



Were You Born on the Wrong Continent?: How the European Model Can Help You Get a Life

By Thomas Geoghegan

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Try to imagine your life in a full-blown European social democracy, especially the German version. Free public goods, a bit of worker control, and whopping trade surpluses? Social democracy doesn't sound too bad. *Were You Born on the Wrong Continent?* reveals where you might have been happier—or at least had time off to be unhappy properly. It explains why Americans should pay attention to Germany, where ordinary people can work three hundred to four hundred hours a year less than we do and still have one of the most competitive economies in the world.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Labor lawyer and Europhile, Geohegan (*Which Side Are You On?*) makes a passionate case for the high-tax, regulation-heavy model of life on the Continent. Using Germany as a model, he argues the middle class is the real beneficiary of European social democracy--its members reap free education, free child care, free nursing home care, guaranteed vacation time, and generous unemployment payments--while their white-collar American counterparts struggle to pay for the same. "Europe is set up for the bourgeois," writes Geohegan. "America's a great place to buy kitty litter at Wal-Mart and relatively cheap gas. But it's not set up for me, a professional without a lot of money." While he's quick to acknowledge that critics seize on labor's costs and prominence as a potential path to the collapse of the system, he's convinced of the framework in place. The narrative unspools in a chatty, anecdotal style; it's jumpy, appealingly digressive, and winning, all the more so for being such an unabashed polemic that refuses to be resigned to the rising rate of inequality in the U.S.

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Review

"Most diverting... [Geoghegan] has the great virtue of being witty and ironic—and to the point... A necessary primer."

—Jurek Martin, *Financial Times*

"Clever and immensely appealing."

—Katha Pollitt, *The Nation*

"All dissatisfied Americans, not just progressives, should read the book."

—Jeremy Gantz, *Alternet*

"A travelogue, self-discovery prose and business book all at once... written with humor and candor, making for an easy, fun read."

—Courtney Crowder, *Chicago Tribune*

About the Author

Thomas Geoghegan is a practicing attorney and the author of several books, including *See You in Court, In America's Court*, and the National Book Critics Circle Award finalist *Which Side Are You On?* (all available from The New Press). He has written for *The Nation*, the *New York Times*, and *Harper's*. He lives in Chicago.

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