

While Skinner's model, which has little space for state imperatives in the definition of regions, is justifiably criticized for its rigidity, Gates not only throws out what is of value in Skinner's core/periphery distinction, her own alternative is cruder and unconvincing. The chapter on folk religion is even less convincing as it tries to persuade us that Buddhist and Taoist deities represented two distinct types of authority: merchant/capitalist versus official. On the subject of ritual money, apparently, ordinary people depicted their gods as capitalist exploiters because they used money as interest-bearing capital, whereas mortals used money simply for repayment of debt. The ethnographic evidence for all of this is very thin (see p. 170), and the argument just does not emerge from the materials in the powerful way that Taussig's (*The Devil and Commodity Fetishism in South America*, 1975) analysis of commodity fetishism emerges from his ethnography of devil worship.

Finally, in the analysis of contemporary Chinese states, the author usefully corrects the mis- (or over-) attribution of Taiwanese economic success to rational, strategizing bureaucrats; the Kuomintang state in Taiwan was a tributary state—at least until the mid-1960s. But her suggestion that even large private corporations are part of the PCMP because of their dependence on the tributary state is difficult to assess because she has little on the state after the 1960s, and the assertion does not do much to clarify PCMP. Also, while there are overt similarities between the tributary qualities of the People's Republic of China and the imperial state, it is hardly illuminating to see them as basically the same. Indeed, in attributing to the state such great continuity in the face of such momentous historical transformations, the author, who is determinedly materialist, may well appear to some as philosophically quite idealist.

*Social Capitalism: A Study of Christian Democracy and the Welfare State.* By Kees van Kersbergen. London: Routledge, 1995. Pp. xii+289. \$69.95.

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To say that Christian democracy is an overlooked phenomenon would be an understatement. A dominant political movement in most of Western Europe, Christian democracy remains as neglected and misunderstood as it is genuinely puzzling. Its distinctiveness has been routinely denied: it is either confused with Catholicism and the Catholic Church or with conservatism and conservative parties. Kees van Kersbergen's book, which should be welcomed by students of European politics and the welfare state, sociologists and political scientists alike, clears up much of this confusion. He shows, first, that a distinctive Christian democratic welfare state emerged that was significantly and systematically different from

both the social democratic and the conservative/liberal social policy regimes. He further demonstrates why Christian democracy should not be confused with the official church, or even with Catholic culture: social Catholic ideology went far beyond the teachings of the Catholic Church, while Christian democratic political and social movements transcended the church's social and political practice. As a result, this book emerges as a fundamental contribution to our understanding of Christian democracy and, hence, European politics at large.

The author sets out to perform two goals in a way that is methodologically rich and eclectic, combining statistical analysis with carefully constructed case studies and a detailed account of the evolution of Catholic social and political ideas. He shows that a distinct welfare-state regime emerged in countries dominated politically by Christian democratic parties. He, then, connects the rise of this welfare-state regime with the ideology of social Catholicism and Christian democracy.

The main finding is that Christian democracy is associated with a core of social policies, dubbed "social capitalism," that aggregate into a welfare state funded by social democratic rates of spending but with very different features. This is a welfare state that tends to be generous but passive and transfer oriented. Its main features are income replacement rather than job protection or creation, the privileging of families rather than individuals, the fragmentation and semipublic character of major aspects of the administration and execution of welfare policies rather than their centralization and state control, the reproduction of social status rather than the refashioning of social structure, and the relative obstruction of women's access to the labor market.

This is an important finding that goes against most of the relevant literature that explains the growth of the welfare state by reference either to nonpolitical (demographic, cultural, etc.) variables or to the impact of social democracy. The analysis offers, correctly I think, a pessimistic prediction about the future of Christian democracy. For a variety of reasons, social capitalism (much like social democracy) has reached its limits and this will affect negatively the future prospects of both Christian democratic parties and the kind of societies they built. Many interesting questions follow from this analysis. For instance, how will countries with different, but equally generous, social policy regimes respond to the (similar) challenges they face?

The second part of the book, a review of the theory of social Catholicism and an examination of the origins and evolution of Christian democratic ideology, is less convincing than the first. Although offering a superb analysis of ideological evolution and transformation, the author fails to demonstrate convincingly that it is this ideology that accounts primarily for the emergence and evolution of the Christian democratic welfare-state regime. The causal link between social Catholic ideology and the development of a specific set of social policies remains unspecified. As a result, the analysis tends to be inconsistent. It is, for instance, full of references to the impact of electoral constraints and electoral strategy: social

capitalism turns out to be an “important electoral asset,” a “resource,” and a “medium” for “Christian democratic power mobilization” (pp. 233–38). The case studies, in particular, privilege a strategic interpretation of welfare state building. The “politics of mediation” (the practice of accommodating conflicts between different social groups, which is associated with Christian democratic welfare policy) is sometimes the result of religious inspiration and sometimes the outcome of electoral constraints and calculations. Variation in social policies of Christian democratic countries is explained in terms of electoral strategy rather than ideology, while the present demise of social capitalism is accounted for by structural factors (decline of religion, decline of traditional identities, drying up of resources) rather than ideological ones. In addition, this account remains unconnected to the thriving theoretical debate on the role of ideas and interests in policy-making.

These shortcomings do not dilute the book’s main contribution. They rather suggest what the next research step should be: a systematic and analytical account of the links between the electoral strategy and the political economy of Christian democratic parties—in times of both socio-economic growth and retrenchment. This is precisely the book’s central merit: by furthering our understanding of Christian democracy, it opens up new areas of research. In the future, no study of the welfare state and of European politics, not to mention Christian democracy, can afford to ignore this book.

*Origins of a Spontaneous Revolution: East Germany, 1989.* By Karl-Dieter Opp, Peter Voss, and Christiane Gern. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995. Pp. ix+280. \$49.50.

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Thucydides blamed revolution on hope of success, and Plato blamed that hope on weak government torn by faction. The book under review bears them out. It argues that the East German revolution of 1989—the least violent revolution in German history—happened because people thought that by demonstrating en masse they would get concessions and get away with it. They were right. The government wavered for several months and resigned. Flouting Marxist prophecy, the Communist state withered away soon after its fortieth birthday.

Opp is a leading exponent of rational-choice theory, which he and his colleagues use to explain why many citizens chose to demonstrate and why the government chose to hold fire. To explain each choice of action as rational, they argue that the benefit of the action taken was greater