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# **A NEW USE OF ARCHITECTURE**

**THE POLITICAL POTENTIAL OF AGAMBEN'S COMMON USE**

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**In architecture, what does use mean? This article explores the theory of use in Giorgio Agamben's works, confronting a series of oppositions between use, property, appropriation, use value and right to use, to finally reach a beyond-the-use condition of the common, where common is not just free to use, but rather free from use: a condition of pure availability.**

KEYWORDS · property, appropriation, use value, profanation, deactivation

How do we define what is common today? One way to look at the common (or to define it) is through its use. We often understand the common as what is available (to use) for everybody. This does not necessarily imply that what is common is public; nor that it is usable by and useful for everybody. What is use then?

For instance, use can refer to the appropriation of space, an excess of use, as it is related to the 'right to use': "the right to benefit from, to use, and to enjoy something which belongs to someone else or is held in common ownership, as long as it is not damaged or destroyed" (Elden, 2014). Use can refer to 're-use' of a space or building, restoring its function, and therefore its availability, as in recent debates on vacancy (Bey, 2010) and temporary reuse (Inti, et al, 2014) in alternative architectural and urban practices (Cupers, 2010). Agamben's theory though goes beyond the conventional concept of appropriation, and the utilitarian understanding of use. It opens to the possibility of a new 'free use' of the common (Agamben, 2000). Free use is what is restored to its original availability, after a process of separation. For instance, a private space is a space consecrated to private use by an act of separation from the common usage. How to restore its free use? By making it inoperative, or replacing its old practical use (or function) with a new use: a pure use without finality.

## THE USE OF AGAMBEN

Agamben's earliest engagement with the issue of use occurs as a conventional Marxist critique in *Stanzas*, specifically in "The Dandy and the Fetish" essay, where Agamben posits that "the transfiguration of the commodity into an enchanted object is the sign that the exchange value is already beginning to eclipse the use value" (Agamben, 1993b). While this early account identifies an erosion of the possibility of use, it is oriented to challenging its underlying utilitarian presuppositions. Agamben's earliest account of use is concerned with examining the possibility of a new relation to things that consists neither in a utilitarian conception of use nor in the logic of exchange (Murray, Whyte, 2011), certainly influenced by his personal and intellectual engagement with Debord, Benjamin and Adorno. Agamben suggests that in the "spectacle [...] in which we are now living, in



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which everything is exhibited in its separation from itself, then spectacle and consumption are the two sides of a single impossibility of using. What cannot be used is, as such, given over to consumption or to spectacular exhibition and [...] the irrevocable loss of all use” (Agamben, 2007a:83-84). As such this empties out what Marx termed the ‘use value’ of commodities, leaving in place empty forms, freed from the need to be useful and thus available for a new, non-utilitarian use (Murray, Whyte, 2011).

Later on, in the essay *Profanations*, he locates the source of the unhappiness he observes in consumer society in the fact that its inhabitants “consume objects that have incorporated within themselves their own inability to be used” (Agamben, 2007a:83). In *The Coming Community*, Agamben mentions use as a “manner neither generic nor individual [...] the manner in which it passes from the common to the proper and from the proper to the common is called usage” and is associated with ethos and defines it using “free use of the proper” that, according to Holderlin’s expression, is “the most difficult task” (Agamben, 1993a:25). When linked to a political debate as in *Means Without Ends*, Agamben displaces such reflections beyond the concepts of appropriation and expropriation in order to think “the possibility and the modalities of a free use” (Agamben, 2000:116) in his critique of the false and exclusionary within the dialectic of proper<sup>1</sup> and improper that characterizes the present we live in. As an alternative, he asks:

If instead we define the common [...] as a point of indifference between the proper and the improper –that is, as something that can never be grasped in terms of either expropriation or appropriation but that can be grasped, rather, only as use– the essential political problem then becomes: ‘how does one use a common?’ (Agamben, 2000:116).

This political meaning is further elaborated in *The Time That Remains* where inspired by a Pauline reading of the early Christian political theology, and specifically of the word *chresai* [*fa uso*] is put in relation

<sup>1</sup> Aristotle in *Politics*, argues: “every article of property has a double way of using it; both uses are related to the article itself, but not related to it in the same manner—one is peculiar to the thing and the other is not peculiar to it. Take for example a shoe—there is its use as a shoe and there is its use as an article of exchange; for both are ways of using a shoe, inasmuch as even he that barter a shoe for money or food with the customer that wants a shoe uses it as a shoe, though not for the use peculiar to a shoe (proper use; *uso proprio*), since shoes have not come into existence for the purpose of barter.” The proper use and the free use represent the political message of resistance suggested by Agamben.



Borei Keila. Phnom Penh, Cambodia, 2014. Espacio en planta baja apropiado informalmente por residentes que ponen en arriendo sus propiedades en el edificio / *Ground floor space informally appropriated by residents who rent out their flat in the formal building.* © BUDD students 2014-2015

with the definition of the messianic life<sup>2</sup> *hos me*, “as if not”. The messianic vocation (*klesis*), Agamben explains, consists precisely in the re-vocation of any vocation; however, this re-vocation does not destroy or annihilate the factitious condition of the world but, rather, suspends it in the figure of the “as if not” (*hos me, come non*). Use is the form that this deactivation takes: “to live messianically means to use the *klesis*, and the messianic *klesis* is something that can only be used and never possessed” (Agamben, 2005a:31). Importantly, this use in the form of the ‘as if not’ has not merely a negative connotation: it does not constitute a new identity; rather, the ‘new creature’ is nothing but the use and the messianic vocation of the old identity. The old identity, the law or the dispositive is not replaced by a new one but only rendered inoperative and, in this way, opened to its ‘true use’ (Agamben, 2005a:33). Precisely in this notion of the re-vocation (*katargesis*) which in St. Paul’s epistles describes the ‘fulfillment’ of the law at the arrival of the Messiah, comes from *argeo*, and thus from *argos*, and means “to render inoperative, to deactivate, to suspend the effectiveness” (Agamben, 2005a:91). As Salzani notes, “the fulfillment in the use is thus *désœuvrement*, and messianic potentiality is precisely that which is not exhausted in its *ergon* but remains potential in a ‘weak’ form. *Katargesis* restores the works –the identities– to their potentiality by rendering them inoperative” (Salzani, 2013).

This true use is neither the Marxian use-value nor the utilitarian concept of Antonio Negri, rather is a deactivation of the use<sup>3</sup> much closer to the Franciscans who refuse all forms of property and right in favor of a *usus pauper*, a restricted “use without right” (Agamben, 2005a:27). In such a use without legal authorization, Agamben sees the possibility of a form of subtraction from law, rather than an open conflict with it. This recalls his debt to Paul, who framed the nullification of substantive vocations introduced by the messianic vocation as a form of use (Attell, 2014),

2 We do not have time to engage in a detailed explanation of the messianic dimension of Agamben’s philosophy however for the sake of clarity, for Agamben, a truly messianic time, is a “time of the now” because the messianic event is not something to be awaited but something that already is. For Agamben, the time to which we must direct our attention is not something that, from a chronological-representational perspective, is forever “to come,” but rather something that has already happened and is always already happening in the present. Messianic for Agamben does also qualify a transformation a “messianic transformation of the law through *katargesis*, therefore, is a matter of rendering it inoperative, suspending its “work”. (Attell, 2014).

3 “Use”, Agamben suggests, is the very definition Paul gives of the messianic life that follows this nullification. While the substance of this reading of Paul is derived from Heidegger’s 1921 lecture *Characteristics of Early Christian Life Experience*, Agamben nonetheless utilizes the Pauline conception of use in opposition to Heidegger’s “appropriation”.



Beirut. Litoral / coastline. © Michele Spatari, DPU Summerlab 2015

exhorting the Corinthians: “Art thou called being a slave? Care not for it: but if thou majesty be made free, use it rather”.<sup>4</sup> In *The State of Exception* Agamben suggests that “what is found after the law is not a more proper and original use value that precedes the law, but a new use that is born only after it. And use, which has been contaminated by law, must also be freed from its own value”; as what opens a passage toward justice is not the erasure of law, “but its deactivation and inactivity [*inoperosità*]*—*that is, another use of the law. This is precisely what the force-of-law (which keeps the law working [*in opera*] beyond its formal suspension) seeks to prevent” (Agamben, 2005b:64).

In *The Highest Poverty: Monastic Rules and Form-of-Life* (2013), Agamben offers a superb interpretation of the message of Francis and of the Franciscan theory of poverty and use suggesting again clearly the very political task of the present: how to think a form-of-life, a human life entirely removed from the grasp of the law and a use of bodies and of the world that would never be substantiated into an appropriation. What is so outrageous and deeply political in the highest poverty practiced by the Franciscans? What leads and what makes life according to Franciscan brothers? Those questions guided Agamben in discovering that the Franciscan rule is a life that coincides with his own form, a life that is a form-of-life. From a legal point of view the form-of-life can be achieved only through the *abdcatio omnis iuris*, or the renunciation to any form of law. The only practice that can be maintained –which allows the very survival of the individual– is the use of things. With an unprecedented radicalism, use is contrasted here with property, as it does not simply represent a different way of owning but a theory of relationship with

4 (I Cor. 7:17–22) cited in Whyte dictionary.



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the world that is independent from the paradigm of appropriation. A Franciscan's existence is outside the law, or an existence for which the body of the individual can never be captured by the legal arrangement, a non-available body [*indisponibile*]. For the Franciscans there is no such thing as a form of economic life or a form of legal life, rather there is simply a form-of-life that makes it impossible for the appropriation but only use. Tracing the different emergences of *usus pauper* – a poor use where “the perfection of the rule consists in the renunciation of ownership and not in the scarcity of use” (Agamben, 2013:56)– *usus facti*, the simple act of using something, and *simplex usus* as a *de facto* use separated by a legal *usus* (property) are simply syntagms that signify the relationships of non appropriation of the human with the world. Agamben's research around the ontology of use continues as he indicates that Franciscans simply define and characterize use as opposed to the right to property. In such expansion, he renders visible possible resistances, inversions and deactivations to bio-economic capture of the bodies and the practice of a purely economic regime (Papa, 2013).

In *The Coming Community*, Agamben frames the non-identitarian singularity that he sees as central to a politics and a form of community that could escape the hold of the state as “a new use of the self” (Agamben, 1993a:28). The formulation of a singularity that ‘makes use’ of itself, rather than being bound within a naturalized and/or politicized identity, is contrasted to a substantive identity that could be represented and granted juridical rights. This point is certainly related to the discussion on potentiality, as in Agamben's view a politics based on substantive identities fixes its pre-given constituencies rather than allowing for changes and transformations in which we could “hope to be other than we are” (Whyte, 2013). A new use of the self then would imply the denaturalization and desacralization of the self, which would exist



Recetas Urbanas, Sevilla, España. Construcción ilegal en la azotea de un edificio /  
*Illegal rooftop construction.* © Santiago Cirugeda

as a pure singularity rather than as an instance of a particular identity. It is however in the *In Praise of Profanation* that Agamben clarifies the concept when he suggests that the “creation of a new use is possible only by deactivating an old use, rendering it inoperative” through an act of profanation (Agamben, 2007a).

Agamben’s *Homo Sacer* project has been recently complemented with two publications not yet translated in English: *L’uso dei Corpi* (2014) – *Homo sacer IV*, 2, and the long awaited *Stasis. La guerra civile come paradigma politico Homo Sacer*, II, 2. *L’uso dei Corpi* [The usage of bodies] seems a closer reflection around the notion of use not only in the Aristotle’s basic division between soul [*anima*] and body but also outlining a double significance of the role of the body [*corpo*], declining modes ‘of use’, up to theorizing ‘a dual form of doing’ [*forma del fare*]. In the first part of the book Agamben sets forth Aristotle’s theory of slavery as the privileged locus for the development of the theory of use, which is indeed revealed in ‘the use of bodies’ drawn from Aristotle’s discussion of slavery in his *Politics*. Agamben found that the syntagm ‘the use of the body’ written in the opening sentences of *Politics* is engaged in the definition of slavery:

(...) who is a human being belonging by nature not to himself but to another is by nature a slave, and a person is a human being belonging to another if in being a man he is an article of property, and an article of property is an instrument for action separable from its owner (Aristotle, 1916 [1254]:15).

Agamben observes that the ‘body of the slave’ [*corpo dello schiavo*] in ancient Greek is intended as an instrument, as in “those whose business is to use their body, [*l’essere la cui opera è l’uso del corpo*] and those who can do nothing better”, and it is here that Agamben sees *enegeia* and *chresis*, being-in-use and use, being juxtaposed as *psyche* and *soma*, body and soul.<sup>5</sup> Aristotle refers to slaves as ‘living tools’.<sup>6</sup> Such reflection emerges from another term Agamben brings back from Aristotle’s work: *ktesis* (tools, instruments, furnishings), which render in themselves the possibility of property, the potential of being owned. However he translates the term *ktema* as “something that is beneficial for everyone’s life” specifying that beneficial means “everything you can make use of”, clearly detaching use from property (Agamben, 2014). Coupling slave with instrument and

<sup>5</sup> The original tension between *energeia*, the being-at-work of man and *dynamis*, and potentiality -which was originally a tension between being-at-work and being-in-use (*chresis*)- are mutually influenced.

<sup>6</sup> Slaves receive the guidance and instructions that they must have in order to live, and in return they provide the master with the benefits of their physical labour, not least of which is the free time that makes it possible for the master to engage in politics and philosophy.

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**“(...) use is contrasted here with property, as it does not simply represent a different way of owning but a theory of relationship with the world that is independent from the paradigm of appropriation. A Franciscan’s existence is outside the law, or an existence for which the body of the individual can never be captured by the legal arrangement (...)”**

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defining it as furnishing is achieved by detaching them from the instruments which are not producing something, but simply their use. That is, their use is not for producing something but is rather a simple *praxis*.<sup>7</sup> For this reason Agamben writes “the use of the body and the absence of practical use (*opera*) are something more, or rather different from a productive activity and they resemble and keep the paradigm of a human activity that is not reducible neither to labour, production or *praxis*” (Agamben, 2014a:35) but as a form-of-life. As such Agamben suggests that it is possible that “the use of the body is situated in the threshold between *zoè* and *bios*, between *oikos* and *polis*, *physis* and *nomos*, that the slave is an operative figure that is caught in the law yet to be cull (*delibare*)” (Agamben, 2014a:74). In this stage of reflection Agamben illustrates again (2007:1) that the notion of work (*opera*) emerges before in the slave rather than in the artist or any other creative figure, as the slave is by definition someone without *ergon* (*opera*/work) and its *ergon* is the very use of the body which makes the slave born with no work (*argos*). Later in a more recent translated works, Agamben returns to the reflection on use and ‘to use’ suggesting that they are terms that modernity has invested with a strong ‘utilitarian’ connotation, transforming their original sense that was not present in the Greek term *chresthai* [to use] which “does not seem to have a meaning of its own, but derives its meaning from the term that follows it, that it is found in the dative or in the genitive, and never, as we would expect, in the accusative”.<sup>8</sup> The verb *chresthai*, Agamben discovers, is classified by grammarians as a ‘middle voice’, that is, neither active nor passive, but the two together. Crucial in this etymological research is that in this ‘middle’ perspective,

(...) the object of the verb *chresthai* cannot be in the accusative, but is always in the dative or the genitive. The process does not travel from an active subject toward the separate object of its action, but implicates in itself the subject, in the same measure in which it is itself implied in the object and ‘is given’ to it. (Agamben, 2014b:69)

The result is thus a radical transformation of the ontology of the concept of ‘subject’. Not a subject that uses an object, but a subject that constitutes itself only through the using, the being in relation with another. The subject that is constituted in this use is both ethical and political, a subject that

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<sup>7</sup> Aristotle speaks of the slave also as a part of the master –even as a separated part of the master’s body, for Agamben this use of the body is not to be intended as productive but rather in its practical version, so it is not that strange to speak of a tool as an extension of the body– if, for example, I use a stick as a probe to explore an otherwise inaccessible space. Prosthetic devices may be external or internal: my deficient eyesight is assisted by the lenses in my glasses, and by lenses implanted in my eyes. The implants have become part of my body; the functionally equivalent external lenses are separated parts of my body. From the master’s point of view, then, the slave is ‘as it were a part and detachable tool of the master’; specifically, he is a detached instrument for action.

<sup>8</sup> To support this reflection Agamben lists several meanings as *chresthai theoi*, literally ‘to make use of god’ that is, to consult an Oracle; *chresthai nostou*, literally ‘to use (the) return’, that is, to experience nostalgia; *chresthai logoi*, literally ‘to use language’ that is, to speak; *chresthai symphorai*, literally ‘to use misfortune’ that is, to be unlucky; *chresthai gynaiki*, literally ‘to use a woman’ that is, to have sexual relations with a woman; *chresthai you polei*, literally ‘to make use of the city’ that is, to participate in political life; *chresthai keiri*, literally ‘to use the hand’ that is, to strike with the fist. (Agamben, 2014b)



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testifies the affection received insofar as it is in relation with another body. Use, in this sense, “is the affection that a body receives inasmuch as it is in relation with another body (or with one’s own body as other)” (Agamben, 2014b:79). In concluding the first part of the *L’Uso dei Corpi*, Agamben connects the circular link between use and care [*uso e cura*] already developed in Heidegger and Foucault:

The slave is, on the one hand, a human animal (or human-animal), and on the other and to the same extent, a living instrument (or a man-tool). The slave is, that is, in the history of anthropogenesis, a dual threshold: the animal life transfix in the human as well as the live (the man) pierces in the *inorganico* (the instrument). (Agamben, 2014a:59)

What seems central in the reflection on use is that, as for Foucault the subject is not a substance but a process, “the ethical dimension, the care of the self does not have an autonomous substance: it does not have other relationship that the one of use between the man and the world” (Agamben, 2014a:58) where the subject of the *chresis* is “entering in a relation with the self and the world” (Agamben, 2014a:49).

After having situated the use of the body of the slave in a threshold that approximates the practice, or the form-of-life of ‘use’ to those in care, Agamben reflects on the conditions for thinking the use as a ‘fundamental political category’ liberated from its intended instrumental nature ascribing it to its original mode of ‘inoperative enjoyment’, anticipating and connecting to the very core of his research

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**“To profane, in this sense, means freeing things from the ‘sacred names’ that set them apart as benefit of the few, to return them to their ‘free’ or ‘common usage’. This makes clear that the ‘usage’ in question is not simply one with a more ample or liberal legal definition, but one that categorically rejects the idea of legitimate ownership (...)”**

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the rendering inoperative of the different exclusionary mechanisms. The book then moves into a fascinating examination of hermeneutics that Agamben develops, linking Foucault’s care of the self with the problem of appropriation (*Ereignis*) and Heidegger’s *Dasein* connected with the Franciscan practice –already outlined in *The Highest Poverty*–, Walter Benjamin, Husserl and Levinas, Spinoza and Hölderlin, and all the theoretical apparatuses constant in Agamben’s *oeuvre*, in order to strengthen the sense of use, declined as an ‘inoperative category’, whose form-of-life and specifically human practices are able to turn off the juridical and governmental dispositive, since “it is never a common property, but only that which cannot be appropriated” what helped –along the entire route of modernity– to deform the ethos [abito] of the living human, given that:

(...) the use is the form in which the *habitus* gives existence, beyond the simple opposition between power and being-in-opera. And if the *habitus* is, in this sense, always already in use by itself and if this [...] implies a neutralization of the opposition subject/object, then there is no place here for an individual owner of the *habitus*, which can decide to put or not put in place. The self is constituted in relation to use, is not a subject, is nothing more than this relation. (Agamben, 2014a:102).

What seems to emerge in Agamben’s reflection is that use “constitutes an inoperative practice (*pratica inoperosa*) that can happen only when the Aristotelian dispositive potentiality/actuality, that assigns the supremacy to *energeia*, to the being-at-work, is deactivated” and profanated (Agamben, 2014a:130).

#### **PROFANING AN ACT OF COMMON USE**

Agamben’s notion of profanation is a way to open up new uses and modes of politics (Boano, Talocci, 2014). In Agamben’s view, to profane means to return sacralized objects to free use. As religion separates things from the common sphere through sacrifice, capitalism also enacts the pure form of separation by making everything a commodity, impossible to use. In the sphere of consumption, profanation is, by contrast, what restores the common use by neutralizing the apparatuses of power through subversion<sup>9</sup> of meaning. This is not unlike the Situationists’ *détournement* –which heavily influenced Agamben– offering a drift to a totally different meaning, a critique of the capitalist commodification of all aspects of life through the misappropriation of existing spaces with well-defined uses, able to determine “a use that is different from the one the capital had ‘assigned’ to that particular piece of urban fabric” (Forty, 2000:23).

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<sup>9</sup> Subversion and profanation thus seem to avoid the reductionist discourse of an architecture that magically generates enjoyment of Lefebvre who, hostile to this spatial fetishism (an abandoned warehouse, he says, can be quickly turned into a place of celebration) alludes to Hill’s ‘illegal architect’ that subverts the conventions and “[...] considers how space is occupied rather than its form, and encourages inappropriate uses”. (Hill, 1998).

To profane, in this sense, means freeing things from the 'sacred names' that set them apart as benefit of the few, to return them to their 'free' or 'common usage'. This makes clear that the 'usage' in question is not simply one with a more ample or liberal legal definition, but one that categorically rejects the idea of legitimate ownership: this 'lawless usage' is not a purely anarchic one, but it is one that rejects the paradigms offered by the juridical culture of its day and carries the revolutionary implication that 'lawful usage'<sup>10</sup> was far from just (De la Durantaye, 2008).

In the book *In Praise of Profanation*, Agamben defines the gesture of profanation as one that can return to the free use of mankind what had been previously taken away from it, confined to the inaccessible sphere of the sacred. For Agamben, to profane something is a positive act for the simple reason that it liberates things and practices for communal usage: a "pure, profane, and liberated from sacred names [*dai nomi sacri*]" is the thing returned to the common use of mankind" (Agamben, 2007a:83). He suggests that "one day humanity will play with the law as children play with disused objects, not in order to restore them to their canonical use but to free them from it for good" (Agamben, 2007a:65). 'Free usage' is thus communal and even communist usage, but it is also more than this and its understanding implies a new conception of the categories of law and usage. Profanation "neutralizes what it profanes [...] deactivat[ing] the apparatuses of power and return[ing] to common use the spaces that power had seized" (Agamben, 2007a:77); this idea of profanation also makes possible the concept of 'gesture', which Agamben comes to define via an alternative reading of the two sides of Aristotle's famous distinction between action [*praxis*] and production [*poiesis*] in which gesture is neither a production nor an enactment but is "undertaking and supporting [...] breaking the false alternative between means and ends" (Agamben, 2000:155). Again in *In Praise of Profanations* a pure means is defined as "a praxis that, while firmly maintaining its nature as a means, is emancipated from its relationship to an end; it has joyously forgotten its goal and can now show itself as such, as a means without an end" (Agamben, 2007a:87). But in the capitalist 'society of spectacle' nothing is as fragile and precarious as the sphere of pure means because "[if] the apparatuses of the capitalist cult are so effective, it is not so much because they act on primary behaviors, but because they act on pure means, that is, on behaviors that have been separated from themselves and thus detached from any relationship to an end. In its extreme phase, capitalism is nothing but a gigantic apparatus for capturing pure means", recounting on the double gesture of indistinction "which have diverted them from their possible use" (Agamben, 2007a:92). As such, it is the task of a new politics to free pure means from the control mechanisms that have taken and imprisoned them. How can this be achieved? Agamben here suggests a way forward which will be central to a progressive political project –not only a powerful tool of diagnosis– in stating that "The creation of a new use is possible only by deactivating an old use, rendering it inoperative" (Agamben, 2007a:87).

For Agamben, today's political struggle is to make possible new forms of profanation in order to overcome today's intensely secularized capitalist cult. Capitalism, then, according to Agamben, is nothing but a system for capturing things, objects, and people, in order to remove all possibility of singular use, that is, in order to make every aspect of life available for control and commodification. Agamben understands that the means by which this end is achieved –the control of a total consumption– has to be related to media and audiovisual devices (cinema and photography more specifically) because the "apparatuses of the media aim precisely at neutralizing this profanatory power of language as pure means, preventing language from disclosing the

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<sup>10</sup> Once ascribed to the statements of Church and State.

possibility of a new use” (Agamben, 2007a:88). Thus profaning for Agamben is specifically to render such separations inoperative, and this task is for him truly important up to the point that, “the profanation of the unprofanable is the political task of the coming generation” (Agamben, 2007a:92). Profanation fits into the overall totality of Agamben’s work in seeking to deactivate the apparatuses of power in the interest of a coming community which is only latent, present but perhaps unrealized; and involves a resistance that challenges the contemporary place of language.

## CONCLUSION

Playing with the powerful conceptual apparatuses of Agamben’s ontology, applying the ideas of use and profanation to the realm of design and architecture –and the spaces they produce– would mean to return the practice itself to the everyday users of those spaces, and to discard the neoliberal exclusionary logic, which lately has created ‘alien’ environments and thus can open for a “radical inclusivity”: a new common (Boano, 2015). Agamben’s chain of adjectives –pure, profane, free– shows the intent of profanation and the reason why Agamben wishes to praise it. Its goal is to free things from the ‘sacred names’ that set them apart as the province of the few; it is to return the things of the world to their natural context: ‘common usage’. In this respect, re-discovering and liberating Agamben’s architecture represents an indispensable tool for architects in search of a theoretical and critical framework for a renewed political practice and a common use. A new use of architecture. **ARQ**

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