

radical democratic theory would look like. The book's conclusion tries to settle this question but maybe does this a tad too fast, ignoring some of the obstacles to a fusion of radical democratic theory and social philosophy. In spite of this minor problem, the book can be considered a success, as an incisive piece of critical theory but also – thanks to the accessible prose – as a critical introduction to the different radical democratic theories.

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**Political Neutrality: A Re-evaluation** by  
**Roberto Merrill and Daniel Weinstock (eds).**  
Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014. 224pp.,  
£60.00 (h/b), ISBN 9780230285101

This book is a collection of original articles on the pervasive idea in liberal political philosophy that the state should be neutral between the conceptions of the good held by its citizens. In what is now becoming common practice when addressing the idea of political neutrality, the book discusses the competing liberal approach to political morality – political perfectionism – and at quite some length too. All contributors are veterans of the debate between these opposing approaches, making for an advanced and well-informed read.

The book is divided into two parts. Part I addresses general questions about the interpretation, justification and realisation of political neutrality. Part II takes on more specific questions regarding neutrality's relationship with other political ideas such as pluralism, public reason and democracy. There are three broad questions unifying the two parts: (1) Is neutrality desirable? (2) Is neutrality possible? (3) Is the divide between neutrality and perfectionism as great as many believe? Across the two parts, the editors succeed in presenting a varied and balanced assessment of these questions. Perhaps in keeping with the idea of neutrality, the book neither presents an overt, unified response to these questions, nor is there a concluding chapter to guide the reader to a particular conclusion.

The questions are not new in the debate on political neutrality, but this collection does

not – for the most part – rehearse previous responses found elsewhere. For example, in Part I, Simon Clarke seeks to revive the idea of consequential neutrality, which has long been dismissed by theorists of most persuasions. And in Part II, Christine Synowich delivers what is perhaps the book's most original and ambitious essay, defending a specific kind of perfectionism that engages with several other debates in political philosophy, including egalitarianism, responsibility and well-being.

Given the brevity and narrow focus of the majority of the essays, the book – including its introductory chapter – is not for newcomers to the debate on political neutrality. There are at least three other collections of essays on political neutrality that serve this purpose better. But the book is, after all, a *re-evaluation* of an already well-established principle in liberal political philosophy, and so rightly aims at delivering concentrated, novel insights. Those well-versed in the field of political morality should find that the essays are grounded in familiar issues, but still advance the general debate on neutrality, and perfectionism.

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**Equal Recognition: The Moral Foundations of Minority Rights** by **Alan Patten.** Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014. 327pp., £30.95 (h/b), ISBN 9780691159379

*Equal Recognition* focuses on the moral foundations of minority rights, a debate situated in contemporary normative political philosophy and multiculturalism. It seeks to answer the following question: to what extent and on which moral basis might minorities legitimately formulate their demands for cultural, religious and linguistic rights in a liberal democratic society? Alan Patten proposes a clear answer that is sensitive to the scarcity of the resources available for competing interests that public policies must take into account in a context of diversified societies. The book argues in favour of 'equal recognition' of national majority and minority cultures as a

necessity of liberal neutrality. This is because 'in certain domains, the only way for the state to discharge its responsibility of neutrality is by extending and protecting specific minority cultural rights' (p. 27). A non-essentialist understanding of culture (chapter 2) and the fair treatment of cultures as distinct from 'aiming to prevent cultural loss as an outcome' (p. 72) are fundamental for the *liberal* multiculturalism that Patten proposes.

There are, however, two *prima facie* challenges that the book's claims face. First, an external critique can be made for not considering the relationship between democracy and the state. Even though in the beginning the competing claims of majority nationalism and minority rights are expressed, without a democratic mechanism procedurally guaranteeing a space for the minority demands, it becomes questionable how the case for equal treatment would be concretised. In this sense, Patten's analysis can strongly benefit from the support of theories of democracy. Second, there may be an inconsistency in the usage of the distinction Patten makes between the substance and authority aspects of a policy (p. 23). In his view, substance is about the question of 'what should be the guiding principles of a legitimate policy', whereas authority is about 'who should have the authority to make decisions'. This distinction is defended in the whole book except in the parts about migration. There, Patten argues that as possessors of authority, citizens may decide 'whether to privilege their own national culture and languages or whether to adopt impartial ... criteria for allocating rights' (p. 290) while, as he continues, 'a Canadian outsider should not have a say in the matter'. There are some convincing arguments provided for granting migrants less generous rights than the national minorities, but the substance/authority distinction's disappearance in the case of migrants is not justified. Nevertheless, for its treatment of the complex questions of cultural diversity for minorities and migrants, as well as issues such as linguistic rights and secession, the book is strongly recommended for scholars of multiculturalism.

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**Capitalism and its Alternatives** by Chris Rogers. London: Zed Books, 2013. 170pp, £14.99 (p/b), ISBN 9781780327365

Framed against the financial failures of 2007 onwards, the dismantling of Bretton Woods and the economic depression of the 1930s, capitalism is defined as being systemically crisis-prone and therefore in need of replacement. Chris Rogers outlines the ways in which Adam Smith, Karl Marx, John Maynard Keynes and Friedrich Hayek understood how wealth was created and the relationship between state and market. All, except Marx, were unable to understand and correct the mechanisms leading to crises. Alternative perspectives are suggested and organised under three analytical categories: alternative forms of capitalism, alternative economic formations to capitalism and movements which oppose capitalism ('anti-capitalism').

Alternatives to capitalism in the form of the cooperative movement and socialism are rejected, as historical experience has shown that they have reproduced many of the undesirable social relations of capitalism. The lesson to be learned is that social action has to be 'continually remade' if degeneration is not to take place. Social and political movements seeking radical change therefore ought not to seek 'outcomes' which are liable to degeneration. The process of change (how to realise an alternative to capitalism) is addressed in terms of an analysis of the state. While acting through the state does not bring about a desired alternative, action 'against the state' is recommended as a process of revolution. Following John Holloway, the author advocates confronting capitalism with social acts of 'doing' from below; and pluralistic Zapata-like diverse, democratic and experimental movements are endorsed.

A merit of the book is that it addresses contemporary economic crises in a philosophical and historical context and it could serve as an introductory overview for students interested in the analysis of contemporary capitalism. The ideas are clearly developed and there is an especially well-written section on the four economic analyses of capitalism. This is a short book covering a wide compass and, while good as an introduction, it will need supplementing