



Debt to Society: Accounting for Life under Capitalism

Miranda Joseph

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It is commonplace to say that criminals pay their debt to society by spending time in prison, but what is a “debt to society”? How is crime understood as a debt? How has time become the equivalent for crime? And how does criminal debt relate to the kind of debt held by consumers and university students?

In *Debt to Society*, Miranda Joseph explores modes of accounting as they are used to create, sustain, or transform social relations. Envisioning accounting broadly to include financial accounting, managerial accounting of costs and performance, and the calculation of “debts to society” owed by criminals, Joseph argues that accounting technologies have a powerful effect on social dynamics by attributing credits and debts. From sovereign bonds and securitized credit card debt to student debt and mortgages, there is no doubt that debt and accounting structure our lives.

Exploring central components of neoliberalism (and neoliberalism in crisis) from incarceration to personal finance and university management, *Debt to Society* exposes the uneven distribution of accountability within our society. Joseph demonstrates how ubiquitous the forces of accounting have become in shaping all aspects of our lives, proposing that we appropriate accounting and offer alternative accounts to turn the present toward a more widely shared well-being.

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