



Democracy in What State? (New Directions in Critical Theory)

Giorgio Agamben, Alain Badiou, Daniel Bensaid, Wendy Brown, Jean-Luc Nancy, Jacques Rancière, Kristin Ross, Slavoj Žižek

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"Is it meaningful to call oneself a democrat? And if so, how do you interpret the word?"

In responding to this question, eight iconoclastic thinkers prove the rich potential of democracy, along with its critical weaknesses, and reconceive the practice to accommodate new political and cultural realities. Giorgio Agamben traces the tense history of constitutions and their coexistence with various governments. Alain Badiou contrasts current democratic practice with democratic communism. Daniel Bensaid ponders the institutionalization of democracy, while Wendy Brown discusses the democratization of society under neoliberalism. Jean-Luc Nancy measures the difference between democracy as a form of rule and as a human end, and Jacques Rancière highlights its egalitarian nature. Kristin Ross identifies hierarchical relationships within democratic practice, and Slavoj Žižek complicates the distinction between those who desire to own the state and those who wish to do without it.

Concentrating on the classical roots of democracy and its changing meaning over time and within different contexts, these essays uniquely defend what is left of the left-wing tradition after the fall of Soviet communism. They confront disincentives to active democratic participation that have caused voter turnout to decline in western countries, and they address electoral indifference by invoking and reviving the tradition of citizen involvement. Passionately written and theoretically rich, this collection speaks to all facets of modern political and democratic debate.

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