voting above will-formation" (p. 5, cf. 175) on the grounds that such will-formation will not determine entirely the outcome of any given vote (p. 77).

Those who regard Rousseau as a moderate democratic reformer will find much in these books to corroborate their views and to stimulate reflection on some largely overlooked aspects of his political thought. This reviewer remains convinced, however, that Rousseau's thought is more foreign to the modern liberal outlook, and for that very reason more valuable and interesting, than these authors allow.

Democracy and Other Neoliberal Fantasies: Communicative Capitalism and Left Politics. By Jodi Dean. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009. 232p. $74.94 cloth, $21.95 paper.
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— Joseph M. Schwartz, *Temple University*

In *Democracy and Other Neoliberal Fantasies,* Jodi Dean deploys a version of psychoanalytic Marxism influenced by Jacques Lacan and Slavoj Žižek to offer an intriguing, though rather idealist, account of the hegemony of neoliberalism. Dean blames left intellectuals' embrace of identity politics and the "politics of victimhood" for the left's failure to offer a "solidaristic" political alternative to neoliberalism. According to Dean, the "academic and typing left's" celebration of "consumption as creativity" reinforced neoliberalism's or (what Dean terms) "communicative capitalism's" project of "inclusion and participation in information, entertainment, and communication technologies in ways that capture resistance and intensify capitalism" (p. 2).

By embracing the individualistic lifestyle liberation of the 1960s and the "marketing of images" of communicative capitalism, left intellectuals (here Dean means some cultural studies scholars) abandoned their "historical solidarity with workers and the poor" (p. 35). By embracing a nonconflictual "ethical" critique of the powerful rather than a "conflictual" politics aimed at altering sovereign power, "the left," in Dean's view, has "retreated from the state" and no longer believes in "collective solutions to large-scale systematic inequalities" (pp. 11, 35). The left's obsession with Foucauldian forms of governance through nonstate institutions leads it to ignore the neoliberal state's use of the violence of militarism and the criminal justice system to enhance sovereignty.

In chapter 1, on "technology," Dean holds that by celebrating the democratic potential of the Internet and social media, the left is complicit in neoliberalism's masking of its own repressive sovereign power. The infotainment industry's ideological claim is that all voices are equal, but Dean convincingly shows that "nodes of power" exist within the Internet and that the proliferation of voices serves, in part, to provide "niche" consumers for global corporate marketers. Drawing on the work of Žižek, Dean argues that it is not the left that benefits from postmodern capitalism, but the right, which has become the master of "packaging, marketing and representation" (p. 7).

Dean contends that the left must break with communicative capitalism's individualization of politics into niche "tribal communities" who commodify their lifestyles via social media. Instead, the left must reengage in the arduous tasks of face-to-face argument with others and contestation for power. In the Lacanian psychoanalytic language that pervades her work, Dean contends that the left's fetish of the Internet reflects a "condensation" of politics into "democratic participation"; a "displacement" of politics into everyday activities, such as surfing the web; and a "denial" that democracy in practice is the rule of the wealthy (pp. 38–40). Dean succeeds in offering a productive counterweight to the naive celebration of the Internet as a democratic leveler of power. Yet only a Luddite would reject using the organizing tools provided by the Internet.

Who constitutes Dean's actual "left" and what constituencies would constitute the "solidaristic left" of her imagination are questions of agency about which the text is peculiarly silent. Dean frequently cites "the academic and typing left" (with Judith Butler, cultural studies theorists, and "deliberative democrats" as her most explicit interlocutors); at other times, she criticizes moderate Democrats and Third Way European social democrats. Self-defined leftists active in trade unions, the global justice movement, or struggles against federal and state budget cuts are explicitly critical of neoliberalism. Older white males of the "social democratic left"—among others, Todd Gitlin in *Twilight of Common Dreams* (1996), Richard Rorty in *Achieving Our Country* (1999), and Walter Benn Michaels in *The Trouble with Identity* (2007)—long ago advanced a critique of identity politics similar to Dean's, while imploring the left to embrace a politics of social solidarity. I'm not sure Dean would embrace their "labor metaphysic," as it downplays the relatively autonomous role race, gender, sexuality, and nationality play in identity formation and social oppression. But Dean is not the first theorist to call for the left to build a politics of solidarity and equality across difference.

Her second chapter, "Free Trade," argues that while the Keynesian welfare state "interpellated" subjects into stable symbolic identities of worker, student, citizen, and housewife, neoliberalism creates imaginary identities whose variability promotes the faith that human freedom is achieved through the marketing of the self. Dean contends that this "fantasy of free trade" (p. 56) promotes a doublet of the "consumer/criminal" (p. 67). The neoliberal subject frees the self from dependence on the state by endlessly consuming, but if we can't afford to do so, the state coerces us into a permanent criminal identity. She believes that the fleeting and unstable consumer identities of neoliberalism preclude the left from uniting human beings behind the

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alternative values of "collectivity, cooperation, solidarity and equity strong enough to counter neoliberalism's free trade fantasy" (p. 73). Dean does not seem to recognize that white workers did not all buy into the myth of "market freedom," but many (though not all) embraced neoliberalism's racialized ideology of welfare state dependency. The right's use of a racial political project to construct a white Republican majority from Reagan onward goes largely unmentioned in Dean's work—even though neoliberal Democrats, led by Bill Clinton, tried to overcome the right's racial appeal through punitive "welfare reform" and criminal justice policies.

In chapter 3, "Democracy," Dean deploys the psychological categories of Jacques Lacan to contend that the absolute authority of the "master" sovereign's word has been displaced by the "hysteric's" logic of protest in the name of demands that cannot be met. While the hysteric protestor demands the restoration of an American democracy that has, in Dean's view, never existed, Lacan's "university expert" believes that "facts" and reason will win out. The faith of deliberative democrats in procedural democracy epitomizes this "fetishization of reason." Dean astutely contends that deliberative democrats fail to interrogate the undemocratic distribution of power in procedural democracies, while also ignoring the role of ideology and power in determining what counts as "truth and reason." But does Dean believe that imperfect democracies provide no political resources on which radical democrats can draw? If corporate money completely dominates "bourgeois democracy," then how can democratic social movements counter the power of capital?

In chapter 4, "Resolve," Dean contends that the right has been able to rally a majority around a politics confronting "evil" because of the left's lack of "conviction." The absolute conviction of the fundamentalist right is the flip side of its fear of relativism and moral pluralism. The right overcomes the relativism of communicative capitalism's commodification of everything through its embrace of moral dogmatism. The right, according to Dean, embraces in Lacanian terms "the discourse of the pervert," which designates as "evil" that "extra" something (Lacan's "*object petit a*") that cannot be contained by brutal repression (pp. 114–20). Dean urges the left to adopt a politics as dogmatic in defense of the welfare state as the right has been in its destruction.

But on what grounds should the left's politics of "social solidarity" rest? While Dean criticizes postmodernism's moral relativism, the influence of Lacan and Žižek on her work leads her to avoid any clear moral commitments and to treat politics as primarily the agonal drive for power. But do not most left activists who advocate a politics of social solidarity implicitly put forth an ethical belief in the "equal moral worth of persons" or of "equal human potentiality"? Yet in chapter 5, "Ethics," Dean castigates the left (here represented solely by Judith Butler) for advocating an "ethics of responsiveness" as opposed to an "ethic of conviction." Butler, in *Precarious Life* (2003), offers a reworking of vulnerability and mourning into an ethic of connections with others. Butler rejects condemnation as "closure that entails finality" and equates finality in politics with an act of sovereignty that precludes the subject from having the capacity for self-reflection and social recognition. This sensibility, Butler contends, can serve as an ethical—and ultimately political—alternative to policies such as the Bush administration's militarist impulse to secure our violated borders. Dean persuasively argues that politics cannot solely rest on empathy for "the other" because politics often demands that we go beyond responsiveness or empathy to judgment and even condemnation. Condemnation, in Dean's view, may be necessary to reject the terms of sovereignty, and condemnation can produce new social links with others who also are excluded from power.

But should not a politics of condemnation be informed by an ethic of responsiveness, if such a politics is to remain democratic and pluralistic? And can Dean seriously ascribe the left's weakness to Butler's ethics of responsiveness? In her idealist account of the failures of the academic left, Dean reifies into powerful social forces intellectual concepts that have little resonance outside of the minds of humanities grad students and their professors. There may well be a more parsimonious materialist explanation for right-wing nationalism's appeal. Well before the academic culture wars, Reagan's militarist foreign policy appealed to industrial (and deindustrialized) white working class males ("Reagan Democrats") who felt the Iran hostage crisis reflected the demise of American economic and military power.

Dean's fifth and concluding chapter analyzes the Lacanian "psychotic's" use of desire to transform a world of questioning to a world of certainty. Here the reified subject is the 9/11 "truthers" (those who believe 9/11 was an "inside job" by the US government). The "truthers" manifest neoliberalism's affinity with fantasy. The unstable modern subject, who never securely occupies the symbolic identity set by the social order, reveals the vicious circularity and "violence and compulsion behind the fragile, ever-changing social order of late modernity" (p. 164). The psychotic needs an answer to the absence of the secure sovereign as master signifier, and thus the psychotic truthers take on the certainty of the "fear, rivalry, and aggression" toward the imaginary other of the manipulative state (p. 167). This simply mirrors the dogmatic certainty of the Bush administration. Thus, in Dean's Lacanian description, "the official and unofficial accounts thus perpetually circle around a void that cannot be filled, deriving their enjoyment from the circuit of drive" (p. 172). Dean concludes the work by stating that the left also reflects this psychic inability to arrive at a viable alternative vision: "for all our hatred of Bush . . . we remained unable or

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unwilling to take the next steps of imagining, organizing, and creating another world" (p. 174).

As a theorist, I have a vocational interest in believing ideas play a role in constituting social movements. But is the absence of a potent left opposition to neoliberalism primarily a function of the failure of academic theory? The social basis for neoliberal hegemony may lie more with business mobilization against the welfare state, the decimation of the labor movement, and increasing Democratic Party reliance on corporate money. The right's mobilization of working people's hostility to means-tested social welfare programs helped get swing voters to think of themselves more as taxpayers than beneficiaries of public goods. While the reader might concur with Dean's telling critiques of identity politics and cultural studies, the work of left political economists, such as David Harvey, may ultimately offer a more telling analysis of neoliberalism than does Lacanian social psychology. All the same, Dean is surely right that the hegemony of neoliberalism deserves much more attention from political theorists than it currently receives, and the conversations that her book will help to generate ought to be welcomed.

The Political Responsibilities of Everyday Bystanders. By Stephen L. Esquith. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010. 256p. $54.95.
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— Colleen Murphy, *Texas A&M University*

In his book, Stephen Esquith defends the claim that political education can generate awareness among everyday bystanders to severe violence of their own complicity and can thus motivate bystanders to fulfill their subsequent political responsibilities. Part I defines the citizen-teacher, who plays a central role in democratic education. Part II examines obstacles to the recognition among everyday bystanders of their political responsibilities for severe violence and how critical reenactments counter these obstacles. Part III illustrates how citizen-teachers can cultivate a sense of political responsibility among everyday bystanders through their interpretation of critical reenactments. Discussions of severe violence often concentrate on the appropriate way to hold perpetrators responsible and address the needs and claims of victims. Esquith's book makes an important contribution to our understanding of severe violence by considering a largely neglected group, the bystanders to severe violence, and the responsibilities such bystanders have to address the consequences of violence.

Paradigm examples of severe violence are poverty, famine, civil war, and genocide. According to Esquith, severe violence causes pain and is political in the sense that 1) political decisions influence whether it occurs and whether responsibility for such violence is evaded or acknowledged, and 2) there are characteristically political consequences for victims of violence, namely, the loss of a political voice via geographical displacement or political disenfranchisement. Everyday bystanders are not causally responsible for severe violence nor are they its direct witnesses. Rather, bystanders "benefit unjustly from the suffering and oppression of others" (p. 13) and so are complicit in it. Bystanders benefit in virtue of the ways in which they "fill the once-filled jobs, hold the once-held offices, occupy the once-occupied homes, farm the once-farmed land, and even parent the once-parented orphans of the disappeared" (p. 16). In Esquith's view, everyday bystanders to severe violence have political responsibility for it because their choices reinforce the political consequences of violence for victims. Everyday bystanders are not necessarily wealthy or fellow citizens. Moreover, there are both individual and corporate bystanders to violence. Examples of corporate bystanders are multinational corporations and universities.

Few everyday bystanders recognize their political responsibility for severe violence. Esquith maintains that this is partly a function of the dominant allegories we use to understand the role and responsibilities of bystanders to suffering. Such allegories present the bystander as entirely unrelated to the individual suffering, and arguments frame the discussion of the responsibilities of bystanders in terms of general moral duties to aid and rescue those in need. Peter Singer's famous example of a bystander who is in a position to save a child drowning in a pond at little cost to himself is a paradigm case. These allegories influence arguments, for example, regarding the responsibilities of members of developed countries toward the members of developing countries. The problem, the author argues, is that such allegories abstract from the deep entanglement of individuals in developed and developing contexts through their shared participation in institutions and fail to address suffering in a long-term manner. In addition, the use of simulations to motivate individuals to address severe violence, such as in the video game *Darfur Is Dying*, generate sympathy, but they do not provide a real understanding of the position of victims of severe violence and implicitly suggest that the solution is "a click away."

Political education is needed to create awareness of responsibility among everyday bystanders. This education must first be based on allegories that make explicit the social context in which bystanders act. Esquith presents two examplary allegories in "Jim in the Grand Marche" and "Ousmane at the Crossroads." Political education must also include critical reenactments of severe violence, instead of simulations. Critical reenactments are embodied performances or abstract representations that function to raise questions about the shared political responsibilities of everyday bystanders in a way that will change their understandings of their responsibilities. Modern dance, poetry, and plays can be forms of critical reenactment.

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