

Book Reviews/Comptes rendus

RICHARD DAY, *Gramsci is Dead: Anarchist Currents in the Newest Social Movements*. Toronto: Between the Lines, 2005. 254 p.

Charting a deliberate line between academia and activism, between engaged practice and theoretical reflection, Richard Day's contribution to creating alternatives to the state and corporate forms, *Gramsci is Dead*, sets out to show readers why it is that "marxist revolutionism" and "liberal/postmarxist reformism" have reached their historical limit in an itinerant, if overly apologetic, take on the "newest" of the new social movements. Day explains why we should look more closely at these movements and why they offer a political imaginary uniquely suited for grounding a politics outside of the dominant mediating institutions of the modern nation-state.

Day argues that most political thinking is subject to the *hegemony of hegemony*, or the belief that any worthwhile social change must take place across a national or international plane. Much modern activism has followed this course, holding to the belief that the state is the only space in which to ground effective social change; that only a politics directed toward the state is capable of reversing domination and grounding emancipation. Day rejects this position, instead of providing an historical account of the rise of hegemonic thought that reveals an inherent faith in mass revolution and state-centered political action. Following this, the book is primarily concerned with countering "the belief that state domination is necessary to achieve 'freedom'" (p. 14), which is the defining characteristic of the hegemony of hegemony. Day argues that modern political thought still suffers this belief, remaining within the logic of neoliberalism and subsequently missing what is unique about the newest social movements, or what he calls radical activism. However, the concern of this review is Day's claim that the politics of recognition and integration are effective only outside state-based mediating forms.

In response to hegemonic thinking, Day draws on contemporary radical activism to develop what he calls the *affinity for affinity*, which is "non-universalizing, non-hierarchical, non-coercive relationships based on mutual aid and shared ethical commitments" (p. 9). He points to indigenous struggles, recent globalization protests, and ongoing political movements in the South, as contemporary examples. He grounds affinity for affinity historically by re-reading classical anarchists including Landauer and Kropotkin, arguing that revolution and reform were not always thought mutually exclusive. Further, to give form to contemporary

struggles he draws selectively from poststructuralist thinkers, notably the work of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, using their concept of the *smooth* as a new sort of citizen cum nomad, and Giorgio Agamben, finding in his concept the *coming community* a means for thinking outside state-based forms of group identity.

To argue that effective social change must be grounded in state-based social forms is to succumb to what Day calls the *politics of demand*. Demands for rights or freedoms further subject individuals and groups to “societies of discipline,” leading to a further increase in discipline and control. Day states early in the book that the only point worth discussing is how best to fight capitalist globalization and the global financial and governmental elites that consciously perpetuate it. To argue that this expansion can be fought by taking state power or influencing it ultimately means perpetuating neoliberal logic (which he equates with societies of control and discipline). Only by tapping into the “deeper, broader and longer-running currents” underlying the “ideological and organizational structures” that have brought about affinity-based groups (p. 4) is it possible to understand history, achievements, and potential radical activism in order to draw on these currents for the strategies and tactics to counter global capitalism.

Day’s aspirations aside, the result of his effort is a book that tries to do too much, and offers little in the way of empirical rigor. Weaving through the text, this reviewer sees several worthwhile and valuable projects which could be developed further, and which would subsequently offer more to his readers. These projects, drawn from this book, might include a fuller account of the “logic of affinity,” one that differentiates between affinity for affinity and the revolutionary politics he critiques. Another might include a more developed account and critique of hegemonic thought *and* practice (one intimately tied to the development of administrative practices and modalities of governance and police). And a third could look at the tactics and strategies of new social movements as new sorts of social relations (focusing on what possibility exists for displacing current forms of domination and producing new sorts of spaces and new social imaginaries addressing the problem of creating enduring alternatives). More developed and empirically grounded arguments should offer firmer ground for thinking and practicing non-hegemonic social relations. But just as important, as Foucault’s works exemplify, is investigating where we have come from and how “we” came about (so that “we” can become something else...).

More fundamental, however, are two problems. For a book the basic argument of which is that new social movements are helpful in understanding and furthering the displacement of hegemony with affinity, there is a concerted lack of engagement with these sorts of groups, movements, tactics and strategies. Furthermore, there is a lack of empirical investigation into the “roots” of neoliberalism and “societies of control.” Day relies almost exclusively on secondary texts and philosophical tracts when discussing hegemony and neoliberalism. The extent to which

discipline and control figure in relations of ruling, the ways in which some activism has fallen back into a “neoliberal” logic, and the ways in which strategies and tactics employed by radical activists differ from modern political thought and activism are all, at base, empirical questions, ones that can and should be addressed more fully. And second, while attempts to reduce or rid academic work of jargon and obscure concepts should be practiced, as Day attempts to do, common words can quickly take their place and become as meaningless. Concepts including “neoliberalism,” “discipline,” “capitalism,” and “societies of control” (a concept left undeveloped by Deleuze) are overused with little qualification or explanation. These are concepts that more often need to be explained, rather than used to explain.

Methodological and organizational criticisms aside, Day has put together a passionate and at times insightful book that examines some of the thinking occurring in and alongside the struggles that are so often absent from public and academic discourse, and for this reason the book is worth reading. It will also appeal to those interested in anarchist thought and practice, both present and past. By locating and beginning to outline a counter-history (rather than a genealogy), Day has set forth on a trail that if not clearly marked, confirms the importance of traveling new lines in the face of the all too common border, check-point or stop sign. The result is a book that may strain under sociological scrutiny, but succeeds in producing new connections and lines worth further investigation.

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