

of the public and the private—indeed, do these boundaries have much use here?—make us work through not just state responsibility but how responsibility in seemingly private domains of love and care interacts with everyday public responsibility that we ascribe to the state. These dissident actions, no matter how fleeting, can make us appreciate the capacity for minority presence and affect (61), enabling us to ask whether and how it is possible to redraw those boundaries in a care-ful way. Ultimately the book is about “the desire for other kinds of states” (157), which is what many of us had hoped the worldwide pandemic crisis might bring about.

So, where does this lead us? As Cooper said in her Kings College inaugural lecture in 2019, social justice is in part dependent on the forms that institutions take. Cooper is asking us to think about democracy and how it can be enacted. Her case studies are all about arguing rights. By encompassing formations that we separate off from the state into “civil society,” and by not taking a stand for or against these different rights claims, her stories enable us to think how acts of exclusion, discrimination, and sanctioning might enable progressive rethinking of what a democratic, inclusive state could look and feel like. The concluding chapter examines possibilities of how things might be otherwise through examples of state play, from LETS schemes to free universities and crowd-sourced constitutions, to show us ways in which the state should not—indeed cannot—be discounted. Her examples help us to rethink what and how states should look, feel, and be like. At a time when neoliberal states are relocating governmental responsibilities onto individuals or to their chums in private companies to make profits, the book asks us to look forwards, to a concept of the state, even if provisional, which is relational, caring, and feeling and has social justice at its heart.

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Carl Raschke: *Neoliberalism and Political Theology: From Kant to Identity Politics*. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019. Pp. viii, 196).

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*Neoliberalism and Political Theology* is a thoughtful and often insightful essay about a topic that has little to do with its title. The latter, along with the author’s introduction, leads the reader to believe that his book will contribute

to the recent trend in political theory that, taking its cue from the German legal scholar Carl Schmitt, asserts that all important political concepts are theological principles in secularized form. Raschke implies as much when he claims that his project “undertakes the venture of mapping the *deep political theology of neoliberalism*” (4). In practice, his book does no such thing. Readers would be hard pressed to find in it any extended argument that neoliberalism — that is, the market fundamentalism that was theorized by economists such as Friedrich Hayek and Milton Friedman and that has become the common sense of present-day globalized society — originates in the theological teachings of a particular religious tradition. Raschke’s real concern lies elsewhere: specifically, in the way in which the neoliberal economics has been tethered to the progressive agenda known as “identity politics.” A more fitting title for the book would be one that he gives to a chapter: “Progressive Neoliberalism and Its Discontents.”

Because so much of the book is devoted to analyzing a broad spectrum of recent theory, following Raschke’s own argument can be tricky. Raschke takes us on a guided tour through contemporary political thought. He deals with scores of theorists and philosophers; those who matter most to him are Michel Foucault (specifically his lectures on pastoral power), Gilles Deleuze, Wendy Brown, Giorgio Agamben, and Nancy Fraser, in addition to several classic European philosophers, notably Friedrich Nietzsche and Immanuel Kant. This tour is an interesting one, as Raschke is a capable guide: he presents clear and cogent synopses of these thinkers and extracts novel meaning from well-known texts. But this “connect-the-theorists” approach to building an argument frequently obscures the author’s own conclusions. On his tour, Raschke provides eloquent and useful commentary on the sites to which he calls our attention, but we are often uncertain about where we are or where his trajectory is taking us. While we may appreciate Raschke’s admiration for grand theory, some may wish that he would tell us more about how the philosophical schemas he presents so clearly shed light on contemporary society — which, at least nominally, remains his theme.

These reservations notwithstanding, Raschke makes some provocative claims about his main — if sometimes unacknowledged — topic: the complicity between progressive politics and neoliberalism. His main inspiration is a series of essays written in 2017 by the political philosopher Nancy Fraser on “progressive neoliberalism.” Raschke shows how Fraser’s insights were prefigured by Foucault’s claim that liberalism originates in pastoral power — that is, a deterritorialized, shepherd-like authority legitimized by its concern for a flock’s well-being — and by Brown’s insight that the neoliberal idea of the free market is tied to a distorted sense of civic duty, which she dubs “sacrificial citizenship.” Kant’s conception of human freedom as an abstract and universal imperative that is detached from concerns with ordinary happiness is the template, Raschke argues, for progressive neoliberalism. The lubricant for liberal society is “*intensive signification*” (93), which generates diversity and political passion in limitless quantities. Identity, in this

context, is best understood as “the reserve currency of neoliberal governmentality” (95). While some political philosophers (Francis Fukuyama most famously) hailed liberal democracy as a system that maximizes the politics of recognition, Raschke suggests that such societies achieve little more than commodified difference—that is, difference with an exchange value on the market of cultural goods—rather than anything resembling mutual understanding and resulting solidarities. Hitting his stride towards the book’s conclusion, Raschke vituperates against the “moral privilege” invoked by neoliberal elites (150), their cosmopolitan disdain for populist outrage at the economic impact of globalization, the “prevalence of private virtue signalling,” and the “narcissistic self-aggrandisement” lurking “behind the screen of an overstimulated moral fervor for righting all the world’s wrongs” (153). Against these trends, Raschke places his hopes in deeper social solidarity, in which transcendent values traditionally embodied by religion are summoned to play a decisive role.

Embedded in an essay that purports to be about neoliberalism’s deep theological underpinnings, one finds, in short, a polemic against progressive liberalism’s Faustian pact with free-market values. The force of Raschke’s critique is, consequently, blunted by the roundabout character of his argument: if the only payoff for invoking political theology is the unobjectionable claim that neoliberalism is rooted in moral values, the detour hardly seems necessary. It is also unclear why extended disquisitions on, say, Agamben are needed, when Raschke could have engaged with authors other than Fraser who have specifically grappled with the problem of progressive neoliberalism, such as the French geographer Christophe Guilluy, the philosopher Jean-Claude Michéa, the British commentator David Goodhart, and Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello in their landmark study *The New Spirit of Capitalism* (Verso, 1999). It is almost as if Raschke felt the need to conceal his esoteric critique of progressive neoliberalism in an exoteric (and, at least in principle, less controversial) argument about neoliberalism’s theological roots. This is a shame: Raschke’s objections to progressive neoliberalism are forceful and prescient, though far from completely spelled out. One hopes that he will revisit these arguments in a more direct manner in subsequent publications.

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