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## **Holloway's Scream: Full of Sound and Fury**

In the beginning is the dream, the promise of a society which permits the full development of human potential, a society in which we relate to each other as human beings and where the mere recognition of the need of another is sufficient to induce our deed. In the beginning is the vision of a society where the products of our past activity serve our own need for development and where, in working together, we develop our capacities, our needs, our human wealth.

That dream moves us – even as we catch only fleeting glimpses. It underlies our struggles – our struggles for wages (to satisfy the needs of socially developed human beings), our struggles over the length and intensity of the working day (in order to have time and energy for ourselves), our struggles to make the state (controlled and used by others to enforce our exploitation) into our own agency, our struggles to end our oppression (for instance, as women, blacks, indigenous people), our struggles for our share of civilisation. And, in those struggles, we ourselves develop. Not only does the dream itself become clearer through our collective activity, but we transform ourselves, we grow; through our revolutionary practice, where we simultaneously

change circumstances and ourselves, we make ourselves fit to create a new world, the world that corresponds to the dream.

John Holloway does not begin his *Change the World without Taking Power* with the dream, the potential, that positive and fertile utopia. He begins with a *scream*: 'In the beginning is the scream. We scream'. It is a scream of sadness, horror, pain, anger but most of all, 'a scream of refusal: NO'.<sup>1</sup> We scream because we refuse to accept. His, in short, is the scream of negativity, and the 'aim of this book is to strengthen negativity, to take the side of the fly in the web, to make the scream more strident'.<sup>2</sup>

Although it might be argued that Holloway's real premise is the dream (the truly human society, the communist society), it is not a point that occupies him, because his purpose is to accentuate the negative. Even Marx's architect who builds his new structure in his mind before producing it in actuality is depicted as engaged, not in something positive, but in negation: 'The doing of the architect is negative, not only in its result, but in its whole process: it begins and ends with the negation of what exists'.<sup>3</sup> Rather than focus upon that alternative and attempt to build it, Holloway himself begins and ends with the negation of what exists.

Most of all, that which exists and must be negated is power over us – the power of our products over us, the power of social relations over us. But also to be negated are the false paths taken in the past, paths that history and theory reveal to be just other forms of power over us, indeed paths that are counter-revolutionary. So, we must say NO to the state – because 'the very notion that society can be changed through the winning of state power' is the source of all our sense of betrayal, and we need to understand that 'to struggle through the state is to become involved in the active process of defeating yourself';<sup>4</sup> NO to seeking power in order to achieve our goals – because 'once the logic of power is adopted, the struggle against power is already lost';<sup>5</sup> NO to the party – because the party (whether revolutionary or parliamentary) is the instrument by which our struggles are impoverished, placing control of the state at the top of the hierarchy and 'sensuality, playing, laughing, loving' at the bottom;<sup>6</sup> NO to armed struggle – because 'even in

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<sup>1</sup> Holloway 2002, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Holloway 2002, p. 8.

<sup>3</sup> Holloway 2002, pp. 24–5.

<sup>4</sup> Holloway 2002, pp. 12–13, 214.

<sup>5</sup> Holloway 2002, p. 17.

<sup>6</sup> Holloway 2002, pp. 16–17.

the unlikely event of military victory, it is capitalist social relations that have triumphed';<sup>7</sup> NO to national liberation – because

the assertion of national identity in national liberation movements [has] done little more than reproduce the oppression against which the scream was directed;<sup>8</sup>

NO to struggles over identity – because the appeal to identity

always involves the consolidation of identity, the strengthening, therefore, of the fracturing of doing, in short, the reinforcement of capital;<sup>9</sup>

NO to identifying and classifying the working class – because

we do not struggle *as* working class, we struggle *against* being working class, against being classified [and because of] the cumulative evidence of a separation between 'the working class' as an empirically identifiable group and the most striking forms of rebellion.<sup>10</sup>

And, finally, NO to the idea that we as thinkers have any privileged understanding of history and the world – because that would imply there are 'Knowers', 'a vanguard of some sort', and because such a positive-scientific displacement of Marx's concept of negative science ensures that

power-over penetrates into revolutionary theory and undermines it far more effectively than any government undercover agents infiltrating a revolutionary organisation.<sup>11</sup>

As can be seen, there are many NO's here, far more than would be anticipated – given Holloway's rejection of an all-Knower. Yet, as we will see, there is one basic, fundamental NO – NO to Marx.

## Holloway's YES

Appropriately, Holloway cheers those who are part of the scream, those who attempt to negate their negation. In the 'absurd and shadowy world of anti-power', he places the Zapatistas, participants in autonomous-community projects and NGOs, those who project 'a radical otherness', the Zapatistas,

<sup>7</sup> Holloway 2002, p. 213.

<sup>8</sup> Holloway 2002, p. 73.

<sup>9</sup> Holloway 2002, pp. 62–4.

<sup>10</sup> Holloway 2002, pp. 56, 144.

<sup>11</sup> Holloway 2002, pp. 80, 84, 118, 122.

Liverpool dockers, the protestors against global neoliberalism, the Zapatistas, Internet workers in Seattle, 'those whose lives are overturned by accumulation: the indigenous of Chiapas, university teachers, coal miners, nearly everybody'.<sup>12</sup>

This anti-power is 'ubiquitous': we find it

in the dignity of everyday existence. Anti-power is the relations that we form all the time, relations of love, friendship, comradeship, community, cooperation.<sup>13</sup>

What makes anti-power revolutionary, though, is that it says NO to power: 'The Zapatistas have said that they want to make the world anew, to create a world of dignity, a world of humanity, but without taking power'.<sup>14</sup> And their call resonates not only among those in open rebellion but also in a hidden world of insubordination – one which encompasses absenteeism from work, the producer who tries to produce a good product (thus, fighting for the development of use-value against value), the 'wise peasant' who, when the great lord passes, 'bows deeply and silently farts'.<sup>15</sup> Changing the world without taking power – this is

the challenge posed by the Zapatistas . . . the challenge of salvaging revolution from the collapse of the state illusion and the collapse of the power illusion.<sup>16</sup>

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, we can see that the mass organisations of the proletariat are no more – 'proletarian power has been replaced by an undefined anti-power', which takes the former's place as 'the hope of humanity'.<sup>17</sup> How much hope, though, can we draw from this diverse world of anti-power? Holloway admits that much of this activity is 'rarely revolutionary', is not always in open hostility to capitalism and does not appear to have the force to change the world.

The Ethiopian peasant's fart certainly does not blow the passing lord off his horse, and yet: it is part of the substratum of negativity which, though generally invisible can flare up in moments of acute social tension. This substratum of negativity is the stuff that social volcanoes are made of.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Holloway 2002, pp. 21, 38, 145, 156, 164.

<sup>13</sup> Holloway 2002, pp. 155, 158.

<sup>14</sup> Holloway 2002, p. 20.

<sup>15</sup> Holloway 2002, pp. 20–1, 150, 157, 193.

<sup>16</sup> Holloway 2002, pp. 20–1.

<sup>17</sup> Holloway 2002, p. 155.

<sup>18</sup> Holloway 2002, p. 21. Holloway is silent on whether this substratum of negativity includes the suicide bomber.

In anti-power, we have the 'stifled volcano', the dry brush for a prairie fire.<sup>19</sup> Because there is always that rage, because the starting point and constant point of return is the scream – negation, rejection, insubordination. But what is it that 'transforms the scream from a scream of anger to a scream of hope, a confident scream of anti-power'?<sup>20</sup>

The recognition that capitalism is fragile. The understanding that rulers 'always depend on those whom they rule' and that any system of rule depends upon acquiescence – that is its weakness and 'the basis for hope'.<sup>21</sup> This, Holloway proposes, is 'the concern of Marxism: understanding the *fragility* of oppression,' understanding that 'in any class society, there is an instability deriving from the ruler's dependence on the ruled', that 'the exploiting class depends on the work of the exploited class for its very existence'.<sup>22</sup> With respect to capitalism, we need to grasp not only that capital depends upon the labour which produces it but, fundamentally, that capital must struggle ferociously to reproduce the subordination of workers, its condition of existence. This is the insight that Holloway draws from his focus upon fetishism and the process of fetishisation – that all the categories and conditions of capital are contested, are in flux, are 'revealed to be raging, bloody battlefields'.<sup>23</sup>

We are, in short, in a constant struggle against subordination, against the way capital defines, classifies, oppresses, exploits us. And, because we constantly scream, the reproduction of capital is inherently fragile. What makes capitalism peculiarly unstable is that it must subordinate insubordinate workers who are *free*, workers who can escape. Inherent in this freedom (which can be temporarily subdued only to rise again) is the dis-articulation of social relations, 'the possibility of social dis-integration, the possibility of crisis'.<sup>24</sup>

Of course, 'hippies can opt out, workers can turn up late for work', and so forth – capital can live with that. In itself, insubordination is not sufficient to produce crisis 'as long as the production of capital (that is the objectivization of doing) itself is not threatened'; insubordination produces crisis, however, when it 'hinders the intensification of exploitation required for capitalist reproduction to such an extent that the profitability of capital is seriously

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<sup>19</sup> Holloway 2002, pp. 158–9.

<sup>20</sup> Holloway 2002, pp. 40, 150.

<sup>21</sup> Holloway 2002, pp. 35–6, 40.

<sup>22</sup> Holloway 2002, pp. 177–8.

<sup>23</sup> Holloway 2002, p. 90.

<sup>24</sup> Holloway 2002, pp. 182–3, 187.

affected'.<sup>25</sup> Happily, we seem to be at that very point. Therein rests Holloway's hope for anti-power.

Given its difficulties in subordinating insubordination, capital has turned to the expansion of credit. Yet, this tactic ('trick'), which puts off confrontation, has produced its own problems: 'crisis (and hence the materiality of anti-power) cannot be understood without discussing the role of the expansion of credit'.<sup>26</sup> Simply stated, the expansion of credit in the face of crisis has meant the growth of fictitious capital, fictitious expectations, fictitious living standards, and it cannot go on:

as a result of the avoidance of confrontation with insubordination, the relative decline in the surplus value produced makes it impossible to maintain the fiction.<sup>27</sup>

The ever-growing separation between real and monetary accumulation produces 'the instability, volatility, fragility and unpredictability of capitalism today'; however, it also increases

the gap between the real subordination of life achieved and the subordination demanded by the voracity of capital. Capital, in order to survive, becomes more and more demanding.<sup>28</sup>

Here, then, is the source of Holloway's 'confident scream of anti-power', why that 'undefined anti-power' can be the 'hope of humanity'. That very fragility of capitalism today means that we cannot pre-judge *which* NO will trigger the social volcano:

the impact of the Zapatista uprising on capital (through the devaluation of the Mexican peso and the world financial upheaval of 1994-5, for example) makes it clear that the capacity to disrupt capital accumulation does not depend necessarily on one's immediate location in the process of production.<sup>29</sup>

*All* our NO's are important. Further, capital's growing demands on us in order to survive, its 'drive to subordinate every aspect of life more and more intensely to capital [which] is the essence of neoliberalism', make our NO's so much more important at this juncture. 'We who are without face and

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<sup>25</sup> Holloway 2002, pp. 190, 193.

<sup>26</sup> Holloway 2002, p. 194.

<sup>27</sup> Holloway 2002, p. 195.

<sup>28</sup> Holloway 2002, pp. 199, 202.

<sup>29</sup> Holloway 2002, p. 149.

without voice: we are the crisis of capitalism'.<sup>30</sup> Now, when capital needs our 'YES, YES' so much more, we can say NO.

## **NO to Capital**

Holloway's confident scream may sound like music to some dwelling in the substratum of negativity, but those familiar with the melodies of Marx are likely to consider it as noise. *Change the World without Taking Power* represents a profound rejection of Marx. While Holloway's NO to Marx is most obvious in their respective views on the place of the state in the struggle to go beyond capitalism, that particular opposition is clearly consistent with quite differing perspectives on what capitalism is and what *Capital* is about.

The concern of Marx was not to understand the fragility of capitalism. Rather, it was to understand its *strength*. His was an attempt to explain precisely how capitalism reproduces itself and why, therefore, capital's walls do not crumble with a loud scream. Consider his conclusion that capitalism tends to produce the workers it needs, workers who treat capitalism as common sense:

The advance of capitalist production develops a working class which by education, tradition and habit looks upon the requirements of this mode of production as self-evident natural laws. The organization of the capitalist process of production, once it is fully developed, breaks down all resistance.<sup>31</sup>

Why did capital tend to 'break down all resistance'? Because of the worker's 'dependence on capital, which springs from the conditions of production themselves, and is guaranteed in perpetuity by them'. The immediate dependence of workers upon the sale of their labour-power to satisfy their needs, the mystification of the nature of capital, whereby the social productivity of labour necessarily appears as the attributes of capital, the divisions among workers and capitals, the effects of the substitution of machinery – these are just some of the reasons for that dependence.<sup>32</sup> All of them come back to the sale of labour-power, that essential characteristic of capitalism, that transaction whose form of expression, however, extinguishes every trace of exploitation, making it appear that the worker gets what she deserves – as does the capitalist.

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<sup>30</sup> Holloway 2002, pp. 202–3.

<sup>31</sup> Marx 1977, p. 899.

<sup>32</sup> Lebowitz 2003, pp. 156–60.

'All the notions of justice held by both the worker and the capitalist, all the mystifications of the capitalist mode of production, all capitalism's illusions about freedom',<sup>33</sup> Marx commented, are grounded in the form of this apparent free exchange.

But you will not find this in Holloway. *His* theme is the fragility of rule: that 'in any class society, there is an instability deriving from the ruler's dependence on the ruled'. The worker's dependence on capital and the particular mystification which flows from the sale of labour-power are not Holloway's story. And there is a reason: in his book, the centrality of the sale of labour-power is displaced by the sale of commodities; the exploitation of the worker, by the fetishism of commodities.<sup>34</sup>

Fetishism (and, following from it, the process of fetishisation) is the central theoretical concept that Holloway advances to make his case for the efficacy of the scream. The concept means more to him, though, than the act of attributing life and meaning to the inanimate object, of believing that social value is inherent in the material characteristics of commodities; for Holloway, fetishism is the 'rupture of doing', the 'rupture of doing and done', the 'rupture of doer from done' – the alienation, in short, of the producer from her product.<sup>35</sup> At the core of his discussion is not capitalism as such but the sale of the commodity:

the fact that it is produced for exchange on the market breaks the flow of doing, makes the thing stand apart from the doing of which it is both product and precondition.<sup>36</sup>

Production for the purpose of exchange ruptures doing and done:

doing is turned against itself, alienated from itself; we lose control over our creative activity. This negation of human creativity takes place through the subjection of human activity to the market.<sup>37</sup>

And the sale of that peculiar commodity, labour-power? The subjection to the market which negates human creativity

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<sup>33</sup> Marx 1977, p. 680.

<sup>34</sup> Although Holloway finds a basis for the stability of capitalism in the concept of commodity fetishism, fragility remains his focus (Holloway 2002, p. 51).

<sup>35</sup> Holloway 2002, pp. 44–6.

<sup>36</sup> Holloway 2002, p. 46.

<sup>37</sup> Holloway 2002, p. 146.



takes place fully when the capacity to work creatively (labour power) becomes a commodity to be sold on the market to those with the capital to buy it.<sup>38</sup>

Rather than focusing (as Marx did) upon commodity production as a condition for the exploitation of the wage-labourer, Holloway reverses the relation and stresses the significance of the sale of labour-power for bringing about 'the generalisation of commodity production': the separation of the done from the doing 'receives its fully developed form in capital, the appropriation of the done by the owners of the past done'.<sup>39</sup> Thus, exploitation as such is not central: production for the market means that 'the rupture of doing and done is by no means limited to the immediate process of exploitation, but extends to the whole society'.<sup>40</sup> The real question is the 'more general distancing of people from the possibility of determining their own activity'.<sup>41</sup> With this substitution of fetishism (alienation) for Marx's concept of exploitation, we have theoretical support for 'the broad concept of class struggle proposed here', Holloway's turn from Marx to the 'shadowy world of anti-power'.

Holloway's displacement of capitalist exploitation from the part that *Capital* assigns it is also manifest in his stress upon fetishisation – the process whereby capitalist forms (commodity, money, capital, and so on) are constituted. Holloway moves from a discussion of the contested nature of capitalist forms – that the problematic nature of the constitution of capitalist forms is always present, and that these forms are 'constantly being established and re-established (or not) through struggle' – to the conclusion that primitive accumulation is 'central to the existence of capitalism'.<sup>42</sup> His logic is that, since

capitalism is the daily repeated violent separation of the object from the subject . . . the violence of this separation is not characteristic just of the earliest period of capitalism: it is the core of capitalism.<sup>43</sup>

In short, 'primitive accumulation is thus a permanent and central feature of capitalism, not a historical phase'.<sup>44</sup>

Insistence upon the class struggle inherent in the constitution of all capitalist forms and on the implicit or explicit violence which is present in that process,

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Holloway 2002, pp. 47, 49.

<sup>40</sup> Holloway 2002, p. 54.

<sup>41</sup> Holloway 2002, p. 148.

<sup>42</sup> Holloway 2002, pp. 79, 89, 143.

<sup>43</sup> Holloway 2002, p. 143.

<sup>44</sup> Holloway 2002, p. 223.

however, should not be permitted to obscure the critical distinction that Marx made between primitive accumulation and accumulation within capitalist relations. Marx gave two different answers to the question, 'where does capital come from?'. Within capitalist relations, he stressed, capital comes from the exploitation of the wage-labourer within the sphere of production. By contrast, in primitive accumulation, capital comes from many diverse sources – but *not* from the exploitation of the wage-labourer, not from the compulsion to perform surplus-labour as the result of the sale of labour-power. By dissolving the difference and treating the two processes as one, 'the indigenous of Chiapas, university teachers, coal miners, nearly everybody' may be considered equal. So, we need not focus on the transaction which, for Marx, is the source of 'all the mystifications of the capitalist mode of production'; in this 'broad concept of class struggle', there is no reason to attach particular significance to the producers of surplus-value.<sup>45</sup> So much for *Capital!*

It seems, though, that there is a certain irony in Holloway's privileging of primitive accumulation. Insofar as he argues that the reproduction of capitalist relations constantly occurs (or does not) through struggle, it suggests that 'the silent compulsion of economic relations' is not sufficient to ensure the domination of the capitalist over the worker. Not *only* 'the rising bourgeoisie', then, 'needs the power of the state'. What Marx called 'an essential aspect of so-called primitive accumulation', the use of the state by capital, would from this perspective be 'a permanent and central feature of capitalism, not a historical phase'.<sup>46</sup> But, would not that make the struggle to take the state away from capital all that more critical?

## **NO to the *Manifesto* and the Commune**

Although Holloway is strangely silent about criticising Marx himself (as opposed to problems in Marxism and the Marxist tradition), his argument completely rejects Marx's view of the place of state in the process of going beyond capitalism.<sup>47</sup> Marx was very explicit in *The Communist Manifesto* that

<sup>45</sup> Holloway 2002, pp. 148–9.

<sup>46</sup> Marx 1977, pp. 899–900.

<sup>47</sup> In the idea that *Capital* provides an understanding of regularities ('a law of motion') in capitalism and in Marx's 'state paradigm', Holloway discovers Lenin and Stalin respectively: the theory of the vanguard party 'developed to their logical conclusion the organizational consequences' of the former, and the strategy of socialism in one country 'was in reality the logical outcome' of the latter (Holloway 2002, pp. 130, 96).

the first step in the revolution by the working class is to raise the proletariat to the position of the dominant class, to win the battle of democracy. This state under the control of workers would then begin a process of making 'despotic inroads' on capital, restricting the possibility for reproduction of capitalist property relations while, at the same time, fostering the emergence of state-owned property; it would, thus, 'wrest, by degrees, all capital from the bourgeoisie'.<sup>48</sup> The state, in short, would be the means by which the working class enforced 'its interests in a general form, in a form possessing general, socially coercive force'.

Holloway disputes this scenario. To retain the idea that you can change the world through the state (whether by winning elections or by revolution) is a grave error – one which has failed to learn from history and theory that the state paradigm, rather than being 'the vehicle of hope', is the 'assassin of hope'.<sup>49</sup> For one, the state does not have the power to challenge capital: 'what the state does and can do is limited by the need to maintain the system of capitalist organization of which it is a part'. It is 'just one node in a web of social relations'.<sup>50</sup> He dismisses the idea, then, that control of the state (the *armed* node!) can be used to tear apart that web, that the workers' state can be used as a lever to disturb the reproduction of capital, can be part of a process that leads beyond capital (even though he can talk about the significance of the Zapatista uprising in disrupting capital accumulation). By *definition*, the 'state in a capitalist society' cannot 'be made to function in the interests of the working class' because as a capitalist state 'its own continued existence is tied to the reproduction of capitalist social relations as a whole'.<sup>51</sup>

*Why* can the state not act against capital? Holloway answers:

any government that takes significant action directed against the interests of capital will find that an economic crisis will result and that capital will flee from the state territory.<sup>52</sup>

Of course, it should be obvious that Holloway's point is not limited to the state, this particular 'node in a web in social relations' – it would apply to workers, environmentalists, political activists (and, indeed, anyone in the world of 'anti-power') who took 'significant action against the interests of

<sup>48</sup> See the discussion of 'the workers' state' in Lebowitz 2003, pp. 189–96.

<sup>49</sup> Holloway 2002, p. 12.

<sup>50</sup> Holloway 2002, p. 13.

<sup>51</sup> Holloway 2002, pp. 91–4.

<sup>52</sup> Holloway 2002, p. 13.

capital'. Further, it should be obvious (as it was to Marx and Engels) that the workers' state is in a unique position to respond to a capital strike by using its 'political supremacy . . . to increase the total of productive forces as rapidly as possible'; in short, 'significant action directed against the interests of capital' does *not* mean that 'an economic crisis will result', as long as the workers' state pursues a policy of 'revolutionary courage'.<sup>53</sup>

The powerlessness of the state, though, is not Holloway's real point; rather, it is that a workers' state (*any* state!) is power over us, is part of the social relations that are constantly defining, classifying, fragmenting, fetishising us. Accordingly, 'it is absurd', he argues, 'to think that the struggle against the separating of doing can lie through the state'. Since 'what is at issue in the revolutionary transformation of the world is not *whose* power but the very existence of power', Holloway for that reason proposes that to struggle through the state is to actively defeat yourself.<sup>54</sup> Marx's argument that the struggle against capital should 'be fought out to a conclusion' through a state of the Commune-type – one which replaces 'the ready-made state machinery', a 'public force organized for social enslavement', with 'the self-government of the producers' – is rejected without mention.<sup>55</sup> And it is obvious why: to create such a state would be to 'construct a counter-power, a power that can stand against the ruling power' when what is *needed* is 'anti-power' – 'something much more radical: the dissolution of power-over'.<sup>56</sup>

The problem, Holloway argues, is that we have aimed 'too low' – 'what has failed is the notion that revolution means capturing power to abolish power'.<sup>57</sup> So, we have to aim *higher*, raise the stakes, pursue the

communist dream: to create a society free of power relations through the dissolution of power-over. This project is far more radical than any notion of revolution based on the conquest of power and at the same time far more realistic.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Lebowitz 2003, p. 192. If Holloway were right – that actions against the interests of capital will stimulate capital flight and create an economic crisis, would the political implication be to work for simultaneous actions by states around the world because this would deny capital a place to run? Given that his real argument is against any state, Holloway does not go there.

<sup>54</sup> Holloway 2002, pp. 17, 214.

<sup>55</sup> Lebowitz 2003, pp. 189–96.

<sup>56</sup> Holloway 2002, p. 36.

<sup>57</sup> Holloway 2002, p. 20.

<sup>58</sup> Holloway 2002, pp. 20, 37.

From this lofty perspective, obviously the idea of using the state – even a state of a new type which is ‘organized into self-working and self-governing communes’ and which serves as the workers’ own power (‘forming their own force instead of the organized force of their suppression’) – is besides the point.<sup>59</sup> Or, rather, it is beneath acknowledgement. But the power of the capitalist state does not disappear simply because we raise our sights. What does Holloway propose to do about the police, the courts, the armies of that capitalist state which is not dependent on ‘the reproduction of capitalist social relations as a whole’ but, rather, *supports that reproduction*?

Nothing. Insofar as the state depends on the reproduction of capitalist social relations and is ‘just one node’ within that web of relations, the answer is to put an end to those relations. Just say NO. Armed with Hegelian logic, the scream becomes more confident: ‘ubiquitous power implies ubiquitous resistance. Ubiquitous yes implies ubiquitous no’. We find hope in the fact that there is power because power implies anti-power. We take comfort in the fact that we can identify and criticise fetishism because it

gives evidence of the present existence of anti-fetishism. . . . The concept of alienation, or fetishism, in other words, implies its opposite . . . as resistance, refusal, rejection of alienation in our daily practice.<sup>60</sup>

The fragility of capitalism, the fragility of capitalism – if we say it enough . . .

And the power of the capitalist state? Dissolved by logic: ‘power is not possessed by any particular person or institution. . . . The state, then, is not the locus of power that it appears to be’.<sup>61</sup> How silly of us to worry about the real capitalist state! But how, in real life, do we get from that state to the society we want to create? How do we change the world without taking power?

### **Idealism and revolutionary practice**

This book demonstrates that negating a negation does not necessarily produce enriched concepts. Holloway’s negation of Marx brings us back, unfortunately, to Hegel.<sup>62</sup> The simplest thing becomes the most complicated and the most

<sup>59</sup> Lebowitz 2003, pp. 194–6.

<sup>60</sup> Holloway 2002, pp. 76, 88–9.

<sup>61</sup> Holloway 2002, pp. 72–3. Holloway’s perspective may be influenced by the fact that the Zapatistas have faced a *weak* state.

<sup>62</sup> Holloway’s Hegelianism can be found as well in his identification of the centrality

complicated the simplest. Here, predicates, mystical substances, become the actual subject and 'the real subject appears as something else, as an element of the mystical substance'.<sup>63</sup> Power becomes the subject. Power is reflected in the capitalist state – rather than 'the capitalist state has power'; the state is dependent upon capitalist relations – rather than 'the maintenance of those relations depends upon the capitalist state'. In the focus on fetishisation, the constitution of forms is key – once constituted, the forms appear to walk the earth as ghostly spectres; they dance, they interact and they imply their opposites. Power passes into anti-power, fetish into anti-fetish.

The contrast to Marx could not be greater. In his negation of Hegel's self-development of the Idea, Marx stressed the way human beings produce themselves through their own activity. They develop, he repeated over and again, through their struggles; they transform circumstances and themselves. Struggle, in short, is a process of production, a process of positing, a positive act. This emphasis upon revolutionary practice, though, is effectively absent from Holloway. That is why he can disdain struggles over identity, why he sees in these the strengthening of fragmentation, the reinforcement of capital – rather than a process of producing human beings with new capacities, people able to initiate a larger movement.<sup>64</sup> (Presumably, the same would be true of struggles over wages, which after all accept that the worker is a wage-labourer – the ultimate acquiescence.) Holloway, who screams his rejection of the 'Knower' as vanguardist, does not hesitate to instruct real people on the correct struggles and to explain why some struggles contribute to dividing the working class.

Insofar as he can already speak of 'we' and can presume, further, that we connect our individual screams, Holloway's 'anti-working anti-class' negative subjects are united *in essence* in the struggle against capital's identification, classification, fragmentation of them; what unites them is 'the community of their negative struggle against capitalism'.<sup>65</sup> Their development as a class for itself is unnecessary. Already One as embodiments of the Idea, as embodiments of the idea of anti-power, they have no *need* for a political instrument where partial knowledge and struggles can be integrated; they do not *need* to grow

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to capitalist relations of the flight of labour and the flight of capital – a discussion rooted in his mythological tale of the transition to capitalism (Holloway 2002, pp. 179–93).

<sup>63</sup> Marx 1975, pp. 23, 25, 40.

<sup>64</sup> Lebowitz 2003, pp. 178–89.

<sup>65</sup> Holloway 2002, p. 164.

through the process of developing common strategies and struggles. Resistance is *already* ubiquitous:

it is necessary to go beyond the force of overt militancy to ask about the force of all who refuse to subordinate themselves, the force of all who refuse to become capitalist machines.<sup>66</sup>

'That is the stuff of dialectical thought', Holloway reveals; dialectics is 'the sense of the explosive force of that which is denied'.<sup>67</sup> Predicates of the Idea of Anti-power, Holloway's people are the stifled volcano. Sooner or later they erupt. And after the eruption? It is hard not to envision these bearers of the scream looking around in surprise at what they have wrought, the destruction brought by that volcano, and sheepishly returning to an inert state until the next time.

This is the stuff not of dialectical thought but, rather, of a period of defeat. 'How can we change the world without taking power? The answer', Holloway proposes early in the book, 'is obvious: we do not know'. And, so, he stresses the importance of working practically and theoretically at this answer.<sup>68</sup> Almost two hundred pages later, on his concluding page, he asks again 'How then do we change the world without taking power? At the end of the book, as at the beginning, we do not know'.<sup>69</sup>

In the beginning is the scream; in the end, the silent fart.

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<sup>66</sup> Holloway 2002, p. 175.

<sup>67</sup> Holloway 2002, p. 76.

<sup>68</sup> Holloway 2002, p. 22.

<sup>69</sup> Holloway 2002, p. 215.

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