Book Review

Holloway, J. 2016. *In, Against, and Beyond Capitalism: The San Francisco Lectures*. Oakland, CA: PM Press (85 pages).

This short but inspiring book is a collection of John Holloway¹'s public lectures at the California Institute of Integral Studies in April 2013. The book mainly deals with the critique of traditional notions of revolution over the last hundred years failing to reach post-capitalist society. Rather than offering a criticism on conventional revolutionary thought, Holloway's lectures offer creative thoughts on how to crack and transcend capitalist social relations.

The book begins with a preface by Andrej Grubačić, the chair of the Anthropology and Social Change Department at the California Institute of Integral Studies who convened Holloway's public lectures in 2013. He poses the difficult to answer question why someone not interested in contemporary Marxism should read Holloway. Rather than explaining the significance of Holloway's works on contemporary Marxism, Grubačić scrutinizes and reveals four theoretical roots that affected Holloway's Marxism.

¹ Holloway is a prominent contemporary Marxist thinker and he was one of the founding members of the internationally recognized 'Open Marxism' or 'Edinburgh Marxism' from the 1980s.

IN, AGAINST, AND BEYOND CAPITALISM

The San Francisco Lectures

JOHN HOLLOWAY

preface by Andrej Grubačić

The first one is dialectics. However, Holloway's dialectic is not based on Hegel's but his political and intellectual project is defined by an effort to develop Adorno's negative dialectics. Holloway, as an Open Marxist, believes in the openness of critique. Therefore, with his negative and open dialectics, he invites us to rethink and develop dialectic further together. The second influence on Holloway's ideas is Italian Autonomist thought. However, rather than focusing on the workers' struggle in the terrain of factory or production sites, Holloway develops autonomism to focus on us, ordinary people. The third theoretical root of Holloway is the state derivationist argument which was active in Germany in the 1970s. This argument shaped

Holloway's perception of the state as 'social relation' or more specifically the state as a 'capitalist form' of social relation. Lastly, Grubačić shows that Holloway was also influenced by the political struggle of the Zapatistas in Chiapas, Mexico. Holloway's major arguments in his famous books (Holloway, 2002, 2010) were inspired by the Zapatistas who were seeking to change the world without taking state power but by cracking it (and recommends so should we).

The next three chapters are derived from Holloway's lectures entitled *Who are We?*, *Capital, the Social Cohesion That Strangles Us*, and *We Are the Crisis of Capital and Proud of It*.

In the first lecture, Holloway invites the audience/the reader to understand the 'new' point of departure in order to live in, against, and beyond capitalist social relations. Holloway's argument traces through the traditional 'grammar' of revolution in the past century proving them wrong and failed because they did not start with us. Some theorists argue that the revolution should begin with the worker. Some believe that anyone who has suffered from capitalism must bring change to the others. However, Holloway's grammar of revolution starts with the 'We' (with a capital W). He changed us as normally perceived as an object to be 'We' as a political subject. In this first lecture he tries to explain that who are that We. For him, the question of revolution should take place from the 'We' (or us) understanding ourselves as totally ordinary people.

Revolution is not an activity for the worker or political activist but We all have to be part of it. Holloway convinces the reader to subvert the traditional perception that We, mostly the poor, are the victim of capitalism to be the 'We are dignity' and 'We are not poor'. We are dignity because we, as ordinary men, rebel against the negation of our dignity which is the major feature of capitalism that creates alienated labour. Holloway also shows that ordinary working men, in fact, are not poor, but full of creativity. We, indeed, are the creators who create value (and our surplus values are the profit of our employers/exploiters). Changing of the point of departure from them to We is crucial and this perception brings hope to contemporary revolutionary thoughts.

The second lecture, *Capital, the Social Cohesion That Strangles Us*, explains that the capitalist social relation has a great force of social cohesion which is the force of money or the force of value. In Marx's thought, in order for us to understand the logic of money, we have to break the surface and see beneath that money expresses the logic of value. And what constitutes the value is the amount of socially necessary time or labour required to produce a commodity. Therefore, behind the appearance of money, there is abstract labour that produces surplus value and this labour is, in fact, alienated labour. Holloway invites the reader to think about the crucial questions of how can we break the system of cohesion and how can we think against capital, against money? To cope with issues, Holloway briefly introduces his idea of 'crack capitalism' (Holloway, 2010). Crack, for him, shows

movements of anti-capitalism. Crack is the rejection of the logic of value, the logic of abstract labour, the logic of alienated labour and the logic of money. Cracks could be activities. They do not depend on size and are about thinking in the opposite direction against capital. Holloway is convinced that the existing social cohesion in which we live is not total and it is, therefore, possible to crack it.

The last lecture, *We Are the Crisis of Capital and Proud of It*, sums up Holloway's whole argument which is that we should rethink the question of revolution. In this last lecture, he gives examples of contemporary political demonstrations and struggles around the world which will lead to nothing new but the intensification of capital. We are at the core of the crisis of capital. He argues that capital cannot stand still and it needs to make more profit. Capital develops many things to gain more profit such as improvements in machinery and leads to the fictitious capital in present day capitalism. At the core of crisis, ordinary men produce things and are made miserable by the system and have no way out. Holloway argues that class struggle is not something we choose to face but it comes from above and we cannot avoid the fact that we need a new type of social relation. However, within this book, and also his previous books Holloway himself does not claim the absolute truth of new revolutionary grammar. He argues that the certain struggle manual or solid pathway is still unknown. But more importantly, since we know that we can create cracks, then we can ask, learn, try to do something against the logic of capital, and ask again

and do it again. Holloway calls this '*Asking. We Walk*'.

In conclusion, this concise book is interesting, inspiring and the arguments are easy to grasp. The book is suitable for both the general reader interested in the area of anti-capitalism and the reader in the field of social and political theory as an introduction and understanding Holloway's theories. However, as is always the case for scholarly inquiry about Holloway or any theorist, reading his previous books is recommended.

References

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