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# On the possibility that the revolution that will end capitalism might fail to usher in communism

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**Marcel Stoetzler**

Bangor University, UK

## Abstract

This article argues that further development of John Holloway's approach in *Change the World without Taking Power* and *Crack Capitalism* needs to address two objections: first, some of the tendencies and practices described by Holloway as 'screams' and 'cracks' may contribute to the emergence of communism (that is, universal human emancipation), but may not cause the demise of capitalism; second, some practices that are (subjectively or objectively) anti-capitalist may not be emancipatory but, to the contrary, reactionary. The need is suggested to take reactionary forms of anti-capitalism, especially fascism, stronger into account. It is proposed to distinguish two dimensions of the negation of capitalism, namely in the sense of, on the one hand, revolution that ends capitalism, and, on the other hand, revolution that ushers in communism, in order to be able to keep both dimensions in sight simultaneously.

## Keywords

Adorno, anti-capitalism, communism, communization, emancipation, fascism, gender, Marx, non-identity, revolution

The optimism of the left repeats the insidious bourgeois superstition that one should not talk of the devil but look on the bright side.

(Adorno, 1978: 114)<sup>1</sup>

## I

In this paper I will try to get to grips with my partial reservations about John Holloway's conception of revolution in *Change the World without Taking Power* and *Crack*

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### Corresponding author:

Marcel Stoetzler, Ysgol Gwyddorau Cymdeithas/School of Social Sciences, Prifysgol Bangor/Bangor University, Neuadd Ogwen Ffordd Siliwen/Siliwen Road Bangor, Gwynedd LL57 2DG, UK

Email: m.stoetzler@bangor.ac.uk

*Capitalism*, which concern two problems. First, the interstitial revolution will not necessarily end capitalism, as capitalism will not simply die from the fact that communism peacefully, cunningly, like a cancer, grows and grows and grows in capitalism's interstices: I suggest that capitalism will die because of the decay of capitalism, not the growth of communism, and that these two processes are neither the same nor related in any linear manner. Second, there are anti-capitalist screams and cracks that are not at all, and cannot even potentially become, communist: there are reactionary, anti-emancipatory forms of anti-capitalism, and as these were decisive factors in the catastrophic history of the twentieth century, their theoretical reflection needs to be more than a critical afterthought; it needs to be central. One way of putting this would be that, like many other variants of autonomist and left-wing Marxism, Holloway's theory suffers from a lack of a theory of fascism. In spite of these reservations, though, his conception is of great importance, and my way of trying to deal with my own reservations will probably make clear enough why I think it is.<sup>2</sup>

## 2

Capital is the name we give to the totalizing structure of contemporary human society. On the one hand, this structure is out there, facing us, opposed, sitting there, objective, bad, dangerous, but, on the other hand, it is also nothing more than our subjectivity, our acting or agency, the agency of all humans who are part of the capitalist civilization-world, the specific societal relation constituted by and emerging out of the interactions of all human agents at any one time, the world that humanity creates every single moment following the example set by God according to the theology of Eriugena as referenced by Holloway (2010: 169).<sup>3</sup>

Crisis is likewise objective, an objective aspect of the real–abstract dynamic of that structure called capital, and, likewise, it is also true that we are the crisis, just as we are capital. Our subjectivity and agency are constitutive of the objective existence of capital as much as of the crisis and of the negation of capital.<sup>4</sup>

Negation is an unruly category, and its unruliness is the focus of this paper. In particular, the issue here is that *revolution-as-the-negation-of-capital* is not in itself, not necessarily, the same as *communism-as-the-negation-of-capital* (that is, revolution as communism): the revolutionary bringing down of capital opens up but the *possibility* of communism, and this possibility's chance of success depends in important ways on *how* the bringing-down occurs. *How* is decisive.

## 3

Revolution-as-the-negation-of-capital is mostly done by *us-as-capital*: that is, by capital in a process of self-negation of capital, a self-negation in which capital, which is in this sense the subject or agent of its own negation, makes use of us-as-the-constitutive-basis-of-capital.<sup>5</sup> Communism-as-the-negation-of-capital, by contrast, is exclusively done by us-as-not-capital, which is, to use Adorno's phrase, our non-identity, our identity against all identifications, in particular against all identifications imposed by the totalizing societal structure called capital (Adorno, 1975: 164) – a force otherwise

known as communism-as-the-real-or-actual-movement, the '*wirkliche Bewegung*' (Marx, 1969: 35): the movement of subjects that refuse being identified, classified, subjected.<sup>6</sup>

These two negations and these two 'we's – or, perhaps better, these two dimensions of 'we': the-(self-)negation-of-capital-as-revolution and the-negation-of-capital-as-communism; and we-as-capital and we-as-not-capital – are different though related. (We are all capital/labour as well as not capital/labour, although some are perhaps more the one, some more the other.) This conceptual distinction (although to be understood as merely a dialectical distinction, a contradiction within a unity) allows us to make a further distinction, namely that *we-as-those-who-drive-capital-into-crisis* (and, at some point, will bring it down, that is, we as the in this respect ultimately revolutionary agents; we-the-wreckers) are *not* thereby necessarily communists (in the sense of we as determinately not capital); we simply play our part as labour, which is the complementary opposite as much as the constitutive basis of capital, and we do our best to play a tough game with-and-against capital because we need to survive. *No less, no more*: by way of constituting capital, we also constitute its intrinsic, in-built, inevitable self-negation, *but not*, in and of itself, communism. Not communism, but only the *possibility* of communism follows from the inherent contradictions of the capital relation. Although capital's self-negating dynamic produces the elements and conditions of communism, communism is more than just the self-negation of capital. Communism emerges from capitalism only as a potentiality; it is born out of freedom, if it is born at all, not out of necessity. Freedom is what communism essentially is. In other words, the abolition of capitalism will create a chance which humanity has the freedom to spoil or to use. Only because we *can* spoil it we can also make communism: if it were a guaranteed outcome, it would be freedom arrived at by ways of unfreedom; guaranteed, necessary freedom, though, is implausible.<sup>7</sup>

#### 4

The conceptual construction proposed here makes possible two things (and was formulated precisely in order to deal with two problems perceived while reading Holloway's two recent books). *First*, the distinction allows us to appreciate as revolutionary the kind of social practices that Holloway chose to refer to as 'screams', or practices that produce or reinforce 'cracks' in the social totality of capitalist society: they are revolutionary in the sense of helping to create or anticipate communism, although they are not revolutionary in the sense of being likely to help bring down capitalism. To use examples given by Holloway, such practices include dying one's hair green, guerrilla gardening, being a girl reading a book in a park; more generally, all things queer and beautiful. *Second*, the proposed distinction makes it possible to articulate the critique and rejection of reactionary opposition to (aspects of) capitalism on two levels, namely responding, first, to the question, 'Is this particular practice bad for capitalism?', and responding, second, to the question, 'Is this particular practice good for communism?' On a pragmatic note, it could be added that a particular practice could be examined with respect to the question whether, if it is bad for capitalism (which is good), it is at least not bad for communism, too.<sup>8</sup>

This allows us to argue that:

- we should be most enthusiastic about actions and practices that are bad for capitalism, but good for communism;
- we should be reasonably enthusiastic about actions and practices that are neutral in terms of destroying capitalism but good for communism, or neutral in terms of communism but destructive of capitalism;
- we should somewhat more discretely and guiltily enjoy those that are as good for capitalism as for communism (I think here of nice food, well-designed clothes, and so on – things that will proliferate endlessly in communism, but require some rehearsing in advance);
- we should very much oppose, though, actions and practices that are bad for communism *regardless of whether they are bad for capitalism, too*: in other words, it is imperative explicitly to resist the temptation to join or support people who fight against capitalism in ways that are bad for communism.

It follows from this consideration that the question ‘What is good for communism?’ is much more important than the question ‘What is bad for capitalism?’ If a good-enough approximate definition can be agreed upon, such as communism is ‘the state of things where one can be different without fear’ (Adorno, 1978: 103),<sup>9</sup> presupposing societal arrangements in which nobody’s access to the means of subsistence is conditional on what, if anything, that person chooses to contribute to society, then a set of criteria for what actions and practices will further such a state of things can be inferred. (The definition of communism – actually socialism, which in Marx are synonymous – that is quoted from Marx, for example, in an article by Paresh Chattopadhyay is the ‘society of free and associated producers’, which is an important formal characterization but too formal as a definition [Chattopadhyay, 2006: 46]. Chattopadhyay goes half-way towards making in this context the distinction I am proposing; he writes: ‘Marx shows how capital creates the subjective and objective conditions of its own negation and, simultaneously, the elements of the new society destined to supersede it – socialism’ [2006: 46]. Chattopadhyay formulates very carefully: capital does not automatically produce its own negation but merely *the conditions* for it, and ‘simultaneously’ not ‘the new society’ but *the elements* of the new society. This formulation does imply that still somebody has to do the negating, and somebody has to come up with some good idea of how to put these ‘elements’ together, or else they will go to waste or serve some other purpose. The concept of ‘negation’, however, might imply either simply disintegration or implosion, or else the ‘determined negation’ of capitalism by socialism/communism. The openness and indeed realism of his statement are in turn negated by Chattopadhyay’s adding that destiny has already decided that socialism/communism will follow capitalism. How does he know?)

## 5

The answer to the question ‘What is bad for capitalism?’ is – somewhat counterintuitively – even less straightforward than the answer to the question ‘What is good for

communism?', as even the capitalists don't seem to agree easily on what they think is good for them, and those who define themselves negatively as 'anti-capitalists' seem to mirror their counterparts in this respect. Trade unionism, for example, is only very indirectly bad for capitalism, namely by way of being good for capitalism, by way of being good for workers *as* workers: insofar as we *are* workers, and that's what we mostly are, we need to get as good a deal as we can get, like the air to breath. In fact only things that are good for capitalism are bad for capitalism, as only the capitalist dynamic digs capitalism's grave. In terms of the question of consciousness – and the *determined* negation of capitalism by communism can only be a conscious one – there lies the rub: to the same extent that we succeed in getting better deals, being good workers and trade unionists, contributing thus (as labour/capital) to capitalism's eating away at itself, we think less about communism and fail to get ready for task two (the big one). Conversely, an empty stomach is of course even less likely to become a communist – it's a double bind.

## 6

Under the last category (actions and practices to be opposed as they are bad for communism regardless of whether they are bad for capitalism, too) belong many of the practices, movements and ideas that have been referred to as 'socialist' in the last two to three hundred years: all the various forms of managerial reformism (Fabianism, Labourism), positivistic authoritarianism (Bolshevism, Stalinism and fellow-travellers), conservative revolution, populism, statist-authoritarian or fascist regimes, all of which are committed to one of many versions of illiberal capitalism (under whose rough, crack-ridden surface unhappy capital always dreams of morphing into shiny, good-quality, liberal capitalism). All these – which I would like to summarily address as unstable, low-quality or 'crap capitalism' – are to be resisted. The more traditional form of apologetics of 'crap capitalism' – formulated by socialists of the chair (of many different chairs) – recommends it as a superior form of capitalism that, being more mature and advanced, accelerates humanity's journey to communism. A perhaps intellectually more attractive folly would be to argue that 'crap capitalism' is good for revolution because bringing down the liberal and arguably most productive and sustainable (ideal-typical) forms of capitalism forces capital into political and cultural forms that seem at most temporarily to be in its best interest, namely authoritarian and fascist regimes that are good for electrification and exterminating the peasantry, but not good at mobilizing the collective creativity needed for long-term successful accumulation, and that are in this sense less than ideal for capitalism. The all-decisive point is, though, that 'socialism' (in the sense of inferior capitalism) is disastrous for communism, amongst other things because it tends to reinforce the authoritarian character structures that liberal capitalism first of all produces, not least at the workplace, but also at least partially sublates, tames, offsets.<sup>10</sup>

## 7

In the face of the enormity of the task ahead, it is good to know that we already make *some* communism, as that present absence, the 'latency' of communism that Holloway borrows from Ernst Bloch (Holloway, 2010: 215), because *mostly* we are currently

making capitalism. In other words, humanity has ('we' have) two historical tasks: *task one* is the relatively easy task of abolishing capitalism (a precarious, vulnerable, derivative, dependent, long-doomed, arrogant and irrational structure that is on its way out, although, perhaps for that reason, still extremely dangerous, nervous, leaning towards outbursts of over-the-top violence) and the much more difficult *task two* of creating communism. Whether and how the two tasks are linked is less than clear; it seems plausible that a strong interest in task two (making communism) could motivate one to participate in task one (ending capitalism), and likewise experience of the latter might strengthen an interest in the former, but neither is a necessary let alone sufficient precondition of the other. (Some might say that in between there is also task one-and-a-half, which is, at least not to create something as bad as, or even worse than, capitalism, and to prevent others from doing so.<sup>11</sup>) Capitalism has many enemies, and only some of them are communists: there is no reason to assume that all those disliking, opposing, boycotting or even fighting capitalism are closet communists slowly progressing towards their coming out.

Some would object at this point that only communists are *really* enemies of capitalism, whereas the others only object to some aspect of capitalism while actually supporting a reformed or fascist version of it. This is certainly true of the 'anti-capitalism' of the German National Socialists, to take an important example. Firstly, though, this cannot be generalized, and, secondly, one can only tell *post festum*: Nazi 'anti-capitalism' turned out to be no such thing because the capitalist mode of production was at the time far from exhausted, not, though, because the Nazis did not really mean it. In a different world-historical situation, such as the impending implosion of capitalism, why should not a racial, super-hierarchical, antisemitic, 'national-socialist' post-capitalism emerge out of the chaos? Even today there are more than enough 'left-wing fascists', 'autonomous nationalists', and so on, around, whose dream is exactly that, and their chances are not so bad. In their world, Hitler is guilty of having sold out the national-socialist revolution to 'the Jews' and 'the system'. If the rest of us underestimate the possibility of their victory out of a residual belief that it is somehow written into the DNA of world history that after capitalism things can only get better, we do so at our own peril. It is therefore wrong to fight fascists on the grounds that they are not consistent enough enemies of capitalism: properly anti-capitalist fascists might emerge and prevail over pro-capitalist fascists in a situation when capitalism is on its last leg, and in any case, many people who look for an efficient force to get rid of liberalism-capitalism (and either subscribe to, or don't really object very much to, such things as antisemitism, racism, sexism) will give them the benefit of the doubt, as was the case previously. (Fascists often also have very reasonable soup kitchens.) Fascists need to be fought irrespective of how anti-capitalist they can be expected to be, but instead on the grounds that they are enemies of communism.

## 8

Amongst the phenomena to be resisted irrespective of their relation to capitalism, as listed above, fascism is probably the one most charged emotionally as well as intellectually, but nevertheless not very much present in discussions among much of the radical (that is, anti-Bolshevik, anti-statist) Marxian left. (Anti-fascism seems, by contrast, a

prerogative of the Leninist left, including Gramscians and Trotskyists.) In contemporary scholarship a consensus seems to have emerged over the last two decades that a generic concept of fascism can be formulated only on the level of ideology and movement practices, whereas the realities of ‘fascist states’ and ‘fascist societies’ are rather too diverse; a ‘fascist state’ is nothing more than a state run by people who subscribe to fascist ideology, which primarily provides them with a conception for a ‘cultural revolution’, not, though, with much in the way of consistent political, let alone economic, policies (Costa Pinto, 2010; Eco, 1995; Griffin, 1998; Macklin, 2005; Woodley, 2009). Fascists in power try to deal with a specific reality by means inspired by their fascist worldview; which means and how they play out in practice depends on an infinity of variables not resulting in anything like a typical ‘fascist state’ or ‘fascist economy’. This elasticity in practical terms is arguably one of the strengths of fascism as an inspiration for anti-liberal ‘cultural revolution’ aiming to establish ‘a new type’ of society, of the state, and of ‘man’ (Griffin, 2010: 88) by way of cultural regeneration. (Contemporary fascists are for this reason entirely immune to any historical fact or experience.) Whether we like it or not, fascism is an ideology that can just as plausibly claim to be aiming at an ‘alternative modernity’ as Marxism does, and this is why it is still around and still vital. (Whether the fascist vision of another modernity is to be understood as capitalist or not depends of course on how one defines capitalism, and fascists and their potential and actual followers will generally care even much less about the finer points of a discourse that presupposes reading *Capital* and *Grundrisse* than many if not most ‘Marxists’.<sup>12</sup>)

## 9

Whether socialist ‘crap capitalism’ or the good-quality, liberal variety, capitalism is an impossible system in any case. The relevant question is not, therefore, ‘Will it collapse?’, but ‘How will it collapse?’, and ‘What will emerge out of the collapse?’ In other words, how will we, the humans, emerge out of it, and what will we be capable of doing after the experience, perhaps the trauma, of the collapsing world, the ugly ending of a civilization? The *Communist Manifesto* contains the formulation that all class struggles of the past ended ‘either in a revolutionary reconstitution of society at large, or in the common ruin (*gemeinsame Untergang*) of the contending classes’ (Marx and Engels, 2002: 219). Assuming this alternative is also valid for the present constellation, the ‘common ruin of the contending classes’ must mean the ruin of the contending classes not *as classes* (which is actually the *desired* outcome) but as humanity: we have to consider the possibility that the historical dynamic of the bourgeois epoch (a.k.a. class struggle) might end in the ‘common ruin’ of humanity.<sup>13</sup>

If we understand revolution, with Walter Benjamin, as the opening up of history, then it must inevitably be ‘*apocalypsis*’ in the sense of disclosure of something unseen beforehand, and thus unpredictable: a radically open event, potentially the beginning of human history (perhaps, however, merely the ending of prehistory followed by nothing). It is safe to assume, though, that how we will come *out of* the revolution will depend very much on how we will go *into* it. Humanity will need to have built up the necessary social, intellectual, mental, emotional resources to come out of the apocalypse singing and

dancing rather than shooting and biting, ‘destroyed by madness, starving hysterical naked’.<sup>14</sup>

## 10

Unless one believes (with classical political economy) that the capitalist mode of production is ‘natural’ and that human history has reached in it its final and ideal form, it goes without saying that capitalism will end. Every mode of production ends, and Marx’s *Capital* provides an analysis of the specific weaknesses and patterns of the disintegration of this one. The presence of communist revolutionaries (that is, people who have a desire for communism) will probably be of no great importance for the revolution that will destroy capitalism. Their presence and number is, however, of utmost importance for the direction into which humanity will be hurled by that revolution. (The tired rhetoric of revolutions having been ‘betrayed’ is based on the false assumption that the *apocalypsis* of the revolution should, in the natural course of things not disfigured by any betrayal, disclose a basic nature of humanity which the disappointed revolutionaries thought they had deciphered; in fact they had merely failed to distinguish the revolution that destroyed what was about to be destroyed from the revolution that would build what they thought should be built. What had taken place was ‘the revolution’ but not ‘The Revolution [Betrayed]’.)

## 11

The brief opening in human history that will be created by the impending implosion of capitalism will also allow humanity to redefine its gender order and the range of ways it allows itself to live its sexuality. These concerns, which are most fundamental to the structure of any human civilization and indicative of its degree of civility and humanity, have in the past caused considerable confusion and disagreement. It has been pointed out, correctly, that all the queering in the world will not bring down capitalism, but it has rarely been appreciated that it does not have to because *we-as-capital* are already taking care of the bringing down of capitalism. Queering ‘merely’ and importantly needs to help shape – by way of partially anticipating and rehearsing – communism, as in Mario Mieli’s conception of ‘gay communism’, in the interstices of capitalist society, to use Holloway’s image (Mieli, 1980).<sup>15</sup> This is being done by *us-as-not-capital*. This argument is implicit in much of feminist and anti-heterosexist literature; it is also fundamental to (‘Frankfurt School’) critical theory. In the last century, revolutions (Bolshevik, fascist, national-socialist) occurred that claimed to end capitalism but only led to more intense barbarism (based on new variations of capitalism, rather than any kind of ending of capitalism). Amongst the factors that made this disastrous outcome possible was that the movement that challenged capitalist exploitation had failed to produce a sufficient number of subjects holding the social characters and personality types that would in terms of emotions, intellect and imagination *be able* to make communism, the free association, being immune to and able to resist authoritarianism and fascism. The interstitial *wirkliche Bewegung* of communism was drowned out (or at least not particularly nurtured) by the struggles and forms of organization involved in the overthrow of (liberal) capitalism.<sup>16</sup> (This is anything but surprising: the movement against capitalism is a

product of capitalism, and while capitalism does produce its gravediggers, it can hardly be expected to produce large numbers of beautiful communist personalities. This is perhaps the core of the problem.) Those who fought capitalism cared too little about communism, the free association that does not identify, classify, subject. But not only did they not make communism, they even failed to end capitalism. Against the background of this historical experience, it is crucial that revolutionaries are not content with simply joining into the revolution that ends capitalism, but are most of all committed to making communism. These two things need to be kept in sight simultaneously; only for this reason is it necessary conceptually to distinguish them.

## 12

If, as Gramsci correctly observed, the Bolshevik *coup d'état* was a revolution against *Capital* (and therewith not a good idea), what Holloway has on his mind is a revolution against the *Manifesto* (a good idea).<sup>17</sup> It ought be a revolution for communism (the state of things where one can be different without fear; a state of things that resists identifications, class-ifications, state-ifications) and not just one against capitalism. The positivistic superstition that communism emerges out of, and is in the last instance identical with, anti-capitalism is to be abandoned.<sup>18</sup>

## Notes

I would like to thank those who listened and reacted to an earlier version of this paper at the 'Historical Materialism' conference at the New School in New York City, May 2011, and especially Chris Wright, Hae-Yung Song and Lars Stubbe for their comments on the same.

1. *Minima Moralia*, piece 73: 'Der linke Optimismus wiederholt den tückischen bürgerlichen Aberglauben, man solle den Teufel nicht an die Wand malen, sondern sich ans Positive halten' (Adorno, 1994: 148).
2. I have developed some critical points about *Change the World without Taking Power* (some of which would similarly apply to *Crack Capitalism*) in Stoetzler (2005) and some thoughts on capital as the totality-structure-subject that needs to be abolished in (Stoetzler 2004).
3. In this text, I use 'subjectivity' and 'agency' interchangeably, although 'subjectivity' is a richer and perhaps more appropriate concept (while 'agency' seems more common in contemporary sociological discussions). A more adequate discussion of 'subjectivity' would need to involve sustained referencing of psychoanalytic theory, which is in the background of my argument on barbaric anti-capitalism (*pace* Critical Theory, of course) but cannot be developed here. I thank Chris Wright for pointing this out.
4. I build here on the discussion of the concept of crisis and its relationship to revolution in the tenth chapter of Holloway (2002).
5. 'Revolution' means here simply a process, typically culminating in a landmark event or series of events, that changes the fundamental structure of a society, possibly creates, dissolves or redefines a society; such a change could be a change in the mode of production, or at least a significant change in the class structure, or at the very least a significant change in the political structure, or the relationship between the two.
6. At this point a possible objection needs to be addressed: it could be argued that the notion

of revolution as the self-negation of capital is rather close to Marx's caricaturing of German philosophers' pointlessly abstract understanding of 'the-cat-eats-the-mouse' as the self-consumption of nature (Marx, 1969: 469). This similarity is indeed quite illuminating, though: substituting the self-consumption of nature for 'the-cat-eats-the-mouse' is not wrong but simply stupid because it uses rather technical language that is designed to express profound thoughts for something that is neither interesting nor relevant as neither the cat nor the mouse (as far as we can tell) has historical subjectivity and consciousness: that is, they objectively *are* parts of a self-consuming soulless mechanism called nature. What does it matter, though? The fact that the cat eats the mouse is true but unremarkable, a machine-like, unconscious and meaningless process, the self-consumption of nature, whereas the fact that societal processes in capitalist society *mimic* the machine-like, meaningless processes that cats, mice and other beings of nature tend to engage in *is* remarkable because humans are neither cats nor mice. (In addition, it could be noted that cats can exist quite independently from mice and feed on something else, whereas there is no substitute for capital's feeding on labour.)

7. By analysing a complex reality in terms of dichotomies, I follow of course in a major tradition of modern social theory that includes not only Marx's analysis of concrete and abstract labour and of the commodity form but also, for example, Durkheim's distinction between the sacred and the profane. To avoid misunderstandings, though, it should be noted that Marx analysed and commented on one particular set of dichotomies which he found is characteristic of, and constituted by, societal reality in only one particular historical epoch (ours), whereas Durkheimians and structuralists, the latter taking their lead from the former, think that the organization of every human thinking process in the form of dichotomies is universal. When some humanist and workerist Marxists, in terms of a defence of subjectivity and agency, slander as 'structuralists' those who emphasize the deplorable fact that we humans are ruled and overpowered by a structure, a form of our self-incurred immaturity or tutelage, they grant structuralism too much. The tradition that, following on from Marx, discovered and critiqued dichotomies in various aspects of the *capitalist* reality of human subjectivity – explicitly *not* of trans-historical human subjectivity – merely needed to spell out what was implied in Marx's suggestion that more and more aspects of human and societal reality are 'really subsumed' to capital and its nuclear structure, the commodity form. The discovery that humans have, over the last two centuries, formed a dangerous and increasingly dominating social structure (totality) that urgently needs to be destroyed has nothing to do with structuralism. It was Marx who referred to value as an 'automatic subject' (in the fourth chapter of *Capital* vol. 1; Marx, 1990: 255) that turns those to whose activity it owes itself into its 'carriers', character masks, object-automatons; the point is that such a thing as an automatic subject, like the totality that forms it, should not exist. Emancipation means the de-automatization of subjectivity, a shared concern of the Enlightenment and all its inheritors. 'I myself know absolutely nothing about what I am saying, in fact I don't even know that I don't know, so that it's highly probable that I am simply being made to speak, and that, in reality, it's only pipes and bellows saying all this' (Valerio in the third act of Georg Büchner's 1836 play *Leonce and Lena*; Büchner, 1987: 142–143). However, against subjectivism and utopianism, Marx stresses that 'steam, electricity, and the self-acting mule were revolutionists of a rather more dangerous character than even citizens Barbès, Raspail and Blanqui' (from a speech of 1856, quoted in Chattopadhyay, 2006: 75).
8. In spite of sharing a point of departure, the perspective proposed here happens to be entirely opposed to the current discussions around 'communization' amongst parts of the Marxist left in the UK, the USA, as well as in France, where this concept seems to have originated (compare Noys, 2011). These debates are explicitly pivoted on the conceptual *identification*

of revolution with communism (otherwise but implicit in the tradition of the Marxist left), regarding as revolutionary only a process that 'is' communism; they are in this sense astonishingly normative (without admitting as much) as they disregard from analysis anything but the most desirable, yet not most likely course of revolutionary events. This tendency could prove dangerous inasmuch as it does not allow its adherents to appreciate that also the enemy could be a revolutionary, or else, that also revolutionaries could be enemies. The real challenge is to understand revolution as a radical opening of history, with all the ambivalences this implies. The shared point of departure lies of course in the long-standing insistence in the anti-Bolshevik tradition that the means of revolution must be adequate to its ends, as for example in this statement by Werner Bonefeld:

Communism ... is the self-activity of the social individuals who determine their affairs themselves as autonomous social subjects. Slaves, as Marcuse (1967, p. 61) puts it, 'have to be free for their liberation so that they are able to become free'. In other words, the society of the free and equal has already to be present in the consciousness and practice of the dependent masses and has to achieve material existence in the revolutionary movement itself.

(2002: 133)

As Bonefeld argues, 'the purpose of social revolution, i.e. human emancipation', has to drive, shape and constitute 'the revolutionary means themselves' (2002: 133). The crux of the whole matter lies in the paradoxical formulation from Marcuse: the slaves can free themselves only insofar as they are not slaves, on the basis of their non-identity; but under conditions of increasingly closed totality in developed capitalism the non-slaveness of the slaves (we) is increasingly precarious. It is implicit in Bonefeld's argument that the 'material existence', or presence, of communism in the struggles of the present, if it is to constitute the means of that struggle, must, within the struggling ('communizing') subjects, be already stronger than the forces of the bad totality. The bad totality is nothing other than the totality of those same subjects, though; the communist struggle can only commence, it seems, when it is already won. I can see no more promising way out of this conundrum than asserting the need to strengthen non-identity in all its forms, unless one wanted to adopt the traditional notions that either the proletariat as proletariat (workerism), or the Party/'the intellectuals' (Leninism), will somehow leap out of the capitalist totality.

9. *Minima Moralia*, piece 66: 'den Zustand ... in dem man ohne Angst verschieden sein kann' (Adorno, 1994: 131).
10. Compare Gaspar M. Tamás:

Socialism as a political movement was a tool of capitalist modernization not only in the East, but also in Central and Western Europe; the bourgeoisie itself did, historically speaking, very little by way of creating, or even fighting for, modern capitalist society.

(2005: 238–239)

Tamás, referring to Herman Gorter, argues that the historical circumstance that 'socialists decided to assume the leadership of non-socialist, democratic revolutions' accounts for nationalism in the proletariat, 'both in the debacle of August 1914 and in the unavoidable transformation of Leninism into Stalinism' (2005: 238). Tamás also points to the passage through which non-Marxian socialism – which he terms 'Rousseauian socialism', held also by many if not most 'Marxists' – can mutate into reactionary modernism:

The meaning of Rousseauian socialism is the re-establishment of the purity of the people through the forcible destitution of the upper castes and the exclusion of extraneous economic elements such as commerce; the people is held to be capable of discovering its virtue, which has been obliterated or corrupted by oppression and inequality, servitude and deference.

(2005: 247)

And:

The philosophical doctrine of a reconstructed people – reconstructed through the abolition of commerce and the market proper – is Fichte's *Der geschlossene Handelsstaat* [1800].

(2005: 267 n. 56)

With reference to E. P. Thompson and Georges Bataille, he notes that 'Rousseauian socialism was often attracted to counter-cultural *intermundia*, far away from official "polite" culture' (2005: 258 n. 11). It could perhaps be argued that Holloway, who is likewise very much attracted to the *intermundia* where some of the cracks occur, attempts a synthesis of Rousseauian and Marxian socialism.

11. Whether a newly emerging barbarism is seen as a mere mutation of capitalism or a genuinely new barbarism depends, of course, on how one chooses to define capitalism. If a new post-liberal form of capitalism should emerge that is neither managerial-populist-totalitarian like fascism, nor reactionary-elitist-authoritarian like most other twentieth-century regimes, but perhaps based on a downsized and gated archipelago of quasi-capitalist polities smugly floating in an ocean of excluded and superfluous sometime-eaters who will be less than helots, then we will be discussing what kind of capitalism, if at all, this is, just as we once discussed what kinds of capitalism, if at all, the Soviet and Nazi societies used to be. Whereas the capitalist character of the latter was denied mostly by those who identified capitalism with private property of the means of production and societal mediation through the so-called marketplace, a possibly emerging archipelagian, exclusive capitalism might be a capitalism that ceases to constitute a world-system, a limitless totality. (We can discuss whether this will still best be addressed as capitalism or something else when we get there.)
12. It is important to keep in mind, as Tamás writes, that fascism's modernity notwithstanding, it is still also true that 'the fascists were quite serious in wanting to go back to before 1789, as they (or at least their predecessors) had been announcing loudly since the 1880s'. They made a 'quite serious attempt to re-introduce caste society, that is, human groups with radically different entitlements and duties (against uniformizing and levelling, 'mechanistic' conceptions of egalitarian liberalism and socialism and bourgeois individualism)' (2005: 251).
13. If a higher being really designed the bourgeois epoch as the antechamber of communism, expecting we would traverse it guided by our free will, (s)he was taking quite a gamble.
14. This quotation is taken from Allen Ginsberg's 'Howl' (1956: 1).
15. See on this issue Stoetzler (2008) and (2009).
16. This was the central question that most of the empirical research undertaken by members of the Frankfurt Institute of Social Research aimed to address, as well as one of the key aspects of their theoretical work.
17. The anti-Bolshevik concept of revolution takes its cues from *Capital*. Most of what the *Manifesto* contains remains of course valid throughout all instalments of Marx's critique; what the conception of revolution proposed by Holloway is directed against is the assertion,

chiefly at the end of the second section of the *Manifesto*, of the 'political' struggle of the proletariat, centred on conquering the state and democracy. (This is not to say, though, that Bolshevism rightly claims those passages in the *Manifesto* that seem wrongheaded and naïve from the autonomist-Marxist-anarchist perspective of *Change the World without Taking Power*: as Hal Draper [1986] wrote, Marx's idea of how the proletariat should use state power once it has 'conquered' it was not identical with state socialism as theorized in the nineteenth and practiced in the twentieth centuries).

18. This is the positivistic interpretation of Marx's formulation that communism is the '*wirkliche Bewegung*'. There is an element of wishful thinking in the Hegelianism of this phrase that lends itself to positivistic (mis)interpretation: Marx of course knew very well that the existing movement, surely in 1848, was only to a very small extent communist in his sense, and this has never changed. Only from the standpoint of the desired future, Marx 'knew' that the small minority was the '*wirkliche*' movement. It is, but not in a positive sense.

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### Author biography

Marcel Stoetzler is a lecturer in Sociology at Bangor University, Wales, UK. He has held postdoctoral fellowships at Goldsmiths College (University of London) and the University of Manchester. He works on social and political theory, intellectual history and historical sociology, and has lately concentrated on various aspects of modern anti-semitism, especially its interconnections with liberalism and nationalism and the emergence of the discipline of sociology. He is also interested in, and has previously published on, problems of feminism, critical theory ('Frankfurt School'), Hannah Arendt and Marx. He has been described as an 'autonomist Adornoite'. His first book, *The State, the Nation and the Jews: Liberalism and the Antisemitism Dispute in Bismarck's Germany*, was published in 2008 by the University of Nebraska Press. He serves on the editorial board of *Patterns of Prejudice*, of which he has edited a special issue (May 2010) on 'Modern Antisemitism and the Emergence of Sociology'. He is also Honorary Research Fellow at the Centre for Jewish Studies, the University of Manchester.