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Interstitial Revolution: On the explosive fusion of negativity and hope

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Introduction¹

*He preferido hablar de cosas imposibles,
Porque de lo posible se sabe demasiado* (Silvio Rodríguez, Resumen de Noticias)²

If they don't let us dream, we will not let them sleep! (M15)

John Holloway's *Change the World Without Taking Power* (2002) was a stormy piece of work that opened a 'crack' within radical thought. A decade ago, Holloway made a provocative proposition: that we can (and should) change the world without the need to take control of the state. Revolution today, claimed Holloway, means precisely the opposite of the traditional formula – to reject state power and develop a counter-power that allows people to invent new worlds. Two opposed views emerged in response Holloway's proposal, reflected in various international workshops, talks, journal special issues, and forums, one of them in this journal (see Dinerstein, 2005a): on the one hand, the book was embraced and celebrated as informing and engaging with autonomous movements, particularly with the Zapatistas whose uprising in 1994 offered a significantly different way of thinking about 'revolution.' On the other hand, it produced bewilderment in some Marxist circles for its radical departure from the traditional views on the relationship between reform and revolution, the party, the working class, and the state.

Written similarly in the author's sophisticated yet accessible style, *Crack Capitalism* deepens and expands Holloway's controversial ideas. As in CTW, the philosophical point of departure whence Holloway stakes his ambition of 'rephrasing' revolution and 'forming a new language' (p. 12)³ is that the world is wrong. Indeed, philosophy, as Critchley (2008: 1) suggests 'does not begin in an experience of wonder...but ... with the indeterminate but palpable sense that something desired has not been fulfilled.' This is followed by the assumption that we, as ordinary people engaged in a multiplicity of resistances, 'want to break. We want to create a different world. Now. Nothing more common, nothing more obvious. Nothing more simple, nothing more difficult.' (p.3) Why, asks Holloway? Because capitalism is 'threatening to crush us all to death.' (p.8). According to Holloway, we are all involved, whether we are aware of it or not, in the

¹ I would to thank Juan Pablo Ferrero, Adam Morton, Greg Schwartz and three anonymous referees for their comments and encouragement.

² 'I have preferred to talk about impossible things, because the possible is too well known' (*News Summary*)

³ All references are from Holloway, John (2010) *Crack Capitalism*. London: Pluto Press

resistance against this suffocating system of money, which constantly pressurises us through war, repression, poverty, bureaucracy, managerialism, and public policy. We are angry. Our multiple resistances (cracks) constitute spaces and/moments created in order to resist a world that we believe is wrong.

Holloway's basic argument can be summarised as follows: radical change can only be achieved by the creation and expansion of 'cracks' in the capitalist domination: '*the only possible way of conceiving revolution is as an interstitial process*' (p. 11).⁴ By rejecting narratives of the revolution as an orchestration with a definitive end point, Holloway claims that the method of the interstitial revolution is not a movement towards the total transformation of society by means of taking the power of the state but the permanent opening of the world by the creation of 'cracks': the revolutionary replacement of one system by another is both impossible and undesirable. The only way to think changing the world radically is as a multiplicity of interstitial movements running from the particular (p. 11). How can this be effective? Every society, suggests Holloway,

is based on 'some sort of social cohesion, some form of relation between the activities of the many different people. In capitalist society, this cohesion has a particular logic often described in terms of the laws of capitalist development. There is a systemic closure that gives the social cohesion a particular force and makes it very difficult to break. To underline the close-knit character of social cohesion in capitalist society, I refer to it as a *social synthesis*' (p. 52)

The cracks (whose many forms are illustrated with examples in the book) break the 'social synthesis' of capitalist society; they clash with the logic of the state, the homogenisation of time, the fetishism of commodities and money.⁵ At the same time, they signal the assertion of another type of (anti-capitalist) human activity—*doing*. They open 'a world that presents itself as closed' (p. 9). This argument is developed across the 33 theses and 8 parts of the book. Roughly, Part I characterises the present time and explains the crack as a method of resistance. Part II discusses the meaning of the crack, which he associates with a particular form of politics—negative politics, or the (anti)politics of dignity. Part III positions the crack in, against and beyond the 'social synthesis' of capitalism—the cracks are able both to break the capitalist 'net' and to recover the flow of human activity or doing. Parts IV, V and VI examine the effects of the constant process of abstraction of doing into labour, i.e. the making of abstract labour, or the basis (self-)domination in capitalism. Finally, parts VII and VIII return to the problem of resistance today, and offers an insight into the powers of doing, and explains why the only possible meaning of revolution is interstitial. In what follows I discuss the main ideas that sustain the proposal at the heart of Holloway's contribution: interstitial revolution. I engage with Holloway's previous work as well as with the work of those who are, I think, his main influences.

⁴ See similar uses of the term 'interstitial' in Critchley's 'interstitial distance within state territory' (2008: 113) and Arditi's 'interstitial region of politics' (2008: 100).

⁵ On a recent debate about abstract labour and the homogenisation of time, see Bonefeld (2010), and Kicillof and Starosta (2011) in this journal.

Doing against labour

'Doing', a fundamental category in *Crack Capitalism*, was introduced by Holloway in CTW, where it is defined as *what we do*. As 'part of a social flow, doing is inherently plural, collective, choral, communal' (2002: 26). Doing is the movement of 'practical negativity' that 'changes, negates an existing state of affairs.' (2002: 23) In *Crack Capitalism*, 'doing' becomes one of the main pillars of interstitial revolution. By exposing the twofold character of labour, Holloway first points to the permanent process of abstraction of our human activity (doing) into abstract labour, which produces a constant 'rupture of the social flow of doing' (p. 115). Abstract labour, he argues, amounts to the 'weaving of capitalism' (p. 87), i.e. the abstraction of human activity constitutes the form through which capitalism weaves its web of social cohesion. Abstract labour encloses our bodies and minds, makes characters of us and transforms nature into an object. Secondly, he connects the two-fold character of labour and the process of abstraction with the nature of our resistance by arguing that the *key to understanding our struggles is to see them not as the struggle between labour and capital (the orthodox Marxist view) but as 'a struggle of doing against labour (and therefore against capital)'* (p. 157). We do not fight against capital but against abstract labour (and only by extension, against capital). Our struggle, the *other class struggle*, is not the struggle of labour against capital but of doing against being transformed into (abstract) labour.

Holloway criticises traditional readings of Marx in that they have historically neglected the antagonism between useful doing and abstract labour, which he regards as especially poignant to the appreciation of today's forms of insubordination. This, and his disavowal of structuralism, has led to Holloway being pigeonholed as an Anarchist. Aware of this, he asks: 'is the present argument then an anarchist argument?' (p. 186) His response is that, despite being beyond labelling, his critique is against orthodox Marxist and anarchist traditions alike, and such critique is 'etched in the structure of the argument' (p. 187):

We start from the refusal-and-creations, from that which does not fit in to the capitalist system: that is where Marxism, with its emphasis on the analysis of domination, has been weak and anarchism strong. But then reflection on the struggles and their problems brings us to the social cohesion and its contradictions: we are brought to the analysis of the dual character of labour. This is where we leave anarchism behind and enter into debates more relevant to the Marxist tradition. Yet, our starting point remains crucial and makes us swim against the mainstream of Marxist thought (p. 187)

Like orthodox Marxism (though for different reasons), both Anarchism and Autonomism have failed to take account of the tension between useful doing and abstract labour on which his argument rests. Holloway has historically concurred with autonomists that 'labour' is the organising principle that capitalists use to impose their command over society: 'labour' is a capitalist concept and, therefore, it cannot constitute the basis on which to propose progressive social practices or even emancipation (Cleaver, 2002). But Open Marxists disagree with the Autonomist's response to the problem of Marxist structuralism in grasping the

dimension of struggle as an aspect of capitalist social relations of production. Roughly, Marxist structural approaches have been inclined to focus their analysis on the 'dynamics of capitalism' as a 'system' and to neglect the dimension of class struggle. At best, class struggle would enter the analysis of capitalism as *deus ex machina* (Elson, 1979: 173). The regrettable outcome of such focus has been that, in their hands, capital becomes the subject, a 'blind subject' (Postone, 1993; see Bonefeld, 1995). As a response, Autonomists have moved their focus from the analysis of 'capitalist development' to that of 'class struggle' (Cleaver, 1992): they inverted the class perspective has either emphasise labour's self-activity and working class self-valorisation (Negri, 1992) or led to adopt a position against labour (see Gruppe Krisis, 1999). But Holloway's argument (offered elsewhere) about this point is that:

the real force of Marx's theory of struggle lies *not* in the reversal of the polarity between capital and labour, but in its dissolution... reversing the polarity is not enough: it is the polarity itself which must be examined (Holloway 1995: 164 and 162).

For many years now, Holloway has insisted on the fact that capital is not an entity, that 'it is labour, alone which constitutes social reality. There is no external force, our own power is confronted by nothing but our own power, albeit in alienated form' (Holloway, 1993:19). But in capital labour exists in a contradictory *form*, or, as Bonefeld aptly put it—'in a mode of being denied' (1994: 51; also Bonefeld, 1995). Over the years Holloway has been deconstructing bourgeois categories (labour, the state, money). His writings are both revealing and inspiring, on the one hand, and uncomfortable and painful, on the other hand: not content with staying at the level of the forms in which concrete labour exists in capitalism, or to analyse how those forms change over time, he, like Marx, goes 'inside the form' (Elson 1979: 152). More than a decade ago Holloway suggested that

to analyse capitalist society in terms of social forms is to see it from the point of view of its historical impermanence, to look at that which appears to be permanent as transient, to present that which seems to be positive as negative. To introduce the concept of form is to move from the photographic print to its negative...[the] various implications of forms (historicity, negativity, internality) are well captured by the term 'mode of existence'. (1995: 165).

This is a political task. As Clarke (1991) highlights, the problem of denaturalising bourgeois categories constitute part of the same problem of how to denaturalise capitalist society. Revealing the social character of labour in capitalism is far more complex than it looks, since formal abstractions are not simply 'ideological devices' to be revealed but reflect the fetishised world of capital as we experience it:

the mystification of political economy does not simply represent an

ideological inversion of reality, but the ideological expression of that inversion. This is why the critique of political economy is not simply a critique of a mystificatory ideology, but of the alienated forms of social life which political economy describes but cannot explain (Clarke 1991: 140).

In CTW Holloway replaces the notion of 'the existence of labour in a mode of being denied' with the 'denial of the "doing of the doers"' (the intellectual homage to Bloch is striking here):

'[t]he doing of the doers is deprived of social validation: we and our doing become invisible. History becomes the history of the powerful, of those who tell others what to do. The flow of doing becomes an antagonistic process in which the doing of most is denied, in which the doing of most is appropriated by the few' (2002: 29-30).

There is an everlasting struggle to negate the human doing and convert it into abstract labour. This is what we struggle against. But can doing be totally subordinated to abstract labour? Is there anything left that can act as the basis for resisting against this encroachment? This is a political question that requires a detailed examination of the distinction between formal and real subsumption made by Marx in *Capital*. Under the formal subsumption of labour, capital 'has not yet succeeded in becoming the dominant force, capable of determining the form of society as a whole' (*Capital*, I: 1023). There is a 'direct subordination of the labour process to capital' (*Capital*, I: 1034) and labourers are externally subjected to capital. Subjectivity is still *external* to the economic process. In times of real subsumption however 'the entire development of socialized labour...in the immediate process of production, takes the form of the productive power of capital. It does not appear as the productive power of labour' (*Capital*, I: 1024). This implies that subjectivity is now constituted as an integrated aspect of the social world, that no longer possesses its autonomous existence from the social constitution of capitalist social relations (Dinerstein, 2002). Under real subsumption concrete labour is mediated by and becomes socially realised through its opposite: abstract labour (Dinerstein and Neary, 2002b). Abstract labour signifies "a social formation in which the process of production has mastery over man, instead of the opposite" (*Capital* I: 175). The abstract aspects mediate the concrete; the abstract aspect is dominant (Elson, 1979). Labour (or work) cannot liberate itself from 'its reified subjection to the power of things, to an external necessity' (Mészáros, 1970: 91), because money is not an external necessity but a social relation, a significant *mediation* in the constitution of us as subjects.

The political implication of this is that the recovery of our doing would find its limits in value as a form of existence of the creative capacity of labour. The real subsumption of the social in capital where: 'no subjectivity is outside' (Hardt and Negri 2000: 353), means the ceaseless transformation (or dematerialisation) of concrete labour into abstract labour, the substance of value: 'Through the real subsumption, the integration of labor into capital becomes more intensive than extensive and society is ever more completely fashioned by capital'

(idem. Ant: 255).

The production of the concrete social forms through which labour and capital assert themselves, as much as the forms of social antagonism, are shaped within this process. The transformation of labour power into abstract labour and the extraction and realisation of surplus value requires the ceaseless subordination of human practice to the expansive operation of the law of value ('logic of capital' in traditional terms). Can we escape this fate? Holloway is not proposing to *recover* concrete labour as an inherent human capacity to create, because he knows well that as it self-expands value constitutes subjectivity, thus perpetuating the subordination of life to the value-creating process. Having said that, real subsumption is not synonymous with an inescapable 'logic of accumulation'—value is a product of the relationship constituted through struggle. Holloway's point is that total subordination is impossible:

concrete doing is not, and cannot be, totally subordinated to abstract labour. There is a non-identity between them: doing does not fit in to abstract labour without a reminder. There is always a surplus, an overflowing. There is always a pushing in different directions... (p. 173)

By struggling against *becoming* abstract labour we produce fissures within the process of production and reproduction of capital, which is an interrupted and crisis-ridden process, always threatened by insubordination or the prospect of it at any of its stages (on this see Bell and Cleaver 1982). If we are to concur with the idea that there always will be a 'surplus (doing) that cannot be subordinated to abstract labour, the question is whether doing can create anti-capitalist world(s) or not. It is beyond doubt that charitable and voluntary activities, barter or participation in communitarian farms are not *necessarily* creating non-capitalist social relations, but co-exist, complement or even sustain capitalism. Many of our present collective experiments and resistances have been (or have attempted to be) integrated into World Bank led programmes, as there has been a shift towards movement- and community-related language from international financial institutions (Dinerstein, 2010). Holloway also acknowledges that due the very nature of capitalist 'social cohesion', the cracks are susceptible to being integrated into the social synthesis that they want to break. So, '[h]ow do we avoid our cracks becoming simply a means for resolving the tensions or contradictions of capitalism, just an element of crisis resolution for the system?' (p. 53). The answer is that we can only rely on the contradictory nature of the crack: cracks are not 'temporary autonomous zone' (TAZ) (Bey 2011), that is they are not zones 'outside' capitalism. Holloway would agree with that

the overwhelming and unavoidable nature of capitalist work means that there is no Archimedean point or detached perspective from which to generate a sustained critique. There is no outside to the world of capitalist work... And yet ... critique has been generated internally from within the logic of capitalist work itself (Dinerstein and Neary, 2002b: 3).

Thus generated from within, cracks are inevitably 'vulnerable to the gelatinous

suction of the capitalist synthesis' (p. 51), always at risk of helping the capitalist state to reframe its policies along the lines of market-oriented liberalism. Thus, cracks exist 'on the edge of impossibility' (p.71). As autonomous sites, cracks can be said to be '(im)possible' as they bear the tension between resistance and integration (Böhm et al, 2010).

The struggle for not being the working class

Closely linked to the argument that our struggles are 'struggles of doing against labour (and therefore against capital' (p. 157), Holloway puts forward the view that we have to rethink the significance of the labour movements, particularly after the revolts of the late 1960s. The crisis of labour has been experienced as the defeat of labour, the defeat of the working class, which became apparent in

'the decline of the trade union movement everywhere in the world, the catastrophic erosion of many of the material gains won by the labour movement in the past, the virtual disappearance of social democratic parties with a real commitment to radical reform, the collapse of the Soviet Union and other "communist countries..."'(p. 183)

'emerged with the crisis of the Fordist-Keynesian forms of institutionalisation of class conflict: a 'crisis in the particular pattern of containment of the power of labour (1996a: 22; also 1996b) ultimately produced by the *recognition* of the power of labour by the state that characterised the Keynesian form of containment. The crisis became evident in the wave of resistances during the late 1960s. In 1967, both writings Debord's *La société du spectacle* and Vaneigem's *Traité de savoir-vivre à l'usage des jeunes générations* denounced the impossibility of a *real politic* choice. Direct democracy, namely workers' councils, was the form of organisation to take forward (Reader, 1993:51). According to the Situationists, the emancipatory task was the de-feshitisation of social relations. May 68 interpreted by the right as an enterprise of subversion, was for the rebels 'a moment of dreams', 'a utopian parenthesis' and a 'crisis of a whole civilisation' (Reader, 1993: 35). To Holloway these revolts expressed an explosion against labour:

This tight, tense wave splits open in 1968 as a generation no longer so tamed by the experience of fascism and war rise up and say "no, we shall not dedicate our lives to the rule of money, we shall not dedicate all the days of our lives to abstract labour. We shall do something else instead". The revolt against capital expresses itself openly as that which it always is and must be: a revolt against labour. (p. 182)

Faced with the resistance against labour, and the increasing 'cost of exploitation', the survival of capital required that it took 'flight from the inadequacy of its own basis: this flight is expressed in the conversion of capital into money' (Holloway, 1996b: 132) This assessment of both the capitalist crisis as a crisis of the capital-labour relationship and the radical features of the revolts of the late 1960s allow

Holloway to make the next controversial statement of the book: that *'inevitably, the crisis of abstract labour is the crisis of the movement constructed on the basis of abstract labour: the labour movement'* (p.183) and therefore the labour movement is *'a movement of the past': it is a movement that represents and reproduces abstract labour*. Undeniably, the 'working class' is an identity that represents and therefore affirms the existence of (wage) abstract labour. Holloway wants to disentangle the working class from the method of the crack. He suggests that our resistances (crack producing acts) cannot typify the struggle of the 'working class' or any other 'subject' for the reason that 'the subject of anti-capitalist struggle is...an anti-identitarian subject (Holloway 2009b: 98).

This makes sense *logically* (though it is *politically* problematic): in order to break the social cohesion of capitalism, knitted by means of commodification, fetishism and abstraction of our doing into abstract labour, we must discard the subjectivities that correspond to the reproduction of the world of money. Holloway has pointed at the 'tragic history of the communist movement' and 'the conceptual problems in the Marxist tradition' (Holloway, 1995: 157) as both being the consequence of this *naturalisation* of the working class as a trans-historical construct, and their insistence on the organisation of the working class' struggles against capitalist exploitation through trade unions and political parties.

Consistently with this and with his proposal to change the world without taking power, Holloway rejects the working class' position as the 'revolutionary subject'. But this does *not* denote that he advocates instead a plurality of subjectivities. Holloway would be at variance with Laclau and Mouffe's (1985: 152) renunciation of 'privileged points of rupture' and their proposal that this, together with 'the plurality and indeterminacy of the social [are] the two fundamental bases from which a new political imaginary can be constructed.' Nor does this mean that Holloway is pointing to major changes in the forms of existence of labour, à la mode of Hardt and Negri's (2004b) 'immaterial labour' being presented as the predominant form within globalisation and 'the multitude' as new subjects of radical change. Nor is Holloway referring to how the disassociation of 'work' with the 'working class' raises the possibility that other dimensions of life determine their class positions. Gorz (1999), who shares Holloway's interpretation of the present period as one of crisis of abstract labour, attacks the work ethic by proposing, in a style echoed by others, that we 'move beyond the wage-society' (Levitas, 2001: 459):

It has to be recognised that neither the right to an income, nor full citizenship, nor everyone's sense of identity and self-fulfilment can any longer be centred on and depend on occupying a job. And society has to be changed to take account of this (Gorz 1999: 54)

Gorz advocate a search for other forms of 'work' — not subordinated to abstract labour. But, unlike Holloway, he proposes that discontinuity in the wage society must be sustained by the state through basic income (Levitas, 2001: 460; Standing, 2011).

Holloway's intention is very different. He aims to point at the contradictions that inhabit 'identity,' and discuss the significance of negativity —

of negative identity. To Holloway, the 'working class' does and does not exist as such, it is not *already constituted* but is permanently *being constituted* in a process that is based on the constant and violent separation of object from the subject. It is by engaging with the resistance that inhabits the concept and reality of the working class that we can anticipate *not* being the working class. This is a recurrent idea in Holloway's work:

We do not struggle as working class, we struggle against being working class, against being classified...There is nothing positive about being members of the working class, about being ordered, commanded, separated from our product and our process of production ... We are/are not working class... We classify ourselves in so far as we produce capital, in so far as we respect money, in so far as we participate, through our practice, our theory, our language (our defining the working class), in the separation of subject and object (Holloway, 2002c: 36-37).

Stop making capitalism

In *Crack Capitalism* Holloway resumes but pushes further the central idea found in CTW — that the state is not a tool for revolution and change and previous discussions about how to refuse 'and do something else instead' (Holloway, 2005: 179). He argues that a significant element of interstitial revolution is that *we stop making capitalism, rather than fight against it*. We must *not only* stop thinking of the state as the instrument for revolution and move 'beyond the state illusion' (Holloway, 2002b) — through the method of the crack we *have to* forge new world(s) that recover and expand the flow of doing. Holloway is conscious that stopping to make capitalism unmistakably entails a fight against capitalism. He recognises that Etienne de la Boetie's 'resolve to serve no more and you are at once freed' (p. 17) cannot provide the way out of a system of slavery, but it is a potent allegory that shows how the powerful depend on the powerless, that represents the power of refusal to be subordinated to the rules of the rulers, in our case, money (via abstract labour). He also identifies in the state that all-pervading social relation that filters and shapes our everyday lives and resistances. What Holloway is proposing is a key *shift* in focus:

Rephrasing the question of revolution as *stop making capitalism* does not give us the answers...what the rephrasing does is to redirect our attention. It makes us focus first on ourselves as the creators and potential non-creators of capitalism. Secondly, it brings our attention to bear on the ec-static tension between doing and labour which both a matter of everyday experience and the space within our capacity to create another world remains entrapped' (p. 255)

By encouraging us to direct our efforts to the creation of new worlds now, not in the hypothetical case of a (possible, future) revolution, Holloway is suggesting that revolution happens every time that we *crack* capitalism, any time that we try a different, alternative, anti-capitalist form of doing things. In his definition of

revolution, Holloway replicates the Zapatistas' view that this world is *wrong* and that it is very difficult to *change it*: 'a more pragmatic attitude demands the construction of a new world' (Esteva cited by Holloway, p. 50):

'Revolution is not about destroying capitalism, but about refusing to create it. To pose revolution as the destruction of capitalism is to reproduce the abstraction of time that is so central to the reproduction of capitalism: it is self-defeating. To think of destroying capitalism is to erect a great monster in front of us, so terrifying that we either give up in despair or else conclude that the only way in which we can slay the monster is by constructing a great party with heroic leaders who sacrifice themselves (and everyone around them) for the sake of revolution' (p. 255)

It would be impossible to know *a priori* what sort of action can stop us making capitalism and how might the cracks fashion new worlds, but to Holloway not to know is desirable, as the crack is open and uncertain.

'No demands': the (anti)politics of dignity vs. 'the police'

Indispensable for the argument of interstitial revolution as the struggle of doing against labour, which leads to the production and propagation of cracks that reject identity and are directed both to stop making capitalism and to the creation of new worlds, it lays a fourth proposal: *there are two kinds of politics, 'the politics of dignity' and 'the politics of poverty', (two kinds of struggles interconnected and mixed) and 'the construction of new worlds depends on our engagement in the former rather than the latter'* (p. 60). The politics of poverty is based on demands. An example of each of them will shed light on the difference Holloway proposes. The involvement of celebrities in the war on poverty, like Bob Geldof's campaign to *Make Poverty History*, are evocative of the politics of poverty. This successful campaign raised awareness about the immorality of poverty in a world of abundance but requires waiting until those in power take measures to eliminate poverty in the world. It comes as no surprise that Bob Geldof ended up collaborating with a 'world poverty group' set up by the UK Conservative leader David Cameron.

The cracks represent the politics of dignity. The notion of dignity became the heart of revolutionary discourse, thus superseding traditional Marxists' lexicon of class and exploitation with the Zapatista's uprising. Not an ideal to guide their struggle, nor the struggles of the working class for social reforms, nor for a future socialist revolution, the Zapatista's projection of 'dignity' means self-determined forms of doing, and it is incompatible with exploitation and oppression (De Angelis 2000). Dignity cannot be *attained* by fighting for better working and/or living conditions, if the subordination of human life to the requirements of capitalist accumulation remains in place, but by rejecting such subordination. Dignity 'is a weapon against a world of destruction' (p. 49). The 'no' entailed in the crack is facilitator for the creation of new forms of being 'subjects, rather than objects' (p. 12).

The politics of dignity, powerfully captured in Hessel's pamphlet *Indignez*

Vous! (2011) is currently projected by both the rebellion of the indignants (*indignad@s*) in Spain (and the *aganaktismenoi* in Greece. Like ¡*Que se vayan tod@s!* (all of them out!) that captured the indignation with the farce of democracy in Argentina a decade earlier, the *Indignad@s* in Spain mobilised for ‘real democracy now!’ against what Rancière (1999: 29) calls ‘the police’ — ‘an order of bodies that defines the allocation of ways of doing, ways of being, and ways of saying, and sees that those bodies are assigned by name to a particular place and task’. Like the popular neighbourhood assemblies in Argentina 2001-2002, the ‘grammar of freedom’ (Martin-Cabrera, 2011; 92) expressed in the *acampadas* in the main squares of Spain reject ‘business as usual’ (Antentas and Vivas, 2011) and became spaces of resistance and hope, from were to discuss issues concerning their individual, social and political needs, here and now. These are genuine spaces for democratic politics, which as argued by Rancière, is defined by ‘the part of action of those who have no part’ (1999: 29). This is an experience of self-determination, a political movement that ‘blurs both the given distribution of the individual and the collective, and the accepted boundary of the political and the social’ (Rancière, 2006: 84): a crack.

The ‘politics of dignity’ clearly moves beyond demand. In this sense, Holloway positions himself somewhere between Critchley (2008), who advocates an ‘infinitely demanding’ attitude from an ethical subjectivity, and Žižek who, in his anti-anarchist critique of the former argues that ‘the truly subversive thing is not to insist on ‘infinite’ demands but, ‘on the contrary, to bombard those in power with strategically well-selected, precise, finite demands, which can’t be met with the same excuse’ (2007: 7; also 2008). To Holloway

‘a demand is addressed to someone and asks them to do something on our behalf in the future, whereas in the politics of living now [dignity] there is no demand. We ask no permission of anyone and we do not wait for the future, but simply break time and assert now another type of doing, another forms of social relations’ (p. 241).

Altering temporality

Crack is a ‘verb’ (a word in motion and in the imperative tense) to name not what we are, or what is attributed to us — in other words our identities, but to denote our *actions*. If interstitial revolution means anything, it is that we are already *contesting*, *challenging* and *critiquing* different yet equally oppressive economic, social and political situations worldwide; individual, collective, ordinary and extraordinary. Interstitial revolution takes us to another dimension, the dimension of doing-non-identity-anti-politics-of-dignity-hope, as opposed to labour-working-class-politics-of-poverty-objective-reality. In this new *open* dimension, we can anticipate another reality far from the oppression that is taking away what is essentially human in us: the act of dreaming *collectively*.

Crack Capitalism points at the *other* (class) struggle: the struggle of *not* becoming abstract labour, the struggle for *not* becoming the working class, the struggle to *stop* reproducing capitalism, the struggle to keep everything open and embrace uncertainty, the struggle that helps us to negate, to reject identity and escape (somehow) the classificatory power of capitalism that sustains its social

cohesion, to embrace dignity. Following Holloway, any crack, be it the refusal to go to work, or the participation in a demonstration or embracing alternative ways of seeing and methods of acting upon the world, produces a fissure in such social cohesion of capital right here right now, whilst simultaneously allows the creation of a space for the experience of *what has not yet become*. (Bloch, 1959/1986)

There cannot be closure, perfection, and certainty. We are contradictory beings and our resistance are so too. Cracks can be (and they are) integrated into the capitalist cohesion at any time, but, since revolution cannot be other than interstitial, the impact of the crack must not be measured in terms of a future gain but in the 'here and now'. Cracks always interrupt the process of abstraction, of doing into labour, that forms the capitalist 'social synthesis'.

The issue of how to articulate the multiplicity of struggles is not on Holloway's agenda, as it is, for example, on Laclau's and Mouffe's, when they propose to construct 'a system of equivalents' which could lead to the radicalisation of the social field (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985), or on Boaventura de Sousa Santos' (2008), when he advocates the need for a better 'work of translation' in an attempt to find common anti-capitalist grounds to a multiplicity of knowledges and practices represented at the World Social Forum. Interstitial revolution does not require such a task on the part of left. Although what Holloway means by 'promote their confluence' (p. 11) is unclear, he is not keen on organisation, an issue that escapes the confines of the book.

The crack is an 'event' which, unlike an 'occurrence' 'which leaves intact the crucial determinative elements of the situation' (Rothenberg, 2010: 156), the *event* (or 'political act' in Žižek's terms) 'brings something new into the world that changes the determinants and significance of the very terms by which we had previously comprehended the situation' (Rothenberg, 2010: 156). The cracks are expected neither to accumulate forces nor to prepare for a future revolution. They offer a 'new temporality of rebellion' that alters our perception of revolution: they are 'here and now insubordination' (Holloway, p.26) which breaks the form of experience of time imposed by capitalism, homogeneous time, time as 'duration' (p. 135). Holloway is referring to the tyranny of the clock, that brings to mind how wonderfully E.P.Thompson (1984: 61) characterised time in industrial capitalism:

This measurement embodies a simple relationship. Those who are employed experience a distinction between their employer's time and their 'own' time. And the employer must use the time of his labour, and see it is not wasted: not the task but the value of time when reduced to money is dominant. Time is now currency: it is not passed but spent.

Certainly, 'the rise of the clock accompanies the rise of the abstraction of doing into labour' (p. 136). But it is not just about labour discipline or punctuality. Clock-time, claims Holloway, determines 'a whole way of living and understanding the world' (p. 138). As opposed to 'doing-time', clock-time is

'the time of duration, is the time of the separation of subject from object, of constitution from existence, of doing from done...is the time-in-which we live ...of institutionalisation...of a world that we do not control...the time of

deferred gratification' (p. 138-140).

Here, Holloway vividly engages with Vaneigem's radical critique of bourgeois conceptions of time that suggests that

the economic imperative has converted man into a living chronometer, distinguishing feature on his wrist. This is the tome of work, progress and output, production, consumption and programming; it's time for the spectacle, for a kiss, or a photo, time for anything, time is money. The time-commodity. Survival time (1967/1994)

The puzzle

But there is something puzzling about the interstitial revolution. If revolution is already happening, does it coexist with capitalism? Will the cracks always be situation acts, here and now, that resonate with 'the disruption of the expected' practiced by Debord's movement, which aimed at breaking and interrupting that which was deemed 'normal' in the late-1950s France? Will the crack always 'interrupt the given' (Arditi, 2008: 114) *without* breaking it apart? Or does Holloway think that the multiplication and expansion of cracks *will* at some point overwhelm the capitalist social cohesion to the point of saturation leading to the end of capitalism? Is this a wrong question? Does the use of the future tense in my sentence show that I am trapped in the temporality of clock-time? Holloway proposes that the cracks are not 'a struggle to establish an alternative totality but rather to break the existing one' (p. 144). So is 'interstitial revolution' sufficiently *promising*? He does suggest that the cracks are able to unlock spaces for 'acting out' a world that does not yet exist. But in the act of anticipating the not-yet-become, are we not inevitably compelled to imagine how it would be and get organised?

In a recent exchange between Michael Hardt and John Holloway (2012) where both discuss emancipatory politics, Hardt is concerned with the 'need to organise autonomous practices (our practices of doing) into more sustainable alternative social forms?' Holloway suggests that 'organising is not the way to go about revolution: any proposal based on the creation of institutions reflects an old way of thinking revolution, as the later 'is always a process of making our own paths'. Yet, he does accept that 'organisation is crucial, but not *an* organisation: it has to be an organising that comes from below, a communising.' (my italics). As the dialogue progresses, Holloway poses a rhetorical question: 'But does there not have to be a coming together of the cracks?' His answer is 'yes' adding that 'I think this is an issue that is not sufficiently explored in my book. I would like to develop further at some point the question of the confluence of the cracks, both in terms of the inspirational lighting of prairie fires and the practical organisation of cooperation.' (Holloway in Hardt and Holloway, 2012)

Seeking to explore this problematic further, I identify and engage with Adornian and Blochian moments within Holloway's work, which have helped Holloway to conceive the crack as both negative and open.

Adorno, Bloch, ... and Marcos: negativity, hope and beyond

Our struggles, claims Holloway, are open, irresolvable and contradictory. Notwithstanding insurmountable differences between them, which are beyond the scope of this review, Ernst Bloch and Theodor Adorno both can be said to be theoretical inspirations for Holloway's conceptualisation of the cracks as open and uncertain enterprise.

Bloch's notion of the 'not-yet-become' can be discerned behind Holloway's idea that the cracks can *anticipate* new worlds. The 'real', argues Bloch, is a process, which mediates between present, unfinished past and, above all, possible future...' (1959/1986: 197). What *is not yet there* inhabits reality, reality is unclosed, unfinished, and it is a *material* dimension of reality:

what they had not discovered was that there is in present material... an impetus and a sense of being broken off, a brooding quality and an anticipation of Not-Yet-Become; and this broken-off and broached material does not take place in the cellar of consciousness, but on its Front. (Bloch, 1959/1986: 11-12)

In this vein, Holloway pictures the crack as an 'opening outward' (p. 35). In the movement of creating the cracks, movement that is surrounded by uncertainty, we anticipate, discover and imagine the (im)possible that inhabits within concrete reality. The question of how do we find hope in the black night?' (p. 193) is not 'utopian,' or 'wishful thinking'. Against detractors and cynics, hope here is posited as purposeful: it guides action (Levitas, 1990). It is the concrete act of resistance what becomes the vehicle for radical change as it offers the possibility for imagining and anticipate alternatives within the reality of this (capitalist) world (Dinerstein and Deneulin, 2012).

This ability to anticipate new worlds through our daydreaming has been beautifully articulated by Subcomandante Marcos, whose articulation resonates with Bloch:

In our dreams we have seen another world, an honest world, a world decidedly more fair than the one in which we now live...this world was not something that came to us from our ancestors. It came from ahead, from the next step we were going to take (in Ponce de Leon, 2001: 18).

But Holloway's conception of the crack is also Adornian. Holloway has artfully transformed Adorno's pessimistic philosophy into a motivation for resistance: 'rupture and revolt and fragility and uncertainty and openness and pain are at the centre of Adorno's thought: that is why he is so exciting' (Holloway 2009a: 12). Adorno's critique of Hegel's positive dialectic that inexorably culminates in synthesis, is a key tool the openness that characterises the crack. In Adorno's philosophy, dialectics is eminently negative so the possibility of closure (synthesis) is overruled:

The thesis that the negation of a negation is something positive can only be upheld by one who presupposes positivity -as all-conceptuality- from the

beginning ...The negation of the negation would be another identity, a new delusion, a projection of consequential logic – and ultimately of the principle of subjectivity-upon the absolute (Adorno, 1995: 160).

In Adorno, any possibility of reconciliation must be resisted (Schwartzböck, 2008: 21) and this includes the past: 'contingency' (a significant concept in Adorno's philosophy) affects as much the past as the future: nothing was ever necessary (Schwartzböck, 2008: 31): 'dialectics' Adorno highlights, 'means to break the compulsion to achieve identity, and to break it by means of the energy stored up in that compulsion and congealed in its objectifications' (1995: 157). Holloway embraces and celebrates the connection between negative dialectics and non-identity established by Adorno:

That is the central theme of Adorno's thought: dialectics as the consistent sense of non-identity, of that which does not fit. It is both libertarian and revolutionary. It is libertarian because its pivot and driving force is the misfit, irreducible particularity, the non-identity that cannot be contained, the rebel who will not submit to party discipline. It is revolutionary because it is explosive, volcanic. If there is no identity other than the identity that is underpinned by non-identity, then there is no possibility of stability. All identity is false, contradictory (Holloway, 2009a: 13)

Holloway's contention is that politically capitalism achieves its social cohesion through abstraction and *classification*. We fight against those classifications. We struggle 'against' identity. This is surely not immediately tangible But Holloway does not address the problem of mediation. Class struggle is *mediated*. And identity is certainly still significant as a tool to contest the process that constitutes the other side of classification: the de sensualisation, dehumanisation, indifference and homogenisation of human activity into abstract labour entailed in the valorisation of capital (see Dinerstein, 2005a; 2005b). The struggle against indifference forces us to reinvent and 'name' ourselves vis-à-vis the dehumanisation and invisibility entailed in capital's valorisation. Thus, Holloway's emphasis on the struggle against identity is consistent with his intention to direct our attention to the falsehood of positive identity: whatever we are, e.g. we are 'women', we are much more than that, and how much more can only be discovered by denying what we are, by looking beyond, by rejecting closure. In truth, (non)identity is sitting on a fence between the struggle for the recognition of the particular and the struggle against the particular for the universal. By emphasising the struggle *against* identity, Holloway is able to make (elsewhere) a distinction that is vital to his argument about the crack as an autonomous and contradictory space/moment: whilst positive autonomism classifies and 'seeks to put everything in its place, slides into sociology, flirts with progressive governments' (2009b: 99), negative autonomism (that inhabits the crack) is 'anti-synthetic' (p. 209), is anti-enclosure, is open,

It is a delirium, a vertiginous critique, a corrosive movement of non-identity, with no paradigms, nothing firm to hold on to, an asking not a telling. The

one still trapped in the identities of abstract labour, the other pushing against and beyond all identities, part of the budding and flowering of useful-creative doing. The distinction matters politically (2009b: 99)

But if the crack is an *opening outward*, how is it possible that it is based on negativity, with negation circumscribed to specific spaces/moments? Is then the utopian function of hope that can help us to anticipate the future –here and now–obliterated? It is well known that for Adorno there is no possibility of happiness until humanity has been emancipated (Schwarzbock, 2008). Is Holloway reluctant to acknowledge that at this point Adorno’s melancholic pessimism becomes anti-political? Holloway agrees with Adorno (and the Frankfurt School) in that all we can do is to say ‘no’ to what is wrong. As Bonefeld (2009: 143) suggests ‘Horkheimer’s (1981: 150) statement “I can say what is wrong, but I cannot say what is right” is thus apt’.

The fusion and the scales

My view is that the book offers a blending of Adorno’s negative dialectics and Bloch’s principle of hope, but the scales are inclined to the former. We learn how the crack allows us to negate and reject but not how we anticipate new worlds. I wonder whether Holloway is concerned that Bloch’s projection into the *future* compromises his argument on the new temporality and the irresolvable character of the crack? In the last paragraph of the *Principle of Hope*, Bloch (1959/1986, p. 1376) goes on to arguing that

True genesis is not at the beginning but at the end, and it starts to begin only when society and existence become radical, i.e. grasp their roots. But the root of history is the working, creating human, being who reshapes and overhauls the given facts. Once he has grasped himself and established what is his, without expropriation and alienation, in real democracy, there arises in the world something which shines into the childhood of all and in which no one has yet been: homeland.

Frequently this reference to ‘homeland’ has been stereotypically interpreted as messianic. But for Bloch, homeland is none other than communism as in the realisation-of-the-unrealised: ‘ultimately we still are not’ (Bloch, 1918/2000: 267). In other words, what makes Bloch’s principle of hope radical is not a plan to be fulfilled *in the future*, but as Lear (2006: 103) highlights, that

‘hope is directed towards a future goodness that transcends the current ability to understand what it is. Radical hope anticipates a good for which those who have the hope as yet lack the appropriate concepts with which to understand it.’

Bloch was not concerned about the closure of dialectics but about conceiving the *real* not as circumscribed to what-it-is but as unclosed. Whilst with Adorno we understand the power of non-identity and non-closure, with Bloch, we ‘*learn hope*’, as Bloch asks us to ‘throw [ourselves] actively into what is becoming to

which [we ourselves] belong' (Bloch [1959]1996: 3). With Bloch, Holloway is drawing our attention to the need for

'a different concept of reality to the narrow and ossified one of the second half of the nineteenth century is thus overdue...that includes a concrete forward dream is already fermenting, 'anticipating elements are a component of reality itself' (Bloch, 1959/1986: 197)

The coexistence between hope and negativity is also enacted in the prose of *Crack Capitalism*: by avoiding certainties, by constantly opening his statements to more queries, by questioning every confirmation, by engaging with what he intuitively thinks his readers would be asking themselves as they read the book, Holloway has produced a text that is fluid but interrupted by self-reflections, hesitations and questions, and which allows him to reflect on the impossibility of closure, and this takes us right up to thesis 33, which occupies no more than half a page, lacks the final period of the last sentence.

What is to be said? Crack on!

The present attempt at *rephrasing* class struggle and revolution as Holloway does in *Crack Capitalism*, has been the norm rather than the exception among radical intellectuals for the past twenty years. The wave was perhaps initiated by Laclau and Mouffe (1985: 189) when they argued that plural democratic movements were shifting from a strategy of opposition' to 'strategy of construction of a new order.' The determination to reshape revolution discursively have led to conversations about the production of the common (*Rethinking Marxism* 2010), commonwealth (Hardt and Negri 2004a), revolution and communism (Badiou 2010; Žižek, 2002), disagreement (Rancière 1999; 2011), ethical, plural, radical, and non-conformist subjectivity (Critchley, 2008; Hardt and Negri, 2004b; Santos, 2003). They share a profound anti-statist scepticism within Marxism associated with the Soviet experiment, and the intention to shift focus from the analysis of the State, or of Capitalism as a 'system,' or of Crisis as being economic, or of revolutions as being intimately tied-up with a politics centred on the Party and the trade unions, towards the nature, quality and dilemmas of the struggles in, against and beyond the state, capital and forms of radical action. One of the apparent weaknesses of *Crack Capitalism* is Holloway's patent failure to engage in a debate with these intellectuals of the left; but is this weakness perhaps explained by him being moved by the desire to connect with activists' own theorising? (Cox and Nielsen, 2007: 434) and the 'heroes of *Crack Capitalism*.' To be sure, Holloway sees himself as part of the revolutionary enterprise of cracking capitalism, and he struggle, as Foucault (1980: 208) suggests, 'against the form of power that transform him into its object and instrument in the sphere of knowledge, truth, consciousness and discourse.'

Crack Capitalism can be said to represent the 'open synthesis' of several hypotheses and ideas that Holloway has carefully cultivated and developed over the last twenty years of passionate work. This is why the book is a coherent, accessible and philosophically substantiated piece of work that contributes to the (im)possibility of revolution today.

Holloway's proposal must not be confused with an 'anti-political' or a 'post political' analysis (Charnock, Purcell and Ribera-Fumaz, 2012). *Crack Capitalism* provides a deep examination of both how capitalism works and how our 'cracks' can affect/alter/rupture/break the capitalist synthesis. It does not proclaim prophetically that the end of capitalism is imminent, but highlights that the cracks can not only produce fissures but also move beyond, from within. *Crack Capitalism* also emphasises the importance of 'tolerating not knowing' as a practice of theorising (Gibson-Graham, 2006: xxxi) and of engaging with our own forms of existence and resistance when we get involved in such practice. It is, in short, an invitation to dream with the unimaginable yet *real* possibilities that inhabit our own subjectivity, a call to denaturalise our identities and the way we think about how things work, to de-codify ourselves by becoming both nothing and everything, challenging spatial and temporal constructions (Dinerstein, 1997), to think of ourselves as fluid subjects (Braidotti, 2010). We are open and uncertain beings in a continuous process of becoming, of shaping absences. Paraphrasing W. Whitman in his 'Song of myself', we contradict ourselves because we are large: we contain multitudes. Holloway characterises his book as 'the story of many, many people...the story of the millions who have woven their way in and out of these pages' (p. 262). Above all, Holloway's is an unfinished book (as is this review of it): *Crack Capitalism* will keep me thinking and daydreaming about revolution, openness, negativity, indignation, dignity, and hope for a long ...

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Endnotes

1. 'I have preferred to talk about impossible things, because the possible is too well known' (News Summary).
2. Unless otherwise stated, all references are from Holloway J (2010) *Crack Capitalism*. London: Pluto Press.
3. See similar uses of the term 'interstitial' in Critchley's 'interstitial distance within state territory' (2008: 113), Pikerill & Chatterton's 'interstitially' (2006: 8); Wright's 'interstitial transformations' (2010: 321), and Arditi's 'interstitial region of politics' (2008: 100).
4. On a recent debate about abstract labour and the homogenisation of time, see Bonfeld(2010), and Kicillof and Starosta (2011) in this journal.

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