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# 'Open Marxism' against and beyond the 'Great Enclosure'? Reflections on how (not) to crack capitalism

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## **Abstract**

The main purpose of this article is to provide an in-depth discussion of John Holloway's recent book, *Crack Capitalism*. To this end, the paper offers a detailed account of the key strengths and weaknesses of Holloway's version of 'open Marxism'. The analysis is divided into two parts. The first part focuses on six significant strengths of *Crack Capitalism*: (1) its insistence upon the importance of autonomous forms of agenda-setting for both individual and collective emancipation; (2) its emphasis on the ordinary constitution of social struggles; (3) its fine-grained interpretation of the socio-ontological conditions underlying human agency; (4) its processual conception of radical social transformation; (5) its recognition of the elastic, adaptable, and integrative power of capitalism; and (6) its proposal for an alternative critical theory, commonly known as 'open Marxism' or 'autonomous Marxism'. The second part of the study examines the principal weaknesses of *Crack Capitalism*: (1) the counterproductive implications of the preponderance of negativity, owing to a one-sided concern with critique, cracks, and crises; (2) conceptual vagueness; (3) an overuse of poetic and metaphorical language; (4) the absence of a serious engagement with the question of normativity; (5) a lack of substantive evidence; (6) a residual economic reductionism; (7) a simplistic notion of gender; (8) the continuing presence of various problematic 'isms'; (9) the misleading distinction between 'doing' and 'labour'; (10) a reductive understanding of capitalism; (11) an unrealistic view of society; and (12) socio-ontological idealism.

## **Keywords**

agency, capitalism, critical theory, economic reductionism, Holloway, idealism, labour, negativity, normativity, open Marxism, society

In his most recent book, entitled *Crack Capitalism* and published by Pluto Press in 2010,<sup>1</sup> John Holloway has demonstrated once again that he deserves to be regarded as a leading Marxist theorist of his generation.<sup>2</sup> The central argument of this volume is clearly presented in the form of thirty-three theses. On the basis of these theses, Holloway maintains that capitalism cannot, and should not, go on forever and that, more importantly, the various moments and spaces in which human actors create alternative ways of engaging with reality appear to indicate that a world beyond capitalism is always already part of the commodified universe in which we currently live. With the aim of illustrating this, *Crack Capitalism* is divided into eight parts, the main themes of which can be summarized as follows.

*Part I* – entitled ‘Break’ (pp. 1–13) – is concerned with the existential significance of normative rupture and social struggle: Holloway boldly announces that his approach is based on ‘the method of the crack’ (p. 8), which is oriented towards the creation of ‘a different world’ (p. 3) inspired by ‘the new language of a new struggle’ (p. 10). *Part II* – entitled ‘Cracks: The Anti-Politics of Dignity’ (pp. 15–45) – proposes that, under capitalism, the assertion of human dignity points not only at the negation of the existing social order but also at the possibility of creating an alternative society capable of transcending the instrumental imperatives of systemic rationality. *Part III* – entitled ‘Cracks on the Edge of Impossibility’ (pp. 47–79) – defends the view that ‘the social synthesis of capitalism’ (p. 51)<sup>3</sup> is constantly being undermined by the multiple cracks which, inspired by a ‘fleet-footed dance’ (p. 71), challenge the apparent ubiquity of market-driven realities. Drawing on Marx’s analysis of ‘concrete labour’ and ‘abstract labour’ (see especially pp. 87–99), *Part IV* – entitled ‘The Dual Character of Labour’ (pp. 81–105) – introduces a conceptual model which lies at the heart of Holloway’s theoretical framework: the distinction between ‘labour’ and ‘doing’ (see especially pp. 83–86). The former refers to alienated, abstract, and disempowering modes of human practice; the latter, by contrast, designates a ‘free, conscious activity, conscious life-activity’ (p. 89).

*Part V* – entitled ‘Abstract Labour: The Great Enclosure’ (pp. 107–161) – is an elaborate attempt to examine the theoretical and practical problems arising from what Holloway characterizes as ‘[t]he abstraction of doing into labour’ (see especially pp. 114–150; theses 15–21). As he illustrates in a remarkably detailed and painstakingly meticulous fashion, the abstraction of ordinary human activities has serious implications for the nature of modern society, in particular with regard to the constitution of social class, the regulation of sexuality, the institutionalization of politics through the state, and the development of social struggles. *Part VI* – entitled ‘The Crisis of Abstract Labour’ (pp. 163–200) – aims to demonstrate the validity of the following assumption: to the extent that labour does not depend on capital, but ‘[c]apital depends on labour for its production’ (p. 180), capital’s existence is parasitical upon the existence of labour, not vice versa. This insight, the author contends, enables us to understand that ‘that which is abstracted exists not just as potential, but as real force in the present’ (p. 171), and that, consequently, emancipatory social struggles draw part of their strength from the systemic crises of the order they seek to transcend. *Part VII* – entitled ‘Doing Against Labour: The Melodies of Interstitial Revolution’ (pp. 201–242) – suggests that ‘the antagonism between labour and capital is simply the superficial expression of a deeper conflict, that between concrete doing and abstract labour’ (p. 221) and that, therefore, we need to recognize that the ‘social antagonism’ (p. 221), far from constituting a merely

structural tension inherent in capitalism, ‘runs through each of us’ (p. 221). In *Part VIII* – entitled ‘A Time of Birth?’ (pp. 243–262) – the book draws to a close by raising a vital point: in order to assert ourselves as sovereign carriers of the forces of production – that is, in order to mobilize our ‘power of doing’ (p. 245) – we need to ‘stop making capitalism’ (see pp. 236, 253–255, 257, and 262).

The remainder of this article shall provide an in-depth discussion of the strengths and challenges, as well as the weaknesses and limitations, of *Crack Capitalism*.

## Strengths and challenges

(1) One of the strengths of *Crack Capitalism* derives from its insistence upon the normative significance of *autonomous forms of agenda-setting* for emancipatory social struggles. As Holloway reminds us, ‘[i]f we only protest, we allow the powerful to set the agenda. If all we do is oppose what they are trying to do, then we simply follow in their footsteps’ (p. 3). Thus, there is no genuine form of ‘*breaking*’ (p. 3) – that is, no transcendence in the Hegelian sense of *Aufhebung* – unless those seeking radical transformation are prepared to ‘seize the initiative’ (p. 3) and to ‘set the agenda’ (p. 3). Whereas following the normative parameters imposed by those who are in a position of power inevitably leads to the continuous reproduction of the given, ‘[t]he point of the *crack* is that it is *rupture*’ (p. 55, italics added). In this sense, the creation of ‘a different set of social relations’ (pp. 55–56), inspired by ‘the attempt to move beyond’ (p. 55) the capitalist logic of systemic functioning, is inconceivable without the individual and collective search for human autonomy. One may think of numerous examples to support Holloway’s critical remark that a ‘major problem of the left, even the radical left, is that it follows the agenda set by capital’ (p. 242), which prevents it from mobilizing some of its most precious resources, notably imagination and creativity. If, by contrast, we acknowledge that by ‘asserting our own world, we set the agenda, the timetable of struggle’ (p. 242), then we are capable of doing justice to the fact that a ‘pre-condition of emancipation’ (p. 242), conceived of as a self-initiated process of human empowerment, is autonomous agenda-setting.<sup>4</sup>

(2) Another noteworthy strength of *Crack Capitalism* is reflected in its emphasis on the *ordinary constitution of social struggle*. As Holloway convincingly argues, in order to allow for the possibility of radical social transformation, we need to take ordinary life seriously. Transformative projects that ignore the existential significance of everyday experience tend to translate into instrumental programmes aimed at structural control and systemic engineering, rather than into tangible realities constructed and sustained by conscious actors capable of cooperation and self-determination. As Holloway announces in the opening pages of his book, ‘[t]his is the *story of ordinary people*’ (p. 5, italics added), that is, of ‘the composer ..., the gardener ..., the car worker ..., the indigenous peasants ..., the university professor ..., the book publisher ..., the theatre director ..., the call centre worker ..., the student ..., the community worker ..., the group of homeless friends ...’ (pp. 4–5). In short, this is the story of people who are able to draw on the immediate experience of the various worlds in which they find themselves situated on a day-to-day basis.

Such a perspective, which is concerned with the quotidian experiences of ordinary people, permits us to do justice to the existential value of four dimensions which are crucial to processes of social transformation: *subjectivity*, *complexity*, *autonomy*, and *reality*. If we

assume that '[s]ocial change is ... the outcome of the barely visible transformation of the daily activities of millions of people' (p. 12), who, as interconnected and interdependent entities, 'constitute the material base of possible radical change' (p. 12), then we are able to recognize that the most solid form of social objectivity is nothing without the presence of human *subjectivity*. If, furthermore, we face up to the 'multiplicity of interstitial movements running from the particular' (p. 11), derived from the variegated experiences of "'ordinary people" who are the heroes of this book' (p. 11),<sup>5</sup> then we are in a position to resist the temptation to reduce society to a monolithically determined totality and account for its intersectionally constituted *complexity*. If, moreover, we consider 'the perfectly ordinary creation of a space or moment' (p. 21),<sup>6</sup> in which people dare to construct a self-empowering realm of action, as 'a place of self-determination' (p. 21), then we point to the possibility of challenging the ubiquity of functionalist rationality through the power of deliberative *autonomy*. If, finally, we accept 'that cracks are quite ordinary rebellions' (p. 85) and that, in this sense, 'the misfit is not someone or something that belongs to the margins of society, but is at its very centre' (p. 85), then we equip ourselves with 'a different vantage point' (p. 85), which enables us to comprehend that the ordinariness of rebellious activity (see p. 258) lies at the heart of human *reality*.<sup>7</sup>

(3) A further significant strength of *Crack Capitalism* can be found in its fine-grained analysis of the socio-ontological conditions underlying *human agency*. Holloway's repeated emphasis on the fact that people are essentially 'subjects, not objects' (p. 6), has major philosophical implications for our understanding of human agency with regard to six key elements of social life.

First, human agency allows for the *constructedness* of the social world. Holloway's 'activity- or resource-centred' (p. 36) approach stresses the fact that, when trying to make sense of life, we need to understand that it is 'our own activity that is at the centre' (p. 96) of the creation of the cultural universe. In other words, human reality is a historical realm built upon the performative force of interrelated social constructions.<sup>8</sup>

Second, human agency is the source of the potential *beyondness* of the social world. As Holloway aphoristically puts it, '[i]f we make it, we can break it' (p. 95). A world that can be socially constructed can be critically deconstructed and collectively reconstructed. From this perspective, 'the construction of alternative social relations' (p. 24) is, in principle, always a possibility, and in some cases even a necessity (see p. 25). Whatever the specific socio-historical conditions underlying the 'explorations in the construction of a different form of socialisation' (p. 248) – aimed at 'an other-doing, an alternative activity' (p. 17) – may be, potential beyondness constitutes an integral component of the withinness that imposes itself upon spatiotemporally situated actions. Thus, when engaged in 'the patient construction of another world' (p. 239), we need to remind ourselves of the socio-ontological fact that both symbolic and material creations are never forever.<sup>9</sup>

Third, human agency is inextricably linked to the *meaningfulness* of the social world. We may come to the somewhat pessimistic conclusion that, in a society which is largely shaped by instrumental rationality inherent in the systemic imperatives imposed by the market and the state, '[o]ur vision of the world is dominated by nouns, by things' (p. 231), rather than by verbs, by doings. Nonetheless, the search for meaning, expressed in the forceful presence of substantive rationality, allowing for the construction of a symbolically structured reality, will always remain an essential ingredient of the human

condition. Far from constituting a peripheral element of social existence, people's desire 'to devote their lives to meaningful activity chosen by them' (p. 25)<sup>10</sup> lies at the heart of what it means to be human.<sup>11</sup>

Fourth, human agency is permeated by the *contradictoriness* of the social world. Rather than conceiving of emancipatory processes as collective actions undertaken by pure and pristine subjects, it is essential to admit that even in social spaces that are largely shaped by principles such as 'dignity, horizontality, love' (p. 63), and even in collectively constructed realms that are aimed at undermining hegemonically established relations of domination, 'patterns of power emerge which are all the more disturbing for not being regulated or perhaps even recognised' (p. 64). In fact, when we, as collective actors seeking to create alternative spaces, come to realize that 'the other social relations we are building are not so other, after all' (p. 71), we are obliged to accept that '[t]here is no pure subject, no beautiful soul, behind the mask' (p. 216) of the power-laden role that we play in a profit-driven collective performance. 'There is no noble savage hiding' (p. 216) under the history of multiple social struggles, for the most emancipatory subject carries the contradictions of society within itself. Put differently, contradictory social realities cannot be abstracted from contradictory subjectivities.<sup>12</sup>

Fifth, human agency is imbued with the *purposefulness* of the social world. The fact that human beings are purposive entities is reflected in people's 'drive towards self-determination' (p. 237).<sup>13</sup> The 'push towards self-determination or autonomy' (p. 39) – that is, towards an 'activity that is self-determined or at least pushes towards self-determination' (p. 84) – illustrates that, no matter how powerful the influence of systemic forces – oriented towards social control, demographic regulation, and economic profit-maximization – may be, human actors have the capacity 'to determine themselves, individually or collectively' (p. 22). In this light, the creation of 'a place of self-determination, refusing to let money (or any other alien force) determine what we do' (p. 21), is aimed at providing ourselves with the opportunity to go through the self-empowering experience of letting our social activities be governed by human needs, rather than by systemic necessities. To suggest that '[t]he crack is simply a push towards self-determination' (p. 38), inspired by the 'aspiration to conscious life-activity that clashes with ... alienation' (p. 97), requires acknowledging that '[t]he problem of self-determination can only be understood in terms of the organisation of our daily activity' (p. 208) and that, in this sense, the purposelessness of instrumental purposes can be challenged by the purposefulness of the search for meaningfulness.<sup>14</sup>

Finally, human agency is characterized by the *distinctiveness* of the social world. Although, as Holloway remarks, '[i]t has become popular to assert that there is no essential difference between humans and other forms of life' (p. 128), it is 'both wrong and dangerous' (p. 128) to deny that it remains vital to recognize the ontological specificity of the symbolically mediated and socially constructed universe through which human beings raise themselves above nature. Even if one concedes that, as pointed out by influential scholars such as Bruno Latour,<sup>15</sup> the differences between the natural and the social world are often blurred, one has to be able to account for the fact that '[i]t is we humans (not the pigs, not the ants) who are destroying the prospects of life on earth' (p. 128) and that, therefore, the challenge consists in shedding light on 'our peculiarly creative and destructive power' (p. 128), by means of which we are capable of both shaping and annihilating the conditions of our existence. If the productive forces, created on the basis of

labour, are potentially also destructive forces, powerful enough to damage or even obliterate the natural environment, then human beings have ‘a distinctive responsibility’ (p. 273 n. 6) in the attempt to have a positive impact on ‘the prospects of life on earth’ (p. 273 n. 6). From this perspective, we are distinctly *human* not only because – as *working* entities – we are purposive, cooperative, and creative beings, or because – as *labouring* entities – we are potentially destructive, competitive, and reproductive beings, but also because – as *reasoning* entities – we are assertive, normative, and expressive creatures. In short, humans are moral actors capable of upholding, mobilizing, and conveying a sense of responsibility through the reflective power of substantive rationality.<sup>16</sup>

(4) Another important strength of *Crack Capitalism* derives from its conception of *radical social transformation*. As the author informs his readers in the opening pages, ‘[t]his book is the daughter of another. *Change the World Without Taking Power* ... argued that the need for radical social change (revolution) is more pressing and more obvious than ever’ (p. 10), but that ‘we do not know how to bring it about’ (p. 10) and that, in the light of the disastrous experiences of the twentieth century, ‘we cannot do it by taking state power’ (p. 10). Thus, ‘the orientation towards the state and the idea of influencing the state or taking state power’ (p. 159) cannot lead to radical social change. It would be erroneous to explain the micro-physics of power, exercised and experienced by ordinary actors, in terms of the macro-physics of systemic domination, steered by the state and the economy. Insisting that we must resist the temptation to reduce the complexity of the multifaceted ways in which power operates in the daily functioning of society to the exercise of state control, and hence suggesting that emancipatory projects which seek to transform society by conquering state power are doomed to failure, Holloway urges his readers, in particular those on the radical left, to abandon the idea that genuine social change can be brought about by the state. In a Marxist-Foucauldian fashion, he puts it as follows:

The state, by its very existence, says in effect, ‘I am the force of social cohesion, I am the centre of social determination. If you want to change society, you must focus on me, you must gain control of me.’ This is not true. The real determinant of society is hidden behind the state and the economy: it is the way in which our *everyday activity* is organised, the subordination of our doing to the *dictates of abstract labour*, that is, of value, money, profit. (p. 133, italics added)

Based on his critique of state-centred conceptions of power, Holloway draws a conceptual distinction between ‘institutionalisation’ (p. 77)<sup>17</sup> and ‘organisation’ (p. 77).<sup>18</sup> The former, he claims, ‘projects the present on to [*sic*] the future and imposes definitions and limits’ (p. 77); the latter, by contrast, ‘has as its core the open and effective coordination of doing’ (p. 77). Whatever one makes of this distinction, the author is right to warn us that ‘[a]ny institution which is not constantly questioned and re-created becomes oppressive’ (p. 235)<sup>19</sup> and that, therefore, emancipatory forms of political organization processes, as illustrated in ‘developments of direct democracy’ (p. 44), should be conceived of ‘not as a set of rules but as a constant process of experimenting with democratic forms’ (p. 44). Arguably, such an alternative view of radical social transformation is both sufficiently *realistic* to accept that ‘a degree of non-horizontality is accepted’ (p. 44) and



sufficiently *ambitious* to allow for the construction of direct democracy, guided by principles such as accountability, transparency, recallability, responsibility, criticizability, and dialogue (see pp. 42–45). To be sure, the categorical ‘rejection of representative democracy as a form of organization that excludes the represented’ (p. 44) is not driven by the illusion that collective deliberation processes are a straightforward affair, or that they allow those involved to escape the power-ladenness of social life. Rather, it is motivated by the assumption that ‘the only way to change the world is to do it ourselves’ (p. 45) and that, instead of proclaiming that ‘the forward march of history’ (p. 240) is determined by ‘the forward march of the five-year plan’ (p. 240), there is no such thing as genuine social transformation without critical practices realized by ordinary subjects capable of deliberation and self-emancipation.<sup>20</sup>

(5) Another significant strength of *Crack Capitalism* stems from its critical analysis of the enormous *elasticity, adaptability, and absorbability of capitalism*. To the extent that ‘[c]apital depends on labour for its production’ (p. 180), ‘the powerful depend on the powerless’ (p. 17). Yet, even if we concede that ‘[w]e make the tyrant’ (p. 6), that ‘[w]e create this totality, we weave the web that holds us prisoner’ (p. 96), we cannot step outside the socio-historical horizon in which we are situated. In fact, if we fail to ‘devote our lives to the labour that creates capital, we [may] face poverty’ (p. 7), and those belonging to the most deprived sections of the population, living in the poorest regions of the world, may even face ‘starvation, and often physical repression’ (p. 7).

Criticizing ‘the social synthesis of capitalism’ (p. 51)<sup>21</sup> by which we are surrounded is obviously less complicated than escaping, or cracking, it. Even if, however, we draw the cynical conclusion that ‘today it is easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism’ (p. 7),<sup>22</sup> and that this is largely due to the fact that most ‘attempts to break seem to get sucked back into the system, if not openly repressed’ (p. 51), we must not assume that capitalism can go on forever. To confuse functional elasticity, structural adaptability, and societal absorbability with systemic immortality means to treat historical specificity as a manifestation of timeless universality. It is one of Holloway’s contributions to have put his finger on the fact that ‘the social synthesis of capitalism’ (p. 51)<sup>23</sup> can continue to assert its sovereignty only to the extent that those who generate it fail, or refuse, to mobilize the empowering resources of human agency with the aim of reaching beyond the limited and limiting horizon of systemic rationality.<sup>24</sup>

(6) The author of *Crack Capitalism* is to be applauded for taking issue with the erroneous presuppositions underlying so-called *orthodox Marxism*<sup>25</sup> and making a case for an alternative approach, commonly known as ‘open Marxism’ or ‘autonomous Marxism’.<sup>26</sup> The fundamental differences between ‘orthodox Marxism’ and ‘open Marxism’ manifest themselves in five paradigmatic oppositions: closure versus openness, necessity versus contingency, positivity versus negativity, heteronomy versus autonomy, and universality versus particularity. Given the pivotal importance of these antinomies to Holloway’s argument, we shall briefly consider each of them before moving on to examine the main weaknesses of *Crack Capitalism*.

First, the opposition between *closure and openness* is perhaps most clearly expressed in the distinction between ‘closed Marxism’ and ‘open Marxism’.<sup>27</sup> In the light of the

former, 'Marxism, from being a theory of struggle, becomes a theory of domination' (p. 160), that is, an explanatory approach founded upon a 'closed, unitary concept of labour' (p. 160) and, hence, upon a one-sided emphasis on social structures, rather than social processes. In the light of the latter, Marxism is concerned with multiple struggles, offers a critical account based upon 'an understanding of labour as an open antagonism' (p. 160), and, thus, involves an engagement with diverse social movements, rather than exclusively with class conflict. The former 'generates a closed understanding of all the categories' (p. 160), whereas the latter 'gives rise to an understanding of all categories as open antagonisms' (p. 160). Insisting upon the epistemological openness of the conceptual tools developed by critical theory, as well as upon the ontological contingency inherent in all socio-historical realities, Holloway argues that '[t]he original No is ... not a closure, but an opening to a different activity' (p. 19) whose existence illustrates that every non-instrumental form of '[d]oing is a torrent against all enclosure' (p. 261). We may regard capitalism as 'a movement of enclosure' (p. 29), capital as 'a movement of enclosing' (p. 30), and alienated labour as an activity that 'imprisons our bodies ... [and] our minds' (p. 109). Moreover, we may have to face up to the 'systemic closure that gives the social cohesion a particular force' (p. 52) in making us feel the 'universal pressure to conform' (p. 53) with the norms and mechanisms underlying 'capitalist social relations' (p. 53).<sup>28</sup> We must not forget, however, that the most powerful 'social synthesis',<sup>29</sup> whatever its material solidity or ideological legitimacy, 'is never entirely closed' (p. 35). For the colonization of social activities by alienated and abstract forms of labour 'is not a closed book but a living antagonism' (p. 156), which lies at the heart of capitalist society, but which can be resolved (*aufgehoben*) by mobilizing the self-empowering resources of humanity.

Second, the opposition between *necessity and contingency* arises from the tension between the determinist view that revolution is inevitable, and that it will occur when the objective historical conditions are sufficiently developed, and the non-determinist understanding that there is no such thing as a predetermined historical path, and that there is no point in seeking to uncover the underlying laws governing the constitution and evolution of society. In line with postmodern accounts of history, and similar to Lyotard's attack on metanarratives,<sup>30</sup> Holloway urges us to accept that we cannot simply assume that history is on the side of the oppressed and that revolution will fall upon us when the time is ripe. 'The old revolutionary certainty can no longer stand. There is absolutely no guarantee of a happy ending' (p. 9). If we concede that 'the old revolutionary certainties have gone' (p. 79) and that we 'can no longer proclaim with confidence that ... victory is inevitable' (p. 79), and if, as a consequence, we acknowledge that '[t]here is no certainty in history' (p. 79), then all mechanistic conceptions of social development are to be abandoned. For they reduce the temporal unfolding of human reality to 'a history of successive structures, a history divided into periods that have a beginning and an end, a history with a clear division between past, present and future' (pp. 139–140). If the time is up for 'the time of Progress' (p. 140), this is so because the narrative of 'a neat flow of thesis, antithesis and synthesis' (p. 9) does not capture the 'dialectic of misfitting' (p. 9)<sup>31</sup> which underlies the infinite multiplicity of spatiotemporally specific realities. The functionalist distinction between a structurally determined subject 'in itself' (*an sich*) and a self-determining subject 'for itself' (*für sich*) fails to account for the complexity of a

polycentrically constituted and cross-sectionally divided reality, whose only foundational necessity emanates from its radical contingency.<sup>32</sup>

Third, the opposition between *positivity and negativity* emerges from the tension between the positive dialectics of ‘scientific Marxism’ and the negative dialectics of ‘open Marxism’. The former operates on the basis of a conceptual reduction of social existence to a developmental logic governed by ‘a neat flow of thesis, antithesis and synthesis’ (p. 9). The latter, by contrast, constitutes a ‘dialectic of misfitting’ (p. 9), reflected in ‘the method of the crack’ (p. 8),<sup>33</sup> and conceives of Marxism not only as a ‘critical theory’ (p. 9) but also as a ‘crisis theory’ (p. 9) aimed at exploring ruptures and fissures, rather than at identifying historical laws and regularities.

Identities give rise to identitarian thought, the form of thinking that starts from the unquestioned existence of identity and identities and constructs on the basis of being rather than doing. To start from identities means to create a positive basis for thought, whereas to understand those identities as historically specific forms of social relations immediately puts thought on a negative footing. (p. 112)

Hence, instead of following the positivist imperatives of ‘scientific rationalism’ (p. 127), which conceives of the world as ‘an object governed by laws that [can] be discovered by reason’ (p. 127), and far from reducing our immersion in the world to ‘a relation of separation, of distance, of knowledge-about and use or exploitation’ (p. 127), the point of negative dialectics is to face up to the historicity that permeates all symbolic representations of reality. If regarded as ‘a trans-historical category’ (p. 143),<sup>34</sup> the concept of ‘totality’ (p. 143)<sup>35</sup> is converted into ‘a positive category’ (p. 143), waiting to be discovered and schematized by virtue of scientific rationality. If, however, understood as a relational category, the concept of totality is employed as a relative approximation to, rather than an all-encompassing representation of, reality. From this perspective, the main challenge of critical theory consists in contributing to the laborious construction of a society emancipated from the illusion of clinging on to the ‘deadening fixity’ (p. 19) underlying the pointless attempts of asserting its own, seemingly unquestionable, positivity.

Fourth, the opposition between *heteronomy and autonomy* is reflected in the tension between ‘labour’ and ‘doing’. To be precise, we are dealing with the conflict between abstract, alienated, and colonized forms of labour, on the one hand, and purposive, cooperative, and creative forms of doing, on the other. The distinction between ‘labour’ and ‘doing’ constitutes the cornerstone of the entire edifice of Holloway’s social theory. Given its centrality, it may not be an accident that the author introduces the distinction between ‘labour’ and ‘doing’ in Thesis 11 (pp. 83–86), an allusion to Marx’s eleventh thesis on Feuerbach.<sup>36</sup> As Holloway explains, ‘[i]n English, we have the word “labour” to indicate a doing that is unpleasant or subject to *external compulsion or determination*’ (p. 84, italics added). He proposes to use the concept of “*doing*” as a general term to indicate an activity that is not necessarily subject to alien determination, an activity that is *potentially self-determining*’ (p. 84, italics added). The crucial point of Holloway’s analysis, however, is not the isolated consideration of each of these two categories but the critical examination of their contradictory relationship. For what is essential to the

functioning of capitalist society, Holloway claims, is ‘the abstraction of doing into labour’.<sup>37</sup> According to the author, this abstraction process pervades the following social developments: the colonization of our bodies and our minds by instrumental rationality;<sup>38</sup> the material and symbolic reproduction of class structures;<sup>39</sup> the binary construction of gender, based on the heteronormative regulation of sexuality;<sup>40</sup> the objectification of nature;<sup>41</sup> the reification of politics through the state, leading to the gradual disempowerment of the human subject;<sup>42</sup> the artificial structuration and disciplinary homogenization of time;<sup>43</sup> the hypostatization of a seemingly transhistorical and cohesive law-bound totality,<sup>44</sup> sustained by the exploitation of labour;<sup>45</sup> and the instrumentalization, hierarchization, and institutionalization of social struggle.<sup>46</sup> Holloway considers these processes as indicative of one significant fact: it is not the ‘conflict ... between labour and capital’ (p. 154)<sup>47</sup> but the ‘conflict between abstract labour and creative or purposeful doing’ (p. 154)<sup>48</sup> which lies at the heart of capitalist society and which is ‘prior to other conflicts’ (p. 223). If we accept the presupposition that the ‘constant living antagonism between abstract labour and concrete doing’ (p. 98) possesses ontological primacy, and thus deserves conceptual priority, over other social conflicts, then it is not ‘the struggle of labour against capital’ (p. 155)<sup>49</sup> but ‘the struggle of doing *against* labour’ (p. 155)<sup>50</sup> which permits us to do justice to the fact that ‘[t]he pivot, the central fulcrum, in all of this is our doing: human creation’ (p. 85). In short, an emancipatory society emanates from the genuine autonomy of purposive, cooperative, and creative human activity.<sup>51</sup>

Fifth, the opposition between *universality and particularity* is illustrated in the tension between the totalizing notion that there is one ‘great unified Struggle’ (p. 20) which determines the course of history, on the one hand, and the demystifying concern with ‘the multiplicity of particular rebellions, dignities, cracks’ (p. 20) which, through the confluence of ‘interstitial movements’ (p. 11), reflect the ‘complexity of domination’ (p. 166), on the other. Of course, Holloway’s position converges with the *Zeitgeist* of the current sociological discourse in putting the key ingredients of the late-modern menu on the agenda: autonomy, plurality, multiplicity, idiosyncrasy, recognition, and confluence. All of these terms – to which one may add concepts such as heterogeneity, alterity, irreducibility, and intersectionality – form part of recent attempts to account for both the real and the representational complexity of differentiated societies. Similarly, Holloway’s use of normative concepts – such as dignity, responsibility, horizontality, accountability, and transparency – falls in line with contemporary efforts to explore the possibilities of direct democracy. The point of such a differentialist approach, which is central to both ‘open’ and ‘autonomist’ Marxism, is to allow for ‘the full recognition of the particularities of our individual and collective activities’ (p. 248) and, more importantly, of ‘their thrust towards self-determination’ (p. 248). Rejecting all types of economic determinism, we need to acknowledge that ‘[c]hanging social relations cannot be reduced to changing the ownership of the means of production’ (p. 166). Discarding the idea that one ‘great unified Struggle’ (p. 20) possesses the ideological monopoly in the landscape of social conflicts, contemporary political actors have no choice but to build on the ‘ungrammatical flow’ (p. 263)<sup>52</sup> of diversified struggles and promote the ‘confluence of many movements, of people fighting for change in different ways and for different reasons’ (p. 60). Refusing to embark upon a struggle in search of the ultimate answers to universal questions, arising from the futile ambition to grasp the big picture of Society, all we are left

with is a 'fight for a world of particulars, a world of many worlds ... , against the totality' (p. 53), against 'the social synthesis' (p. 53). 'A world of many worlds' (p. 210),<sup>53</sup> however, would constitute 'not a new totality but a shifting constellation or confederation of particularities' (p. 210). In other words, a world of many worlds would be a world of worldly particularities and worldless universality.

After having considered the main arguments and contributions of *Crack Capitalism* in the above section, the remainder of this article shall reflect upon its weaknesses and limitations.

## Weaknesses and limitations

(1) One major problem with *Crack Capitalism* is what may be described as the *preponderance of negativity*. Given Holloway's various announcements that, for him, '[t]he method of the crack is dialectical ... in the sense of a negative dialectics, a dialectic of misfitting' (p. 9), and that, from this perspective, it constitutes a 'method of crisis' (p. 9),<sup>54</sup> the author places the emphasis on moments of social rupture and subversive deconstruction. One may argue that the normative value of Holloway's approach, inspired by Adorno's negative dialectics,<sup>55</sup> derives from its capacity to locate the emancipatory potential for radical social change in the fissures and fractures of the existing order. Yet, to conceive of 'critical theory' (p. 9) as 'crisis theory' (p. 9), and thus as 'the theory of our own misfitting' (p. 9), bears the danger of celebrating the rejection and deconstruction of social arrangements at the expense of contributing to their transformation and reinvention.

To be sure, Holloway is right to resist the temptation to develop utopian blueprints.<sup>56</sup> If, however, the normative task of critical theory is reduced to uncovering the contradictions inherent in capitalist society without reflecting in detail on the conditions allowing for the establishment of viable alternatives, then it will remain trapped in the symbolic and material parameters of the historical horizon it seeks to overcome. On the one hand, Holloway warns us that we should not 'allow the powerful to set the agenda' (p. 3): '[i]f all we do is oppose what they are trying to do, then we simply follow in their footsteps' (p. 3) and thereby degrade social criticism to a decorative and corrective language game. On the other hand, given his analytical focus on the detrimental consequences of 'abstract labour',<sup>57</sup> he provides remarkably few insights into the construction of alternative social arrangements, shaped by the 'communising',<sup>58</sup> force of 'concrete labour',<sup>59</sup> and 'concrete doing'.<sup>60</sup> In short, Holloway explains in great length what the 'agenda',<sup>61</sup> of the cracks is *not* about and what it is meant to criticize, but he says hardly anything substantial about what it aims to achieve.

If we assume that '[d]ignity consists in setting our own agenda' (p. 50), enabling us to 'take the initiative' (p. 50) and to 'determine our action according to our own needs' (p. 56), then we must confront the challenge of specifying the main aspects of such an agenda and the nature of these needs. The centrality of processes of *negation* for '[t]he method of the crack' (p. 9) is expressed in assertions such as the following:

The key to our emancipation, the key to becoming fully human is simple: *refuse, disobey* (pp. 6-7, italics added). – The break begins with *refusal*, with *No* (p. 17, italics added). – The

original *No* is ... the threshold of a *counter-world* ... (p. 19, italics added). – ... *serve no more* ... (pp. 7 and 17, see also pp. 18 and 261). – The dignity is a *breaking*, a *negating*, a *moving*, an *exploring* (p. 19, italics added). – ... the only rule of a language of doing is [to] *break the rules*: ... an anti-grammar ... (p. 199).

The principal problem with such a one-sided focus on *critique, cracks, and crises* is that it runs the risk of leading to the creation of a largely rhetorical, merely responsive, and barely constructive approach to social transformation.<sup>62</sup>

(2) Another major weakness of *Crack Capitalism* is its *conceptual vagueness*. Holloway's concern with *critique, cracks, and crises* is based on a fine-grained analysis of the various theoretical and practical problems arising from the contradictions and consequences of capitalist forms of domination. Yet, the author fails to develop his arguments at the same level of depth and breadth when reflecting upon the conditions underlying the construction of alternative social arrangements. One may speculate about the reasons for this considerable limitation. In the author's defence, sympathetic critics may remind us of Holloway's legitimate aversion to the construction of 'positive concepts'<sup>63</sup> and utopian blueprints, whose 'deadening fixity' (p. 19) tends to result in totalitarian thought used for the justification of authoritarian regimes. 'Great crimes often start from great ideas',<sup>64</sup> as illustrated in the historical impact of ideologies as diverse as National Socialism, Marxism-Leninism, and neoliberalism.

If, however, one is less willing to give Holloway the benefit of the doubt, one may reasonably object that the *countless repetition of empty words* – such as 'different', 'alternative', 'other', 'another', 'new', and 'certain' – is little more than hot air. Sympathetic readers may find this imprecise terminology thought-provoking, and sceptical readers may regard it as a sign of Holloway's honourable, but hardly satisfying, confession that the only real insight offered by the idea of cracking capitalism is 'an answer-no-answer' (p. 12): '[t]he cracks are always questions, not answers' (p. 20), and '[t]here is no Right Answer, just millions of experiments' (p. 256).<sup>65</sup> In the best-case scenario, these statements make Holloway sound like an Adornian critical theorist; in the worst-case scenario, they illustrate that he effectively celebrates the relativist *Zeitgeist* embraced by Lyotardian postmodernists. However one interprets Holloway's position, his latest book contains a large number of vague terms, which amount to little more than rhetorical devices and decorative semantics.<sup>66</sup> Such a nebulous account of emancipation, which fails to capture the qualitative specificity of empowering social practices, is symptomatic of the author's inability to identify viable forms of action and reflection capable of substantially undermining the hegemonic logic of capitalism.<sup>67</sup>

(3) An additional source of weakness in *Crack Capitalism*, linked to the previous point, is Holloway's extensive use of *poetic and metaphorical language*. The rhetorical employment of conceptual ambiguity may be an intentional product of the author's ambition to challenge his readers and invite them to immerse themselves in the provocative thought experiments of the 'polyphonic, polymorphous critic' (p. 213). From this perspective, our only epistemic certainty is existential uncertainty,<sup>68</sup> our only real answer is 'an answer-no-answer' (p. 12), our only paradigm is the constant raising of

open questions (see p. 13), and our sole genuine position is a ‘walking’ (p. 13) process based on radical scepticism towards the idea of ‘standing still’ (p. 13). As Holloway acknowledges, ‘[a]ll metaphors are dangerous games that may have to be abandoned at some point’ (p. 51). It is ironic, then, that the author makes extensive use of treacherously ambiguous metaphors throughout the entire book.<sup>69</sup>

(4) A further considerable flaw of *Crack Capitalism* is the author’s lack of serious engagement with the question of *normativity*. In this regard, three problems emerge. First, the reader is left in the dark as to the nature of the *normative presuppositions* underlying Holloway’s approach. Second, in many passages, the reader is required to decipher an unnecessarily *figurative and allegorical* language characteristic of religious and esoteric, rather than analytical and critical, forms of reasoning. Third, *key concepts* – such as ‘dignity’, ‘responsibility’, ‘solidarity’, ‘democracy’, and ‘humanity’ – are so loosely employed and vaguely defined that readers find themselves situated in a normative vacuum that can be filled with almost any kind of ideological creed. These significant politico-philosophical problems, which arise from the author’s failure to address the question of normativity in a thorough and self-critical manner, weaken the quality of the book’s argument. Let us, for the sake of brevity, consider just a few examples to illustrate this point.

In the opening pages, the author suggests that, if ‘we seize the initiative’ (p. 3, italics added) and ‘we set the agenda’ (p. 3, italics added), we can ‘dedicate ourselves to what we consider necessary or desirable’ (p. 4, italics added). It is not clear to whom Holloway refers with the first-person-plural pronoun ‘we’,<sup>70</sup> which he uses on almost every page and which is commonly employed in religious texts in which it is assumed that author and reader are believers of the same faith. What is even more problematic, however, is that Holloway fails to provide normative grounds on which he can justify what he *considers* necessary or desirable when making a case for his view of the world. The mere fact that an individual or collective subject *regards* something as indispensable or worthwhile does not make it normatively defensible. The Nazis conceived of various things as both necessary and desirable, and so do classists, racists, sexists, ageists, ableists, and religious fundamentalists in the present age. This does not mean, however, that their validity claims constitute justifiable, let alone desirable, legitimacy claims. Holloway’s intuitive aversion to the construction of ‘positive concepts’ (see p. 19) and to foundational philosophical imperatives prevents him from proposing a solid normative framework on the basis of which it is possible to distinguish between defensible and non-defensible – that is, between legitimate and illegitimate, moral and amoral, universally justifiable and tribalistically desirable – validity claims.<sup>71</sup> Some commentators claim that, since Habermas’s announcement of a ‘paradigm shift’, critical theory has entered a midlife crisis;<sup>72</sup> one may add that without Habermas’s ‘linguistic turn’ critical theory would never have grown up in the first place. Critical theory without normative foundations is tantamount to social praxis without access to material and symbolic resources.<sup>73</sup>

(5) Another problematic aspect of *Crack Capitalism*, which critical social scientists may find unforgivable, is the fact that Holloway fails to provide *substantive evidence* in support of his main arguments. This major shortcoming manifests itself on several levels.

(a) Even if one sympathizes with the underlying presuppositions of Holloway's theoretical framework, the quality of his analysis suffers from an abundance of *unsubstantiated claims*. In this respect, consider the following examples.

Holloway asserts that '[t]he force of the cracks breaks dimensionality' (p. 36) and that, therefore, 'to revolt against capital is to revolt against dimensionality itself' (p. 36). Yet, he fails to specify what constitutes 'dimensionality' (see pp. 27–37) and why we should assume that it has no place in an emancipatory society.

In another context, Holloway maintains that, '[i]f capital is the negation of self-determination, then the push towards self-determination or autonomy must be fundamentally different in its forms of organisation' (p. 39). The problem with this assertion is that it makes sense only if one is prepared to accept Holloway's *presupposition* that 'capital is the negation of self-determination' (p. 39), a strong affirmation which, as even sympathetic readers will admit, is contradicted by the fact that millions of people buy into capitalism precisely because they think that the opposite is true, namely that there appears to be more room for individual and collective self-determination in liberal and market-driven societies than in any other large-scale social systems that have emerged until the present.<sup>74</sup>

In a similar vein, one does not need to be a liberal to reject Holloway's uncorroborated claim that '[r]ebellion is always irrational, judged by the dominant rationality' (p. 52). Not only is it reductive to suggest that there is *one* dominant rationality that governs differentiated societies, but it is also erroneous to ignore the fact that one of the strengths of liberal-pluralistic societies is their capacity to allow for rational dialogue between diverse, including subversive, forms of political engagement.<sup>75</sup>

Finally, on a philosophical level, one may sympathize with Holloway's numerous aphorisms that draw upon Ernst Bloch's impressive exploration of 'the principle of hope'.<sup>76</sup> Yet, sympathy and tacit agreement can hardly serve as a solid ground for a defensible argument. Consider the following assertions:

... to say that something exists in the form of something else means that it exists 'in the mode of being denied' ... (p. 169)<sup>77</sup>

The very fact that we criticise these forms means that there is something that exists beyond them. (p. 170)

To understand abstraction as present process means that that which is abstracted exists not just as potential, but as real force in the present. (p. 171)

The first contention is nonsense, for not everything that 'exists in the form of something else' (p. 169) is necessarily being denied. The second statement is unconvincing, since we often criticize social arrangements, actions, or discourses erroneously. The third affirmation presupposes, but does not prove, the existence of a 'real force' (p. 171) that is more than just a potential. Given the author's tendency to rely on unsubstantiated claims, crucial ideas put forward in *Crack Capitalism* may be regarded, at best, as thought experiments or, at worst, as religious or esoteric forms of reasoning.<sup>78</sup>



(b) It is striking that, although Holloway provides his readers with plenty of useful examples to illustrate his points, he fails to support his central claims with *empirical evidence*. Considering his radical scepticism towards ‘positivist’ or ‘scientific’<sup>79</sup> approaches, this may not come as a surprise. Nonetheless, if we take the naïve view that it is possible to pursue critical social science without providing substantive evidence for key arguments, then we end up playing speculative language games, which may sound radical and thought-provoking, but which have little to do with serious social analysis. Equating empirical research with positivist inquiry is just as short-sighted as assuming that theoretical analysis can be reduced to cultural studies. To recognize that ‘research without theory is blind, and theory without research is empty’<sup>80</sup> requires acknowledging that any attempt to make significant claims about the functioning of society is pointless without a systematic engagement with the empirical dimensions of reality. Given Holloway’s exclusive reliance on conceptual frameworks and anecdotal evidence, *Crack Capitalism* offers little in the way of substantive social analysis. This limitation is particularly important with regard to two issues.

The first issue concerns the alarmism that permeates Holloway’s *apocalyptic account of capitalist society*. Similar to other Marxists, Holloway has a necromantic tendency to declare that contemporary capitalism is more aggressive, more violent, and more destructive than ever before. On the *economic* level, bold statements such as ‘the functioning of the capitalist market does not allow us to survive and we need to find other ways to live’ (p. 3) may sound compelling, particularly when facing the far-reaching social consequences of the recent and on-going global economic crisis.<sup>81</sup> Yet, Holloway does not engage with the arguments made by those who believe that an increasing number of people are better, rather than worse, off because of, not despite, the existence of capitalism. On the *political* level, to denounce ‘the growing use of torture in the world’ (p. 3) without providing any kind of empirical data suggesting that in the present age torture is more widespread than in the past, when recent studies indicate that the opposite appears to be true,<sup>82</sup> is part of the author’s rhetorical strategy to argue that revolution is more necessary than ever before. The point is not to downplay the significance of the continuing use of torture in various countries around the world, but to avoid painting a simplistic picture of the historical relationship between homicide, genocide, and torture, on the one hand, and capitalism, on the other. On the *ecological* level, Holloway is of course right to point out that ‘[i]t has become clear that we humans are destroying the natural conditions of our own existence’ (p. 4). Nonetheless, he fails to provide any empirical evidence in support of the claim that ‘it seems unlikely that a society in which the determining force is the pursuit of profit can reverse this trend’ (p. 4). There is little doubt that there is a fundamental tension between the pursuit of profit maximization and the concern for environmental preservation. Nevertheless, those who do not share the paradigmatic presuppositions of Holloway’s framework – notably social democrats, liberals, and conservatives – will legitimately object that ecologically inspired state interventionism has been far more effective in capitalist societies than in socialist ones. The claim that the world has not (yet) experienced real socialism or communism may obviously be used as a last resort to defend Holloway’s position.

*Crack Capitalism*, then, contains an abundance of apocalyptic announcements such as the following:

Humanity (in all its senses) jars increasingly with capitalism. It becomes harder and harder to fit as capital demands more and more (p. 9). – ... confronting an increasingly violent capitalism (p. 55).<sup>83</sup> – ... the future of humanity depends on our ability to overcome the rift we have created (p. 128).

The author's failure to provide substantive evidence in support of these claims may not be a source of objection for radical political activists, but it will prevent him from being taken seriously by critical social scientists.

The second issue concerns the alarmism that underpins Holloway's *idealistic account of social revolution*. Similar to other Marxists who seek to justify the political relevance of their writings, Holloway gives the impression that the end of capitalism is near, revolution is around the corner, and there are millions of cracks in an increasingly fragile economic system. One can find numerous examples in *Crack Capitalism* to illustrate the significance of the simplistic assumptions upon which Holloway's idealistic conception of social revolution is based.<sup>84</sup> The following ten claims are crucial in this regard:

(i) *Revolution is more urgent than ever before.*

The need to get rid of capitalism, the need for a lasting and radical transformation of society is more urgent than ever ... (p. 35)

... in recent years the against-and-beyond has become more important. (p. 161)

... the dichotomy we face, now more starkly than ever. (p. 252)

If revolution is more urgent than ever, why is capitalism, even in moments of deep crisis, widely perceived and effectively treated as the hegemonic economic system?

(ii) *Revolution is an obvious necessity of the present.*

We need revolution now, here and now. So absurd, so necessary. So obvious. (p. 4)

Communism (or whatever we choose to call it) becomes an immediate necessity, not a future stage of development. (p. 26)

It is the collective cry that is growing louder and louder each day ... (p. 240)

If revolution is such an obvious necessity, why do relatively few people engage with radical politics? Should we consider those who do not sympathize with, or even object to, the idea of social revolution as victims of 'false consciousness'?

(iii) *Revolution is all around the lake.*

... the million attempts to break with the logic of destruction. (p. 13)

All around the lake there are people doing the same thing as we are, screaming 'NO' as loud as they can, creating cracks ... (p. 17)

... all the time and in a million different ways, we try to break the logic of capital. (p. 36)

... moments or spaces of revolt-and-other-doing already exist all over the place ... (p. 51)

... our rebellions are ... all over the place, these insanities that push towards a different world ... (p. 72)

We *all* strain at the leash. We pull *all the time* against alien activity ... (p. 178, italics added)

... the revolts that exist everywhere ... (p. 258)

Of the millions who want to stop making capitalism. (p. 262)

If revolution is all around the lake, why does the majority of the world population comply with and reproduce, rather than break with and transcend, the logic of capitalism? Do we not have to recognize that compliance and complicity, rather than subversion and rebellion, are preponderant features of most capitalist societies? How do we explain that millions of people think 'yes', instead of screaming 'no', when immersing themselves in commodified life-styles and postindustrial forms of consumerism? Holloway appears to live in a different world.

(iv) *Revolution is part of a global struggle.*

... the global struggle against the commodification of basic necessities. (p. 22)

If revolution is part of a global struggle, why do anti-capitalist movements remain fairly marginalized around the world? Why is it that, in the wider scheme of things, 'the great events [in] Seattle, Genoa, Gleneagles, Heiligendamm, and so on' (p. 238), have had hardly any *substantive* effect on the long-term development of global capitalism?

(v) *Revolution is a dance led not by the leaders but by the dancers.*

If capital chooses to repress us, to co-opt us, to imitate us, so be it, but let it be clear that *we lead the dance*. ... *we set the agenda* ... (p. 50, italics added)

If revolution is such an empowering process, why is it that those who either control or represent capital, rather than those who oppose it, continue to have the upper hand and set the agenda?<sup>85</sup>

(vi) *Revolution is a real possibility.*

Rebellion is *always* an option, in *any* situation. (p. 169, italics added)

If revolution is a real possibility because there is no spatiotemporal context capable of annihilating the possibility of resistance, why can rebellion be suppressed to such an extent that, in some cases, it effectively *ceases* to represent a viable option?

(vii) *Revolution is the most ordinary thing in the world.*

To say that cracks are quite ordinary rebellions is to say that the misfit is not someone or something that belongs to the margins of society, but is at its very centre. To mis-fit is a central part of everyday experience. (p. 85)

... to be revolutionary is the most ordinary thing in the world, it is simply part of living in capitalist society. (p. 258)

Our strength lies in our ordinariness. ... the mutual resonance of ordinary rebelliousnesses is the only possible basis for a communising revolution. (p. 258)

If revolution is the most ordinary thing in the world, why is it that most people could not care less about the possibility of radical social transformation?

*(viii) Revolution is a real possibility derived from a latent force.*

Behind the character mask is a latent force, a menace, a potential. (p. 215)

... it is the creative force at the very centre of society that is invisible. (p. 216)

If revolution derives from a latent force, why should we assume that this underlying potential is a *constructive capacity* associated with the bright sides of humanity, such as creativity, solidarity, and cooperation, rather than a *detrimental power* expressed in the dark sides of humanity, such as envy, competition, and destruction?

*(ix) Revolution is omnipresent.*

... objectively that is where we are: *always* pushing at the limits, *always* trying to do the impossible, *always* trying to break the logic of the system ... (p. 71, italics added)

If revolution is omnipresent, why is it that most people function, and do what is possible, within the parameters of exogenously imposed constraints? Why is it that, by and large, they reproduce the logic of the various social systems of which they are part?

*(x) Revolution is part of an anti-capitalist struggle.*

... anti-capitalist revolution is ... an interstitial process ... (p. 63)

... anti-capitalist struggle is all around us. (p. 198)

The centre of anti-capitalist revolution is quite simply doing. (p. 260)

If revolution is part of an anti-capitalist struggle, why is it that, amongst contemporary social movements, only a minority of collective actors define their political projects in opposition to capitalism?

Whilst seeking to overcome the pitfalls of mainstream social analysis, Holloway's 'open Marxism' remains trapped in some of the most stifling limitations of 'closed Marxism'. As illustrated above, this is largely due to the author's lack of critical engagement with empirical social analysis.

**(6)** Another major weakness of *Crack Capitalism* is its *economic reductionism*. Whilst one may sympathize with Holloway's radical critique of dogmatic versions of Marxism, it is far from clear whether or not he succeeds in liberating himself from the chains of

economic reductionism. The most obvious indication of his failure to do so is the fact that he continues to give priority to economic relations over other forms of social relations. To be sure, Holloway insists upon the fact that, in the contemporary world, we are confronted with a ‘multiplicity of particular rebellions, dignities, cracks’ (p. 20), which, through the confluence of ‘interstitial movements’ (p. 11), reflects ‘the complexity of domination’ (p. 166). Nonetheless, he considers capitalism as the fundamental source of social domination, which is more significant than other modes of social domination, such as racism, sexism, ageism, or ableism.

This perspective is, most bluntly, conveyed by the book’s title: *Crack Capitalism*, rather than *Crack Racism*, *Crack Sexism*, *Crack Ageism*, or *Crack Ableism*. Holloway’s big-picture announcements – such as ‘we can say that *class conflict is prior to gender or racial conflict*, but only if we understand class conflict as ... the conflict over the class-ification of doers as labourers’ (p. 284 n. 19, italics added) – illustrate that, although he rejects crude forms of economic determinism, which portray the conflict between capital and labour as the foundational antagonism underlying modern society, he remains trapped in the self-imposed limitations of a sophisticated variant of materialist reductionism. The latter attributes foundational status to ‘the conflict between doing and labour’ (p. 284 n. 19) and, therefore, considers capitalist domination to be more significant than other forms of social domination. Holloway’s central ambition to demonstrate that not only ‘the antagonism between labour and capital’ (p. 149)<sup>86</sup> but also other social struggles have their roots in ‘a deeper conflict’ (p. 213), namely in ‘the antagonism between concrete doing and abstract labour’ (p. 189; see also p. 221), may allow us to substitute the sophisticated economic foundationalism of ‘open Marxism’ for the crude economic determinism of ‘closed Marxism’. Yet, to the extent that Holloway regards all other types of social conflict as ‘*simply the superficial expression* of a deeper conflict, that between concrete doing and abstract labour’ (p. 221, italics added), he remains caught up in the reductive presuppositions of an *epiphenomenalist* conception of society. According to this materialist epiphenomenalism, we can distinguish between a ‘main contradiction’ (*Hauptwiderspruch*) and ‘subordinate contradictions’ (*Nebenwidersprüche*), the latter representing derivative manifestations of the former.<sup>87</sup>

Thus, it comes as no surprise that Holloway has a tendency to reduce power relations to sheer articulations of capitalist domination. When reflecting upon how to react to ‘the terrible repression by the Mexican state in Oaxaca’ (p. 56) and suggesting that we need to find ways of ‘breaking capitalist social relations’ (p. 56), he forgets that capitalism is only one amongst other forms of domination that modern states are designed to protect. When deconstructing ‘the social cohesion of capitalism’ (pp. 56–57) and asserting that humanity’s principle ‘enemy is the social synthesis of capitalist society’ (p. 50),<sup>88</sup> he ignores the existence of other vital sources of social integration and division, such as the normative regimes generated by culture, ethnicity, nationhood, language, religion, gender, age, and ability. When claiming that we are ‘reproducing the capitalist distinction between public and private’ (p. 76), he neglects the premodern history of the ideological and organizational separation between public and private, which long predates the rise of capitalism.<sup>89</sup>

Whilst contending that ‘[t]he very concept of the individual is product of the spread of commodity exchange and the growth of capitalist society’ (p. 112), Holloway

disregards the central place of this concept in early Enlightenment thought, preceding the arrival of capitalist modernity. The author's suggestion that 'we are entrapped in roles generated by capitalism' (p. 116) overlooks the fact that, in polycentric societies, actors are expected to take on a large variety of social roles, some of which are related to, and some of which do not have anything to do with, capitalism.<sup>90</sup> His conception of people's 'drive towards social self-determination' (p. 22)<sup>91</sup> as 'a push not only against but also beyond the determination of our lives by capital' (p. 22) is reductive, given that most contemporary struggles for individual or collective self-determination are not aimed at emancipation from capitalist domination, not to mention the fact that millions of people believe, some of them passionately, that capitalism is a vehicle for, rather than an obstacle to, self-determination.

Holloway's description of '[d]ignity [as] an attack on capitalism' (p. 49)<sup>92</sup> fails to grasp that contemporary political actors are concerned with numerous types of attack on dignity, as expressed in the multiple discourses on human rights, civil rights, political rights, social rights, cultural rights, sexual rights, animal rights, and environmental rights.<sup>93</sup> Even when declaring that 'I have insisted on the importance of starting out from *particular* struggles – the cracks in capitalist domination – rather than starting out from an analysis of capitalism as a whole' (p. 87, italics added), he continues to share a major limitation with 'most work in the Marxist tradition' (p. 87): the reductive view that, under capitalism, 'abstract labour becomes established as the organising principle of society' (p. 148) and 'behind *all* the struggles ... is the drive against abstract labour' (p. 199, italics added). Such a monolithic perspective prevents him from doing justice to the fact that differentiated societies have a plurality of interrelated organizing principles, none of which possess an exclusive significance for the construction of collective life forms and none of which are reducible to 'the drive against abstract labour' (p. 199). Rather than proclaiming that a 'new world of struggle has opened' (p. 199), that '[a]t its core is the struggle against labour' (p. 199),<sup>94</sup> and that people 'must learn a new language of anti-capitalism' (p. 199), we should recognize that the various social struggles that shape the twenty-first century lack a structural or ideological epicentre. If there is any new language to be learned, it is the language of multiple languages.

(7) Yet another problematic aspect of *Crack Capitalism* can be found in its analysis of *gender*. If most contemporary feminists will find Holloway's account of the relationship between capitalism and patriarchy unconvincing, this is due to three reasons.

First, Holloway's *materialist* account of gender reads like a collection of notes put together by a Marxist who desperately seeks to get approval from his feminist critics for taking sexist discrimination seriously. An entire section is devoted to the critique of heteronormative power relations (see pp. 119–124; thesis 16), in a book which is primarily concerned with cracking capitalism and which interprets other types of domination as 'secondary', 'derivative', 'parasitical', or 'epiphenomenal' forms of social conflict.<sup>95</sup>

Second, Holloway's *constructivist* account of gender does not contain anything that has not already been discussed in the field of gender studies over past decades. More importantly, it fails to engage with arguments which challenge the sociological truism that gender is socially constructed through a multiplicity of relatively arbitrary, embodied, and performative acts.<sup>96</sup>

Third, Holloway's *essentialist* account of gender suggests that there is something intrinsically good about being female or feminine, and something inherently bad about being male or masculine: '... the labourer really is a "he" and the doer really is a "she" ...' (p. 219). One can hardly think of a more essentialist way of characterizing both repressive and emancipatory subjects. To glorify the '*nosotras*'<sup>97</sup> – affirming that 'what we need is a We with a feminine lilt' (p. 220) – and demonize the '*nosotros*'<sup>98</sup> – assuming that 'the identitarian subject is undoubtedly a "he"' (p. 218) – is no less problematic than implying that there is something intrinsically *emancipatory* about being poor, working class, indigenous, homo- or bisexual, and mentally or physically disabled, whereas there is something inevitably *repressive* about being wealthy, middle or upper class, white, heterosexual, strong, and healthy. Whilst not being culpable of positive racism, Holloway *is* guilty of positive sexism. In addition to this, it is worth mentioning that, by and large, the language employed in *Crack Capitalism* is barely less androcentric and heteronormative than the signifiers used in mainstream social theories, which, like Holloway's writings, suffer from the 'white theory-boys syndrome'.<sup>99</sup>

(8) A further problematic dimension of *Crack Capitalism* is the fact that it remains trapped in some of the key 'isms' it seeks to 'crack'.

(a) *Ethnocentrism*: While Holloway makes universal claims about the nature of social domination and human emancipation, both his form of reasoning, on the conceptual level, and his anecdotal examples, on the empirical level, are ethnocentric, drawing on Western literature and referring almost exclusively, and with some noticeable repetition, to Europe and Latin America. A glance at the bibliography (pp. 287–298) and at the Author Index (pp. 299–301) will suffice to confirm that the epistemic scope of this book is impregnated with the aforementioned 'white theory-boys syndrome'.<sup>100</sup>

(b) *Proselytism*: On the basis of a bewildering mixture of critical and poetic, analytical and metaphorical, reasoning, and thus 'by using language that only the initiated understand' (p. 35), large parts of the book are written 'in a way that alienates many people' (p. 35), particularly those who do not want to be included in Holloway's quasi-religious 'we' and do not share the normative presuppositions underlying his work.

(c) *Identitarianism*: In an Adornian fashion, Holloway is deeply critical of 'identity-thinking'.<sup>101</sup> Yet, given that he advocates 'a different *type* of doing' (p. 21, italics added) – through the 'confluence of the different movements' (p. 259), through a 'fight for a world of *particulars*, a world of *many worlds*' (p. 53, italics added; see also pp. 210 and 240), created by 'a shifting constellation or confederation of *particularities*' (p. 210, italics added) and sustained by 'the full *recognition* of the *particularities* of our individual and collective activities' (p. 248, italics added) –, he effectively endorses identity-thinking, in line with the politics of difference and recognition.<sup>102</sup>

(d) *Structuralism*: Holloway contends that '[i]t is difficult to think of the new language as having a *grammar*, since grammar implies *rules* and the only rule of a language of doing is [to] *break the rules*' (p. 199).<sup>103</sup> Despite his insistence upon the 'ungrammatical flow' (p. 263) of emancipatory actions and reflections, and despite his proposal to think of empowering practices in terms of 'an anti-grammar or, better, rhythms or melodies' (p. 199), which can prevent us from imposing 'a new identity that freezes' (p. 223),

his own narrative, written in beautiful prose and following the rules of the English language, is based on a structuralist<sup>104</sup> *grammar* of social struggle, which locates the main source of conflict in the ‘living antagonism between abstract labour and concrete doing’ (p. 98).

(e) *Teleologism*: Since one of the chief ambitions of Holloway’s ‘open Marxism’ is to move away from the dogmatic assumptions of ‘closed Marxism’ and thereby reject its reductive view of history as a predetermined process driven by ‘Progress’ (p. 147), it is ironic that the underlying story of *Crack Capitalism* is tantamount to an ideological metanarrative epitomized in the slogan ‘Doing Against Labour’ (p. 201).<sup>105</sup> To regard all other forms of social conflict as ‘*simply the superficial expression of a deeper conflict, that between concrete doing and abstract labour*’ (p. 221, italics added), means to suggest that the course of history is shaped not by ‘the dialectics of Spirit, the hermeneutics of meaning, the emancipation of the rational or working subject, or the creation of wealth’,<sup>106</sup> but by the purposive force of ‘doing’.

(f) *Rationalism*: Holloway criticizes the scientific presuppositions of orthodox Marxism in particular and Enlightenment thought in general.<sup>107</sup> This is illustrated in relativist statements such as ‘[t]he admission that we do not know is both a principle of knowledge and a principle of organisation’ (p. 256). Yet, his radical criticism of rationalist and realist epistemologies is weakened by the fact that, in accordance with mainstream Western thought, the author conceives of emancipatory practices as *conscious* processes of self-determination guided by *reason*. From this perspective, in order to emancipate ourselves we need ‘to engage in free, *conscious* activity, *conscious* life-activity’ (p. 89, italics added), whereas it is ‘alienation that deprives our activity of *conscious* determination’ (p. 97, italics added). While rightly maintaining that emancipatory practices must not be reduced to ‘a rational process, a process of rational argument or learning’ (p. 226), he admits that ‘the core is *rational* critique’ (p. 226, italics added). Holloway’s ‘fleet-footed dance’ (p. 71) is not so fleet-footed after all.

(g) *Theoreticism*: As indicated by the book’s title, *Crack Capitalism* is written in the spirit of Marx’s Eleventh Thesis on Feuerbach: ‘The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it.’<sup>108</sup> Despite Holloway’s apparent opposition to the idea of producing theory for the sake of theory, *Crack Capitalism* fails to crack theoreticism. Essentially, this is due to three reasons: lack of empirical evidence; extensive use of allegorical language; celebration of sophisticated conceptual distinctions with little use value for concrete political action.<sup>109</sup>

(h) *Transcendentalism*: Given that social constructivism is as old as sociology itself, Holloway’s emphasis on the historical nature of social relations<sup>110</sup> is not particularly original. What is more troubling, however, is that his constructivist critique of ‘trans-historical’ categories is contradicted by the fact that he himself attributes a transcendental quality to several sociological and philosophical concepts. Thus, although he claims that ‘[i]t is not that there is some trans-historical quality of dignity’ (p. 43), he portrays dignity as a fundamental socio-ontological category, constituting an integral component of the human condition.<sup>111</sup> Admitting that ‘*[a]ny* society is based on some sort of social cohesion’ (p. 52, italics added) and that we can regard ‘trust as a central organisational principle’ (p. 65), he implies that there are universal preconditions for the possibility of social order. Even though he rejects the idea that there is ‘some sort of unchangeable



concept of “human nature” (p. 65), Holloway’s naïve humanism and anthropological optimism are embedded in essentialist assumptions about the foundations of human nature and society.<sup>112</sup> The author warns us that we must not ‘convert totality into a positive, trans-historical concept’ (p. 143); by suggesting that the performative capacity of ‘doing’ lies at the heart of human existence, however, he converts purposeful activity into the cornerstone of the social. In short, Holloway’s social philosophy rests on universalist presuppositions about the human condition.

(i) *Liberalism*: Some of Holloway’s key concepts come inadvertently close to the terminology used by liberal political theorists and middle-of-the-road politicians. Debates on ‘collective deliberation’, ‘accountability’, ‘transparency’, ‘recallability’, ‘responsibility’, and ‘dignity’ (see especially pp. 44–45) are vital ingredients of political liberalism, and so are both the anthropocentric notion that ‘our self-fulfilment as human doers implies creative change’ (p. 209) and the pluralist conviction that ‘disagreement and discussion are crucial in the formation of the resonating We’ (p. 257) constructed through ‘dialogical politics’ (p. 225; see also p. 256). The point is not, of course, to suggest that political liberalism and Marxist autonomism are two sides of the same coin. It is nonetheless striking that, despite Holloway’s demonization of the ‘capitalist state’,<sup>113</sup> liberal approaches to participatory processes are remarkably similar to his autonomist conception of democracy. This does not convert Holloway into a *de facto* liberal, but it does illustrate that the reduction of the modern state to a vehicle of capitalist domination prevents Holloway from freeing himself from the chains of functionalist Marxism.

(j) *Functionalism*: Although the whole point of Holloway’s insistence upon the socio-ontological power of ‘doing’ is to reject the functionalist nature of orthodox Marxism, which he accuses of converting Marx’s ‘theory of struggle’ (p. 160) into a ‘theory of domination’ (p. 160), his own approach remains trapped in a mechanistic account of society. This is, perhaps most clearly, illustrated in the following statement: ‘The real determinant of society is hidden behind the state and the economy: ... abstract labour’ (p. 133). This assertion contains all the reductive ‘isms’ of orthodox Marxism: ‘real’ (scientism), ‘determinant’ (determinism), ‘society’ (holism), ‘hidden’ (structuralism), ‘behind’ (epiphenomenalism), ‘the state’ (functionalism), ‘the economy’ (foundationalism), and ‘abstract labour’ (economism). It would be difficult to host more sources of sociological reductionism characteristic of orthodox Marxism in one sentence.<sup>114</sup> Holloway’s account of capitalist society fails to break out of the functionalist strait-jacket of the *Gleichschaltungstheese*,<sup>115</sup> according to which, under capitalism, ‘[t]he interaction of people’s activities is beyond their control, operates according to its own logic’ (p. 143), and is largely determined by ‘laws that operate *behind the backs of the producers*’ (p. 142, italics added). From this perspective, ‘the social synthesis of capitalism’ (p. 51)<sup>116</sup> is tantamount to a systemic ‘totality’ (p. 143) which necessarily involves ‘the elimination of alternative ways of doing ... of anything that does not fit in with the blind laws of abstract labour’ (p. 143), whose underlying logic only critical theorists and enlightened activists appear able to uncover. Ironically, then, the reductive presuppositions of orthodox Marxism, illustrated in ‘[t]he leap from the upward push of struggle to the standpoint of totality’ (p. 206), are omnipresent in Holloway’s ‘open Marxism’.

(k) *Systemic functionalism and hermeneutic functionalism*: At the centre of Holloway’s functionalist account of capitalism lies a curious paradox. On the one hand, he conceives of capital as an abstract and anonymous force, whose reproduction depends on

the autopoietic power of systemic rationality and escapes human control (*systemic functionalism*). On the other hand, he portrays capital as a motivational and will-equipped subject, whose meaning-laden actions are derived from the utilitarian power of strategic rationality and shaped by an all-embracing vitality (*hermeneutic functionalism*). In accordance with the latter perspective, the author attributes distinctly human qualities and species-constitutive capacities – such as agency, intentionality, determination, control, choice, and value-drivenness – to capital. Holloway’s ‘hermeneutics of capital’ is illustrated in assertions such as the following:

... capital *chooses* ... (p. 50), *demands* more and more ... (p. 9; see also p. 179) to *set* the agenda ... (pp. 49–50; see also pp. 3, 242, and 259) [and] *rule* ... (p. 27). – [Capital imposes] a constant *turning* of the screw (p. 250; see also p. 179). – ... capital is the *negation* of self-determination ... (p. 39), *embodies* ... *values* ... (p. 42). – ... capital is a *movement* of enclosing ... (p. 30). – Let capital and the state *run* after us ... (p. 56). – ... capital *follows* ... the dance ... (p. 75), [and] *invests* ... energy and resources in *trying* to ensure that it [refusal] does not happen ... (p. 169). – ... it constantly *flees* ... (p. 180). – Capital is always a *reaction* to anti-capitalist struggle ... (p. 242). – ‘Fit or be damned!’ *cries* capital (p. 251). (Italics added to the above quotations.)

In short, Holloway’s unhappy marriage of functionalism and hermeneutics is expressed in the representation of capital as a powerful force that is simultaneously abstract and concrete, anonymous and identifiable, systemic and normative, value-blind and value-laden, non-human and human. We cannot have it both ways.

(9) One of the most problematic aspects of *Crack Capitalism* is Holloway’s distinction between ‘doing’ and ‘labour’. As reflected in the title of the Spanish edition, *Agrietar el capitalismo. El hacer contra el trabajo*,<sup>117</sup> the conflict between ‘doing’ and ‘labour’, understood as a permanent struggle between two oppositional forces, may be regarded as the most fundamental concern in Holloway’s critical theory. The centrality of this point is expressed in the view that the ‘constant living antagonism between abstract labour and concrete doing’ (p. 98) possesses ontological primacy, and hence deserves conceptual priority, over other social conflicts. This presupposition is flawed for three reasons. First, it is reductive in that it considers *all* forms of social conflict – such as economic, political, cultural, ethnic, linguistic, religious, generational, or gender-specific conflicts – as mere derivatives, and thus epiphenomenal manifestations, of the antagonism between abstract labour and concrete doing.<sup>118</sup> Second, it is reductive in that it conceives of ‘doing’ as the foundational force of society, which is too broad a category to qualify as an emancipatory practice.<sup>119</sup> Third, it is reductive in that it is based on a misconception of labour.<sup>120</sup> Both the first issue and the second issue have already been examined above; the third issue is no less important, involving Holloway’s failure to account for the anthropological significance of labour.

(a) *Labour as an anthropological specificity*: Although Holloway rightly insists upon the distinctiveness of humanity,<sup>121</sup> he does not recognize that labour is one of the socio-ontological foundations that raise us, as a species, above any other form of existence in the world.<sup>122</sup>

(b) *Labour as an anthropological invariant*: By denying that ‘labour is “common to every social phase of human existence”’ (p. 98), and by claiming that ‘labour ... is not characteristic of all societies’ (p. 98), Holloway fails to explain the cross-cultural centrality of labour. ‘Whatever the specific mode of production of a particular social formation may be, every society needs to be economically organised in one way or another in order to ensure its material reproduction. Different *Lebensformen* may be characterised by different *Arbeitsformen*, but no human *Lebensform* can do without a specific *Arbeitsform*.<sup>123</sup> As everyday actors, we may not like labour, but, as a species, we cannot survive without it. To be sure, this does *not* mean that ‘labour ... is seen as a timeless, trans-historical category’ (p. 110), that it ‘can be studied independently of its historical forms’ (p. 91) or be ‘seen in abstraction from its concrete characteristics’ (p. 91). This does imply, however, that, while ‘labour changes in each historical epoch and can only be understood in its historical context’ (p. 91), it represents a *conditio sine qua non* of human existence in that it ‘is *common* to all social phases’ (p. 91). Similar to other socio-ontological foundations – such as language, culture, desire, and experience<sup>124</sup> – labour is a transcendental condition of human existence, but this does not convert it into a timeless or ahistorical category.

(c) *Labour as an anthropological resource*: The main problem with Holloway’s distinction between ‘doing’ and ‘labour’ is that it fails to account for the fact that it is not labour as such, but *abstract and alienated labour* which represents a disempowering form of activity. Otherwise, the concepts of ‘abstract labour’ and ‘alienated labour’ would be mere tautologies. Holloway implicitly acknowledges this when shedding light on the ‘dual character of labour’ (see especially pp. 81–105), distinguishing between ‘concrete labour’ and ‘abstract labour’ (see especially pp. 87–99), and thereby contradicting his claim that labour *per se* is the key source of human disempowerment. When discussing various forms of ‘abstraction of doing into labour’ (Part V, pp. 107–161), what he is really talking about is the colonization of concrete doing by abstract labour. The whole point of Marx’s critique of *Entfremdung* is that *alienated* labour is ‘not the satisfaction of a need but only a means to satisfy needs outside itself’.<sup>125</sup> To be exact, under capitalism, the exploited worker is alienated from (i) his or her product, (ii) other producers, (iii) the production process, and (iv) him- or herself as a species-being.<sup>126</sup> In other words, one of the things which distinguishes us as human beings from other species is the fact that, as working creatures, we are at the same time (i) purposive, (ii) cooperative, (iii) creative, and (iv) socio-productive entities.<sup>127</sup> It is not because of ‘doing’ (*tun* or *machen*) but because of labour (*arbeiten*) ‘that we have created, and continue to create, ourselves by creating our own world’.<sup>128</sup> ‘Doing’ is too broad a category to allow us to do justice to the empowering potential inherent in the species-distinctive foundations of humanity.

**(10)** Another salient weakness of *Crack Capitalism* is its reductive conception of capitalism. Given the thematic focus of the book, this issue could hardly be more crucial. The flawed nature of Holloway’s analysis of capitalism poses various problems.

(a) Holloway fails to recognize that several pathological aspects of modern society are due to *industrialism*, rather than capitalism. Instead of solely reflecting upon ‘the disaster that is capitalism’ (p. 261), it is imperative to account for the detrimental dimensions of industrialism. On the *environmental* level, the large-scale destruction of nature (see p. 4)

is inextricably linked to the emergence of industrial society. Even if one takes the view that capitalism and environmentalism are irreconcilable, one has to concede that both capitalist *and* socialist societies have significantly contributed to the systematic destruction of the planet. Indeed, considering the ecological disasters of the twentieth century, one may suggest that the environmental record of socialist societies is far worse than that of most liberal political regimes. The often-held view that ‘really existing socialism’, as experienced in the past century, cannot be regarded as ‘real’ socialism is hardly convincing, as it fails to face up to the cross-systemic implications attached to the rise of industrialism. On the *political* level, most liberal-capitalist societies, unlike their socialist counterparts, have been relatively successful in establishing democratic practices and defending fundamental legal, political, and social rights. Normative tensions such as representation versus deliberation, centralization versus localization, and heteronomy versus autonomy are intrinsic to all large-scale industrial societies. On the *sociological* level, substantial problems arising from the spread of alienation, anomie, and functionalist rationality are just as prevalent in socialist societies as in capitalist ones. The romantic plea for a return to *Gemeinschaft* and the fatalistic denial of *Gesellschaft*<sup>129</sup> are no less problematic in the ideological discourses invented by conservatives and fascists than in the writings of anarchist and autonomist Marxists.<sup>130</sup>

(b) Holloway paints a *monolithic* picture of capitalism. Based on his *Gleichschaltungsthese*, he conceives of capitalism as a ‘social synthesis’<sup>131</sup> and ‘cohesive social totality’<sup>132</sup> reproduced through ‘systemic closure’ (p. 52). Therefore, he fails to admit that, far from producing one ‘very boring film’ (p. 235), capitalism generates ‘a multiplicity of films’ (p. 236), as illustrated in the emergence of ‘multiple modernities’.<sup>133</sup> The paradoxical dynamic of ‘glocalization’,<sup>134</sup> which is shaped by both globalization and localization processes, indicates that capitalism involves not only the standardization and homogenization of the world, but also the recognition of its diversity and heterogeneity. Since his book lacks a critical engagement with *varieties of capitalism*,<sup>135</sup> however, Holloway does not acknowledge that different capitalist systems diverge massively in terms of their social, economic, political, cultural, and demographic organization. Moreover, he downplays the fact that capitalist societies are *internally differentiated*, in terms of an ever-increasing division of labour, and *internally divided* by sociological variables, such as class, gender, ethnicity, religion, age, and ability. In short, Holloway’s characterization of capitalism as a ‘social synthesis’ and ‘social totality’ prevents him from accounting for both the internal and the external complexity of market-driven societies. His reductive account of capitalism may create an imaginative reality of representation, but it achieves little in the way of a perceptive representation of reality.

(c) Holloway offers a remarkably *one-sided* account of capitalism, stressing almost exclusively its negative dimensions and pathological consequences, but telling us hardly anything about its positive aspects and empowering features. Paradoxically, Marx was not only critical of but also fascinated by capitalism, particularly in the face of its unprecedented dynamism and propensity to innovation. One can criticize ‘the film of capitalism’ (p. 235) on many grounds, perhaps even for being ‘a very bad film’ (p. 235), but certainly *not* for being ‘a very boring film’ (p. 235). Holloway’s critical, and arguably moralistic, stance is primarily concerned with the dehumanizing,<sup>136</sup> destructive,<sup>137</sup> and exploitative<sup>138</sup> nature of capitalism. Such a negative view, which conceives of capitalism

as a ‘system of enclosure’,<sup>139</sup> prevents him from taking one of Marx’s main theoretical interests seriously: the vigorous, pioneering, and productive nature of capitalism.<sup>140</sup> In fact, considering the rapid development of the productive forces over the past two centuries, one may come to the cynical conclusion that capitalism is capable of mobilizing the purposive, cooperative, creative, and species-constitutive potential of ‘meaningful activity’ (see pp. 25 and 185) more successfully than any other hitherto existing economic system. Its capacity to achieve precisely this has recently been discussed in terms of the ‘new spirit of capitalism’.<sup>141</sup> Holloway needs to ask himself why large parts of the world population do *not* think that capitalism is a ‘disaster’ (p. 261), let alone the major source of ‘frustration that runs through [their] daily lives’ (p. 73) making things ‘much worse’ (p. 260). Those who claim the answer is ‘false consciousness’ should apply this description to their own state of mind.

(d) Holloway’s apocalyptic announcements give the impression that capitalism is an utterly *uncontrollable* system. Truisms such as ‘[m]oney makes the world go round’ (p. 65) and ‘[v]alue ... is a force that nobody controls’ (p. 65) are based on the conviction that the capitalist ‘synthesis or totality acquires an *autonomy* of its own and stands against us as an alien force’ (p. 96, italics added), whose systemic power is both ‘*uncontrolled* and *uncontrollable*’ (p. 96, italics added). Not only Marxist functionalists but also Luhmannian systems theorists and Bourdieusian field theorists are likely to agree with Holloway’s emphasis on the relative autonomy of the capitalist economic system. They would rightly criticize Holloway, however, for his silence on the historical impact of various forms of state interventionism, market regulation, and redistributive policies. Even if we share Holloway’s view that ‘[c]apital is in its deepest crisis in many years’ (p. 250), it is premature to proclaim the end of capitalism – because of, not despite, the interventionist policies pursued by national and transnational political and economic institutions.<sup>142</sup>

(e) Given the far-reaching social consequences of the recent and on-going global economic crisis, Holloway portrays capitalism as a porous system that is at the brink of collapse. Yet, the reality is that, despite the deep crises experienced in the early twenty-first century, capitalism is effectively the only game in town. Inadvertently, Holloway concedes this when referring to the following significant political developments in order to describe the current historical context:

... 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 ..., the collapse of the Soviet Union and other ‘communist countries’ and the integration of China into world capitalism, the defeat of the movements of national liberation ..., and the crisis of Marxism ... . (pp. 182–183)

One can barely imagine a more spot-on account of the fact that, even in the current context of the global crisis of capitalism, more and more parts of the world appear to be faced with the preliminary triumph of neoliberalism.

(f) Holloway’s analysis of the relationship between use value and exchange value is flawed in four respects.

First, he claims that, under capitalism, the exchange value of a product is always and necessarily preponderant over its use value. The view, however, that – because, ‘[i]n a capitalist society, products ... are produced as commodities’ (p. 91) – ‘[w]hat interests the producer is not the utility (or use-value) of the product but its exchangeability or value’ (p. 91) overlooks the fact that capitalists have to produce *useful* products to remain competitive, not to mention the sense in which capitalist markets appear to be more efficient than socialist economies at generating innovative and high-quality goods, particularly in the realm of technology.

Second, it is not true that in regulated market societies ‘labour is seen in abstraction from its concrete characteristics’ (p. 91). In an exchange-driven economy, workers do sell their labour power as a commodity, but, in most advanced liberal societies, working conditions are regulated and have, over the past two centuries, significantly improved for large parts of the population.

Third, it is erroneous to assume that the labour process under capitalism involves the complete ‘abstraction of the activity itself, a process by which I become indifferent to the content of my own activity’ (p. 94). Studies in the sociology of work, including Marxist investigations,<sup>143</sup> suggest otherwise. A commodified activity can still be a meaningful and enjoyable form of doing, not just for a lecturer writing an article on *Crack Capitalism*, but also for a stewardess serving food, a blue-collar worker manufacturing cars, or a confectioner baking cakes.<sup>144</sup> The purposive, cooperative, creative, and species-constitutive potential inherent in labour can be colonized and instrumentalized by capitalism, but the former is not therefore necessarily neutralized or eliminated by the latter. The book *Crack Capitalism* is a commodity with an exchange value, but this does not annihilate its use value, let alone its important philosophical value.

Fourth, Holloway makes the mistaken assumption that ‘[w]hat determines the saleability of commodities on the market is the amount of time that is necessary to produce them’ (p. 179) and that, in this sense, ‘[t]he quantity of the value of the commodity is determined by the socially necessary labour time required to produce it’ (p. 92). In fact, socially necessary labour time is a central, but by no means the only, factor determining the exchange value of goods and products in capitalist markets. For instance, the exchange value of a painting depends to a large extent on its symbolic value, derived from the social recognition of its painter. Something similar applies to the exchange value of goods produced by a particular brand, and to the market value of high-profile academics, scientists, lawyers, architects, writers, composers, and musicians. The dimension of *symbolic power*, crucial to the creation of exchange value in consumerist societies, is completely absent from Holloway’s analysis of capitalism.

**(11)** Some readers, especially sociologists and anthropologists, may notice that the argument developed in *Crack Capitalism* is based on an *unrealistic view of society*. This shortcoming is significant in several respects.

(a) *Normativity*: When urging his readers to recognize ‘the close relation between disasters, carnivals and uprisings’ (p. 32),<sup>145</sup> and arguing that, in the face of major upheaval and disruption, ‘[a]ll our expectations about time and how things work are suddenly torn apart’ (p. 32), Holloway would be well advised to accept that the most emancipatory form of society cannot be sustained if it fails to generate at least a minimal

degree of normativity allowing for a sense of cultural belonging, regulative unity, and interactional predictability. There can be no social revolution, let alone a social formation, without rules and conventions.

(b) *Identity*: Holloway conceives of capitalism as a social system reproduced by ‘practices which treat people not as people but as the embodiment of labels, definitions, classifications’ (pp. 39–40). Claiming that ‘[i]dentity is the core of the prison that holds us tight’ (p. 111), and suggesting that ‘[t]he movement of anti-identity is necessarily a revolution without name’ (p. 217), Holloway fails to take into account that the construction of *all* societies is contingent upon the creation of classificatory processes, which form the backbone of material and symbolic forms of human action. Classification is not tantamount to domination.<sup>146</sup> Humans make sense of, relate to, and act upon the world by classifying it, since the meaningful construction of society hinges upon access to a phenomenally structured reality. Not every identity is a source of discriminatory agency. ‘Doing flows [and] any definition of it is an abstraction’ (p. 224), just as identity flows and any escape from it is an illusion.

(c) *Horizontality*: Holloway contends that ‘[h]orizontality is part of the assertion of our own subjectivity’ (p. 43), that ‘all should be involved in decision-making processes on an equal basis’ (p. 43), and that ‘there should be no leaders’ (p. 43). He is realistic enough to concede that ‘informal patterns of leadership often grow up even when there are no formal structures’ (pp. 43–44) and that, therefore, it is useful to conceive of ‘horizontality not as an absolute rule but as a constant struggle against verticality’ (p. 44). Nonetheless, his account of horizontality is problematic for a number of reasons. First, it is not clear why we should not assume that verticality is *also* ‘part of the assertion of our own subjectivity’ (p. 43). Holloway presupposes, but fails to demonstrate, the socio-ontological preponderance of the communicative and cooperative, rather than the purposive and competitive, dimensions of human life. His idealistic account of the social prevents him from acknowledging that both cooperation *and* competition appear to constitute integral components of both individualist *and* collectivist societies.<sup>147</sup> Second, he fails to recognize that formal modes of leadership can be less influential and detrimental, and often more transparent and accountable, than informal power structures. Third, in several contexts, it may be both unviable and undesirable to undermine either formal or informal types of established legitimacy, given that, in some areas, expert knowledge *is* more informed, reliable, and epistemically authoritative than common sense. Experts often do know better than laypersons. Without advocating the conversion of democracy into technocracy, the recognition of formal or informal hierarchies is, in some cases, preferable to their abolition.<sup>148</sup>

(d) *Conformity*: Holloway characterizes capitalism as a ‘social synthesis’,<sup>149</sup> that is, as a social system that imposes a false sense of conformity upon its members. Although he admits that ‘[a]ny society is based on some sort of social cohesion’ (p. 52), he complains about ‘the enormous cohesive force of the society that surrounds us’ (p. 49) and the allegedly coercive nature of the powerful ‘social synthesis’,<sup>150</sup> by which we are absorbed. This view is founded on four misconceptions.

First, Holloway ignores that the creation of a sense of belonging and identity constitutes not only a precondition for the emergence of social order but also an empowering resource for the construction of personal autonomy.<sup>151</sup>

Second, Holloway's proposition to abandon the idea of 'constructing an alternative social synthesis' (p. 205), whilst favouring the idea of 'breaking the social synthesis' (p. 205) through cracks and disruptions, is sociologically naïve and philosophically unsustainable. In order to create a better society, we need to engage in symbolic and material practices oriented towards formation and construction, rather than relying on the subversive force of negation and deconstruction.

Third, Holloway's characterization of capitalist society as a cohesive and synthetic system is reductive. Far from constituting completely homogeneous and monolithic entities, complex societies are highly differentiated, polycentrally constituted, and internally divided.

Fourth, Holloway's tendency to portray capitalist society as more coercive and cohesive than pre-capitalist formations is deeply problematic. According to this view, under capitalism, '[s]ocial cohesion ... is qualitatively different from that which existed in pre-capitalist societies' (p. 142) in that 'it determines the contents of people's activity much more thoroughly and it exists as an external force independent of any conscious control' (p. 142): '[t]here is a much tighter integration between a person's particular activities and the society as a whole' (p. 142). Anyone familiar with sociological or anthropological studies of pre-capitalist societies will notice that Holloway's description could not be further from the truth. The degree of social control – derived from the assertion of absolutist power, the omnipresence of religious practices and beliefs, and the normative function of social expectations and collective representations – was far more pronounced in premodern societies than it is in modern liberal ones.

(e) *Discipline*: Emphasizing the importance of the struggle against 'the imposition of capitalist discipline' (p. 72), notably 'the discipline of employment' (p. 23), and warning us of 'the imposition ... of a new discipline in the workplace' (p. 103), which may be interpreted 'in terms of the establishment of a disciplined society' (p. 145),<sup>152</sup> Holloway suggests that 'there is something fundamentally wrong with a society that does not have pleasure as its principle' (p. 74). Is there? If I were driven merely by pleasure, I would not be writing this article. 'Live for pleasure, not for pain' (p. 78) sounds like an attractive slogan.<sup>153</sup> Holloway's radical denunciation of discipline and labour, along with his provocative defence of the right to pleasure and leisure, may sound appealing. Nevertheless, such an arguably hedonistic perspective fails to recognize that disciplinary practices and purposive activities, far from being reducible to pathological expressions of modernity, constitute anthropological preconditions for the construction of society.

(f) *Totality*: Holloway claims that '[t]he existence of a social totality ..., as a cohesive law-bound force independent of any conscious human direction, is peculiar to capitalism' (p. 96) and urges us to face up to the fact that '[w]e create this totality, we weave the web that holds us prisoner' (p. 96). He fails to acknowledge, however, that *any* kind of social formation is built upon a specific degree of unconscious reproduction by its members. The construction of *any* society, not only 'the existence of capitalism' (p. 169), 'is based on its own constant reconstitution, the constant recreation of its forms of social relations' (p. 169).<sup>154</sup> Once again, Holloway makes the mistake of converting an anthropological invariant into a historical specificity. This leads him to ignore that, under capitalism, social development is *not* completely divorced from deliberative, purposive, and meaning-laden action. The view that social structures are reducible to anonymous and



largely uncontrollable forces remains caught up in the pitfalls of ‘closed Marxism’. It is only partly true that, ‘under capitalism, socialisation exists as abstraction’ (p. 248). For even under the omnipresent power of functionalist rationality, exercised by the state and the economy, there is room for communicative rationality, which ordinary subjects capable of speech and reflection mobilize in their everyday interactions. In other words, systemically differentiated societies cannot exist without communicatively structured lifeworlds.<sup>155</sup>

(12) Perhaps the most problematic aspect of *Crack Capitalism* is the *socio-ontological idealism* that permeates Holloway’s whole argument. The far-reaching significance of this issue manifests itself on various levels.

(a) The problem of *naïve humanism* is reflected in Holloway’s tendency to attribute largely positive elements to the concept of ‘humanity’ and portray it as an emancipatory force. This view is questionable for several reasons. First, it *essentializes* ‘humanity’, suggesting that specific – notably emancipatory – characteristics are intrinsic to social actors and thereby presuming that there is such a thing as human nature. Second, it *normativizes* ‘humanity’, presupposing that particular principles, rights, and values – such as ‘dignity’, ‘responsibility’, ‘solidarity’, ‘trust’, and ‘hope’ – are universal and hence inherent in the human condition.<sup>156</sup> Third, it *idealizes* ‘humanity’, associating it with the bright sides of social life, and thus downplaying the possibility of deriving the dark aspects of society – such as egoism, rivalry, ranking, aggression, and destruction – from humanity itself.<sup>157</sup> Fourth, it *teleologizes* ‘humanity’, implying that ‘[t]he key to our emancipation [is] the key to becoming fully human’ (pp. 6–7) and that, when drawing upon the ‘anti-logic of humanity’ (p. 72), it is ‘trying to be human that is our revolutionary hope’ (p. 251).<sup>158</sup> Fifth, it *pathologizes* ‘humanity’, claiming that ‘[t]he actor is damaged by the role she plays’ (p. 216) and that capitalism has damaged our true nature, preventing us from realizing our species-constitutive potential. Sixth, it *dichotomizes* ‘humanity’, insinuating that every human subject has both a performative and a genuine side, both a dramaturgically produced appearance and a context-transcending essence, and that this gap between artificiality and authenticity is reflected in the fact that ‘[w]e are each and all both character masks and the shadowy figure behind the mask’ (p. 221). Finally, it *prioritizes* ‘humanity’, seeking ‘to restore ourselves to the centre of the universe’ (p. 242), advocating ‘the assertion of ourselves as our own true sun’ (p. 242), and thereby falling into the trap of anthropocentrism. It is ironic, then, that Holloway announces that ‘[t]here is no assumption here that people are basically “good”’ (p. 221) and that ‘[t]here is no pure subject, no beautiful soul, behind the mask’ (p. 216), when in fact his entire theoretical framework is founded on essentialist presuppositions about what it means to be ‘human’.

(b) The problem of *anthropological optimism* is illustrated in Holloway’s tendency to establish a dichotomy between the micro-physics of emancipation and the macro-physics of domination. From this perspective, purposive, cooperative, creative, and communicative forms of action constitute the socio-ontological cornerstone of everyday life; by contrast, utilitarian, strategic, manipulative, and calculative modes of action represent systemically induced manifestations of a profit-driven and totally administered society. Hence, instrumental power is portrayed as a detrimental force, exogenously imposed

upon people's lifeworlds and endogenously produced by social systems. In this sense, 'power-over' is conceived of as a *von außen Hineingetragenes*,<sup>159</sup> that is, as a systemic force that invades our everyday lives 'from without', rather than as a relational force that is always already part of our micro-sociological realities 'from within'.

If we accept that there is no such thing as a neutral or disinterested human action because all social relations are both power-laden and interest-laden, then we need to question the ideal of 'non-instrumental forms of organisation' (p. 40). If we recognize that 'any strike generates new relations of friendship and solidarity' (p. 41) as much as it produces new dynamics of rivalry and contestation, then we have to acknowledge that the struggle for social recognition is as much about 'amorosity' (p. 41), 'love' (p. 41), 'cooperation' (p. 37), 'horizontality' (p. 43), and 'self-determination' (pp. 40 and 203) as it is about animosity, hatred, competition, hierarchy, and domination. As Holloway pertinently remarks, '[t]he fact that we build our own prison is a source both of hope and of profound depression' (p. 165). On the one hand, all social constructions can be theoretically deconstructed and practically reconstructed. On the other hand, given that we are the creators and carriers, rather than simply the reproducers and victims, of the less comfortable aspects of social life, it appears that 'there is something wrong with us' (p. 165). It is precisely this admission that Holloway fails to develop with sufficient depth. In order to avoid falling into the traps of socio-ontological optimism, which locates the preponderant force of human action in a naïve micro-physics of emancipation, and socio-ontological pessimism, which situates the preponderant force of human action in a fatalistic macro-physics of domination, we need to embrace a position of socio-ontological realism, which does justice to the fact that both 'power-to' and 'power-over'<sup>160</sup> – that is, both communicative and instrumental action, both cooperation and competition – constitute integral components of human lifeworlds.

(c) The problem of *idealistic radicalism* is illustrated in Holloway's tendency to provide an unrealistic account of social change.

First, drawing upon the central argument of this book's 'mother' text,<sup>161</sup> *Change the World Without Taking Power*,<sup>162</sup> Holloway claims that 'we are clear that we cannot change society radically through the state' (p. 57) and that 'we know, from experience and from reflection, that we cannot do it by taking state power' (p. 10). Yet, not only is the state not necessarily a force of evil; but, in addition, it is unviable and, as sceptics may argue, undesirable to bring about radical social change, particularly in large-scale societies, without some sort of state involvement. For the planetary network society in which we live does not allow for the construction of a community in which everybody is enabled to participate in all local, national, regional, continental, or global decision-making processes.

Second, Holloway's conception of social change is remarkably *vague*. The book's motto 'crack capitalism' (see especially p. 11) is 'a simple answer' (p. 11), indeed too simple an answer, 'an answer-no-answer' (p. 12), motivated by 'an attempt to create open question-concepts rather than to lay down a paradigm' (p. 13). Holloway's plea for an 'anti-politics of dignity' (see especially pp. 15–45) – inspired by the idea that '[t]he cracks are always questions, not answers' (p. 20) – may sound like music to our ears, but in practice it amounts to little more than an intuitive appeal to reject capitalism by undermining its hegemonic logic on an

everyday basis. His anti-identitarian emphasis on negation – expressed in concepts such as ‘anti-politics’, ‘other politics’, and ‘anti-labelling’<sup>163</sup> – will contribute little to the exploration of new horizons capable of breaking away from capitalist forms of social organization.

Third, Holloway’s conception of social change rests on a simplistic *binary typology of politics*: ‘politics of dignity’ versus ‘politics of poverty’, ‘politics of dialogue’ versus ‘politics of monologue’, ‘politics of councils or assemblies’ versus ‘politics of parties’, ‘communitarian-popular struggle’ versus ‘national-popular struggle’, ‘community-based struggle from below’ versus ‘state-centred struggle from above’.<sup>164</sup> This dichotomous view of politics not only ignores the fact that, in reality, the distinction between emancipatory and repressive politics is not as clear-cut as Holloway suggests, but it also fails to recognize that both party-politics *and* grassroots-politics ‘tend to reproduce the objectification of the person’ (p. 59),<sup>165</sup> because social hierarchies and power mechanisms are both systemically *and* relationally – that is, both macro-sociologically *and* micro-sociologically – reproduced *and* generated. Whilst it is true that a ‘[r]evolution through the eyes of the state or a state-centred organisation can only be a revolution on behalf of others’ (p. 59), the fact that a movement emerges ‘from below’ is not a guarantee of its emancipatory nature.

Fourth, in the closing section of his book (see thesis 32), the author makes several points about what it means to ‘stop making capitalism’.<sup>166</sup> It is ironic that, although Holloway explicitly rejects the idea of a political programme, or paradigmatic agenda, and insists that ‘we have no Moses, we have no prophets, just ourselves’ (p. 261), this concluding section reads like an autonomist version of the Ten Commandments or, to be exact, like Holloway’s Eleven Theses on Revolution.<sup>167</sup> In fact, the unsympathetic reader may legitimately object that Holloway’s ‘new poetry of struggle’ (p. 254) amounts to little more than exactly that: poetry. Let us, finally, consider Holloway’s Eleven Theses one by one.

(i) ‘*Stop making capitalism*’ (pp. 254–255): The claim that ‘[r]evolution is not about destroying capitalism, but about refusing to create it’ (p. 254) is not only inconsistent with the fact that Holloway repeatedly urges his readers to ‘multiply the cracks’ (p. 11)<sup>168</sup> and thereby contribute to breaking it, but also reflects the limited scope of theoreticist language games.

(ii) ‘*Asking we walk*’ (pp. 255–256): The observation that ‘[k]nowing is a process constructed collectively ..., a dialogue rather than a monologue’ (pp. 255–256), underlies all liberal-democratic forms of pluralism, and ‘[t]he admission that we do not know [as] both a principle of knowledge and a principle of organisation’ (p. 256) illustrates that Holloway’s position is unwittingly close to the most relativist variants of postmodernism.<sup>169</sup>

(iii) ‘*There is no Right Answer, just millions of experiments*’ (pp. 256–257): This post-ideological position is indicative of one of Holloway’s most fundamental performative contradictions:<sup>170</sup> in principle, he rejects the epistemic distinction between right and wrong, but, in practice, he constantly seeks to tell us what is wrong with capitalism and what is right about the construction of alternative worlds. Whilst the expression ‘against-and-beyond-capital’ (p. 256; see also pp. 43 and 72) is indicative of his economic

reductionism, the motto ‘follow your inclinations’ (p. 256) is symptomatic of his dangerously ambiguous situationism.

(iv) *‘We are ordinary people’* (p. 258): The conviction that ‘[o]ur strength lies in our ordinariness’ (p. 258) is politically so elastic that Obama, Thatcher, Perón, and even Hitler would be happy to endorse it. There is nothing intrinsically good, let alone emancipatory, about ordinariness.<sup>171</sup>

(v) *‘Do it ourselves’* (pp. 258–259): This catchphrase, which is essential to the neo-conservative idea of the Big Society, is arguably one of the key ingredients of the ‘new spirit of capitalism’.<sup>172</sup>

(vi) *‘Set the agenda’* (p. 259): The slogan ‘[l]et them run after us instead of us running after them’ (p. 259) is problematic not only because it is based on a misconception of the balance of power as well as on a simplistic distinction between ‘us’ and ‘them’, but also because only a small minority of contemporary social movements define themselves in opposition to capitalism.<sup>173</sup>

(vii) *‘We build another world’* (p. 259): This plea is so broad that anarchists, communists, socialists, social democrats, liberals, neoconservatives, and fascists can subscribe to it; and the precision ‘doing against and beyond labour’ (p. 259) is so narrow that from the alleged ‘confluence of the different movements’ (p. 259) only the minority of anti-capitalist collective actors will support it.

(viii) *‘Do against labour’* (pp. 259–260): The assertion that ‘[t]he centre of anti-capitalist revolution is quite simply doing’ (p. 260) is absurd, simply because ‘doing’ is too broad a category to qualify as an emancipatory practice. Homicide, genocide, and torture are forms of ‘doing’, but this does not convert them into universally empowering, let alone desirable, forms of action.<sup>174</sup> ‘The revolutions of the twentieth century failed not because they were too radical but because they were not nearly radical enough’ (p. 260), just as the revolutions of the twenty-first century will fail if they are either too narrow in limiting themselves to the struggle against capitalism or too broad in advocating vague forms of ‘doing-ism’.

(ix) *‘Break the walls’* (pp. 260–261): It is not the alleged ‘tension between doing and labour’ (p. 260), but the struggle between relatively empowered and relatively disempowered social actors which lies at the heart of the dialectics of domination and emancipation. To the extent that emancipatory forms of doing can be ‘a torrent against ... enclosure’ (p. 261), albeit never against ‘*all enclosure*’ (p. 261, italics added), repressive forms of doing can be a flow against subversive disclosure and towards reproductive enclosure, but neither against *all* subversive disclosure nor towards an *all-encompassing enclosure*.

(x) *‘Crack Capitalism’* (p. 261): Cracking capitalism is not enough. Considering all the other ‘isms’ that need to be ‘cracked’, a critical analysis of the social must be prepared to locate both the emancipatory *and* the repressive dimensions of society in the lifeworld, rather than assuming that pristine forms of intersubjectivity have been colonized by Frankensteinian<sup>175</sup> mechanisms and corrupted by systemic modes of instrumental rationality.

(xi) *‘Refuse-and-create! Refuse-and-create! That, for us, is Moses and the Prophets’* (p. 261): Even if he declares that ‘we have no Moses, we have no prophets, just ourselves’ (p. 261), Holloway’s writings give the impression that ‘open Marxism’ is the sigh of the oppressed creature.

## Acknowledgement

I would like to thank Richard Armstrong for his useful comments on an earlier version of this article.

## Notes

1. Holloway (2010a). Unless otherwise indicated, all page references (both in the body of the text and in the notes) are to this book.
2. Amongst his most important contributions are the following: Bonefeld and Holloway (1991, 1995); Bonefeld et al. (1995); Holloway (1981a, 1981b, 1987, 1988a, 1988b, 1991a, 1991b, 1995a, 1996b, 1997, 1998a, 1998b, 2001, 2002a, 2002b, 2002c, 2003a, 2003b, 2005a [2002], 2005b, 2007a, 2007b, 2007c, 2009a, 2009b, 2010); Holloway and Peláez (1998a, 1998b); Holloway and Picciotto (1978a, 1978b); Holloway et al. (2009a, 2009b). For useful commentaries on Holloway's recent work, see, for instance: Bensaïd (2005); Binford (2005); De Angelis (2005); Feather (2011); Hearse (2007a, 2007b, 2007c, 2007d); Lebowitz (2005); Löwy (2007); Starosta (2005); Stoetzler (2005); Susen (2008a); Susen (2008b).
3. See also pp. 63, 79, and 248.
4. On Holloway's reflections on the normative challenges arising from *autonomous forms of agenda-setting*, see especially pp. 3, 17–18, 42–45, 49–50, 55–56, 241–242, and 259.
5. On this point, see also p. 264.
6. On this point, see also p. 84.
7. On Holloway's reflections on the normative challenges arising from the *ordinary constitution of social struggle*, see especially pp. 4–6, 11–12, 21, 26, 85, 99, and 258.
8. On Holloway's emphasis on the *constructedness* of the social world, see especially pp. 6, 17–18, 24, 28, 36, 50, 69–70, 96, 118, 121–124, 165, 197, 205, 215, 231, 233, 239, 248, and 255.
9. On Holloway's emphasis on the *beyondness* of the social world, see especially pp. 17–18, 24–25, 231, 239, and 248.
10. On this point, see also pp. 52–53.
11. On Holloway's emphasis on the *meaningfulness* of the social world, see especially pp. 25, 52–53, 231, and 255. On this point, see also Celikates (2009) and Susen (2011a).
12. On Holloway's emphasis on the *contradictoriness* of the social world, see especially pp. 63–64, 71, 216, and 225.
13. See also pp. 22 and 173.
14. On Holloway's emphasis on the *purposefulness* of the social world, see especially pp. 21–22, 38–41, 45, 61–63, 66, 84, 95–97, 109, 154–156, 173, 203, 208–209, 222–225, 232, 237, and 248.
15. See, for example, Latour (1990) and Latour (1993 [1991]). For an excellent critique of Latour's position, see, for instance, Wilding (2010). Unfortunately, Holloway does not engage with Latour's arguments and thus fails to provide new insights into the debate on the distinction between nature and society. On Holloway's anthropocentric conception of being, see especially pp. 4, 125, 127–128, 242, 273 n. 6, and 277 n. 9.
16. On Holloway's emphasis on the *distinctiveness* of the social world, see especially pp. 10, 128, and 273 n. 6.
17. On Holloway's account of institutions and institutionalization processes, see pp. 32, 62, 76–77, 139, 199, 207, 211, 223–224, 235–236, 256, 270 n. 20, and 272 n. 7.
18. On Holloway's conception of organization, see pp. 7, 21, 24, 28, 32, 39–40, 43–45, 55–65, 69, 75–77, 86, 95, 110, 113, 117, 133, 157, 160, 166, 175, 182, 185, 191, 198–199, 206–207, 210–211, 218, 222, 224, 226, 235, 248, 256–258, 267 n. 9, 270 n. 16, 271 n. 29, and 275 n. 7.
19. In the original text, the author put a comma before the word 'becomes'.

20. On Holloway's reflections on the normative challenges arising from *radical social transformation*, particularly in terms of his critical understanding of *the state*, see especially pp. 10, 23, 27, 29–30, 40–41, 44–45, 54–66, 83, 96, 110–112, 130–134, 139, 158–159, 168–169, 205–206, 215, 235, 240, and 257.
21. See also pp. 63, 79, and 248.
22. Quoting *Turbulence* (2008: 3).
23. See also pp. 63, 79, and 248.
24. On Holloway's reflections on the normative challenges arising from the *elasticity, adaptability, and absorbability of capitalism*, see especially pp. 6–7, 17, 51, 65, and 180.
25. On Holloway's critique of orthodox Marxism, see especially pp. 9, 83, 98, 151–154, 156–161, 186, 236, and 282 n. 8.
26. On Holloway's conception of 'open' or 'autonomous' Marxism, see especially pp. 19, 154–156, 160, 168, and 282 n. 12.
27. See, for instance, p. 160.
28. On Holloway's conception of 'capitalist social relations', see pp. 24, 39, 53–54, 56, 59, 70, 84, 112, 116, 131, 169, and 247.
29. On Holloway's use of the concept of 'social synthesis', see especially pp. 50–53, 63, 65, 70, 83, 87, 95–97, 142, 205–207, and 221.
30. See Lyotard (1984 [1979]).
31. On Holloway's conception of the 'dialectic of misfitting', see also p. 282 n. 11.
32. On this point, see also Susen (2008a), especially pp. 55–65, 68–73, and 76–80, and Susen (2008b), especially pp. 148–164.
33. See also pp. 9 and 193.
34. On Holloway's use of the term 'trans-historical category', see also pp. 153 and 282 n. 14.
35. See also p. 144.
36. Marx (2000/1977b [1845]: 173).
37. The importance that Holloway attaches to this process is reflected in the fact that the formulation 'the abstraction of doing into labour' appears in the titles of theses 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, and 21.
38. See thesis 14 (pp. 109–113).
39. See thesis 15 (pp. 114–118).
40. See thesis 16 (pp. 119–124).
41. See thesis 17 (pp. 125–129).
42. See thesis 18 (pp. 130–134).
43. See thesis 19 (pp. 135–140).
44. See thesis 20 (pp. 141–144).
45. See thesis 21 (pp. 145–150).
46. See thesis 22 (pp. 151–161).
47. See also pp. 149, 154–156, 181, 200, and 221.
48. See also p. 155.
49. See also pp. 104, 153, 156–157, and 183.
50. See also pp. 156–158, 183, and 220.
51. On this point, see Susen (2007: 104–107 and 280–283).
52. On Holloway's reflections on the concepts of 'grammar' and 'anti-grammar', see p. 199.
53. See also pp. 53 and 240. As the Zapatistas famously put it: '*Queremos un mundo en el que quepan muchos mundos*' ('We want a world in which many worlds fit'). On this point, see Holloway and Peláez (1998b).
54. See also p. 193.
55. See Adorno (1973 [1966]).
56. See, for example, the following remark on the concept of dignity: 'We must be careful not to convert it into a positive concept that might give it a deadening fixity' (p. 19).

57. See especially pp. 83–161.
58. See pp. 210, 258, and 283 n. 10.
59. See especially pp. 91–92, 98, 173, and 176.
60. See especially pp. 203–242.
61. On Holloway's use of the concepts of 'agenda' and 'agenda-setting', see especially pp. 3, 49–50, 55, 241–242, and 259.
62. On the preponderance of negativity in *Crack Capitalism*, see especially pp. 3, 6–7, 9, 17, 19, 29, 42, 49–51, 55–56, 83, 220, 241–242, and 259.
63. See, for instance, p. 19.
64. Bauman (1997: 5).
65. This sentence is italicized in the original.
66. Consider, for example, the following statements: '*We want to create a different world*' (p. 3, italics in original). – '*We can devote ourselves to a different type of activity*' (p. 7, italics added). – '*... there are already a million experiments in radical change, in doing things in a quite different way ... , towards a different world ...*' (p. 11, italics added). – '*... an opening to a different activity, the threshold of a counter-world with a different logic and a different language*' (p. 19, italics added). – '*... a distinctly different logic ... , the anti-logic ... , [i]n all sorts of ways ...*' (p. 26, italics added). – '*... a different rhythm*' (p. 29, italics added). – '*... projection into a different world*' (p. 36, italics added). – '*... envisaging a different world*' (p. 37, italics added). – '*[T]he push towards self-determination or autonomy must be fundamentally different in its forms of organisation*' (p. 39, italics added). – '*... create a world according to different values, different ideas of what is good and bad*' (p. 42, italics added). – '*Cracks break with the logic of capitalist society. To that logic, we oppose a different way of doing things*' (p. 49, italics added). – '*... the new social relations and the new ways of doing things*' (p. 49, italics added). – '*A more pragmatic attitude demands the construction of a new world. ... we concentrate on building something else ... something different*' (p. 50, italics added). – '*... a crack is the perfectly ordinary creation of a space or moment in which we assert a different type of doing*' (p. 84, italics in original). – '*... our spaces-moments of other-doing exist outside capital*' (p. 176, italics added). – '*... a new language of struggle, with a new conceptuality ... , new patterns of struggle*' (p. 183, italics added). – '*... different form of sociality*' (p. 221, italics added). – '*Creating another society ... , the question of creating other social relations, of doing things in a different way, at a rhythm of our own choosing*' (pp. 238–239, italics added). – '*... something new emerging ... , fragments of new melodies of struggle emerging, ... glimpses of a new direction in the flow of revolt*' (p. 253, italics added). – '*... we must live differently, we must act differently, we must relate in a different way to one another and to the other forms of life*' (p. 259, italics added).
67. On the problem of conceptual vagueness in *Crack Capitalism* (and, in particular, on Holloway's employment of terms such as 'different', 'alternative', 'other', 'another', 'new', and 'certain'), see especially pp. 3, 7, 11, 12, 13, 19, 20, 26, 29, 31, 35–39, 42, 49, 50, 59, 71, 85, 96, 129, 177, 184–185, 209, 221, 238–239, 247, 253, 256, and 259–260.
68. For instance, on the end of 'revolutionary certainties', see pp. 9, 79, and 211.
69. On this point, consider the following examples: Holloway describes 'dignity' as '*a dark liquid bubbling up from a lake of possibility*' (p. 20), as '*a blade hacking at the strands of the spider's web that holds us entrapped*' (p. 49), and as '*a fleet-footed dance*' (p. 71). He conceives of '*[t]he confluence of our dignities*' (pp. 77–78) as an improvisational encounter of '*jazz musicians ... , moving together in a discordant harmony*' (p. 78). He claims that behind historical processes of social classification – such as monetization and commodification, ethnicization and racialization, or sexualization and naturalization – '*there is something hidden, a dark side, an invisible ... , something that is not (yet) entirely absorbed*' (p. 170) into '*the social*

synthesis' (on the concept of 'social synthesis', see especially pp. 50, 52–53, 63, 65, 70, 83, 87, 95–97, 142, 205–207, and 221). He suggests that '[w]e are looking for hope in a dark night' (p. 20). He compares capitalist society to a 'theatre' (pp. 212–213) whose actresses and actors, whilst 'forced into certain roles' (p. 213), have the performative power 'to throw off their masks' (p. 213) and thereby demonstrate that '[i]nside the savage-converted-into-labourer dances the savage-in-rebellion' (p. 213). One may, in this sense, suggest that the human *Gattungswesen* is this 'shadowy figure ... , a scream, a question, a crisis, a menace, a potential, a we, a flow' (p. 224). One may, in short, follow Holloway in seeking to invent a 'new poetry of struggle' (p. 254). Yet, does this enable us to invent a new reality of struggle? The answer is no.

70. On Holloway's use of the first-person-plural pronoun 'we' (employed, in some cases, in opposition to 'them'), consider the following assertions: '*We* Want to break. *We* want to create a different world' (p. 3, italics added). – '*We* scream "NO" so loud that the ice begins to crack' (p. 17, italics added). – 'The idea that *our* forms of organisation are radically different from *their* forms of organisation is profoundly rooted in the whole history of anti-capitalism' (p. 40, italics in original). – '*We* want to break ...' (p. 51, italics added). – '... *we* want to break capitalism, to break the dynamic of a system that is destroying *us*' (p. 51, italics added). – '... the capitalism that *we* are fighting against' (p. 69, italics added). – '... what *we* want is a social connection based on trust, solidarity, generosity, gift ...' (p. 70, italics added). – '*We* scream .... *Our* cracks exist [...]' (p. 71, italics added). – '... perhaps *they* are right, perhaps *we* are crazy' (p. 71, italics added). – '*We* do not want to fit in to [*sic*] this world of destruction. And do *you* know something else? *Your* crisis is *your* incapacity to contain *our* power-to-do, *your* crisis is the breakthrough of *our* creative-productive force' (p. 252, italics added). – '... the tension between doing and labour is a constant preoccupation in *our* lives' (p. 260, italics added).
71. On this point, consider the following statements (whose validity could be defended not only by anarchists, communists, and socialists, but also by religious fundamentalists and even by fascists): 'It is a different matter when the negation becomes a negation-and-creation' (p. 18). – 'The original No is ... not a closure, but an opening to a different activity, the threshold of a counter-world with a different logic and a different language' (p. 19). – 'Dignity is the unfolding of the power of No. Our refusal confronts us with the opportunity, necessity, and responsibility of developing our own capacities' (p. 19). – 'It is the moving that is important, the moving against-and-beyond: the negating and creating ...' (p. 19). – '... another concept of doing, an other-doing, which they seek to determine themselves, individually or collectively' (p. 22). – '... just doing something for its own sake ...' (p. 33). – '... insufficiency, ... an incompleteness, a restlessness. A crack is ... an opening outwards ... shining into a dark night ..., promises of a possible future ..., unfinished experiments ..., a lasting and radical transformation of society is more urgent than ever ...' (p. 35). – '... explorations in the anti-politics of dignity ...' (p. 39). – '... dignity is nothing other than the struggle against and beyond its own negation' (p. 43). – 'Our time is a time of resistance, of rebellion. It revolts against the time of duration' (p. 234). – 'The struggle is not a struggle for survival ... but a struggle to live' (p. 236). – 'Each moment is its own justification: each moment of rebellion stands proud in its own dignity' (p. 236). – 'Our time is the time of living in our world, the world that does not yet exist, and exists not yet. We create the world that does not yet exist by living it' (p. 241). Of course, one may object that the above statements are taken out of context. The fact that they can be defended from almost any ideological stance, however, is indicative of the serious consequences arising from Holloway's unwillingness to provide normative foundations for his critical theory.
72. See, for instance, Moritz (1992).



73. On the philosophical problems arising from the lack of critical reflection upon the role of normative foundations in critical theory, see especially pp. 3–4, 18–19, 22, 31, 33, 35, 38–43, 55, 128–129, 168–171, 180, 223, 228, 234, 236, 237, 241, 248, and 258.
74. In this context, see also Holloway's unsubstantiated assertion that '[v]alue is incompatible with self-determination' (p. 66).
75. Truisms such as 'the state is a form of social relations, a way of doing things' (p. 57) are not particularly insightful in this context; this vague characterization of the state applies to any kind of solidified manifestation of human interaction.
76. See Bloch (1959, 1964).
77. Quoting Gunn (1992: 14). On this point, see also Gunn (1987, 1991).
78. One may add numerous examples to the list. Critical Marxists, for instance, may be irritated by the fact that Holloway treats *the theory of the ever-increasing rate of exploitation* and *the theory of the tendency of the rate of profit to fall* (both of which have been extensively discussed and challenged in the Marxist literature) as undisputed presuppositional frameworks. On this point, see especially pp. 180 and 251.
79. On Holloway's critique of positivism and scientism, see especially pp. 19, 22, 127, 159, and 181.
80. Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992: 162, italics removed). On Bourdieu's conception of social science, see, for example, Susen (2011c).
81. As Holloway points out, '[c]apital is in its deepest crisis in many years' (p. 250).
82. See, for instance, Pinker (2011).
83. In this context, see also p. 56: '... the tendency in the world is for violent repression to become a more and more common response to any sort of challenge to the existing system of domination'.
84. Holloway's conception of revolution is inextricably linked to his idealistic account of social struggle. This account suggests that social struggle constitutes not only an *emancipatory* process but also a *ubiquitous* historical driving force. Consider, for instance, the following contentions: 'It is the anti-logic of what we think of as humanity, of decency, of dignity; even in the most harmless-looking examples, there is *always* an *underlying* insubordination or non-subordination' (p. 26, italics added). – '... struggles cover a huge range of different activities' (p. 38). – 'Contradiction is struggle: concepts are *inevitably* conceptualisations of the social antagonism in which we live and think. That is why *all concepts* must be understood as open concepts, conceptualisations of an open, unresolved process of *struggle*' (p. 200, italics added). – A striking example of Holloway's idealistic account of social struggle can be found in his various comments on the *piqueteros* in Argentina (see pp. 20, 25, 41, 52, 57, 264, 270 n. 14, and 284 n. 6). Holloway acknowledges that, like any other social movement, the *piquetero* movement is not free from internal contradictions (as illustrated in a member's statement expressing serious concerns about machismo; pp. 41–42). Yet, one does not have to be a rational choice theorist to be suspicious of Holloway's assumption that the search for 'meaningful activity' (pp. 25 and 185) represents the main motivational force behind this movement.
85. On Holloway's somewhat idealistic view of this 'dance', see especially pp. 55–56, 75–76, 180, 242, and 259.
86. See also pp. 154–156, 181, 200, and 221.
87. For an excellent discussion of this problem in Marxist thought, see Weber (1995).
88. On this point, see also pp. 53, 63, 65, 79, and 248.
89. For useful discussions of the historical development of the separation between 'the public' and 'the private', see, for example: Calloun (1992); Geuss (2001); Habermas (1989 [1962]); Rabotnikof (1998); Steinberger (1999); Susen (2011b); Weintraub and Kumar (1997).

90. On this point, see, for instance: Boltanski and Thévenot (1991, 1999); Ladrière et al. (1993); Lahire (1998); Thévenot (2001, 2006). On Holloway's reductive conception of social roles, see especially pp. 115, 176, 212–213, and 222–223.
91. In the original text, the word 'towards' appears in italics. On this point, see also p. 173.
92. On this point, see also p. 43.
93. On this point, see, for instance, Susen (2010a: especially 154–158 and 198–208; 2010b: especially 268–274).
94. See also the following statement: '... the *central axis* of these new melodies of struggle is the revolt of doing against labour' (p. 199, italics added).
95. On Holloway's epiphenomenalist conception of gender-based domination, consider the following formulations: 'The abstraction of doing into *labour* is the creation of the male labourer and the *dimorphisation of sexuality*' (p. 119, italics added). – 'Life-activity (having children, bringing them up, getting food and preparing it, and so on) continues to exist outside the *immediate* domination of value production, but its *subordination to labour* is secured by its dependence on the labourer's wage ...' (p. 119, 'immediate' italicized in the original, italics added to '*subordination to labour*'). – 'The creation of labour is the creation of the male labourer' (p. 121). – 'This suggests, then, that *woman* and *man* should be seen not as trans-historical categories, but as *specifically capitalist forms of social relations*, akin to value or money or state' (p. 123, italics added to the second part of the sentence). – 'The *separation of sexuality from the body* as a whole and its concentration in the genitals was imposed historically at the same time as the *abstraction of labour* ...' (p. 123, italics added).
96. Most scholars familiar with gender studies and the sociology of sexuality will find the following (constructivist) remarks hardly insightful: 'Women continued to take charge of the activities of reproduction ...' (p. 120). – 'The creation of a new hierarchy ..., a redefinition of women's role in society and a redefinition of the meaning of being a woman' (p. 120). – 'The mutilation goes even farther: it is not just the establishment of a hierarchy between men and women but the very creation of women and men' (p. 121). – 'The genitalisation of sexuality leads to sexual dimorphism, the idea that there are two and only two sexes' (p. 122). – '*Man* and *woman* (and indeed *homosexual* and *heterosexual*) are identifications .... A classification to be fought against' (p. 123, italics in original). – 'It is not that we *are* women or men, or homosexuals or heterosexuals: we *do* women and men, masculinity and femininity and homosexuality and heterosexuality, not just as individual choice, but as social practice' (p. 124, italics in original). – '... question the whole construction of *women* and *men*' (p. 197, italics in original). – 'Our shadowy figure, the anti-identitarian subject, is also anti-gender, *a movement against-and-beyond the division of society into two clear genders*' (p. 219, italics added). – '... the crisis of sexual dimorphism, the erotic revolt of polymorphous perversity' (p. 219).
97. See p. 220. On this point, consider the following assertions: 'Should this not be *mulier abscondita*, the hidden woman?' (p. 218, italics in original). – 'If we must attach a *gender* to the *doer*, then certainly we should think of her as a "*she*" rather than a "*he*" ...' (p. 218, italics added). – '... *the labourer* really is a "*he*" and *the doer* really is a "*she*" ...' (p. 219, italics added). – '... clearly "*nosotras*" is a better characterisation of the shadowy subject, a *nosotras* understood perhaps not as affirmation of femininity but as revolt against masculinity' (p. 220, italics added). These are only some of the many examples which illustrate that Holloway tends to associate 'the doer' with a female category. One can hardly think of a more essentialist way of characterizing the 'emancipatory subject'.
98. See p. 220. On this point, consider the following assertions: '*Violence* ... the terrain of the *forces of domination*: ... *hierarchical structures dominated by men*' (p. 55, italics added). – '*The capitalist* may be a very nice person and kind to *his* children, but if *he* does not dedicate *himself* to the function of capital, to maximising *his* profits ..., then *he* will go out of

- business and cease to be a capitalist' (p. 115, italics added). – '*Identitarian subjectivity is a male-dominated subjectivity, the identitarian subject is undoubtedly a "he"*', with many of the characteristics associated with *masculinity*' (p. 218, italics added). – '*The crisis of the "he" and the critiques of male subjectivity can be seen as part of the more general crisis of identitarian subjectivity and indeed of abstract labour*' (p. 218, italics added). These are only some of the many examples which illustrate that Holloway tends to associate social domination, in particular capitalist domination, with male domination. One can hardly think of a more essentialist way of characterizing the 'repressive subject'.
99. Holloway asks us to 'question the whole construction of *women and men*' (p. 197, italics in original), but, throughout the manuscript, he uses concepts such as 'men', 'women', 'girl in the park', and so on, *without* treating them as social constructions.
  100. In the author's defence, see p. 266 n. 3: 'If the examples cited are drawn disproportionately from Mexico and Latin America, and from Europe, this is just because that is where I live and have lived. It is clear, however, that similar examples can be found all over the world.' Anthropologists and postcolonial theorists may have good reasons to disagree with the second sentence.
  101. On Holloway's critical account of 'identity', 'non-identity', and 'anti-identity', see especially pp. 75–76, 85, 98, 111–115, 118, 121, 123, 139, 164–166, 173, 194, 197, 200, 213–214, 217–219, 222–225, 233, 273 n. 5, 275 n. 2, 275 n. 5, 275 n. 7, 276 n. 3, 284 n. 8, and 284 n. 13.
  102. See Young (1990, 1994 [1989]).
  103. Italics added to the words 'grammar' and 'rules'; 'break the rules' italicized in the original.
  104. On Holloway's critique of structuralism, see especially pp. 112, 116, 190, 193, 217, 280 n. 10, and 281 n. 10.
  105. See Holloway (2011 [2010]). The second part of the title of the Spanish edition (*Agrietar el capitalismo. El hacer contra el trabajo*) reflects the centrality of this idea.
  106. Lyotard (1984 [1979]: xxiii).
  107. On Holloway's anti-scientism, see especially pp. 22, 36, 39–40, 112, 239–240, and 256.
  108. Marx (2000/1977b [1845]: 173).
  109. One may have good reasons to sympathize with Holloway's critique of instrumentalist conceptions of politics, but it is far from obvious whether or not the following – arguably theoreticist – assertions transcend the self-imposed limitations of left-wing intellectualism: '... the force of this "other-politics" lies in its overcoming of the distinction between ethics and politics' (p. 43). – '... the means is the end' (p. 43) – 'It is a question of movement, of direction. *Movement is what matters. The possibility of the cracks is in their moving*' (p. 72, italics in original). – 'We start not from the stillness of identity but from the moving of non- or, better, anti-identity. We start dialectically, but not with a dialectic understood as interaction but rather as the negative restlessness of misfitting, of insufficiency' (p. 85). – 'If abstract labour totalises, then the struggle against abstract labour is a struggle against totalisation' (p. 144). – '... moving is crucial ... doing moves' (pp. 208–209). – 'The only way in which we can strengthen subversion is by constantly subverting it' (p. 224). – 'The drive of anti-identity is a constant movement beyond the concept, it constantly goes beyond our conscious knowledge' (p. 225). – 'Duration rests on the separation of subject and object' (p. 230).
  110. Consider, for example, the following assertions: '... the idea that useful labour *changes* in each historical epoch and can only be understood in its *historical context*' (p. 91, italics added). – 'If we *make* it, we can *break* it' (p. 95, italics added). – '... to understand those identities as *historically specific* forms of *social relations* immediately puts thought on a negative footing' (p. 112, italics added). – '... the whole construction of *women and men*' (p. 197, italics in original).

111. On Holloway's conception of dignity, see pp. 17, 19, 26, 28, 35, 39, 41, 43, 45, 49–51, 55, 60–61, 71, 75–76, 99, 236, 239–240, 248, 257, and 284 n. 20.
112. On this point, see sections on Holloway's 'naïve humanism' and 'anthropological optimism'.
113. On Holloway's conception of 'the capitalist state', see especially pp. 23, 27, 54–63, 65–66, 110, 130–134, 139, 159, and 168.
114. On Holloway's functionalism, consider the following assertions: 'Capitalists are capitalists not because they control value, but because they serve it' (p. 66). – 'In capitalism, it is the movement of value that determines what should be done and how it should be done: no human, not even the capitalist class, makes those determinations' (p. 67). – 'Value attacks as a force operating behind our backs ...' (p. 67). – 'The world of personification is an ordered world, a world that can be classified, a world in which people perform their social functions, a world that can be understood in functionalist terms' (p. 115). – '... the personification of impersonal forces ..., the power of capital, the power of the system ..., a complex web of social cohesion' (p. 131). – 'Citizenship is an abstraction ...' (p. 132). – 'Abstract labour constitutes a totality that is independent of conscious determination. It has its own logic, its own laws of development: the logic of capital, with its laws that operate behind the backs of the producers' (p. 142).
115. Translation from German into English: 'thesis' (*These*); 'systemic synchronization', 'making the same', or 'bringing into line' (*Gleichschaltung*).
116. See also pp. 63, 79, and 248.
117. Holloway (2011).
118. On Holloway's account of the alleged 'antagonism between abstract labour and concrete doing', see especially pp. 98, 149, 154–157, 160, 169, 179, 189, 213, and 221.
119. On Holloway's conception of 'doing', see especially pp. 11–12, 17–19, 21–22, 28–30, 33, 39, 49, 51, 83–105, 109–161, 169, 172–200, 203–242, and 245–261.
120. On Holloway's conception of 'labour', see especially pp. 81–105, 109–161, and 165–200.
121. On Holloway's distinction between the natural world and the social world, see especially pp. 4, 125, 127–128, 242, 273 n. 6, and 277 n. 9.
122. On this point, see Susen (2007: 104–107 and 280–283). For an examination of five socio-ontological foundations, see Susen (2007: Chap. 10).
123. Susen (2007: 280).
124. For a *Grundriß* concerning the main features of these socio-ontological foundations, see Susen (2007: 275–302).
125. Marx (2000/1977a [1844]: 88). Holloway's misreading of Marx is reflected in statements such as '[t]his alienation is not just the end result of labour but inherent in the process of labour itself' (p. 88), although formulations such as 'labour, as alienated labour' (p. 88) suggest that he, inconsistently, implies that it is not labour *per se*, but alienated labour which is the problem. Holloway's misconception of labour is particularly significant on pp. 84–85, 87–89, 104–105, and 109.
126. See Marx (2000/1977a [1844]: especially 88–91). On this point, see also Susen (2007: 104–107).
127. See Susen (2007: 106 and 280–283).
128. Susen (2007: 280).
129. On Holloway's tendency to idealize premodern society (and premodern forms of 'doing') and demonize modern society (and modern forms of 'abstraction'), see especially pp. 100–102, 126–127, 129, and 141–142.
130. On Holloway's tendency to consider modern pathologies as problems intrinsic to capitalism, rather than to industrialism, consider the following assertions: 'It has become clear that we humans are *destroying the natural conditions of our own existence*, and it seems unlikely that

a society in which the determining force is *the pursuit of profit* can reverse this trend' (p. 4, italics added). – '*... injustices of capitalism ... , effects of our social system on the natural world ...*' (p. 10, italics added). – '*... we want to break capitalism, to break the dynamic of a system that is destroying us*' (p. 51, italics added). – '*... the system of social cohesion that is currently destroying humanity. ... In capitalist society, this cohesion has a particular logic often described in terms of the laws of capitalist development. There is a systemic closure ...*' (p. 52, italics added).

131. On the concept of 'social synthesis', see especially pp. 50, 52–53, 63, 65, 70, 83, 87, 95–97, 142, 205–207, and 221.
132. See p. 96. On the concept of 'social totality', see especially pp. 20, 53, 63, 95–96, 141–147, 181, 196, 203–210, 248, 278 n. 5, 281 n. 3, and 283 n. 2. On the concept of 'social cohesion', see especially pp. 49, 52–54, 57, 66, 93, 96, 99, 112, 131–133, 142–143, 148, 172, 181, 187, 205, and 269 n. 3.
133. On the concept of 'multiple modernities', see, for example: Bhambra (2007); Delanty (2006); Eisenstadt (2002, 2003); Featherstone et al. (1995); Sachsenmaier et al. (2002); Susen and Turner (2011).
134. See, for instance, Featherstone et al. (1995: especially Chaps 1–7).
135. On this point, see, for example: Hall and Soskice (2001); Hancké (2009); Hancké et al. (2007); Soederberg et al. (2005).
136. See pp. 7, 9, 42, 49–53, 67, 72, 85–86, 89, 93, 95–96, 126, 128, 231, 235, and 251.
137. See pp. 13, 49–51, 67, 71, 113, 128, 135, 252, and 273 n. 6.
138. See pp. 4, 6, 49, 62, 104, 115, 127, 132, 137, 146–149, 154–155, 158, 175, 182, 185, 194, 251, 262, 270 n. 20, 279 n. 3, and 280 n. 9.
139. On Holloway's conception of 'enclosure', see especially pp. 29–32, 52, 107–161, 165, and 260–261.
140. In this regard, Holloway's account of the capitalist structuration of time is equally one-sided, stressing exclusively the homogenizing and standardizing aspects of temporalization under capitalism. On this point, see especially pp. 135–140, 228–229, 236–242. For an excellent (Bourdieuian) analysis of this issue, see Adkins (2011).
141. See Boltanski and Chiapello (2005 [1999]). Curiously, Holloway refers to this book (on pp. 75, 272 n. 2, and 288), but without paying attention to this central insight of Boltanski and Chiapello's influential study.
142. On Holloway's largely negative account of the state and modern institutions, see especially p. 23 (on welfare), p. 54 (on law), p. 57 (on state subsidies), pp. 58–59 (on the state and capitalism), p. 66 (on central planning), p. 77 (on institutionalization processes), p. 206 (on the state as 'a false, illusory totality'), and p. 208 (on hierarchy and centralization).
143. See, for example: Hofmann (1988: especially Part II, Chaps 1–3); Neumann (2010: especially Chaps 5 and 7).
144. On Holloway's example of cake-baking, see pp. 92–94, 130–131, 142, 203, and 205.
145. In this context, Holloway draws upon the works of Henri Lefebvre, Rebecca Solnit, and Sergio Tischler (see especially pp. 31–33).
146. See Holloway's critique of 'sexism, racism, ageism' (p. 39).
147. On this point, see, for example, Triandis (1996: especially 408–409).
148. On Holloway's conception of democracy, see especially pp. 27, 40, 44, 57, 60, 62, 65, 85–86, 205, 208, 235, 237, 269 n. 7, and 273 n. 6. The critical reader may legitimately object that Holloway's conception of direct democracy is hopelessly idealistic. In fact, there is a vast amount of literature on the concept of direct democracy, but, given that the author hardly engages with recent debates in this area, it is not surprising that even the sympathetic reader is likely to find Holloway's account of direct democracy somewhat superficial. Consider, for

example, the following assertions: ‘... we shall determine our own activity’ (p. 27). – ‘... *our* forms of organisation are radically different from *their* forms of organisation’ (p. 40, italics in original). – ‘The anti-capitalist tradition ..., active participation, direct democracy and comradeship. This is the tradition of the commune, council, soviet, or assembly’ (p. 40). – ‘... the Zapatista principle of *mandar obedeciendo* (“to command obeying”) ... the rejection of representative democracy as a form of organisation that excludes the represented. ... developments of direct democracy, not as a set of rules but as a constant process of experimenting with democratic forms’ (p. 44). – ‘... the inherently antagonistic nature of the relation between “from above” and “from below”. ... The movement from below is the push from the particular towards self-determination, while any *from above*, any representation of the totality in a world still capitalist can only be a push that moves in the opposite direction ...’ (p. 208, italics in original). For excellent discussions of direct and deliberative models of democracy, see, for instance: Cooke (2000); Eriksen and Weigård (2003); Festenstein (2004); Habermas (1996 [1992]), 2005); Pellizzoni (2001); Young (1997).

149. See pp. 50–53, 63, 65, 70, 83, 87, 95–97, 142, 205–207, and 221.

150. See *ibid.*

151. On this point, see Mead (1967 [1934]: especially 173–178, 192–200, 209–213, and 273–281). See also Susen (2010c).

152. On this point, see also p. 197.

153. See also p. 175: ‘... when we have a good time with those we love, when we relax and think “yes, this is the way life should be!” ...’.

154. In this context, Holloway’s observation that ‘[w]e create a society that systematically conceals the fact that we create it’ (p. 146) is not particularly useful either. For in *any* kind of society, social reproduction is a largely unconscious process, and in *all* societies, including capitalist societies, people can be aware, or be made aware, of their involvement in processes of social reproduction. Otherwise, they are portrayed as (largely unconscious) cultural dupes.

155. On this point, see Habermas (1987a [1981]: especially 75–101; 1987b [1981]: especially 119–197). See also Susen (2007: 61–73; 2009: 85–87).

156. Consider, for instance, the following statement: ‘Dignity is a pick-axe wielded against the encroaching walls that threaten to crush the whole of humanity. Dignity is a blade hacking at the strands of the spider’s web that holds us entrapped’ (p. 49). On Holloway’s essentialist conception of dignity, see especially pp. 17, 19, 26, 28, 35, 39, 41, 43, 45, 49–51, 55, 60–61, 71, 75–76, 99, 236, 239–240, 248, 257, and 284 n. 20.

157. Consider, for example, the following assertions: ‘Humanity (in all its senses) jars increasingly with capitalism’ (p. 9); ‘... the system of social cohesion that is currently destroying humanity’ (p. 52); ‘... it is the creative force at the very centre of society that is invisible’ (p. 216); ‘Simply trying to be human, chatting to our friends, falling in love ...’ (p. 251).

158. In this context, see also the following passage: ‘... the lost truth of humanity, as potential future, as present struggle’ (p. 89).

159. Translation from German into English: ‘imported from the outside’.

160. On this distinction, see pp. 9, 59, 62, 68, 85, 96, 98, 124, 128, 130–135, 199, 206, 209, 224–226, 232–233, 235, 246–249, 252, 261, 277 n. 1, 277 n. 2, 277 n. 5, and 280 n. 9. In addition, see Holloway (2002a: 28–30 and 36–37). See also, for example: Susen (2007: 125; 2008a: 59, 65, and 71–72; 2008b: 142, 145, 151, and 155–157).

161. On this characterization, see pp. 10 and 264.

162. Holloway (2002a).

163. On this point, see especially p. 40.

164. On this point, see pp. 59–63. On this point, see also pp. 205–208.

165. On the unhappy marriage of *Kantianism* (‘people should be treated as ends in themselves,

- rather than as means to an end’) and *Marxism* (‘under capitalism, exchange value is preponderant over use value’) in Holloway’s writings, see especially pp. 33–34 (on Horkheimer), p. 38 (on self-determination and the focus on the ‘how’), pp. 39–40 (on capitalist objectification), p. 43 (on the separation of means and ends), p. 72 (on the idea that ‘movement is what matters’), p. 75 (on objectification and profit-maximization), p. 97 (on conscious determination), pp. 146–148 (on meaning, instrumental reason, and abstraction), p. 173 (on ‘concrete labour’ and ‘abstract labour’), and p. 256 (on reason and inclinations). Given the preponderance of socio-ontological idealism in his writings, Holloway fails to examine to what extent substantive rationality (*Wertrationalität*) and instrumental rationality (*Zweckrationalität*) are intimately intertwined. Even with the best intentions in the world, purposive and cooperative forms of ‘doing’ contain an instrumental dimension; and, even with the worst intentions in the world, utility-driven and strategic forms of ‘doing’ comprise a meaning-laden dimension.
166. See pp. 236, 253–255, 257, and 262.
167. See Marx (2000/1977b [1845]). On Holloway’s Eleven Theses, see pp. 253–261.
168. This inconsistency is even more obvious when considering the title of the German edition: *Kapitalismus aufbrechen*; see Holloway (2010b). On Holloway’s insistence upon the importance of ‘the cracks’, see especially pp. 8, 9, 11–12, 15–45, 47–79, 83–86, 87, 177, 198, and 261.
169. On the similarities between Holloway’s arguments and postmodern themes, see especially pp. 9, 211, and 256 (on radical scepticism), pp. 11 and 112 (on multiplicity and particularity), p. 20 (on cracks as questions, rather than answers), pp. 22, 36, and 39–40 (on positivism and scientism), p. 127 (on rationalism), p. 209 (on evanescence), pp. 239–240 (on metanarratives and the Enlightenment), and p. 253 (on history).
170. In fact, the book is full of such performative contradictions. Consider the following examples:
- (a) On the one hand, Holloway seeks to criticize and deconstruct the idea of an underlying social or linguistic grammar (see especially pp. 199 and 263). On the other hand, his own argument is based on a particular (i.e. Marxist-autonomist) grammar of social struggle.
  - (b) On various occasions, Holloway criticizes identitarian thought in general and identity politics in particular, claiming that ‘[d]oing flows’ (p. 224) and that ‘any definition of it is an abstraction’ (p. 224). His own analysis, however, is not only developed by employing identitarian concepts and definitions, but it is also based on foundationalist, and thus identitarian, assumptions about the nature of society and humanity.
  - (c) Holloway spells out that his conception of revolution should not be misconceived as ‘a struggle for authenticity’ (p. 223), because ‘authenticity can itself become a role, a new identity that freezes’ (p. 223). Throughout the book, however, Holloway – in the tradition of classical Marxist thought and its foundationalist preoccupation with the nature of the *Gattungswesen* – presupposes, in a humanistically inspired fashion, the existence of a *Gattungsauthenticität*, particularly when employing terms such as ‘humanity’, ‘dignity’, and ‘alienation’.
171. On Holloway’s tendency to regard ‘the ordinary’ as something good, or even emancipatory, in itself, consider the following assertions: ‘... “ordinary people” who are the heroes of this book’ (p. 11; on this point, see also p. 264). – ‘Social change is ... the outcome of the barely visible transformation of the daily activities of millions of people’ (p. 12). – ‘... the quality of the movement itself, that is, the quality of the transformation of everyday life through the movement, that is the strongest form of self-defence ..., enriching the daily life of everyone’ (p. 56). – ‘Our strength lies in our ordinariness. ... the mutual resonance of ordinary rebelliousnesses is the only possible basis for a communising revolution’ (p. 258).
172. See Boltanski and Chiapello (2005 [1999]).
173. On recent studies of social movements, see, for example: Chesters and Welsh (2005); Eder

- (1993) Hamel et al. (2001); Klandermans and Staggenborg (2002); McDonald (2006); Mayo (2005); Melucci (1989, 1994); Neveu (2002 [1996]); Scott (1990); Smith and Johnston (2002); Susen (2010a).
174. This reflects a general problem with Holloway's writings: his tendency to invent his own private language, removed from ordinary social practices and impenetrable by most ordinary social actors. An example of this tendency can be found in his idealization of verbs and demonization of nouns. On this point, see especially pp. 130–131 and 231–233.
175. On Holloway's use of this analogy, see pp. 146 and 229–231.

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