

transition. Relations to nature and to each other must be reconfigured; daily life habits must evolve along anti-capitalist lines; modes of production must be controlled by workers and communities; mental conceptions of the world must shift away from neoliberal ideology toward something entirely new. In this chapter, Harvey is seeking nothing less than a full-scale transformation of the dominant social order.

This closing chapter on anti-capitalist struggle has drawn its fair share of criticism. Some activists argue that his approach is already being implemented; anarchists may challenge his view that autonomist organizing is unable to develop large-scale organizational forms; others may argue that he downplays the role of race, gender and difference. Harvey's reference to violence may also draw criticism. These are all interesting criticisms worthy of pursuit and reasoned deliberation.

To this series of critiques, it is worth raising a level of concern over Harvey's drift away from classical conceptual rigour. On the one hand, removing Marx's dense conceptual baggage makes his ideas accessible and relevant. *Enigma* is receiving widespread attention precisely because Harvey has simplified classical Marxist concepts and theories. This is encouraging, insofar as the anti-capitalist ideas of *Enigma* will reach a broader audience than much of the Marxist literature currently available. On the other hand, removing classical language and concepts runs the risk of losing the theoretical roots of anti-capitalist theory and action. This is a fine balance. For example, Harvey never makes explicit reference to human labour as being the source for value in capitalist economies. This is problematic when adopting a Marxist framework of analysis.

Nevertheless, Harvey offers one of the most novel and accessible explanations of capitalism today. There is an element of dark humour in this as well: his novel theoretical constructs are based largely upon a passing footnote that Marx published over 140 years ago. *Enigma* offers both a method for understanding the world, and a course of action for changing it along anti-capitalist lines. Both contributions are welcome and, indeed, necessary.

Olsen, Gregg M. 2011. *Power and Inequality: A Comparative Introduction*. Don Mills: Oxford University Press. ISBN 978-0-19-544400-1. Paperback: 24.95 CAD. Pages: 216.

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A book on inequality could not be more timely, when movements to occupy financial and other business heartlands have broken out in many countries, when even

the staunchly pro-capitalist OECD has pointed to the dangers of societies pulling apart socially and economically, and when some of the wealthiest people on the planet, like the billionaire Warren Buffet, are practically begging governments to increase their taxes.

Power and Inequality can be described as a more-or-less textbook, though thankfully Olsen does not present his information in a “neutral,” “he said, she said” narrative, typical of such books. He is clear from the beginning that social inequality “is created, reproduced, institutionalized, legitimated, and perpetuated by the people who hold the most resources in society” (8). The book is divided into three parts of roughly equal length, with each part containing two chapters: Part I: *Considering Inequality*, has an introduction (Ch. 1) and an examination of four basic models of equality (intrinsic, opportunity, condition, outcome) (Ch. 2); Part II: *Measuring Inequality*, surveys material indicators of inequality (poverty, income, wealth, and life chances) (Ch. 3) alongside non-material indicators, in particular rights and entitlements (Ch. 4); and Part III: *Explaining Inequality*, covers theories that justify inequality (sociobiology, functionalism, and culturalist accounts) (Ch. 5) and those opposed to inequality, especially theories that focus on power and conflict (Ch. 6). The book is structured around comparisons within and between three highly unequal Anglo-Saxon countries (Great Britain, Canada and the United States) and three more egalitarian – though *still* unequal – Nordic nations (Finland, Norway and Sweden).

For some, there will be a sense of déjà vu in reading this work. Chapters 1, 5, 6, and to some extent 3, go over ground that was well-covered in Olsen’s previous, superb book, *The Politics of the Welfare State* (Oxford University Press, 2002). As a consequence, for those familiar with *The Politics*, chapters 2 and 4 in *Power and Inequality* will contain most of the fresh material. The second chapter, the best of the lot, is an important overview, given that most discussions of equality are marred by superficial notions, prevalent among far too many students, that equality means we must all be the same – have the same incomes, wear the same clothes, even think the same thoughts. The fourth chapter is also quite informative, focusing on human rights and entitlements to income, services and protective legislation (for example, workplace health and safety). While worth consulting, the book will be of more limited use to academics, which is not surprising given that it is an introductory text. However, for students approaching the topic of inequality in depth for the first time in upper-year undergraduate courses, this work will give them a solid grounding in the key issues and debates.

My comments in the rest of this review are directed at the improvements that could be made to a second edition. First, while *Power and Inequality* is a relatively short book, it could be even shorter. Most of the more than 20 pages of discursive notes, which appear at the end of the chapters, could be left on the cutting-room floor. The section titled “The Organization of This Book” (9-13) also could be dispensed with. (By the way, every publisher should have as a cardinal rule: “Book proposals must never reappear in

the introduction of the book.”) The section “The Comparative Approach” (26-30) could be condensed to a paragraph or two, while the “Early Statements” (on inequality) (139-43) could be excised as well; the quick tour of Plato, Aristotle, Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau and Adam Smith is too sketchy to be useful.

Second, the book embodies one of my pet peeves, namely that some of the data used were getting a tad moldy from the moment of publication. I would have expected a work appearing in 2011 (released in October 2010) to have had more up-to-date statistics. With the exception of Table 6.1, on union density, which goes down to 2007, most of the other tables end around 2004, with one (#3.3) on wealth inequality ending in 2002 and one (#4.3) on public social expenditure as a percentage of GDP ending in 2001. Granted, it often takes a few years for data to become available, but the statistics in most of these tables probably could have been brought closer to the date of publication, hence helping to lengthen the shelf-life of the book.

Third, there is an important gap in the discussion of the theories that legitimate inequality (Ch. 5). While it was important to analyze these theories to some extent, most of them strike me as “old hat.” For sure, these arguments, in particular racist aspects of social Darwinism, are always lurking somewhere in the shadows. It seems to me, however, that the dominant defense of inequality these days is an economic one, namely that without fabulously wealthy people in our society – the “job creators” – the rest of us would be stumbling around like kittens whose eyes haven’t yet opened, helpless creatures incapable of organizing their economies. There is some hint of this “economic” discussion (see 94-6), but the pro-capitalist defense of inequality should be given much greater attention. Olsen could challenge the myths that equality produces economic stagnation, harms innovation, reduces productivity, rewards the lazy, crushes individualism, removes incentives for obtaining a post-secondary education, and so forth. Most conservatives, at least those running for public office, would not use the theories highlighted by Olsen to defend their position, and I suspect that today few, even of their ilk, would strongly espouse these theories.

Finally, the book ends with “Challenging Inequality” (Ch. 6), which focuses mostly on Marx, Weber and “power resources theory.” This concluding account should be expanded to also articulate the socio-economic advantages of egalitarianism and perhaps give suggestions of how we might get closer to a more equal society. It is especially important to demonstrate to students, a majority of whom do not bother to vote, the importance of old-fashioned political activity (in the form of elections, parties and so on) in tackling the inequalities that so many of them find repugnant.