

sonal spaces and practices, brings us in the crosshairs of Spinozist “anthropology of passions” and the Marxist master theory of labor, wages, and value (pp. xxxi, 113). To justify the rather strange desire to work for others in neoliberal capitalism requires something more than the objective framework of an office or an economy. It is necessary to understand the instruments at work: alignment, enlistment, surveillance, love, domination, and liberation—all working within the orbit of desire. In the first chapter, Lordon discusses the founding logic of this process: Spinoza’s “conatus” (pp. 33–7), or the striving to act, associated with desire and the functioning of life itself. Thus, we enter into the social game of work and organization with full disclosure and knowledge that we shall remain enslaved—joyfully or sadly. In the second chapter, Lordon explores how the goal of cultivating employees as joyful “auto-mobiles,” who would keep alive the master-desire of capitalism internally (pp. 53, 77), remains essentially outside the Marxian logic of alienation. It is instead based on the notion of “colinearisation” of master-desire (pp. 100–1), which is the production of suitable desires. In the present example, it is money itself as all other desires can be fulfilled by it. But are we destined to remain enslaved by neoliberal master-desires without any hope of liberation? The last chapter explores the condition of that possibility in the idea of “recommune” or *res communa*, which is actualized in the small, the numerically narrow, and the “local” (pp. 132, 133). Lordon seems to suggest that, while the local is not outside the scope of work (and alienation) and therefore the material production of life, it certainly has the power to counter master-desire and the phenomenon of colinearization. Perhaps, what remains to be truly desired in Lordon’s book is a greater exploration of the actual politics of possibility of the local that can be better accessed through the ethnographic form.

[Gabriel Ash’s translation of Lordon’s complex text is engaging and deserves mention.]

ABHIJEET PAUL is finishing his PhD dissertation on work, technology, and ethics at the University of California, Berkeley. He has been interviewed in *New Philosopher* in a special issue on “Work.” His entry on “dependency theory” in *The Encyclopedia of Empire* (Blackwell) is forthcoming in 2015, and he has been invited to contribute an article to a book on deterritorialization and globalization to be published by Brill in 2015. He is also preparing a manuscript on “political test” in the Bengali novels of Jibanananda Das.

**Noam Yuran.** *What Money Wants: An Economy of Desire.* Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2014. 320 pp.

ANAT ROSENBERG

Noam Yuran’s new book is a philosophy or, as Yuran prefers, social ontology of economy, offering a heterodox alternative to orthodox individualist economic thought. Two claims lie at the heart of the analysis. First, economy is an impersonal context of action in which one’s activity is necessarily set against one’s self-perception. This claim is based on insightful readings in Karl Marx, Max Weber, and Thorstein Veblen, who, on Yuran’s account, expose basic economic concepts: profit-seeking, accumulation, and waste, as impersonal drives. Second, and in fact an application of the first, money embodies an impersonal drive, a desire embedded in the money-object itself. While a product of social relations, the desire for money confronts each of us as an objective reality, one that cannot be fully reduced to subjective ends. Claiming that money is entangled with desire is at once trivial—we know from experience that people want

money, and unutterable—there is no theoretical knowledge of desire as a constitutive element of money's existence. Since money is customarily viewed as a means rather than end, desire for money itself (and not the things it can buy), which for Yuran is the very structure sustaining money, remains unrecognized in economic thought except as pathology. This impasse provides a powerful foundation for Yuran's alternative account. After a theoretical exposition founded chiefly on Marx in the first chapter, the book offers brilliant analyses ranging as far and wide as Charles Dickens's *Hard Times*, classical and modern economics, communications theory and reality TV, advertising and brand theory, and finally original readings in Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* and Veblen's *The Theory of the Leisure Class*. Yuran's moves from the mundane and contemporary to high theory and historical myths, and across conceptual divides, are effective. An important strand of argument emerging from these explorations ties money with the consumer economy by showing that money's quality as endlessly exchangeable depends on every other commodity *not* being so. This structural argument, developed from Marx, offers deep insights about the commodity at the same time that it traverses the material/symbolic dichotomy informing histories of money and shows a continuity between our own form of symbolic money and older ones based in material substances like gold.

Two elements central to the analysis constantly challenge the reader: Yuran's philosophy of history and his claim that the social structures sustaining money are traumatic. Yuran treats history as *persistence* through change. Money, to take the main theme, is always already made of desire. This element transcends the individual; it is crystallized and carried through history as a blind inheritance. There is thus no moment of historical formation in *What Money Wants*. Historical changes, to the extent they can be excavated from the book, concern the form of (un)awareness of historical subjects of the logic of the economy. I was often challenged by Yuran's refusal to historicize (in the familiar sense) and his prioritization of abstract ontological claims; after all, the main theorists on whom he builds wrote in a particular era of Western capitalism; they themselves attempted to historicize their moments. Admittedly, Yuran's view of history is both theorized, most fully in chapter 4, and has ideological resonance: a revolution would mean overcoming the money-object; history, says Yuran, is the opposite: a story of a revolution which never occurs. Still, he leaves you wanting concrete anchors. Yuran's philosophy of history relates directly to trauma. If history is persistence, the thing that persists above all else is a traumatic oversight. Economic action cannot be fully understood by those who engage in it; it embodies elements alien to everything individual, concrete and local. To take a non-money example, conspicuous leisure in Veblen's theory is a case of a status system that coerces individuals to engage in a waste they cannot comprehend. An element of disavowal and foreignness to oneself is thus constitutive of the economy. At the same time, the economy is everywhere: the things that money can't buy are themselves a crucial economic category for Yuran, hence there is no escape from this traumatic and inherently threatening form of social crystallization.

While *What Money Wants* advances a compelling critique of orthodox thought and an alternative account of economic phenomena, Yuran's emphasis on persistence and inescapable trauma left me wondering whether *What Money Wants* offers a route *out* of the social structures it critically theorizes. Critical theory has often flagged the social as theoretical remedy. Yuran, however, conceptualizes a social that is not only incomprehensible to individual subjects but also persisting (diachronically) and all encompassing (synchronically); the social itself thus becomes a malady that cannot, on these theoretical terms, be overcome. Perhaps the sense of suffocation that emerges despite the many beautiful and humorous moments in the book is where Yuran wants to get us in order to begin a wholly new search for an alternative imagination.

ANAT ROSENBERG is an associate professor of law at the Interdisciplinary Center (IDC) Herzliya, Israel, and a researcher at the Minerva Humanities Center Research Group on Political Economy at Tel Aviv University. Her work focuses on liberal thought in late modernity and liberalism critique, cultural representations of modern market society, particularly in nineteenth-century English law and literature and the history of consumer culture in late modernity. She can be reached at [arosenberg@idc.ac.il](mailto:arosenberg@idc.ac.il).