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**Autor:** Giorgio Agamben

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The Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben has always been an original reader of texts, understanding their many rich historical, aesthetic, and political meanings and effects. In *Profanations*, Agamben has assembled for the first time some of his most pivotal essays on photography, the novel, and film. A meditation on memory and oblivion, on what is lost and what remains, *Profanations* proves yet again that Agamben is one of the most provocative writers of our time. In ten essays, Agamben ponders a series of literary and philosophical problems: the relation among genius, ego, and theories of subjectivity; the problem of messianic time as explicated in both images and lived experience; parody as a literary paradigm; and the potential of magic to provide an ethical canon.

The range of topics and themes addressed here attest to the creativity of Agamben's singular mode of thought and his persistent concern with the act of witnessing, sometimes futile, sometimes earth-shattering. "In Praise of Profanity," the central essay of this short but dense book, confronts the question of profanity as the crucial political task of the moment. An act of resistance to every form of separation, the concept of profanation reorients perceptions of how power, consumption, and use interweave to produce an urgent political modality and desire: to profane the unprofanable. Agamben not only provides a new and potent theoretical model but describes it with a writerly style that itself forges inescapable links among literature, politics, and philosophy.