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Bare Life, Facticity, and Biopolitics in Agamben and the Early Heidegger

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Abstract: The first book of Agamben’s *Homo Sacer* series contains very few references to Heidegger. Even so, the pages that Agamben devotes to Heidegger in the third part of the book are far from a digression. They touch on a number of crucial topics that are vital to both Heidegger and Agamben, such as the relationship between philosophy and politics, the specific philosophical motivations behind Heidegger’s political commitment, and life as a central philosophical theme. This article evaluates Agamben’s interpretation of Heidegger in those pages by concentrating on two interrelated questions: (1) whether and to what extent Agamben’s biopolitical reading of Heidegger is plausible and persuasive, and (2) how to judge the relationship between their respective accounts of life, which center around the two seminal concepts of “bare life” and “facticity.”

Introduction

It is well known that Martin Heidegger has been a pivotal source of inspiration for Giorgio Agamben. This influence can be perceived clearly throughout Agamben’s work.¹ Remarkably, however, the first book of the *Homo Sacer* series, which has laid the foundation for one of the most provocative and

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¹See the informative overview provided by Mathew Abbott, “Martin Heidegger,” in *Agamben’s Philosophical Lineage*, ed. Adam Kotsko and Carlo Salzani (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017), 63–75.

controversial intellectual projects in contemporary philosophy, contains very few references to Heidegger.² Even so, the four pages that Agamben devotes to Heidegger in the third part of the book are far from a digression.³ They touch on a number of crucial topics that are vital to both Heidegger and Agamben, such as the relationship between philosophy and politics, the specific philosophical motivations behind Heidegger's political commitment, and life as a central philosophical theme. This article evaluates Agamben's interpretation of Heidegger in those pages by concentrating on two interrelated questions: (1) whether and to what extent Agamben's biopolitical reading of Heidegger is plausible and persuasive, and (2) how to judge the relationship between their respective accounts of life, which center around the two seminal concepts of "bare life"⁴ and "factual life"⁵ and have had a significant influence on contemporary continental philosophy.⁶

The relationship between biopolitics and Heidegger has already attracted scholarly attention. Three contributions in particular have shed light on the biopolitical significance of Heidegger's thought. In his critical analysis of Foucault's and Agamben's biopolitical theories,⁷ Robert Sinnerbrink argues that "an important anticipation of the concept of the biopolitical" can be identified in Heidegger's writings from the 1930s and 1940s, especially in his lectures on Nietzsche and in *Contributions to Philosophy*.⁸ Heidegger's critical genealogy of modernity underlines "the connection between biological life, technology, and politics" that is also vital to a biopolitical perspective.⁹ However, Sinnerbrink rightly points out some limitations that characterize the later Heidegger's approach to the biopolitical. I return to Sinnerbrink's

²Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), 44, 48, 59–61, 150–53.

³Ibid., 150–53.

⁴Ibid., 8.

⁵Martin Heidegger, "Phenomenological Interpretations in connection with Aristotle: An Indication of the Hermeneutical Situation," in *Supplements: From the Earliest Essays to "Being and Time" and Beyond*, ed. John van Buren (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), 113; Martin Heidegger, *The Phenomenology of Religious Life*, trans. Matthias Fritsch and Jennifer Anna Gosetti-Ferencei (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 87.

⁶On the concept of facticity, see the very useful volume edited by François Raffoul and Eric Sean Nelson, *Rethinking Facticity* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008). In "The Passion of Facticity," in *Potentialities: Collected Essays in Philosophy*, ed. and trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), 185–204, Agamben discusses Heidegger's conception of facticity in detail, without, however, elaborating on its specific biopolitical significance.

⁷Robert Sinnerbrink, "From *Machenschaft* to Biopolitics: A Genealogical Critique of Biopower," in *Critique Today*, ed. Robert Sinnerbrink, Jean-Philippe Deranty, Nicholas H. Smith, and Peter Schmiegen (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 239–65.

⁸Ibid., 240.

⁹Ibid., 241.

conclusions at the end of my analysis. In his study on life, technology, and biopolitics,¹⁰ Timothy C. Campbell pays particular attention to “the intersection of technology and biopolitics in Heidegger’s later thought.”¹¹ His approach to Heidegger has been inspired by Agamben and Esposito, notably by their readings of the Heideggerian notions of *eigentlich* and *uneigentlich*, which according to Campbell acquire a biopolitical meaning when they are translated as “proper” and “improper.”¹² A different perspective is adopted by Marco Piasentier, who critically examines how the later Heidegger’s conception of the relation between language and the human being is relevant to Foucault’s and Agamben’s biopolitical theories. Piasentier explores an array of topics that are at the forefront of both Heidegger scholarship and biopolitical studies, such as biologism and the question of the anthropological difference.¹³

The thematic scope of my article is different from and more limited than these contributions. While Sinnerbrink, Campbell, and Piasentier predominantly discuss Heidegger’s later thought, my analysis concentrates on how the early Heidegger’s concept of facticity has been interpreted by Agamben in the first book of the *Homo Sacer* series. The biopolitical meaning of Heideggerian facticity has been underlined by Roberto Esposito.¹⁴ His reading of Heideggerian facticity bears striking similarities to that of Agamben. Esposito thinks that “Heidegger’s thought emerges in the first half of the twentieth century as *the only one* able to support the philosophical confrontation with biopolitics.”¹⁵ He asserts that Heidegger’s account of facticity is biopolitically relevant because it is conceptualized in terms of immanence and decision: “What opens the possibility of thinking *bios* and politics within the same conceptual piece is that [first] at no point does authentic being [*poter-essere*] exceed the effective possibility of being there [*dell’esserci*], and second that the self-decision of this being is absolutely immanent to itself.”¹⁶ This is fundamentally the thesis put forward by Agamben in his remarks on Heideggerian facticity that are discussed in this article. That Agamben’s biopolitical interpretation of Heideggerian facticity remains problematic is also pointed out in recent scholarship. Frances Restuccia maintains that Agamben’s comments on Heideggerian facticity are “cloaked in obfuscation” and tries to make sense of both his “confusing” claims and “the twists of

¹⁰Timothy C. Campbell, *Improper Life: Technology and Biopolitics from Heidegger to Agamben* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011).

¹¹*Ibid.*, 1.

¹²*Ibid.*, viii.

¹³Marco Piasentier, *On Biopolitics: An Inquiry into Nature and Language* (New York: Routledge, 2021).

¹⁴Roberto Esposito, *Bios: Biopolitics and Philosophy*, trans. Timothy Campbell (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 150–57.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 152 (emphasis added).

¹⁶*Ibid.*

his argument.¹⁷ I agree with Restuccia that Agamben's approach to Heidegger lacks clarity. But it cries out for a more detailed philosophical examination and contextualization, which is still missing in the existing literature and will be provided in the following analysis.

This article comprises four sections. The first contains preliminary conceptual, terminological, and methodological considerations that clarify both the assumptions of my analysis and its main argument. The second discusses the respective ways in which Agamben and Heidegger conceptualize life and concludes that despite some general convergences, they put forward profoundly different accounts of the topic. The third section corroborates this conclusion by demonstrating that their respective concepts of life go hand in hand with diverging interpretations of Aristotle. Even though Agamben and Heidegger use the same source of inspiration when articulating their own distinctive ideas about life, their readings of Aristotle are clearly indicative of their different approaches to the subject: Agamben pays more attention to the biological and political aspects of life, which play no essential role in Heidegger's writings. The final section briefly addresses the relationship between Heidegger and Nazism, which Agamben labels "the scandal of twentieth-century philosophy,"¹⁸ and discusses both strengths and weaknesses of Agamben's take on this famously contentious issue.

1. Preliminary Clarifications

Before discussing Agamben's approach to Heideggerian facticity, I provide three preliminary clarifications which allow me to explain the main argument. The first consideration concerns the term "facticity." Roughly speaking, Heidegger uses the concept of "facticity" in two ways which correspond to the two phases of his philosophical evolution that scholarly convention characterizes as Heidegger's early Freiburg period (1919–23) and his Marburg period (1923–28). In his early Freiburg period, "facticity" is fundamentally coextensive with human life, or "factual life." For example, we read that "'facticity' and 'existence' do not mean the same thing, and the factual character of the being of life is not determined by existence. The latter is only one possibility that temporalizes itself and unfolds itself in the being of life we have described as 'factual,' and this means that it is in facticity that the possibility of radically formulating the problem of the being of life is centered."¹⁹ In the

¹⁷Frances Restuccia, *Agamben's Political Ontology of Nudity in Literature and Art* (New York: Routledge, 2019), 157, 158.

¹⁸Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 150. See also Giorgio Agamben, "Heidegger e il nazismo," in *La potenza del pensiero: Saggi e conferenze*, 2nd ed. (Vicenza: Neri Pozza, 2012), 329–39.

¹⁹Heidegger, "Phenomenological Interpretations," 120; see also Martin Heidegger, *Ontology: The Hermeneutics of Facticity*, trans. John van Buren (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999).

Marburg period, by contrast, the term denotes one specific ontological characteristic of Dasein, that is, “thrownness”: “The being of Dasein is care. It includes in itself facticity (thrownness), existence (project) and falling prey. Dasein exists as thrown, brought into its there *not* of its own accord.”²⁰ This terminological and conceptual difference plays no important role in Agamben’s remarks analyzed in this article. Agamben seems to oscillate between the two meanings and does not show any interest in Heideggerian philology. In accordance with Agamben’s perspective,²¹ I therefore use “facticity,” “factual life,” and “Dasein” as synonyms, because his arguments and interpretations are discussed from a predominantly conceptual angle.²²

The second consideration concerns an exegetical point. A further problematic aspect of Agamben’s interpretation is that he sees a continuity between at least three different phases in Heidegger’s philosophical work—namely, his early Freiburg lecture courses, the ontology presented in *Being and Time*, and the philosophy developed in the first half of the 1930s. This approach is far from self-evidently correct, because a considerable number of differences can be pointed out when it comes to interpreting the relationship between these three phases of Heidegger’s thought. Those differences concern terminologies, conceptual shifts, and methodological issues that have defined Heidegger’s philosophical development during the 1920s and the 1930s, as documented by Theodore Kisiel in his thorough analysis of the early Heidegger.²³ However, such points are not relevant to my analysis of Agamben’s interpretation, because, as mentioned, he is not seeking to provide a contribution to Heidegger scholarship.

The third clarification pertains to my understanding of both power and the political. Since the aim of this article is not to assess whether Agamben’s accounts of power and politics are persuasive but rather to decide whether his biopolitical interpretation of Heideggerian facticity is plausible, I adopt Agamben’s own definitions of power and the political. The question then becomes whether Agamben’s concepts can be applied legitimately to Heideggerian facticity. For the purposes of this article, we can schematically differentiate three concepts of power in Agamben’s work, which are closely interconnected and partially overlapping in his view. The first form of power is sovereignty. Agamben’s definition of *sovereign power* aligns itself with Carl Schmitt’s famous account, according to which the sovereign is the

²⁰Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Joan Stambaugh, revised by Dennis J. Schmidt (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010), 272.

²¹Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 150.

²²On Heidegger’s concept of facticity and its various connotations, see also Jesús Adrián Escudero, “Facticity (Faktizität),” in *The Cambridge Heidegger Lexicon*, ed. Mark A. Wrathall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 311–12.

²³Theodore Kisiel, *The Genesis of Heidegger’s “Being and Time”* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

one “who decides on the exception.”²⁴ Agamben argues that sovereign power coincides in fact with biopower, the power over bare life. In Agamben’s view, the political and the biopolitical are one and the same. This identity is a fundamental tenet put forward in the first book of the *Homo Sacer* series.²⁵ With *The Kingdom and the Glory*, however, a significant conceptual rearticulation must be noted, which Catherine Mills rightly characterizes as an “apparent shift in Agamben’s thinking.”²⁶ Agamben introduces a third form of power, governmental power, and traces its origins back to economic theology:

two broadly speaking political paradigms, antinomial but functionally related to one another, derive from Christian theology: political theology, which founds the transcendence of sovereign power on the single God, and economic theology, which replaces this transcendence with the idea of an *oikonomia*, conceived as an immanent ordering—domestic and not political in a strict sense—of both divine and human life. Political philosophy and the modern theory of sovereignty derive from the first paradigm; modern biopolitics up to the current triumph of economy and government over every other aspect of social life derive from the second paradigm.²⁷

Agamben seems to think that biopower, or biopolitics, includes two fundamental forms that complement each other, that is, sovereign power (or sovereignty) and governmental power (government or economy). We could summarize his conception as: biopower = sovereign power + governmental power; or the biopolitical = the political + the governmental.

I evaluate Agamben’s interpretation of Heideggerian facticity on his own philosophical terms and conclude that his approach is neither convincing nor consistent. My critical discussion of Agamben’s biopolitical reading of Heideggerian facticity is defined by three main directions. (1) I question Agamben’s decisionistic reading of Heideggerian facticity, by arguing that *pace* Agamben, Heidegger’s concept of resoluteness does not necessarily, immediately, or explicitly involve a reference to the biopolitical. (2) I argue that Agamben illegitimately reads his concept of bare life into Heidegger’s concept of life. My contention is that biopower, sovereign power, and governmental power have no tangible presence in Heideggerian facticity. (3) Agamben’s conceptualization of bare life presupposes the *bios-zōē* scheme, which he claims to derive from the ancient Greeks.²⁸ I contend that the early Heidegger’s interpretation of Aristotle moves in a different direction

²⁴Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, trans. George Schwab (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 5.

²⁵Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 6.

²⁶Catherine Mills, *Biopolitics* (London: Routledge, 2018), 45.

²⁷Giorgio Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory: For a Theological Genealogy of Economy and Government*, trans. Lorenzo Chiesa with Matteo Mandarini (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011), 1.

²⁸Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 1–3.

and does not involve such a differentiation between *bios* and *zōē*, nor does Heidegger address the biological as such. This conclusion further undermines Agamben's attempt to identify a biopolitical convergence between his account of bare life and Heideggerian facticity.

2. Facticity and Biopolitics

The general context of Agamben's remarks on Heidegger in the third part of *Homo Sacer* is the relationship between politics and life.²⁹ Agamben elaborates on a number of specific phenomena that, in his view, have defined modern biopolitics—most notably the concentration camp and Nazi politics. The crucial problem is to what extent life has been given an inherently political meaning in modernity. In exploring this question, Agamben puts forward a number of complex interpretive and philosophical theses about Heidegger's thought. First of all, he contends that Heidegger views facticity (or factual life) in political terms. From this crucial tenet Agamben derives his other positions on the relationship between life and politics in Heidegger.

Agamben argues that in Heidegger facticity has a political meaning because it involves an intrinsic reference to "decision."³⁰ This point of view is clearly Schmittian as Agamben considers decision to be an integral element of sovereignty, in accordance with Schmitt's famous definition of the sovereign as the one "who decides on the exception."³¹ This concept of decision articulates the relationship between the two main poles of the biopolitical in the first book of the *Homo Sacer* series, that is, sovereign power and bare life.³² The main consequence of Agamben's Schmittian approach to Heidegger's conception of facticity is that Agamben identifies a convergence between his own concept of bare life and Heidegger's account of facticity, insofar as he defines bare life as the life subject to the sovereign exception. Both bare life and factual life have a political meaning because both are defined by decision.

The question that arises is whether Agamben's interpretive claim about decision and facticity in Heidegger is justified. It can certainly be argued that decision is crucial to both bare life and factual life. Agamben seems to presuppose a decisionistic interpretation of the early Heidegger, which should come as no surprise. Various scholars contend that Heidegger and Schmitt both adhere to decisionism. Karl Löwith has emphasized that "it is not chance, if one finds a political 'decisionism' in Carl Schmitt which corresponds to Heidegger's existentialist philosophy, in which the 'capacity-for-Being-a-whole' of individual authentic existence is transposed to the 'totality'

²⁹Ibid., 119–88.

³⁰Ibid., 153.

³¹Schmitt, *Political Theology*, 5. See also Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 11.

³²Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 18–26.

of the authentic state, which is itself always particular.³³ A decisionistic interpretation of Heidegger's early philosophy has been questioned with good reasons.³⁴ We can concede, for the sake of argument, that a decisionistic interpretation is plausible and would therefore corroborate Agamben's attempt to establish a connection between his concept of bare life and Heideggerian facticity. Nonetheless, it is not clear whether the concept of decision denotes the same thing in Agamben (and Schmitt) and Heidegger. I am inclined to answer this question negatively. The decision that defines bare life is biopolitical in nature. It is the decision of the sovereign, who captures life by means of the "exception," by means of inclusion and exclusion.³⁵ In this case, decision is inherently external to bare life: bare life as such is passively subject to the sovereign. In other words, the decision of the sovereign is the source of the constitution of life as a political subject.³⁶

Heidegger's conceptualization of "resoluteness" (*Entschlossenheit*), which forms the core of a decisionistic reading, is fundamentally different.³⁷ Heidegger's decisionism is not necessarily, immediately, or explicitly biopolitical, because it does not entail any intrinsic relation to sovereign power. The decision that defines Dasein is primarily "existentiell,"³⁸ because it is the decision that Dasein has to make when answering the concrete question of its own existence.³⁹ This decision does not come from outside but is immanent. It is the decision of Dasein in the sense of both a subjective and an objective genitive. In and through its decision, Dasein becomes an authentic self. Dasein's "existentiell" decision is the source of the self that exists authentically.⁴⁰

In *The Use of Bodies*, Agamben himself draws attention to "the peculiar dialectic that defines the analytic of Dasein: that between the improper

³³Karl Löwith, "The Political Implications of Heidegger's Existentialism," trans. Richard Wolin and Melissa J. Cox, *New German Critique*, no. 45 (1988): 122–23. On decisionism in Heidegger and Schmitt, see Christian Graf von Krockow, *Die Entscheidung: Eine Untersuchung über Ernst Jünger, Carl Schmitt, Martin Heidegger* (Stuttgart: Enke, 1958).

³⁴Matthew Burch, "Death and Deliberation: Overcoming the Decisionism Critique of Heidegger's Practical Philosophy," *Inquiry* 53, no. 3 (2010): 211–34.

³⁵Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 18–26.

³⁶*Ibid.*, 106.

³⁷Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 257–96. An alternative translation of "Entschlossenheit" is "resolute openness," which is preferred by various scholars (see, for example, John van Buren, *The Young Heidegger: Rumor of the Hidden King* [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994], 302). This translation renders more properly the connotations of opening and unfolding that define decisions, including political decisions. I thank an anonymous reviewer for drawing my attention to these terminological and conceptual nuances.

³⁸Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 11.

³⁹*Ibid.*

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 282–97.

(*Uneigentlich*) and the proper (*Eigentlich*).⁴¹ He translates the Heideggerian conceptual pair “authentic” and “inauthentic” as “proper” and “improper,” and rightly underlines how the relationship between the two terms cannot be understood as a radical opposition. It is rather a “dialectic” that is inherent, or immanent, in existence as such: “the proper does not have another place and substance with respect to the improper.”⁴² His interpretation of Heidegger is certainly correct in this regard: the authentic, or “the proper,” does not involve transcending the inauthentic, or “the improper,” but rather dealing with it in a different manner. However, even though Agamben is clearly aware of the difference between the immanent nature of Dasein’s decision and the external nature of the sovereign’s decision,⁴³ this does not prevent him from asserting the political meaning of Heidegger’s account of life.

When interpreting Heidegger’s account of life from a biopolitical point of view, Agamben quotes a passage that seems explicit about the relationship between Dasein and the political: “man’s factual essence already contains the movement that, if grasped, constitutes him as Dasein and, therefore, as a political being (*polis* signifies the place, the *Da*, where and how Dasein is insofar as Dasein is historical’ [*Einführung*, p. 117]).”⁴⁴ However, this passage reinforces my doubts about Agamben’s interpretation. Heidegger seems to neglect or downplay the specific political aspects of factual life to the extent that they end up losing any specific political content and denote the ontological and historical dimension of intersubjectivity. In the passage quoted by Agamben, Heidegger connects Dasein with the polis but does not clarify the specific political element of this connection; his speculative interpretations of the polis remain vague. The crucial point is that Agamben seems to politicize (or to overemphasize the political connotation of) Heidegger’s conception of the polis, whereas this conception does not involve any specific political content.

A passage in Agamben’s book *The Open: Man and Animal* confirms that he seems to overemphasize the political meaning of Heidegger’s conception of the polis: “It is beyond question that for Heidegger a political paradigm (indeed the political paradigm par excellence) is at stake in the dialectic between concealedness and unconcealedness. In the course on Parmenides, the *polis* is defined precisely by the conflict between *Verborgenheit* and *Unverborgenheit*.”⁴⁵ Agamben reads the conflict between “earth” and “world” in Heidegger from a political viewpoint and applies the same

⁴¹Giorgio Agamben, *The Use of Bodies*, trans. Adam Kotsko (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2016), 44.

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 153.

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵Giorgio Agamben, *The Open: Man and Animal*, trans. Kevin Attell (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004), 72.

political perspective to the interplay of “unconcealedness” (*Unverborgenheit*) and “concealedness” (*Verborgenheit*). I disagree with Agamben on this point. Although conflict is an eminently political concept, Heidegger’s account of conflict seems more metaphysical, or ontological, than political because he does not clarify the relationship between conflict and power. Heidegger does not concentrate on the specific political meaning of the polis precisely because he reduces the conflict typical of the polis to the metaphysical, or ontological, movement of “unconcealedness” and “concealedness.”

Interestingly, at times, Agamben himself admits the priority of the ontological perspective in Heidegger. When identifying a connection between Heidegger’s concept of *Ge-stell* and his own analysis of governmentality in *The Kingdom and the Glory*, he states: “The *Ge-stell* is the apparatus of the absolute and integral government of the world.”⁴⁶ However, he also underlines that “Heidegger cannot resolve the problem of technology because he was unable to restore it to its political locus.”⁴⁷ Agamben seems to suggest that Heidegger’s approach to technology fails as it remains only ontological and is not sufficiently political. *Pace* Agamben, similar considerations apply to facticity as well. It is certainly possible to identify the “political implications” of Heidegger’s decisionism,⁴⁸ and Dasein’s “*existentiell*” decision might also have a political meaning when it comes to certain concrete situations (for example, in the case of individuals who commit themselves to political action). However, we must clearly differentiate between the explicit meaning of Heidegger’s concept of resoluteness as such, which is “*existential*” and not *per se* political—namely, it does not entail any necessary, intrinsic, or explicit relation to power—and the possible implications and concrete manifestations of *certain* “*existentiell*” decisions, which may also be political.⁴⁹

If Agamben and Heidegger do not share the same concept of decision, and if a biopolitical interpretation of Heidegger’s notion of facticity is therefore not convincing, the further question arises whether there are other similarities between bare life and factual life that could support Agamben’s contention that Heidegger’s concept of facticity has a biopolitical connotation. A vague similarity between bare life and Dasein can be seen in the fact that both notions denote an ultimate givenness, an irreducible fact that human existence cannot escape. However, while bare life denotes a biopolitical givenness, the givenness of factual life is not inherently biopolitical. Heidegger’s concept of factual life cannot be considered similar or equivalent to Agamben’s concept of bare life or *homo sacer*: the crucial difference is that bare life has an inherently biopolitical meaning that is lacking in the case of Dasein, regardless of the concept of decision. Heidegger’s ontological

⁴⁶Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory*, 252 (emphasis original).

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, 253 (emphasis original).

⁴⁸Löwith, “Political Implications of Heidegger’s Existentialism.”

⁴⁹On the difference between “*existentiell*” and “*existential*,” see Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 11–12.

articulation of factual life does not pay attention to the three main forms of power that are differentiated and discussed by Agamben, that is, biopower, sovereign power, and governmental power. Heidegger's Dasein is more of an "existentiell" or "existential" subjectivity than a biopolitical one.

Heidegger does not address the question of intersubjectivity from a specifically biopolitical angle. He focuses instead on whether and to what extent the authentic self stands in opposition to the inauthenticity of public life. The same applies to the ontological or transcendental structure of "being-with,"⁵⁰ which remains largely formal and has no specific biopolitical connotations. This way of dealing with intersubjectivity is typical of both his early hermeneutics of factual life and the ontology outlined in *Being and Time*,⁵¹ and provides no account of the biopolitical as such. In his ontology of existence, Heidegger develops a description of the public sphere ("the they"),⁵² which could carry political connotations. While I agree that Heidegger's analysis of public opinion can be interpreted in political terms, this is a possible development of an analysis that does not reveal any explicit and specific (bio)political intentions. A phenomenology, or ontology, of the (bio)political is not on the early Heidegger's philosophical agenda.

Remarkably, Agamben is aware of the formal nature of the existential structures Heidegger explicates in both his ontology of facticity and the analytic of Dasein. Agamben points out that Heidegger's account of facticity, or Dasein, results in dismissing a number of metaphysical differentiations that are typical of traditional anthropology and are no longer acceptable in the context of the hermeneutics of facticity or the ontology of Dasein. Moreover, Agamben underlines that Heidegger's philosophical articulation of facticity is "a formalization of the essential experience of factual life."⁵³ This seems to hint at a critical point Heidegger addresses in *Being and Time*, namely, the relationship between the "ontological" and the "ontic," between the philosophical viewpoint and that of concrete life.⁵⁴ Agamben is right in underlining that Heidegger's ontology results from an existential "formalization" of the philosopher's facticity. However, it is precisely this "formalization" that deprives Heidegger's existential concepts of any concrete biopolitical meaning. It is therefore surprising that Agamben attaches a biopolitical meaning to Heidegger's concept of facticity, while underlining the formal nature of the "existentials," their ontological or transcendental meaning. In sum, the formal nature of Heidegger's "existentials" can hardly be reconciled with the concrete biopolitical dimension that defines bare life.

⁵⁰Ibid., 114.

⁵¹See Martin Heidegger, *Phenomenological Interpretations of Aristotle: Initiation into Phenomenological Research*, trans. Richard Rojcewicz (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 61–115; Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 161–73.

⁵²Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 122–26.

⁵³Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 150.

⁵⁴This is a critical methodological question. See Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 297–302.

3. Articulating Life with the Help of Aristotle

The fundamentally different viewpoints of Heidegger's and Agamben's approaches to the question of life can also be ascertained if we examine the different ways in which they interpret Aristotle. When it comes to philosophically articulating factual life and bare life, both draw inspiration from Aristotle in manners that are highly symptomatic of their different views on the philosophical question of life. Heidegger provides ontological-phenomenological interpretations that in essence have no biopolitical content. There is no textual evidence supporting the idea of a biopolitical agenda, perspective, or motivation behind those interpretations. This is not the case with Agamben, who provides a reading of Aristotle that is explicitly biopolitical in nature. What seems to be a convergence in terms of shared sources of inspiration reveals the profound differences between the two thinkers: Heidegger *depoliticizes* Aristotelian texts by adopting an ontological, or phenomenological, angle, while Agamben biopoliticizes them, developing a specific biopolitical approach to both Aristotle and the question of life.

As the vast literature on Heidegger's interpretations of Aristotle has documented,⁵⁵ at the end of Heidegger's early Freiburg period, his phenomenological and hermeneutical perspectives merge with an outspoken ontological approach, which he draws from Aristotle.⁵⁶ In the context of his ontology of facticity, Heidegger's aim is to outline ontological structures, which are not yet presented as the "existentials" of the analytic of Dasein, even if they clearly resemble the results achieved in *Being and Time*. In the early Freiburg period, the structures explicated by the ontology of facticity function as the modes of being of factual life.⁵⁷ Accordingly, Heidegger reformulates the question of life as the question of "the ontological sense of factual life."⁵⁸ This ontological angle is instrumental in recalibrating both phenomenology and hermeneutics. As a result, the intentional structures of life are addressed as the various modes of being that define the relationship between factual life and the world.⁵⁹

The question arises whether we can view those modes of being of factual life in biopolitical terms. Jean Grondin has convincingly identified ethical

⁵⁵For example, Walter Brogan, *Heidegger and Aristotle: The Twofoldness of Being* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005); Alfred Denker, Holger Zaborowski, Günter Figal, and Franco Volpi, eds., *Heidegger und Aristoteles* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Alber, 2007); Dimitrios Yfantis, *Die Auseinandersetzung des frühen Heidegger mit Aristoteles: Ihre Entstehung und Entfaltung sowie ihre Bedeutung für die Entwicklung der frühen Philosophie Martin Heideggers (1919–1927)* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2009).

⁵⁶Kiesel, *Genesis of Heidegger's "Being and Time,"* 227–75.

⁵⁷Heidegger, *Phenomenological Interpretations*.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*, 133.

⁵⁹*Ibid.*, 64–115.

aspects in Heidegger's hermeneutics of factual life by emphasizing the Heideggerian critique of the theoretical attitude.⁶⁰ The quasi-ethical meaning of the hermeneutics of factual life (and Heidegger's philosophy in general) cannot be disputed.⁶¹ However, I contend that the residual quasi-ethical tone of Heidegger's philosophy does not allow us to conclude that we can identify an explicit biopolitical perspective in the early Freiburg lecture courses on Aristotle. In these lecture courses, Heidegger outlines modes of being that have no biopolitical content to the extent that they do not entail any intrinsic relation to the three forms of power differentiated by Agamben. Biopower, sovereign power, and governmental power have no tangible presence in his interpretations of Aristotle either. It is certainly possible to use those modes of being as general categories to develop a detailed ontological, or phenomenological, analysis of biopolitical phenomena. However, this is a possible development of Heidegger's analysis which is in itself neither explicitly nor implicitly centered around biopolitics and biopower. Franco Volpi has already pointed out that Heidegger recalibrates ontologically, or "ontologizes,"⁶² existential structures he has identified and articulated with the help of Aristotelian texts. This distinctive perspective concerns exactly those texts that are most susceptible to biopolitical interpretations—notably, *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Politics*.

The consequences of this approach are clear when we compare Heidegger and Agamben. The *bios-zōē* divide, which is vital to Agamben's definition of bare life and is therefore crucial for his theory of biopolitics,⁶³ plays no role in Heidegger's Aristotelian ontology of facticity. Heidegger appropriates Aristotle's texts on ethics, politics, rhetoric, and psychology for the purposes of his analysis of factual life, so that neither ethics nor politics as such define his interpretive angle, which remains quintessentially ontological.⁶⁴ As a result, virtues become modes of being and the concept of polis is ontologized to such an extent that it has no specific biopolitical connotations and coincides with a formal, or general, ontological structure (or mode of being) of

⁶⁰Jean Grondin, "The Ethical and Young Hegelian Motives in Heidegger's Hermeneutics of Facticity," in *Reading Heidegger from the Start: Essays in His Earliest Thought*, ed. Theodore Kisiel and John van Buren (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), 345–60.

⁶¹On Heidegger and ethics, see also Diana Aurenque, *Ethosdenken: Auf der Spur einer ethischen Fragestellung in der Philosophie Martin Heideggers* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Alber, 2011).

⁶²See, for example, Franco Volpi, "In Whose Name? Heidegger and 'Practical Philosophy,'" *European Journal of Political Theory* 6, no. 1 (2007): 39.

⁶³James Gordon Finlayson has provided an in-depth critical analysis of Agamben's approach to Aristotle in the article "'Bare Life' and Politics in Agamben's Reading of Aristotle," *Review of Politics* 72, no. 1 (2010): 97–126.

⁶⁴Martin Heidegger, *Basic Concepts of Aristotelian Philosophy*, trans. Robert D. Metcalf and Mark B. Tanzer (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002).

intersubjectivity.⁶⁵ In this context, biopower, sovereign power, and governmental power are not visible at all.

This conclusion can be corroborated by considering how Heidegger ontologizes Aristotle's notion of life.⁶⁶ In his early Freiburg courses, Heidegger downplays the ontological significance of modern biology: "Biological concepts of life are to be set aside from the very outset: unnecessary burdens, even if certain motives might spring from these concepts, which is possible, however, only if the intended grasp of human existence as life remains open, preconceptually, to an understanding of life which is essentially older than that of modern biology."⁶⁷ The fundamental difference between Heidegger and Agamben is conspicuous: Heidegger ontologizes the Aristotelian concept of life, whereas Agamben attributes a specific biopolitical meaning to it. According to Agamben, Aristotle's conceptualization of the living has a peculiar biopolitical scope to the extent that the articulation of life itself implies a logic of inclusion and exclusion.⁶⁸ A comparable perspective is absent in Heidegger. Not only does Heidegger pay no attention to the biopolitical aspects of life; in his early Freiburg writings, the biological dimension of human existence is not discussed either.

Heidegger's reluctance to treat this dimension in his analysis of human life is no coincidence.⁶⁹ When demarcating the theme of his ontology, Heidegger states that the approaches of particular ontic sciences should play no role, because his analysis remains ontological.⁷⁰ However, he was aware that this could not be his last word on the subject, and decided to tackle it in the Freiburg lecture course of the winter semester 1929/30, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude*.⁷¹ Here, he demonstrates serious engagement with prominent biologists and discusses the ontological differences between Dasein, animals, and inorganic nature. Nonetheless, his treatment of the question is far from satisfactory. Instead of considering animality as an integral part of human facticity and asking whether and how human animality can be differentiated from nonhuman animality, Heidegger conceptualizes the animal *ex negativo*: human existence is

⁶⁵Ibid., 32–45.

⁶⁶Martin Heidegger, *Introduction to Phenomenological Research*, trans. Daniel O. Dahlstrom (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), 4: "Περὶ ψυχῆς is no psychology in the modern sense, but instead deals with the being of a human being (or of living beings in general) in the world."

⁶⁷Heidegger, *Phenomenological Interpretations*, 62.

⁶⁸Agamben, *Use of Bodies*, 195–206.

⁶⁹David E. Storey, *Naturalizing Heidegger: His Confrontation with Nietzsche, His Contributions to Environmental Philosophy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2016), esp. 33–79.

⁷⁰Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 44–49.

⁷¹Martin Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude*, trans. William McNeill and Nicholas Walker (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995).

defined by its capability of forming a world, while the animal is “poor” in this respect.⁷² In *The Open*, Agamben has paid much attention to Heidegger’s lecture course. However, he seems to read his own biopolitical perspective into those lectures, which keep addressing the question of animality from a predominantly ontological, or metaphysical, point of view.

Heidegger’s insufficient treatment of the biological aspects typical of human facticity also becomes visible when we consider a further point of Agamben’s reading of Aristotle. According to Agamben, the question of language is of the greatest importance because it overlaps with the emergence of the political as a distinct sphere in relation to the natural. When Aristotle defines the human being as a political animal (*zōion politikon*) and as an animal equipped with *logos* (*zōion logon echon*), he refers to a more fundamental phenomenon that lies at the intersection of both definitions, that is, the relation between nature and politics:

It is true that in a famous passage of the same work, Aristotle defines man as a *politikon zōon* (*Politics*, 1253a, 4). But here . . . “political” is not an attribute of the living being as such, but rather a specific difference that determines the genus *zōon*. (Only a little later, after all, human politics is distinguished from that of other living beings in that it is founded, through a supplement of politicity [*politicitā*] tied to language, on a community not simply of the pleasant and the painful but of the good and the evil and of the just and the unjust.)⁷³

When reading Aristotle, Agamben concentrates on the intersection of politics, language, and animality, thereby addressing the specific biopolitical meaning of the two Aristotelian accounts of the human as a *zōion politikon* and as a *zōion logon echon*. Compared to Agamben’s analysis of language, Heidegger’s analysis of those Aristotelian accounts goes in a different direction, which is not biopolitical but ontological. Heidegger, too, identifies a fundamental relationship between the two Aristotelian notions of the human, but reformulates them ontologically. His 1924 lecture course *Basic Concepts of Aristotelian Philosophy*, which is to a great extent a philosophical paraphrase of Aristotelian texts, documents how he ultimately remains true to his “ontologization” of Aristotle:

Aristotle touches on this in a context where he wants to establish that the human being is a ζῷον πολιτικόν. In this context, he has recourse to *the being of animals*, and posits the ζῷον λόγον ἔχον as compared with a ζῷον that has only φωνή. He endeavors to show that life is already constituted through φωνή; that, furthermore, what is living in this way has a *being* that is fundamentally determined as *being-with-one-another*; and that animals are already, in a certain way, ζῷα πολιτικά. Human beings are only μᾶλλον ζῷον πολιτικόν than are (e.g., bees) [*sic*]. By virtue of this demarcation from *the being of animals*, constituted through φωνή, *the*

⁷²Ibid., 268.

⁷³Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 2–3.

peculiar way of being that is determined by λόγος will become more precisely characterized.⁷⁴

The text is clear evidence that Heidegger's predominantly ontological point of view is also applied to the question of animality, which is not treated specifically in his ontology of facticity nor in his interpretation of Aristotelian texts. Heidegger takes for granted the fact that language (*logos*) defines human beings, but never really poses the question of how to philosophically understand the relationship between language and the biological dimension of human life. The animal, biological, or natural aspects of human life are absorbed into the existential, cultural, or historical.⁷⁵ This circumstance can be explained in various ways. For example, we can mention the antinaturalism of phenomenology, especially in the early phase of Heidegger's philosophical work.⁷⁶

Not only is it difficult to recognize a specifically biopolitical meaning in Heidegger's conception of facticity, it is also problematic to identify a specific, in-depth consideration of the biological element of human existence. Despite being a common source of inspiration for both Agamben's concept of bare life and Heidegger's phenomenological articulation of facticity, Aristotle is interpreted by the two thinkers for different purposes. The *bios-zōē* differentiation, which forms a fundamental presupposition for Agamben's biopolitical theory and his narrative of biopower, is not relevant from Heidegger's ontological point of view, nor is an "inclusive exclusion"⁷⁷ present in Heidegger's appropriation of Aristotle's concept of life.

4. Heidegger, Nazism, and the Question of Power

I have argued that Agamben's approach to Heidegger's account of facticity is not persuasive, because, *pace* Agamben, Heidegger's conception of facticity has no explicit biopolitical connotations. Moreover, I have contended that Heideggerian facticity has no biopolitical relevance because Heidegger pays no attention to the biological aspects of human life. However, despite these objections against Agamben's approach to Heideggerian facticity, the philosophical point he tries to demonstrate is interesting and deserves closer examination.

⁷⁴Heidegger, *Basic Concepts*, 36 (emphases added).

⁷⁵Heidegger's treatment in *Being and Time* is clearly indicative of his tendency to historicize nature, which therefore becomes a theme for ontology only to the extent that it is part of human history (see, for example, *Being and Time*, 369–70). This is in fact an anthropocentric or ontocentric view of nature. Similar considerations apply to his later philosophy: see Martin Heidegger, *Off the Beaten Track*, ed. and trans. Julian Young and Kenneth Haynes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 1–56.

⁷⁶See also Kisiel, *Genesis of Heidegger's "Being and Time,"* 21–68.

⁷⁷Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 8.

According to Agamben, the philosophical root of Heidegger's involvement in Nazism should be located in his early philosophical perspectives, which also lay the foundation for the ontology outlined in *Being and Time*. In the wake of Levinas, Agamben asserts that the main similarity between Heidegger's notion of facticity and the Nazi conception of life can be seen in the fact that both accounts renounce transcendence. Life is defined by a fundamental immanence. According to Agamben, it is exactly this significant affinity that led Heidegger to embrace Nazism: Heidegger's involvement in Nazism is not a mere incident but results from a certain philosophical understanding of life.⁷⁸ Agamben therefore agrees with Levinas that "Nazism is rooted in the same experience of facticity from which Heidegger departs, and which the philosopher had summarized in his *Rectoral Address* in the formula 'to will or not to will one's own Dasein.'"⁷⁹

The question is where exactly the intersection of Nazism and Heidegger's philosophy lies. If we consider *Being and Time*, the ontological structures of Dasein cannot be given any "ontic" meaning. As already pointed out, this also means we cannot provide the "existentials" with concrete (bio)political connotations, insofar as they are supposed to be merely formal.⁸⁰ However, two points seem to undermine this sharp separation between the ontic and the ontological. First, Heidegger admits that philosophy is never able to abandon its own "ontic" roots and presuppositions.⁸¹ Remarkably, this admission concerns exactly the idea of existence that Agamben concentrates on, namely, that Dasein is concerned about, and has to take responsibility for, its own being. From this point of view, Agamben's interpretation seems correct. Second, in his rectoral address,⁸² Heidegger uses his own ontological findings to account for a specific "ontic" vision in which Dasein faces an ultimate decision. The conceptuality of decision seems to turn into the conceptuality of "will."⁸³ This transition from decision to will lies at the intersection of the ontological and the ontic, philosophy and politics, ontology and ideology.

⁷⁸The literature on Heidegger and Nazism is immense. For a useful overview see Alfred Denker and Holger Zaborowski, eds., *Heidegger und der Nationalsozialismus*, 2 vols. (Freiburg im Breisgau: Alber, 2009). The publication of the so-called Black Notebooks has reawakened vehement discussions: see, among others, Peter Trawny, *Heidegger and the Myth of a Jewish World Conspiracy*, trans. Andrew J. Mitchell (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015).

⁷⁹Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 152.

⁸⁰Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 15–19.

⁸¹*Ibid.*, 297–302.

⁸²Martin Heidegger, "The Self-Assertion of the German University: Address, Delivered on the Solemn Assumption of the Rectorate of the University Freiburg—The Rectorate 1933/34: Facts and Thoughts," trans. Karsten Harries, *Review of Metaphysics* 38, no. 3 (1985): 467–502.

⁸³On Heidegger's account of will, see Bret W. Davis, *Heidegger and the Will: On the Way to Gelassenheit* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2007).

Here, Agamben's take on Heidegger's proximity to Nazism seems to point in the right direction as well.⁸⁴

At the same time, Agamben argues that there is a fundamental difference between Heidegger's ontology of facticity and Nazi ideology. Heidegger interprets facticity in existential terms and explicitly rejects any biologicistic account of life, whereas Nazism asserts the primacy of biological facticity and is therefore unable to think of human life in terms of potentiality and freedom. Agamben's belief that this is the fundamental issue that caused the divergence between Heidegger and Nazism is also the problem with his take on Heidegger and Nazism. If Heideggerian facticity does not involve biological connotations, then it is not clear why Agamben claims that "only when situated in the perspective of modern biopolitics does this relation [between Heidegger and Nazism] acquire its proper significance (and this is the very thing that both Heidegger's accusers and his defenders fail to do)."⁸⁵ The biological plays no significant role in Heidegger's account of facticity. Nor does Heidegger address the biopolitical as such in his philosophy: his decisionism does not concern the sovereign and does not reveal connections with biopower, sovereign power, or governmental power. Therefore, Agamben is not persuasive when he states that

the experience of facticity is equivalent to a radicalization without precedent of the state of exception (with its indistinction of nature and politics, outside and inside, exclusion and inclusion) in a dimension in which the state of exception tends to become the rule. It is as if the bare life of *homo sacer*, whose exclusion founded sovereign power, now became—in assuming itself as a task—explicitly and immediately political.⁸⁶

Agamben seems to conflate the ontological formality of facticity, in which traditional categories and differentiations no longer apply to Dasein, and the (ontic) "indistinction" that defines a generalized and permanent state of exception typical of modern biopolitics. Surprisingly, Agamben's conclusion seems to contradict his own tenet that "life is immediately political in its very facticity"⁸⁷ for both Heidegger and Nazism.

Two points seem problematic in this interpretation. First, Agamben contends that the difference between Heidegger and modern biopolitics lies in the fact that in Heideggerian ontology, decision is immanent in life and does not originate from an external source (e.g., the sovereign). This is certainly correct, as we have seen. However, the differentiation between external and internal decision does not suffice when it comes to identifying the specific biopolitical meaning of decision. Regardless of its immanent nature, Heideggerian decision does not reveal specific biopolitical aspects. Second,

⁸⁴Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 152.

⁸⁵Ibid., 150.

⁸⁶Ibid., 153.

⁸⁷Ibid.

if “power no longer seems to have any hold” over factual life, then the question arises whether it is still plausible to consider Heideggerian facticity to be “explicitly and immediately political.”⁸⁸ Instead, I conclude that it is precisely the missing link between facticity and biopower that undermines Agamben’s take on the biopolitical nature of Heidegger’s account of factual life. *Pace* Agamben, Heideggerian facticity is not “explicitly and immediately political” for at least three reasons, which I have pointed out in this article: (1) the ontological has priority over both the ethical and the political; (2) the ethical and the political are located at the “ontic” level; (3) Heideggerian decisionism is not necessarily biopolitical.

When criticizing Agamben’s approach to Heidegger, I have insisted on the fact that Agamben interprets Heideggerian facticity biopolitically, whereas I contend that its explicit and specific biopolitical meaning cannot be documented, because the early Heidegger’s intention is fundamentally ontological and does not reveal any perceivable biopolitical connotations. However, Agamben’s peculiar interpretation of Heideggerian facticity might indicate a deeper philosophical problem concerning Agamben’s thought. The question whether the differentiation between the political and the ontological still holds true when it comes to Agamben himself must be answered negatively, because Agamben’s political philosophy clearly goes hand in hand with ontological considerations. Numerous passages of the *Homo Sacer* series document this interplay between ontology and politics. For example, the concluding pages of *Homo Sacer* illustrate this point perspicuously: “In the syntagm ‘bare life,’ ‘bare’ corresponds to the Greek *haplōs*, the term by which first philosophy defines pure Being. The isolation of the sphere of pure Being, which constitutes the fundamental activity of Western metaphysics, is not without analogies with the isolation of bare life in the realm of Western politics.”⁸⁹ In *The Use of Bodies*, Agamben addresses the question again and insists that “politics and ontology, ontological apparatuses and political apparatuses are in solidarity, because they have need of one another to actualize themselves.”⁹⁰ Even if I am inclined to reject Agamben’s biopolitical interpretation of the early Heidegger, I acknowledge that there are philosophical reasons that led him to such an interpretation. Agamben can argue that Heideggerian facticity is biopolitical insofar as he assumes an intrinsic relationship between politics and ontology. From Agamben’s point of view, ontological concepts necessarily acquire a (bio)political meaning, and vice versa; in his view, this also applies to facticity, regardless of Heidegger’s explicit intentions.

The relationship between Heidegger’s thought and the question of power becomes more complex when we examine his writings from the 1930s onwards. Here, power is considered to be a manifestation of being to such an extent that it “needs no bearers, because being is never borne by beings,

⁸⁸Ibid.

⁸⁹Ibid., 182.

⁹⁰Agamben, *Use of Bodies*, 132.

but rather at most the converse: beings are empowered to themselves in a thorough-going manner by being, that is, by power."⁹¹ This quote documents that even where Heidegger addresses the question of power, he maintains his predominantly ontological approach, by adopting the viewpoint of "the history of Beyng." However, this conclusion should not prevent us acknowledging that the question of power becomes an increasingly important topic in Heidegger's later thought, as scholars have recognized. In his book *Language after Heidegger*,⁹² for example, Krzysztof Ziarek has mapped Heidegger's articulation of the various dimensions of power and drawn attention, among other things, to the relationship between *Herrschaft* (dominion), *Macht* (power), and *Gewalt* (violence), that is, "the metaphysical operations of power."⁹³ He has also emphasized that "Foucault developed his conception of power to a large extent from Heidegger's readings of Nietzsche."⁹⁴ This point had already been discussed more extensively by Robert Sinnerbrink. Sinnerbrink has provided a very persuasive analysis of Heidegger's influence on Foucault's and Agamben's biopolitical theories, arguing that "Heidegger prefigures the convergence of technological ordering, biological existence, and enhancement of power, that are constitutive of the concepts of biopower and biopolitics."⁹⁵ Sinnerbrink lays particular emphasis on Heidegger's *Contributions to Philosophy* and his Nietzsche lectures, and underlines the biopolitical relevance of crucial themes such as "the will to power as knowledge,"⁹⁶ which clearly anticipates the Foucauldian concept of "knowledge-power,"⁹⁷ and "machination" (*Machenschaft*),⁹⁸ that is, the global interpretive framework that characterizes modernity. Nonetheless, Sinnerbrink captures an important difference between the later Heidegger and biopolitical theories: "For all his anticipation of the biopolitical, however, Heidegger does not explicitly connect the biological existence of human beings with the operation of power in modernity, nor does he articulate machination as a specifically political phenomenon."⁹⁹ I subscribe to the conclusion that the later Heidegger's

⁹¹Martin Heidegger, *The History of Beyng*, trans. William McNeill and Jeffrey Powell (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015), 55.

⁹²Krzysztof Ziarek, *Language after Heidegger* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), 193–205.

⁹³*Ibid.*, 199.

⁹⁴*Ibid.*, 196.

⁹⁵Sinnerbrink, "From *Machenschaft* to Biopolitics," 241.

⁹⁶Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, vol. 3, *The Will to Power as Knowledge and as Metaphysics*, ed. David Farrell Krell, trans. Joan Stambaugh, David Farrell Krell, and Frank A. Capuzzi (New York: Harper and Row, 1987).

⁹⁷Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, *An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 143.

⁹⁸Martin Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy (Of the Event)*, trans. Richard Rojcewicz and Daniela Vallega-Neu (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), 100.

⁹⁹Sinnerbrink, "From *Machenschaft* to Biopolitics," 244 (emphasis original).

approach to power remains quintessentially ontological. In this article, *pace* Agamben, I have tried to demonstrate that similar considerations also apply to the early Heidegger, whose concept of facticity does not reveal explicit and specific biopolitical connotations.