

Philosophy of Giorgio Agamben-*Homo Sacer's* on the Independent Curriculum for Learning in Indonesia: Critical Reflection

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ABSTRACT

This study seeks to explore the phenomenon of the *Homo Sacer* philosopher Giorgio Agamben regarding the concept of "Freedom of Learning" in Indonesia, especially in Central Kalimantan. I see the term independent learning must be at the level of equality of human rights of students. This research uses a reflection study of experiences as educators and literature studies.

Keywords: *Education Freedom, Homo Sacer, Human Right, Subjectivity*

1. INTRODUCTION

Confusing statements or *aporia*, according to the philosophy of Giorgio Agamben, the Italian philosopher, question the inconsistency of truth (*understanding*) and fact (*verification*) in knowledge. This can be seen in the difference between the speakers of history and the events that occurred (Durantaye, 2009: 252-253). Agamben begins this confusion when dealing with the historical remains of Auschwitz and even criticizes the ethical experience of Auschwitz. He begins to question the legal, theological and ethical history. Legal (*juridical*), theological and historical according to Agamben are contaminated. Agamben thinks that ethics and law are two separate things. According to him, law can obscure ethical coordinates (Durantaye, 2009: 254).

The judgments (guilt, forgiveness, innocence and responsibility) attached by legal, theological and historical ethics in that context have been tainted. The context of Auschwitz (concentration camps) exposes to the contemporary reader the inadequacy of law in that event. Agamben asserts that the category (discourse) of law when confronted with problems (uprisings, refugees, terror [*civil war*]; author) will not be fully legal. It is more ethical. The mouth of law is based on ethics. True law has ethical duties and responsibilities in it (Durantaye, 2009: 254). Giorgio Agamben's nakedness of life (*Homo Sacer*) is an impunity under authoritarian protection. Agamben's lens then traces and questions the law, politics in society, including law and politics in participants/subjects/learners. The state of exception becomes important in Agamben's understanding, including in the current education policy that upholds the philosophy of "Freedom to Learn/Merdeka Belajar."

The lens of Giorgio Agamben, a philosopher influenced by Hannah Arendt, includes the element of exception in law. Agamben argues that the state of exception in law is at the level of suspension of the law. It can also be a paradoxical position when acting on the threshold of uncertainty, in which we live. This paradoxical function is ambivalent in the name of normalization. On the one hand, the state of exception functions well by seeing the secret of power (*arcanum imperii*) and loosening - in an artificial sense - the two competing hard forces. The other side can be detrimental or act as a killing machine for certain parties or the many (Agamben in Attell, 2005: 86-87). For example, legal exemptions during the Nazi era. Moreover, it can also function as - as the Latin adage goes - necessity *legem non habet* (Agamben in Attell, 2005: 86-87).

Giorgio Agamben also talks about sovereignty. The concept of sovereignty in Agamben's understanding is a paradoxical sovereignty. Rulers as juridical decision-makers in a sovereignty are inside and outside the legal

order. He also proclaims emergencies as exceptions. He can also suspend the legal validity of the exception itself (Agamben, 1998: 15).

2. PREVIOUS RESEARCH

Michael A. Peters (2014) in his research said that education and research that traces/is based on Giorgio Agamben's philosophy are still relatively few. Peters hopes that there will be research that talks about identity and its relationship with singularity, which is the object of criticism of Agamben's critical pedagogy lens (Peters, 2014: 7).

The second previous research, I traced the conversation through Vincent Lloyd's paper (2013). Lloyd says that Agamben saw politics in Europe and America as close to Christian theology. Agamben persuades political skeptics to see politics as an economic framework. Sovereignty or something authoritative needs to be shifted towards internal differentiation that criticizes the dominance of rulers over governmentality (Lloyd, 2013: 59; Norris, 2017: 758). For him, the pinnacle of political narrative imagery points to an invisible or empty ruler. It is a mystery or a human secret (Lloyd, 2013: 60). Lloyd's version of sovereignty can be compared to Bianca Maria Esposito's (2022) recent research in the context of the Covid 19 pandemic (Esposito, 2022: 1-18).

The third previous research, I cite the research of Thomas Erling Peterson. Peterson (2014) says that in the context of education, Agamben emphasizes the mutual connection between the empirical and the symbolic such as art and science (Peterson, 2014: 336). This emphasis stems from an understanding of language. Agamben says consciousness comes from language. For him, no language experiences absolutism. Language is valid because it is a relation. Therefore, according to Peterson's interpretation of Agamben's philosophy, the reading of texts should read texts that are considered light or less useful.

In my previous research, I looked at alternative paths that go beyond revolution and law from the perspective of Katrina Kniss's research (2019). Kniss looks at Agamben's reading from the angle of reading politics from the perspective of the marginalized. Kniss named it the Anabaptist tradition. The marginalized (Anabaptists) are able to see and seek alternative paths through their inherent exile as marginalized people. The messianic call, according to them, is able to provide a way by giving up their rights. They see anarchism as post-anarchism or political resistance without anarchism. Agamben's version of powerlessness is a political way of fighting structural oppression (Kniss, 2019: 208). I see this kind of politics as a form of resistance to realize sovereignty through resistance to final ideas (Kniss, 2019: 211).

Next, I explore the research views of Tyson Edward Lewis (2014). Lewis sees Agamben's reading through the connection between potentiality and impotence (the event of uncertainty). The relationship between the two is a non-dualism/non-separated or mutually constitutive relationship. Educational freedom can be achieved when understanding the meaning of uncertainty. It is the capacity for incompetence (Lewis, 2014: 335). The purpose of this understanding is to avoid the general public's understanding of levels in education as a race to be able to compete globally. impotence is understood as genius (Lewis, 2014: 336).

In relation to Giorgio Agamben's controversial *Homo Sacer*, I try to include Stephen Thomson's writing. Thomson (2021) in his writing criticizes Giorgio Agamben's philosophy with its *homo sacer* universality with femininity. Agamben's theory is problematic when dealing with the female body, namely the reproductive system. Feminists, through Thomson's writing, see the perspective of universal nudity as problematic (the body [*homo sacer*] is not only absent, but it is something excluded). It is as if this philosophy eliminates the role of the body in a broader scope. However, despite this, Agamben's lens becomes useful when it is viewed as a phenomenon of sexual blindness in society (Thomson, 2021: 777-778).

Peters considers that based on his search, there are still few researchers in education who use Agamben's philosophy. Lloyd sees the proximity of the history of politics in Europe and America (sovereignty shifting towards internal differentiation) with Christian theology, both of which are currently in the educational environment. Peterson sees Agamben's connection with the educational world's connection between the empirical and the symbolic, for example in art and knowledge. Both are not absolutes, but relational. Kniss sees Agamben's

philosophical shift from anarchism to post-anarchism. Political education is important to resist ideas that feel no need for hermeneutics (interpretation). My last previous research saw Thomson bringing up the Homo Sacer debate for feminists. She becomes problematic when it comes to the isolation of women's bodies and the erasure of participation. It becomes useful to look at the phenomenon of gender-blindness in society at large.

The previous research above looked at Giorgio Agamben's various perspectives and their connection to the world of education. Although there is no mention of a curriculum that liberates or liberates learning, I see that all the previous studies criticize learning that leads to one way, one ideology by segregating other ideologies, valuing differential/multidisciplinary humanity, and relational. I also saw - based on the first previous research - the challenge for Indonesia to use Agamben's philosophy in an educational context. Thus, I explore and critically reflect on the phenomenon of the dictum "Merdeka Belajar" in Indonesia.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Legal and Policy Exceptions during the Covid 19 Pandemic

Education during Covid 19 has changed. The Indonesian Minister of Education, Culture, Research and Technology, Nadiem Anwar Makarim poured out an emergency policy (you could say an exception) for vaccines for all elements of education. In addition, Karim also instructed all elements involved in education to implement online learning. The normalization of Makarim's policy on the Covid 19 pandemic has brought the dynamics of the overall political wave in Indonesia. There are rejections here and there, the emergence of emergency policies that are local in nature according to the development or level of the Enforcement of Restrictions on Community Activities (PPKM).

The Philosophy of Merdeka Belajar in Indonesia

The philosophy of "Merdeka Belajar" originated from the contemplation of Ki Hajar Dewantara. Ayunda Pininta Kasih, writer of Kompas.com, said that Ki Hajar Dewantara had founded the Taman Siswa School, "Kindergarten / Taman Indria, Elementary / Taman Muda, Junior / Taman Dewasa, Senior / Taman Madya to Bachelor Wiyata / Taman Guru (Kasih, 2022)." The establishment of Taman Siswa, in my opinion, is an achievement, considering its existence until now. Dewantara, the former Minister in the field of teaching, said that human freedom, including learning subjects, aims to regulate their way of life and in line with the rules that are in the community environment (Kasih, 2022)." Dewantara's hope, the owner of the full name Raden Mas Soewardi Soerjaningrat, is that each subject / teacher / learner has mental independence. Independence according to him is freedom of birth, mind and energy. Born on May 2, 1889, he made three centers of education (tricentric education) which are in the family, community and college. The three are a unity that cannot be separated (Directorate of SMP, 2022).

Dian Ihsan (2022) as the author of KOMPAS conveyed the same thing regarding "Merdeka Belajar." Learning methods, tools, and topics focus on the interests of the student subject (Ihsan, 2022). The idea was later forwarded by Nadiem Anwar Makarim, Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of Indonesia. Rahel Narda Chaterine, a writer for Kompas, said that the Gojek founder continued the idea in the form of four main policies, "Abolishing the USBN and replacing the UN with a National Assessment. Furthermore, the policy of simplifying lesson plans and a more fluid new student admission policy (PPDB) (Chaterine in Kompas, 2021).

Human Rights and Homo Sacer

In the context of human rights, Giorgi Agamben uses a neologism-'form of life'-to describe something emancipatory. Humans as subjects come together through their ability to go out (*exodus*) to live their lives without needing to be equated with an event or competition. Agamben uses the terms *zoé* and *bios* when talking about the living. He separates them or separates the profane and the sacred. According to Rasmus Ugilt (2014), *zoé* and *bios* are not two opposing concepts (Ugilt, 2014: 41). Ugilt adds, "human life normally deals with an incredible amount of pointless exercises: aesthetics, ethics, leisure, boredom, lethargy, snobbery, legality etc (Ugilt, 2014: 42)."

The idea that the right to life is a fundamental idea in the declaration of human rights. Agamben follows this idea with the question of what kind of life is an immanent human right. Agamben's question is not about the right to life. Rather, the primacy of rights is the right to have rights, including human rights. Rights are naked (sacred). Therefore, the primacy of rights needs to be meaningful. Speaking of rights, I look at the research of J. Kameron Carter (2013). He sees, "*homo sacer*" through the social and historical processes of Western embodiment or modern globality's bond with the body (Carter, 2013: 78)." Hunter, on the other hand, calls it "the construction of something, a form of rule and life by bringing together two abstract entities (Hunter, 2017: 135)."

Independent Curriculum

According to Sandra Desi Caesaria, the Kompas writer quoted Nadiem Makarim that the independent curriculum is the Prototype Curriculum. This curriculum focuses on autonomy and independence for students. Nadiem said that the independent curriculum is project-based which requires soft skills and character tailored to each school character. Furthermore, the development of basic competencies (literacy and numerization) is important in this curriculum. For teachers, teachers are able to conduct fluid learning through differentiation of local content and based on their respective contexts (Caesaria, 2022).

Kemendikburistik conveyed a policy as an additional option that refers to the conditions of the Covid 19 pandemic is an independent curriculum. The independent curriculum, according to the Ministry of Education and Culture through its website, says the use of the curriculum after the recovery of learning during 2022 to 2024 (Kemendikburistik). In 2024 there will be a determination of further policies related to the national scale curriculum through an evaluation of the independent curriculum.

4. CONCLUSION

I see the subject/nara/learner in Agamben's lens as a subject who lives, interprets the life of education (zoé and bios) in Agamben's Lens. He is entitled to the educational rights attached to him. In addition to the educational process in schools, he also has a social meaning by reflecting on something that comes from outside himself and his relationship with education. For example: curriculum, freedom of thought and opinion, school-learner-community collaboration and school facilities. Everything is running in the name of "Merdeka Belajar" as Makarim continues Ki Hajar Dewantara's philosophy. Merdeka learning through an independent curriculum is able to support students through a prototype curriculum that focuses on character, literacy and numerization and other soft skills.

I see that based on experience in Jakarta, Medan, Pontianak and Palangka Raya, the dictum "Merdeka Belajar" is not a new product in the world of education itself. It has previously existed. However, there are several developments based on the times and at the same time according to the context of each region. How students, teachers, curriculum, environment and surrounding communities perceive learning that is truly independent affects their daily lives. This shift certainly brings fresh air with the openness of information and the flexibility of the learner subject when dealing with information and large audiences.

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