

Rancièrè and Law, Monica Lopez Lerma and Julen Etxabe (ed.s), Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2018, **PRICE**, hardback, ISBN: 978-1-138-95513-4

Clare Woodford,

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The last ten years has seen a proliferation of English-language publications on the work of Jacques Rancièrè, yet many rush to pigeon-hole his work, misunderstanding his reworking of what seem to be familiar ideas, missing the novelty and doubling, flattening the playfulness and failing to comprehend the radicality of what he has to say. Furthermore it is rare to read an edited volume that has been carefully compiled, with a consistent narrative and each and every chapter making a valuable and innovative intervention such that overall, it succeeds in making a distinctive and singularly coherent contribution to academic debate. This book is a rare find on both counts. It contains a detailed and careful exposition of Rancièrè's work which also advances its own hope that it may challenge contemporary legal theory and practice; whilst the energy and spirit of Rancièrè's work is carried through every page, making it a readable whilst rigorous contribution to the fields of both political thought and legal studies.

The opening introductory essay provides an approachable synthesis of Rancièrè's broad corpus. Useful for scholars, students and other interested readers it makes Rancièrè's at times playfully obtuse style accessible to all yet without compromising the spirit of Rancièrè's work. Acknowledging that Rancièrè's work has by now been illuminated 'from almost every angle', it points out that this is not the case with regards to 'the wider implications of Rancièrè for law and socio-legal studies' [1]. However the editors wisely choose not to elaborate a Rancièrian theory of law, seeking to avoid falling into the explication model of traditional pedagogical dominatory models. Instead, rather than inform us what Rancièrè thinks about the law, they consider what the law thinks about Rancièrè, or in their own words what a 'Rancièrè-inspired legal theory would look like' [1]. By moving forward to consider the implications of Rancièrè's work for legal theory they engage in critical dialogue with Rancièrè's writings, enabling the book to develop a unique argument and contribution to radical legal theory. This book is an active, spirited intervention not just in legal theory but in wider social theory, contribution new work on the applications of Rancièrè's writings for all aspects of our lives today. How it can be used to question norms, unsettle our thinking, undermine notions of permanence and certainty, and reveal disjuncture that could be exploited for emancipatory purposes where it had, until now, gone unnoticed.

The rest of the book is divided into four sections, 'Law without Methods' which provides an overview of the approach the book is taking; 'From the Rights of Subjects to the Subjects of Rights' focusing not on how individuals are formed into subjects but how we might assert new and transformative subjectivities; 'Democracy, Constitution and the State' which begins to break down the usual

dependence between legal theory and sovereignty; and 'Law and Aesthetics' which sketches a radical new way of thinking the aesthetics of law and legal theory. Each section comprises original and inspiring essays, applying Rancière's thought to pressing issues within and beyond legal theory today.

The narrative of the book is held together by the innovative conception of 'law without method' elaborated in the extended essay of section 1 by Julien Extabe. Capturing the motion and transience of meaning so central to Rancière's work, Extabe emphasises the dramatic challenge to law that Rancière's work poses, simultaneously undoing and reformulating the law in every appeal to it. This is a conceptualisation of law as a process through which openings can be exploited to remake and rework the world of what is and is not possible. Extabe reminds us that the dominatory power of legalism does have weak spots, it can 'crack', and we can make the cracks 'count' - he leaves it open to us as to whether or not we will.

The following essays all engage with Rancière's work in innovative ways, not only intervening in academic debate in legal theory, political thought, aesthetics and beyond, but also providing a valuable resource for students struggling to understand how Rancière's work can be applied to our everyday lives and institutions and the challenges that such application can produce.

From European refugee policy to the relations between law and street art, each of the chapters operates at the interstices of disciplines: the dramaturgy of law, law and film, law and politics. Some curiosities still persist – for example concerns about how to distinguish better from worse police orders (Frost) or how to found a legitimate democratic constitution (Heinze) and the role of struggle (Schmittian or not?) in Rancière's work (Minikkinen). Questions of these sort always seem to arise with regards to Rancière's work and demonstrate the force of theoretical concerns pushing back against the radicality of Rancière's thought, rejecting and reigning in its anarchic tendencies, seeking to retheorise and recontain the threat that equality poses to power. Perhaps the drive behind these questions arises from the very disciplining of the world that equality will always undermine – the division of knowledge into disciplines that construct barriers between communities of scholars and knowledge systems. Indeed, these are questions that are already avidly debated and progressed in much political thought today. It is here that greater convergence between legal and political theory could be of use. The interdisciplinarity of this volume is to be commended but it also blazes a trail that more need to follow if we are to further our knowledge and ask how we can retain the radicality of an axiomatic equality without appearing to neglect the urgent need for infrastructural change today.

Each chapter provides useful examples and case studies demonstrating how Rancière's work can be used to inform and challenge the world we take for granted. A widely relevant fantastic resource for teachers and students of legal theory, political and social thought, resistance, radical critical theory and beyond, this volume has instigated a new turn, effecting repercussions within and beyond legal theory which I hope will continue to resound for many years to come.