



State of Exception

By Giorgio Agamben

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Two months after the attacks of 9/11, the Bush administration, in the midst of what it perceived to be a state of emergency, authorized the indefinite detention of noncitizens suspected of terrorist activities and their subsequent trials by a military commission. Here, distinguished Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben uses such circumstances to argue that this unusual extension of power, or "state of exception," has historically been an underexamined and powerful strategy that has the potential to transform democracies into totalitarian states.

The sequel to Agamben's *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, *State of Exception* is the first book to theorize the state of exception in historical and philosophical context. In Agamben's view, the majority of legal scholars and policymakers in Europe as well as the United States have wrongly rejected the necessity of such a theory, claiming instead that the state of exception is a pragmatic question. Agamben argues here that the state of exception, which was meant to be a provisional measure, became in the course of the twentieth century a normal paradigm of government. Writing nothing less than the history of the state of exception in its various national contexts throughout Western Europe and the United States, Agamben uses the work of Carl Schmitt as a foil for his reflections as well as that of Derrida, Benjamin, and Arendt.

In this highly topical book, Agamben ultimately arrives at original ideas about the future of democracy and casts a new light on the hidden relationship that ties law to violence.

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Editorial Review

Review

"When a conservative member of the U.S. Congress recently designated the Guantanamo prisoners as 'those who were missed by the bombs' and thus forfeited their right to live, he almost literally evoked Agamben's notion of homo sacer, a man reduced to bare life no longer covered by any legal or civil rights. What you hold in your hands is simply *the* book for all those who do not see in 9/11 a mere pretext for patriotic mobilization, but an impetus for a deeper reflection on where we stand today with regard to the very fundamentals of our civilization."

(Slavoj Zizek *Slavoj Zizek, author of Iraq: The Borrowed Kettle* 2004-08-06)

"*State of Exception* is a timely and compelling inquiry into the capacity of state power to withdraw the guarantees of legal protection and entitlement, at once abandoning its subjects to the violent whims of law and intensifying state power. Not to be conceived as merely occasional and conditional, invocations of a state of exception have come to constitute the basis of modern state power. Agamben deftly considers the historical and philosophical implications of this power, offering a brilliant consideration of 'life' and its tense relation to normativity. This is an erudite and provocative book that calls for us to 'stop the machine' and break the violent hold that law lays upon life."

(Judith Butler *Judith Butler, author of Precarious Life: Powers of Violence and Mourning* 2004-08-06)

"For Agamben, fingerprinting is not just a matter of civil liberties: it is symptomatic of an alarming shift in political geography. We have moved from Athens to Auschwitz: the West's political model is now the concentration camp rather than the city state; we are no longer citizens but detainees, distinguishable from the inmates of Guantanamo not by any difference in legal status, but only by the fact that we have not yet had the misfortune to be incarcerated--or unexpectedly executed by a missile from an unmanned aircraft. . . . But although his recent examples come from the war on terror, the political development they represent is not, according to Agamben, peculiar to the United States under the Bush presidency. It is part of a wider range in governance in which the rule of law is routinely displaced by the state of exception, or emergency, and people are increasingly subject to extra-judicial state violence."

(Malcolm Bull *London Review of Books* 2004-12-16)

"*State of Exception* is an impressive and disquieting meditation on the state of the democratic institutions by which political power is organised in the West. Written in a simple and lucid language, this is an erudite, meticulous, and precise examination of the long and complex history of the ideological framework underpinning the present obsession with the state of exception as the 'new form-of-state' as it obtains at least in the USA and UK."

(Tony Simoes da Silva *International Journal of Baudrillard Studies* 2005-07-01)

"This book will likely be every bit as influential as [Agamben's] previous texts. . . . An indispensable read for geographers and others interested in the spatiality of law and sovereign power."

(Mathew Coleman *Environment and Planning*)

"The impact of Agamben's thought since the publication of the first volume of *Homo Sacer* . . . has been immense not merely in the field of continental philosophy but also in political and legal theory, sociology, and in literary and cultural studies."

(M. Canstantinou and M. Margaroni *Continental Philosophy*)

"In Agamben's work, one meets a vision that looks deeply into the well of human experience, and perceives there a turbulent and powerful interplay of political and social forces, all serving to shape and constitute--not only the social order and individual subhjectivity--but also 'life' at its most basic level."

(*Radical Philosophy Review*)

"A worthwhile addition to the burgeoning literature on mass violence."

(Kenneth Hemmereichs *H-Net*)

From the Inside Flap

Two months after the attacks of 9/11, the Bush administration, in the midst of what it perceived to be a state of emergency, authorized the indefinite detention of noncitizens suspected of terrorist activities and their subsequent trials by a military commission. Here, distinguished Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben uses such circumstances to argue that this unusual extension of power, or "state of exception," has historically been an underexamined and powerful strategy that has the potential to transform democracies into totalitarian states.

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About the Author

Giorgio Agamben is professor of aesthetics at the University of Verona. He is the author of ten previous books, including the prequel to this one, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. **Kevin Attell** is a writer and translator living in Berkeley, California. He is the translator of Agamben's *The Open: Man and Animal*.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Ryan Brown:

The book *State of Exception* make you feel enjoy for your spare time. You may use to make your capable more increase. Book can to get your best friend when you getting anxiety or having big problem with your subject. If you can make studying a book *State of Exception* to become your habit, you can get much more advantages, like add your own personal capable, increase your knowledge about several or all subjects. You can know everything if you like start and read a e-book *State of Exception*. Kinds of book are a lot of. It means that, science book or encyclopedia or other folks. So , how do you think about this guide?

Callie Allen:

Nowadays reading books become more than want or need but also work as a life style. This reading habit give you lot of advantages. The benefits you got of course the knowledge the particular information inside the book which improve your knowledge and information. The details you get based on what kind of publication you read, if you want have more knowledge just go with knowledge books but if you want sense happy read one using theme for entertaining including comic or novel. Typically the State of Exception is kind of guide which is giving the reader unpredictable experience.

Patrick Allen:

Playing with family in a very park, coming to see the marine world or hanging out with buddies is thing that usually you might have done when you have spare time, then why you don't try thing that really opposite from that. One particular activity that make you not feeling tired but still relaxing, trilling like on roller coaster you already been ride on and with addition of knowledge. Even you love State of Exception, you are able to enjoy both. It is great combination right, you still would like to miss it? What kind of hangout type is it? Oh can happen its mind hangout folks. What? Still don't have it, oh come on its named reading friends.

John Almanzar:

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