



# Extraordinary Responsibility: Politics beyond the Moral Calculus

*Shalini Satkunanandan*

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## **Extraordinary Responsibility: Politics beyond the Moral Calculus** Shalini Satkunanandan

Careful attention to contemporary political debates, including those around global warming, the federal debt, and the use of drone strikes on suspected terrorists, reveals that we often view our responsibility as something that can be quantified and discharged. Shalini Satkunanandan shows how Plato, Kant, Nietzsche, Weber, and Heidegger each suggest that this calculative or bookkeeping mindset both belongs to "morality", understood as part of our ordinary approach to responsibility, and effaces the incalculable, undischageable, and more onerous dimensions of our responsibility. These thinkers also reveal how the view of responsibility as calculable is at the heart of "moralism" - the pettifogging, mindless, legalistic, excessively judgmental, or punitive policing of our own or others' compliance with moral duties. By elaborating their narratives of a difficult "conversion" to the open-ended and relentless character of responsibility, Satkunanandan explores how we might be less moralistic and more responsible in politics. She ultimately argues for a political ethos attentive to how calculative thinking can limit our responsibility, but that still accepts a circumscribed place for calculation (and morality) in responsible politics.

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