopes for a return to a

situation of truth, covered over by a mistake in the orthodoxy of the moment. In a similar way, terrorism often foments at the opportunity of returning the world to some idealistic pre-globalization. Of course, the imagined world prior to globalization might not look the way the terrorist imagines, but that response to the faults of globalization should remain an important part of any investigation into terrorism. Likewise, a hope of an imagined pre-global age does not insist on some romanticized and heroic excuse of the violence they employ. On the contrary, condemning the violence can only really happen when actual descriptions of motivations for that violence are provided. Further, it shows the ultimate failure of the terrorist organizations, as I have shown the ways terrorist groups rely on globalization and hypocritically chastise the very things that make them successful (social media, technology, global trade, etc.).

Second, terrorism as a heresy does not stray far from Carl Schmitt's original political project, and it is surprising that this concept has not already been developed further by Schmitt himself or contemporary political theological interpreters of Schmitt. If all secular political concepts are rooted in theological concepts, as Schmitt insists, then it appears odd that Schmitt never substantiates his fundamental claim of the friend-enemy divide upon some theological claim. Heresy exists in the most primordial theological moment, providing an intelligible divide between metaphysical goodness and evil, prior to political divisions. Heresy provides the option of rendering someone outside the grace of the divine figure, with full support of that divine figure.

The social and political divides utilized for the sake of a race war rely on the very early manifestations of a divide between correct and incorrect

metaphysical articulations. Heresy may even exist at the inception of language, as the moment one can name a thing in representational form, the ability for error and misnaming occurs. Making an incorrect cognitive choice about the nature of reality, in its most fundamental form, provides for deep material by which humans can make distinctions between various groups. The failure by a group or individual to articulate appropriate truth about the nature of reality provides justification for a variety of social divisions. The friend/enemy divide, at the heart of politics, relies on a heretical distinction. Terrorism, as the newest manifestation of this divide, necessarily reestablishes the primal heretical distinction at the root of human epistemological work.

Finally, framing terror as heresy focuses on the ways in which groups like the Islamic State and the Christian Identity movement view the world in some way that has been lost to the globalized biopolitical order. Terrorists, while their actions and violence betray a substantial lack of meaning, do have some vision of the world the biopolitical neoliberal order has lost. Again, this does not romantically excuse the violence such groups employ, but even the most repugnant actors in the world can still provide some insight into how people view reality.

In the case of contemporary terror, a truth emerges over the precarity and vulnerability of life, and the ultimate failure of a system that purports to protect that life in some definitive sense. Biopolitical states eradicate life in a myriad of ways, regularly resorting to violence, and often ignoring the suffering of its own citizens, in systemic ways. The pollution of the earth, the pillaging of the environment, the proliferation of weapons capable of destroying the world, the

bio-piracy of crops, the commodification of bodies for sexual ends, and the unhealthy fascination with guns are all endemic of a culture that hates life. Yet, the entire political matrix sets as its goal the maintenance and protection of life. Something appears afoul with these expressions of political goals and the actualized social and cultural undertakings. The fundamental disharmony of the neoliberal order, the simultaneous celebration and disavowal of violence, all come into focus when one takes the ongoing heretical actions of terrorists seriously.

Viewing terrorism through the lens of heresy says much about the actions, motivations, and factors involved in terrorist endeavors. But it equally says something about those citizens and participants in the neoliberal order. It exposes those things hidden by the insistence upon life, and the ruptures of the social and cultural dynamics that work against this agenda. Terrorism brings back into focus the very fragility of life, and the impossibility of its protection.

Foucault speaks of the ways in which death vanishes from the vision of the citizens of a biopolitical order. Hiding death in private ceremonies, or transforming it into something artificial in video games and entertainment, renders death invisible in the social order. Mortuaries provide a cover for dead bodies, pushed out and expunged from regular social spaces. Ceremonies that pay respect to the dead exist only the privacy of the internal family structure, and even those memorials are undergoing changes, shifting from the exposure of death to celebrations of life.

Yet, death remains part of the human experience. The attempts to render it invisible fail, because we share this ultimate and final fate with the animals.

We are going to die. Terrorism, at its most heretical, reminds of us of this reality, even as biopolitical projects aim to hide and obscure it.

Terrorism cannot be solved by biopolitics, as it cannot even be adequately explained. It remains fundamentally detached from a system that takes life as its ultimate object, and the instrumentality as its primary function. Terrorism is the pre-political meaninglessness made manifest in the center of politics. Like the inexplicability and meaninglessness of death, a problem that cannot be solved by politics of any sort, terrorism is the heretical reminder of this decisive and ultimate reality of the human.

Conclusion

Terrorism defines current politics. Many political institutions, mechanisms, definitions, and policies potentially relate back to the problems of terrorism. It could even be said that terrorism serves a necessary functional role in the construction of modern neoliberal political activities.

To fully understand and appreciate this necessary functional role terrorism must be understood in accordance with the goals and prohibitions embedded in contemporary political motivations. Like any formation of politics, the biopolitical state arises with goals and ideas that energize its activities and institutions. Namely, life has taken up a residence at the center of this political moment. On the one hand, from Foucault's perspective, this focus upon life justifies violence for the sake of a body population, which it organizes and seeks to assist in flourishing. For Agamben, life highlights the primordial distinctions

and thresholds contemporary politics brings back to the surface in new and unforeseen ways. For both theorists, and many others who follow their lines of thought, life has been made political.

This making life political does not occur spontaneously but relies on a long and varied historical development, that easily could have been otherwise. For both, religion acts as a force within this historical development.²³ Foucault uses at length the Shepherd model to characterize and describe the ongoing developments and shifts in power, while Agamben relies on Schmitt's ideas of sovereignty rooted in the exceptionality of the miracle.

By highlighting this shared religious and theological material, I have attempted to remedy something that appears in the ongoing literature devoted to these two thinkers. Emphasizing this shared theoretical material does not equate the theories of the two and make them synonymous. It does, however, work against the tendencies in scholarship that overly focus upon their differences. Their differences are important, and they are many; but the overlap between the two should not be forgotten or minimalized. This predominantly appears in the

²³ I use religion and theology interchangeably as both Foucault and Agamben signal a reliance upon western Christianized concepts to define what they mean by religion. Further, thinkers within political theology, as a specialized field of political philosophy and theology, often use these terms without a fleshed-out distinction. Obviously, theology takes on forms dependent upon the religious histories and dogmas it speaks to. There are general ideas of divinity, separate from particular religious histories or mythologies, that political theology often utilizes. For example, the role of the miracle in Schmitt's political theology could certainly find historical realization in Christianity, but likewise it would be similar in Judaism and Islam. To use them interchangeably here does not ignore the particulars established by certain faith traditions, and the nuances that would result in theology; however, in this case the nuances are less important than the generalized concepts that come to articulate the specific theoretical ideas of political theology.

literature specific to Foucault and the diminishing of the religious ideas so important and central to his work.

Further, I wanted to highlight the religious dimensions of each to show the ways in which the institutionalization of biopolitics in neoliberalism disavows the very religious ideas upon which it was constructed. Modern biopolitics insists on an irreligious and secularized form of politics, while simultaneously relying on religious ideas to support that political structure. It disavows its own genesis, and this general disavowal of the religious nature plays an important role in the importance and centralization of terrorism. For example, the ways terrorism comes to be understood as a problem relies on the religious fervency anathema to contemporary politics. Since terrorism often relies on religious mythologies, ideas, and symbols it presents something uniquely unlike biopolitics, at least from the perspective of biopolitical states. This distance and difference biopolitics continually insists upon between its use of violence and the terrorist's, relies on this distance between the secularized state and the overtly apocalyptically religious ideas of terrorists. Terrorism looks and feels unique because biopolitically infused forms of neoliberalism disavow their own religious mythologies, ideas, and symbols.

The ways neoliberalism centralizes terrorism reaffirms the disavowal process. The emphasis on terrorism as an economic negativity disavows the ways the economy, and the variety of securitization projects, rely on the presence of terrorism. If terrorism were to vanish today, the economic consequences would be enormous. Yet this ongoing war on terror provides a narrative that insists on terrorism as a destabilizing factor for the global economy.

The biopolitical insistence and focus upon the flourishing of life disavows violence as a tool of an archaic past. Its use of violence takes on ethical and political justification through the protection of that life it defines as worthy. Make no mistake, violence has not been wholly disavowed, but instead requires certain definitional elements rooted in the primordial distinctions of the state. Violence emanates through the biopolitical state, but it must serve some instrumental purpose of protecting that secularized and abstracted form of life. Defining terrorism as excessively violent requires some foundational idea of violence to define itself over and against other forms of violence. In this case, terrorism appears to the biopolitical state as excessively violent precisely because the violence it employs lacks efficiency and instrumental effectiveness.

The religious fervency of terrorists roots the process of disavowal that shows up in the other ways biopolitics centralizes terrorism. To be clear, this is not a defense of terrorism in any way, likewise it is not a defense of the biopolitical state. I aim to only point out the ways that biopolitics has come to define terrorism as something fundamentally in opposition to the forms and modes of biopolitical neoliberalism. Imagining terrorism within the larger framework of heresy remedies this series of disavowals in four ways.

First, it brings to the fore the forgotten religious shadings of biopolitics and contemporary politics. Political theology in general has gone about this task, and I merely offer up another way of envisioning the theological elements of secularized politics. Heresy serves a non-exhaustive definitional role that highlights the ongoing religious elements of the ongoing war on terror from both the side of neoliberalism and the side of the terrorist. If one were to

comparatively analyze the discourse that western nations produce they would witness this reality.²⁴ By framing the entire struggle in the language of heresy the religious dimensions are not forgotten and covered over by the appearance of naturalized secularization.

Second, heresy demonstrates the ways in which each side of the war on terror end up co-constituting and forming the other. Like struggles over orthodoxy and heresy in the past, this struggle recurrently defines each side unlike the other. For this co-constitutive element to work each side requires the other side. Terrorism requires a neoliberal and globalized system to attack while that neoliberal and globalized system require some enemy to define itself against. This need of defining oneself against a perceived enemy might not be exclusive to heresy alone, but heresy highlights the ways in which orthodoxy for each relies on the perceived shortcomings of the other. Each does not merely have an enemy that they disagree with over a territory or some limited resource, but the differentiation takes on a more pervasive ideological element. By examining terrorism through this lens of heresy, the struggle and war transform from one of imminent resource struggles, to a transcendent ideal form of the world.

Third, it highlights an internally established orthodoxy of biopolitics. Predictably, this orthodoxy centers on life and instrumentalization. Of course, those orthodoxic elements show up in the ways it defines terrorism: as a threat to life, as a threat to the economic utility of the current system. Heresy allows focus

²⁴ See Bruce Lincoln, "The Rhetoric of Bush and Bin Laden," in *Holy Terrors: Thinking About Religion after 9/11*, University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 2002.

upon the ways in which biopolitics generates and manifests its own sincerely established correct ideas about politics and society, and the resulting coercive encouragement of the population to uniformity around this orthodoxy.

Fourth, heresy allows for novelty. This might appear as an abstract and undetermined benefit of the proposal, but novelty on its own can be generative. The entire structure of studying terrorism has come to a standstill, even while terrorism expands beyond the established academic and political categories. The transition to eco-terrorism, bioterrorism, cyberterrorism, and narcoterrorism all produce new and unforeseen consequences for which traditional terrorism studies cannot adequately account. Novelty in the study of terrorism can produce new theoretical tools for understanding these different and divergent activities that lack some of the hallmark elements of more traditional state sponsored, religious, and political terrorism.

Likewise, heresy, while novel, can only do so much. It retains only a limited scope within the larger field of terrorism studies. Future work needs to be done, namely in the ways in which terrorism will augment and shift in the future. New apocalyptic images, detached from religious mythologies are on the rise, and attending terroristic endeavors, uses of violence, and destabilizations will occur. Heresy, as a concept may be advantageous in this changing political, religious, and social landscape.

More importantly, terrorism and neoliberalism are not the only forces involved in these ongoing changes. Just as Christianity and Judaism were not the only religions in the world during the 2nd century, a time where they were both hurling claims of orthodoxy and heterodoxy, terrorism and neoliberalism

are not the only options available for contemporary political movements. New forms of rebellion and political change are certainly possible. However, if neoliberal states produce the working definitions of the global political order and these definitions disavow their center, working to hide the very impetus of their actions, then genuine new articulations of political possibilities will always be caught in resisting something not sufficiently understood. The point of this dissertation was not to understand terrorism more effectively, and thereby combat it with more precision. The real goal is to understand biopolitics and neoliberalism more fully to produce new forms of political possibilities.

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