



# **Democracy and Other Neoliberal Fantasies: Communicative Capitalism and Left Politics (e- Duke books scholarly collection.)**

*Jodi Dean*

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*Democracy and Other Neoliberal Fantasies* is an impassioned call for the realization of a progressive left politics in the United States. Through an assessment of the ideologies underlying contemporary political culture, Jodi Dean takes the left to task for its capitulations to conservatives and its failure to take responsibility for the extensive neoliberalization implemented during the Clinton presidency. She argues that the left's ability to develop and defend a collective vision of equality and solidarity has been undermined by the ascendance of "communicative capitalism," a constellation of consumerism, the privileging of the self over group interests, and the embrace of the language of victimization. As Dean explains, communicative capitalism is enabled and exacerbated by the Web and other networked communications media, which reduce political energies to the registration of opinion and the transmission of feelings. The result is a psychotic politics where certainty displaces credibility and the circulation of intense feeling trumps the exchange of reason.

Dean's critique ranges from her argument that the term *democracy* has become a meaningless cipher invoked by the left and right alike to an analysis of the fantasy of free trade underlying neoliberalism, and from an examination of new theories of sovereignty advanced by politicians and left academics to a look at the changing meanings of "evil" in the speeches of U.S. presidents since the mid-twentieth century. She emphasizes the futility of a politics enacted by individuals determined not to offend anyone, and she examines questions of truth, knowledge, and power in relation to 9/11 conspiracy theories. Dean insists that any reestablishment of a vital and purposeful left politics will require shedding the mantle of victimization, confronting the marriage of neoliberalism and democracy, and mobilizing different terms to represent political strategies and goals.

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