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A Globalist Ideology of Post-Marxism? Hardt and Negri's *Empire*

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ABSTRACT *Hardt and Negri interpret contemporary sovereignty and politics in the light of a theory of contemporary globalization that is taken to supersede Marxism and former ideological standpoints of the Left. In particular, Hardt and Negri highlight how their reading of empire and multitude breaks with the teleology of Marxism and accepts the openness of events. They advertise the novelty, which is held to consist in their recognition of a thoroughly socialized and globalized world in which there exists no predetermined historical subject of liberation. Hardt and Negri, however, exemplify the continuity between Marxist and post-Marxist ideological standpoints. The continuity between classical Marxism and Hardt and Negri's notion of empire and its supersession resides in the affinity between the normative values that shape Marx's reading of history and the emancipatory character of the multitude, which frames the notion of empire. Hardt and Negri offer a radical Leftist reading of globalization that contrasts with alternative ideological notions that inform more orthodox interpretations of globalization, and thereby points to the ideological character of theories of globalization.*

KEY WORDS: Hardt, Negri, empire, multitude

Ideology remains a central feature of the contemporary world. Political ideologies map the terrain of the political, locate politics in a wider web of meaning and impart normative direction to conduct by highlighting what is of significance and what should be done. The ubiquity of ideology in the contemporary world is occluded by a number of developments. Aspects of the contemporary world are flagged as being novel. This novelty is taken to signal an allegedly post-ideological condition. Central to the sense of the world's novelty is the notion of globalization. Adherents of the doctrine of globalization assume many standpoints but converge upon the assumption that old rules no longer apply and that preceding ideological commitments are outmoded. Politicians declaim about globalization and the novelty of the current situation in justifying wars, in reaffirming economic orthodoxies and in proclaiming that traditional socialist ideological commitments must be sacrificed

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due to the pragmatic requirements of economic globalization. Likewise the theory of globalization is advertised as being distinct from preceding theories, and yet its complexity, its incorporation of a range of normative standpoints and its links with preceding theories are often unacknowledged.

In this essay I argue that theories of globalization do not betoken an entirely novel post-ideological age, but that they represent complex assortments of explanation of the world, which contain implicit and explicit ideological commitments. Hardt and Negri's reading of globalization as yielding the hegemony of empire and as harbouring the prospect of global revolution is a contemporary statement of ideological radicalism, which rehearses more aspects of classic Marxist ideology than is suggested by *Empire's* (2000) claims to theoretical novelty. Hardt and Negri are post-Marxist theorists of globalization, whose standpoint is radical in its unremitting hostility to the current dispositions of power. Just as Marx and Engels provided an ideological service in framing a highly theoretical set of doctrines for a burgeoning labour movement in the nineteenth century, so Hardt and Negri provide dense theoretical support for a burgeoning anti-capitalist movement of the present. This movement's disinclination to establish prioritised goals and hierarchical organisation is matched at an abstract level by Hardt and Negri's theoretical eschewal of specific plans and programmes on the part of the revolutionary multitude, which they envisage as infinitely plural in its composition. (For a concise account of the anti-capitalist movement's rejection of discipline and hierarchy associated with traditional Marxism see Tormey 2004: 172) Hardt and Negri's association with a distinct and contemporary ideological movement, though, does not exclude a close affinity between their standpoint and that of Marx. Held's recent *Global Covenant-The Social Democratic Alternative to the Washington Consensus* is an express continuation of social democratic ideology in new circumstances. He maintains 'a certain set of values-social democratic values-remains indispensable to a sound and feasible agenda for global change (Held 2004: xv). Likewise Hardt and Negri's break with past ideology is not clean. They are post-Marxist in that they conceive of the world in terms of an agenda and circumstances that postdate Marx, but their summative reading of history and their dialectical inter-linking of empire and multitude in framing a prospective revolution highlights a continuing affiliation to a Marxist style of theorising. In arguing this case I will draw upon Hardt and Negri's recent *Multitude-War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (2004), where they expressly consider the possibility that their standpoint does not break with the dialectical one of their predecessors.

Explanations of globalization tend to be developed alongside the promotion of insufficiently acknowledged associated normative ideals such as emancipation from traditional or fixed values, reflexivity and cosmopolitanism (See Giddens 2002) There is nothing wrong in combining ideological commitments with explanatory analysis, but a recognition of the differing aspects of globalization and its differing dimensions that are invoked by theorists, politicians and citizens appraising the world from distinct vantage points, would militate against its reification. Increasingly, the voluminous literature on globalization shows conceptual refinement due

to its incorporation of a range of criticisms and responses to criticisms, and an emerging express recognition of divergent ideological possibilities. (see Held 2004). One set of criticisms focuses on the alleged uniqueness of contemporary developments. In the light of evidence for long-standing trans-national activities, theorists of globalization now tend to be circumspect in the way they present claims for the novelty of the contemporary world. Held et al., in their discriminating conceptual and empirical study, *Global Transformations*, recognize that globalization has a history as well as a contemporary expression. Nonetheless, they maintain the novelty of the contemporary situation, by highlighting the intensity of its current phase (Held et al. 1999). They invoke empirical developments such as growth in international trade, in trans-national businesses, in regional and global political mechanisms, in trans-national communicative networks, and in international cultural discourses (Held et al. 1999). Empirical data, however, do not unambiguously indicate progressive globalization. Hirst and Thompson, in *Globalization in Question* (1996) interpret data on international trade and investment to suggest increasing regionalization rather than internationalization.

In *Global Transformations*, Held et al. also acknowledge the complexity of global developments and the differing styles and tempos of changes that occur in distinct spheres of activity. Notwithstanding their incorporation of plurality into their account, they persist in seeing this diversity as representing a set of processes that are encompassed by a single notion of globalization (Held et al. 1999). This identification of an essential underlying process of globalization underpins a reading of globalization in the contemporary era as constituting a distinctly novel form of world history. Theorists of globalization run together interpretive conceptual readings of globalization with strong causal claims and normative commitments on its behalf that tend to essentialise the notion of globalization and magnify its supposed novelty. In so doing they advertise a break with preceding theories and theorists, while holding theoretical and normative ambitions that harmonise with the classic grand narratives of modernity. Standardly, globalization is a theory that links political economy to a wider web of social relations so as to provide a comprehensive explanation of the present via wide-ranging synchronic and diachronic analyses. Its key concept, globalization is highly suggestive and captures undoubted features of the present and yet it is ambiguous and elusive. The ambition of the claims that are made by globalization theorists rehearses that of the 'global' theorising of Hegel and Marx. This shared ambition is supported by a common tendency to reduce complex phenomena to an underlying economic or systemic cause, to gloss over differences within and qualifications to an overarching theory of historical development, to undertheorise the relationship between normative and explanatory aspects of their theories and to underplay the contestability of their claims.

Affinities between contemporary globalization theory and the classic grand narratives of Hegel and Marx inform these theories, and disturb the claim of globalization theorists to present a significantly new way of conceiving of the world. In particular, this similarity between contemporary globalization theory and Hegel and Marx is evident in the continuity between Hegel and Marx's theories of the world-historical

significance of the modern state and the proletariat and Hardt and Negri's identification of empire and multitude as culminating points of the historical process. Hegel begins his *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* by remarking on its global content: 'The subject of this course of Lectures is the Philosophical History of the World. And by this must be understood, not a collection of general observations respecting it, suggested by the study of its records, and proposed to be illustrated by its facts, but Universal History itself' (Hegel 1956: 12). Hegel, in establishing a comprehensive philosophical system, develops a global history that recognises the universality of the present conjuncture. The modern European world for Hegel is paradigmatic for mankind. Hegel identifies his reading of modernity to be of normative global significance; the modern state constitutes the end of the historical process. Likewise, Marx interprets capitalism as globalizing human potential. Mankind, for Marx, is social. Human beings are constituted by their social relations and capital capitalizes on this sociality by extending networks of relations across the globe as well as intensifying their operation in all aspects of the social world. The completion of this process of socialization is to be achieved by the projected world revolution of the proletariat.

The ways in which globalization may be understood as operating as a conceptual field providing an interpretive unifying framework for sets of processes and affiliated perspectives mirrors the possibilities and problems that are exhibited in the interpretive schemes of Marx and Hegel. Contemporary theorists of globalization tend to distance themselves from the preceding theories of Hegel and Marx. This rejection of intellectual forbears is not a token of increasing intellectual sophistication. While Hegel and Marx deploy sophisticated if contestable interpretive frameworks, theorists of globalization tend to undertheorize the relations between levels of analysis that are operative in their schemes. Hardt and Negri are at one with the general run of globalization theorists in highlighting the globality of the contemporary world, and in separating their theorising from the preceding modernist perspectives of Hegel and Marx.

Hardt and Negri's *Empire* is a post-Marxist globalist ideology. The work emphasises its postdating of Marxism. It underplays its shared ideological features with Marxism. Like other adherents to the thesis of globalization, Hardt and Negri exaggerate their originality and thereby underplay significant aspects of their work. In fact, like Hegel and Marx they entertain a large-scale reading of history linking past, present and future, and they see the world in teleological terms redolent of Hegel and Marx. Their claim to encompass a distinct postmodern and immanent radicalism masks their debts to dialectical and ideological predecessors. Their egalitarian emancipatory and indeterminate depiction of the multitude mirrors Marx's reading of the proletariat. The emancipatory potential of the multitude, like that of the proletariat, is shaped by preceding diachronic conditions that have opened up the global possibilities of freedom, while Hardt and Negri maintain, like Marx, that the logic of emancipation precludes determination of the course of revolutionary action. Hardt and Negri's succeeding book to *Empire*, *Multitude* (2004), acknowledges more expansively a debt to Marx's concepts and methods. Hardt and Negri admit to a

'haunting suspicion that he was already there before us' (Hardt & Negri 2004: 141). Nonetheless, they insist upon their distinctive postmodern standpoint, which breaks decisively with the dialectical heritage of Marxism and which identifies significant developments that have altered capitalist society since Marx's death.

Empire

Empire by Hardt and Negri is a significant book, and its significance lies in its promise of renewing radical and revolutionary ideology. Walker observes that 'it [*Empire*] responds to a widespread feeling that contemporary trends demand new theorisations and conceptual vocabularies, as well as far greater imagination about how we might respond to the practical challenges of our time' (Walker 2002: 338). Certainly, *Empire* assumes and subverts the language of globalization. Nonetheless, its postmodern reworking of features of the contemporary social and political landscape does not succeed in breaking from modernist ways of thinking. It advertises a purely immanent mode of reading the present, which dispenses with dialectic and teleology. Its critical globalism, however, presupposes the intertwining of its key concepts of empire and multitude, and the linking of these notions with a wider web of concepts that rehearses the dialectical paradigms of Hegel and Marx. Indeed, to recognise *Empire*'s connections with past theorising is salutary, because it alerts readers to the problems that bedevil a globalist radical ideology.

Empire is an elaborated critical engagement with the notion of globalization. Much of what it says rehearses standard features of globalization theory. These include its incorporation and eclipse of nation-state sovereignty in a wider global context, its highlighting of the prevalent decentred, de-territorializing apparatuses of rule and of the intensive socialization and mediatization of production. What distinguishes *Empire*'s theory of globalization, however, is its reversal of the ideological frameworks that standardly underpin readings of globalization. Whereas globalization standardly either is celebrated or is taken to require political reforms, Hardt and Negri reject the norms and political practices that underpin the contemporary dispositions of power. They articulate an alternative radical ideology of globalism. Walker observes *Empire*'s consonance with normative international relations theory of a preceding era: 'Ignore the term empire and large sections of the text could have been written by various "normative" theorists of the 1970s' (Walker 2002: 341). Hardt and Negri maintain the irreversibility of globalization and acknowledge its wholesale socialization of the production of life, but they project and endorse the prospective supersession of prevailing imperial power. Just as Held maintains a globalist ideology of social democracy in anticipating and supporting the development of cosmopolitan forms of democracy and social democracy, so Hardt and Negri envisage the multitude overturning imperial rule by enacting global revolution.

Empire's distinctive, ideological reading of global development, however, in which the concepts of empire and multitude are essentialised, is ultimately unconvincing. The multitude for Hardt and Negri fuses singularity with commonality due

to the conditions of empire in which production is socialised on a universal, global basis. This universality is presumed to render the singularities of the revolutionary struggle immediately universal. As Negri maintains in *Alma Venus, Multitudo*, a work that is a close companion to *Empire*, 'the postmodern multitude is an ensemble of singularities whose life-tool is the brain and whose productive force consists in co-operation. In other words, if the singularities that constitute the multitude are plural, the manner in which they enter into relations is co-operative' (Negri 2000, in Negri 2003: 233–234). In *Negri on Negri*, Negri maintains that the multitude is a 'multiplicity of subjects' (Negri 2004: 111). At the same time he attributes ontological power to the multitude and declares, 'This means that the multitude embodies a mechanism that seeks to represent desire and to transform the world.' (Negri 2004, 112) Hence while the multitude is taken to exist as a plurality of independent people it is at the same time reified as an essential entity, which acts as a unified, yet mythical subject.

By the concept of empire, Hardt and Negri signpost a fundamentally new topography of power, an innovative configuration of sovereignty—a political force that is decentred and operates flexible apparatuses of rule. Empire assumes and exercises rule over hybrid identities, just as global capital maintains a smooth system of economic and cultural exchanges that incorporates industrialized, communicative, co-operative and affective labour. As Mandarini notes, 'this total subsumption (of all forms of production to capitalist relations) expresses the material conditions grounding the claim that in Empire there is no longer an outside' (Mandarini 2003: 4). These claims about the unity and novelty of empire are paradoxical in that they are undertheorised and yet shielded from empirical discrimination by imperial rhetoric. Hardt and Negri's invocation of empirical phenomena to support their arguments in *Empire* and affiliated writings is suggestive rather than being evidentially convincing. Barkawi and Laffey comment, 'Hardt and Negri's description of an emerging political and social formation is notably threadbare' (Barkawi & Laffey 2002: 111).

Empire is the conceptual counterpart of multitude. It is endlessly plural but at the same time a unified subject. The notion of empire, like that of multitude is designed to express a pure plurality, which thereby follows Deleuze and Guattari in renouncing a dialectical reading of an entity, which combines unity and multiplicity in a structured and developmental way (Deleuze & Guattari 1988: 32). The unity amidst diversity that is characteristic of empire and its antagonist, the multitude, admits of no clear mode of discrimination, just as the positive value accorded to the multitude and the negative value associated with empire informs *Empire's* reading of history and politics without itself receiving critical notice.

Hardt and Negri's express commitment to avoid dialectics and modernist precursors cannot disguise *Empire's* conceptual essentialism, its contestable causal claims, its unacknowledged teleology and its unreflected normative standpoint. *Empire* is holistic in its explanatory reach but partial in its relaxed assertion of its own assumptions and terms. If *Empire's* claims are problematic, its critique is a valuable exercise. Its developmental dichotomous conceptual reading of the present

is of a piece with Marxism and affiliated ideologies. Its radical opposition to the contemporary orchestration of global power represents a distinctive normative standpoint and thereby highlights the ideological dimension of all readings of globalization. Criticism of *Empire* supersedes its specific critique of Hardt and Negri's revamping of radical ideology. *Empire*'s adherence to a combination of contestable causal, conceptual and normative terms signals the possibilities and problems associated with the frameworks of analysis that are rehearsed in more conventional ideological readings of globalization.

Post-Marxist Immanence or Dialectical Redevelopment?

Hardt and Negri highlight the originality of their perspective. They do so by contrasting the immanence of their critique to what they take to be the external teleological dialectic of Hegel and Marx. If Hegel and Marx are construed as operating by means of independently formulated logical or scientific doctrines, then Hardt and Negri aim to adhere to the immanent conditions of historical development. But Hardt and Negri's repudiation of Hegel and Marx and their claims to originality can be criticised on at least two counts. On the one hand, this repudiation plays down the immanence of Hegel and Marx's dialectical perspectives and, on the other hand, the immanence of their own advertised postmodern perspective depends crucially on a reading of history and the present in terms of a highly generalised dialectical scheme of thought. In *Multitude*, their successor to *Empire*, Hardt and Negri consider possible criticisms of their methodological standpoint. In doing so, they expressly consider the charge that they are continuing the dialectical method of Marx and Hegel. In refuting this charge, they argue unconvincingly that their explanation of terms does not assume their mutual implication. They disavow the reciprocity of the One and the Many, and that they profess a reading of identity and difference in non-dichotomous terms (Hardt & Negri 2004: 225). Their claim to be post-dialectical thinkers is compromised in that they do assume a reciprocity, for instance, between empire and multitude and Hegel and Marx are theorists sensitive to the problematic character of one-dimensional readings of conceptual relationships. Hegel in his *Logic* expressly takes the one and the many to be distinct as well as intertwined. He is careful to define identity in terms of the *unity* between identity and difference (Hegel 1976).

Hardt and Negri's failure to justify the distinctiveness of their conceptual standpoint is serious because their argument for imperial sovereignty depends not so much on the specification of new empirical political phenomena but by elaborated conceptual designation. Empire, for Hardt and Negri, is a paradigm of political power that is both systemic and hierarchical; a construction of norms and legitimacy that dominates world space (Hardt & Negri 2000: 13). The values to which it is directed and to which everything is attuned, are the promotion of order and the cessation of conflict (Hardt & Negri 2000: 38). Imperial sovereignty is decentred and operates via a deterritorialized apparatus of rule. The character of empire turns on its conceptual reflection of capital, just as, for Marx, changing state forms reflect

the operational requirements of economic interests. The absolute hegemony, which empire exercises over subordinate identities, mirrors and depends upon global capital. Global capital, in turn, orders economic and cultural exchanges that incorporate industrial, communicative, co-operative and affective labour. Hardt and Negri's notion of the illimitable force of empire accords with their reading of the unremitting power of global capital. They assert, 'the increasingly intense relationship of mutual implication of all social forces that capitalism has pursued throughout its development has now been fully realized' (Hardt & Negri 2000: 25). For Hardt and Negri contemporary global capital directs universal biopower rather than controlling a delineated sphere of production.

In preceding works, Negri documented the redundancy of traditional Marxist analysis. In *Marx Beyond Marx-Lessons On The Grundrisse*, he critiqued what he took to be Marx's narrow conception of labour. He comments, 'In fact, the Marxist definition of productive labour is a reductive definition, which is linked to the socialist axiology of manual labour' (Negri 1991: 183). Negri disavows a Marxist critique, which purports to isolate value from the conditions of capitalist production. He is opposed to a standpoint, which counterposes use value to exchange value, because it assumes that the use value of labour power operates outside of the sphere of the capitalist determination of exchange value. Negri denies the validity of a non-immanent reading of contradiction. He maintains that contemporary capital subsumes all production under its network of relations. In *The Constitution of Time* Negri argues,

Here use-value cannot appear except under the guise of exchange-value. There is no longer an external vantage point upon which use-value can depend. The overcoming of capitalism occurs on the basis of needs constructed by capitalism. But in that case, time-as-measure of value is identical to the value of labour, to time of labour as substance. (Negri 1997, in Negri 2003: 25-26).

For Negri and Hardt contemporary empire and contemporary capitalism do not allow for critical perspectives that are outside of or transcend the actual operations of global capital and imperial sovereignty.

For Hardt and Negri, capital and empire are mutually reinforcing agencies that preclude an external critical perspective. They deny a supposed critical reading of the present, which orders history and projects the future according to the dynamic of an underlying but illusory force that is insulated from the dynamics of the hierarchical system of prevailing power. They perceive the conditions of the present as precluding the ascription of an essential agency of radical change that is resistant to and independent of prevailing hegemonic forces. Negri, in *Kairos, Alma Venus, Multitudo*, underlines the pitfalls of formulating a critique, which assumes a logic that is external to the contemporary operations of power. He remarks, 'The critiques of constitutive power that play on the "instituting-instituted" opposition, whether they are of dialectical or vitalistic inspiration are false. For in postmodernity, constituent power knows nothing of that opposition, in as much as it exists in

accordance with the direction that urges the common to constitute itself against the void, on the edge of time' (Negri 2000, in Negri 2003: 234). Hardt and Negri gloss resistance to global capital and imperial power as part and parcel of the process of developing and maintaining empire. They observe, 'The processes of globalization would not exist or would come to a halt if they were not continually both frustrated and driven by these explosions of the multitude that touch immediately on the highest levels of imperial power' (Hardt & Negri 2000: 59).

Hardt and Negri's concept of empire emerges out of reflection upon its conceptual, dialectical consonance with the ubiquitous, global force of capital. The advertised globality of empire renders the notion impervious to clear-cut empirical specification or criticism. Apparently recalcitrant phenomena, such as irruptions of local or regional forms of power, or forces antagonistic to generalised hegemony are redefined so that they are seen as being functionally requisite to the maintenance of empire. Nonetheless, Hardt and Negri gesture at empirical features of the contemporary world that are presumed to underscore the rhetoric of imperial sovereignty. They detect evidence for empire in an increasing reliance on global institutions such as the United Nations and a novel resort to the rhetoric of global peacekeeping and policing to justify military action (Hardt & Negri 2000: 240–260). Their resort to empirical data, though, is problematic. While the post-Cold War situation, like all historical contexts is unique, its break with preceding dualities is insufficient in itself to denote the advent of an imperial power that breaks definitively with preceding modulations of sovereignty. The recent sidelining of the United Nations by the United States and its faithful ally the United Kingdom in the war against Iraq signals that the United States of America remains an autonomous global actor. Hardt and Negri, though, by stretching their conceptual reading of empire to include unilateral operations by the United States, allow for the privileged position in empire of the United States (Hardt & Negri 2000: 37). In *Multitude* they urge that the contemporary state of war exemplifies the simultaneous prosecution of US national interests and the coordination of global, avowedly humanitarian concerns such as the promotion of human rights. In arguing for this simultaneous exercise of supra-national imperial power and of national American force, they urge, 'we should not get caught up here in the tired debates about globalization and nation-states as if the two were necessarily incompatible' (Hardt & Negri 2004: 60). To urge the complexity of contemporary sovereignty is insightful, but the devil is in the detail and a convincing exploration of this complexity would need to make pertinent distinctions about how power is being exercised in specific situations and why and how it might make sense to point to national or multi-national aspects of the exercise of power.

The notion of empire relies fundamentally upon its indeterminate and yet essentialist conceptual specification. Its meaning emerges out of its dichotomous relationship with the multitude and its symbiosis with capital. Just as Hegel and Marx employ highly abstract concepts such as value, capital, the notion and the idea to order and assimilate a range of related concepts, so empire orders and assimilates a diversity of phenomena without changing its essential form. Hardt and Negri invoke the notion of the ever-expanding American frontier to allude to the expansiveness of

empire (Hardt & Negri 2000: 160–182). This metaphor of a moveable frontier captures the elasticity of their sense of empire. It trades upon, without authenticating, the tangible and mythic quality of the world encountered and constituted by American pioneers. Their analysis of the conditions of contemporary power is insightful, and suggestive without being precise. They conclude that the overall determination of the exercise of global power will have to be supra-nationalistic, given that the nature of modern warfare demands its prosecution on a networked, non-hierarchical basis to counteract the networked, global character of contemporary resistance to empire (Hardt & Negri 2004: 62). But they neither specify empirically the character of the networked opposition to empire, nor do they delineate the forms of networked international cooperation that the United States must practise in warfare. The United States practises a variety of forms of international cooperation as well as exercising a relative independence and the significance of these divergent practices is not assessed.

Hardt and Negri conceptualise the operations of empire as being linked to the unifying force of global capital. They envisage the disunities of space and time as being closed by the unifying economic operations of production and consumption, in which mediation itself becomes an aspect of a continuous economic process, the operation of universal biopower. Hardt and Negri point to the developmental and mediating role that is played by trans-national corporations and communications networks. Their account of capital and progressive global unification is closely modelled on Marx's account of the self-expansion and infinite reproductive capacity of capital (see Browning 1998; Arthur 1998). In urging the originality of their reading of empire, however, Hardt and Negri emphasise their postdating of Marx. Crucial to their designation of *Empire* as a postmodern and post-Marxist text is its highlighting of the comprehensive socialization of production in the universality of biopower in the contemporary world. They urge that a sphere of material production can no longer be separated from an immaterial social and cultural world. Mediation constantly absorbs all processes in a unifying global economy in which there is an 'informational colonization of being' (Hardt & Negri 2000: 34).

Hardt and Negri advertise the novelty of empire and their own theorising by contrasting the immateriality of their conception of production from Marx's materialism. For Hardt and Negri, the post-Marxist notion of immaterial production has profound consequences. In *Multitude* they observe that along with the emergence of immaterial labour there is a 'blurring of time divisions that we see in post-Fordist production' (Hardt & Negri 2004: 146). If production is no longer trammelled by the focus upon producing material things, then the activity of production itself is not to be encapsulated by specific designated periods of production time. Ideas, for instance, are generated at odd times, during and outside working hours. Likewise contemporary products may not be independently specifiable commodities that serve the needs of independently specifiable social consumers. Rather, they might contribute directly to the sociality of life by constituting the means and expression of communication and affective life. The joy of texting and the analytical satisfaction

offered by a powerful search engine are not separable from the emotive and communicative life of the twenty-first century.

Hardt and Negri's postdating of Marxism and the specification of the originality of their own ideological radicalism are problematic. Marx's materialism and his productivism are controversial. Sympathetic and critical commentators have taken Marx to reduce the social to an underlying productive materialism (see Cohen 1978; Plamenatz 1954). Reductive readings of Marx, however, are problematic. Marx's identification of labour power as the key force production is accompanied by his recognition that the sphere of production is not to be separated conceptually from the social relations in which it operates (see Carver 1998: ch. 3; Marx 1974; Marx & Engels 1976). More generally, Hardt and Negri's conceptual map of a global economy of empire draws upon a Marxist framework of explanation, whereby the immanent logic of capitalist development, the constant exploitation of materials and labour to supply the commodities that are exchanged for money and deployed as capital, composes an endless expanding circle of transactions. The circuits of capital constitute an endless supersession of barriers to the operation of expanding circuits, in which its processes of mediation supersede material and cultural obstacles that impede an inherently globalizing process. This process consumes merely local manifestations of capital and its adversarial forms of discontent. Notwithstanding this affinity between *Empire* and classical Marxism, Hardt and Negri advertise a radical break with the preceding dialectical theories of Hegel and Marx.

A dialectical perspective that connects phenomena by way of immanent argumentative development is stigmatised by Hardt and Negri as disguising historical development as a form of teleology that presumes the external end of freedom from the outset of its analysis. They urge,

We are not repeating the schema of an ideal teleology that justifies any passage in the name of a promised end. On the contrary, our reasoning here is based on two methodological approaches that are intended to be nondialectical and absolutely immanent: the first is *critical and deconstructive*, aiming to subvert dominant languages, revealing an alternative ontological basis that resides in the multitude; the second is *constructive and ethico-political*, seeking to lead the processes of the production of subjectivity. (Hardt & Negri 2000: 47)

The argumentative drift of Hardt and Negri is to depict empire as *sui generis* by advertising its conceptual demarcation from previous formulations of hegemony. They emphasise their distinctness from dialectical predecessors by asserting the novelty of their approach to history. They insist, 'This approach breaks methodologically with every philosophy of history insofar as it refuses any deterministic conception of historical development and any rational celebration of the result. Philosophy is not the Owl of Minerva-subjective proposition, desire and praxis that are applied to the event' (Hardt & Negri 2000: 49).

Hardt and Negri's claim over the distinctness of their standpoint is itself susceptible to dialectical critique. On the one hand, their repudiation of dialectics

sits uneasily with their equal insistence on framing an immanent critique of empire. They repudiate merely external protest. 'We should be done once and for all with the search for an outside, a standpoint that imagines purity for our politics. It is better both theoretically and practically to enter the terrain of Empire' (Hardt & Negri 2000: 44). Their designation of empire, however, includes an overlapping conceptual recognition of the development of the prospective liberation of the multitude. The upshot is that by the generality of their view of history, they are committed to the very style of a teleological, dialectical reading of history, which they repudiate rhetorically. *Empire's* teleology, which links concepts identifying past, present and future, is evidenced in the determination of Hardt and Negri to style their approach as incorporating postmodernism's supersession of modernity.

Hardt and Negri's reading of empire is informed by a highly generalised and normative interpretation of the logic of historical development. The postmodern supersedes the modern and the immateriality of biopower under conditions of new informational and communicative technologies, supersedes directly productive practices and a materialist view of labour. Likewise they style imperial sovereignty to be a form outstripping its modern subject, the nation state. The latter, in circumscribing the operation of hegemony, is as postdated as Old Europe. They observe, 'If modernity is European, postmodernity is American' (Hardt & Negri 2000: xiii). They show a sensitivity to the criticism that they are reworking rather than repudiating a dialectical style of theorising in their discussion of dialectic in *Multitude*. Here they recognise how their style of immanent critique of empire might be criticised as being an unacknowledged reworking of dialectical thinking. They urge that such a critique is misplaced because they do not merely work with the reciprocity of concepts that define the past and present, but allow for the emergence of what is distinct and different (Hardt & Negri 2004: 225)

Hardt and Negri's protestations against ascribing to them a dialectical teleological reading of history assume that Hegel and Marx did not allow for the emergence of new forms in the historical process. Hegel and Marx recognised that new social forms emerge but they identified their connections with past phenomena and with one another, just as Hardt and Negri's approach to history is dialectical in that the meaning and unfolding of new events and concepts are revealed by their inter-relations and by their relations with preceding developments. To assume that the modern is superseded neatly by the postmodern lends itself to a reading of history, in which progress is unilinear and politics becomes the art of operating strategically in relation to an already identified course of events. The later Lyotard's reservations over his use of the term postmodernity reflected his own belated recognition of the susceptibility of his own discourse to the grand theorising that he sought to repudiate. (Lyotard 1992). Hardt and Negri's reliance on a teleological reading of history is evidenced by the logical and practical dependence of empire and its development upon the emancipatory potential of the multitude. The notion of the multitude, for Hardt and Negri, performs many roles. The multitude is the object of historical imperial development, and the deterritorialising mass of creative sociality responsible for, and subject to, the power of empire. Its post-national, post-industrial

character distinguishes rebellion against empire from a Marxist, modernist proletarian revolution. At the same time, the emancipatory guise of the multitude provides a normative, ideological framework, which renders *Empire* more than a merely explanatory guide to the constitution of imperial power. The goal of worldwide emancipation frames an ideological interpretive scheme whereby the concepts of empire, the multitude, capital, and the postmodern form inter-secting elements of a grand narrative of historical development. Its dialectical, teleological style mirrors as much as postdates Marxism in seeing the limitations of past and present as being revealed and redeemed in a complete prospective emancipation from the fetters imposed upon social enactment in the conditions of time and space.

Hardt and Negri at times recognise how their claims to radical originality are partially subverted by their own recognition that the alternatives to empire inscribed in the global system render their analysis a more profound immanentist scheme than that achieved by Marx and Machiavelli (Hardt & Negri 2000: 65). They even conceive of their work as, perforce, following a teleological logic, in observing, 'a teleology of sorts is constructed only after the fact, *post festum*' (Hardt & Negri 2000: 44). This latter admission of their adoption of a teleological perspective, which is distinguished by its *post-festum* character, however, raises questions about Hardt and Negri's reading of the teleology of Hegel and Marx. For Hegel, the essence of history and the inspiration generating its study within the political community is the free activity of individuals that supersedes the merely naturalistic ties of family and tribe that develops within and promotes political cultures, which in turn recognise and celebrate it in narrative form. Given that freedom is the presupposition of history, a philosophical teleological reading of history, for Hegel, does not override the freedom of historical actors. Philosophical history is, perforce, a retrospective interpretation of how freedom has been recognised and developed in history, rather than a causal theory that can predict the future (Hegel 1956). Likewise, Marx and Engels in *The German Ideology* are at pains to distance themselves from contemporary Young Hegelians, such as Stirner, who falsify history by construing its development in *a priori* ideological terms. They make clear that their materialistic reading of history is a retrospective, *post festum* categorisation of historical development that does not foreclose on the openness of historical events (Marx & Engels 1976). *Empire*'s claim to be a novel critique of society depends crucially upon the supposed originality of its conceptual scheme. Its acknowledged *post-festum* teleological reading of history highlights its conceptual affinity with Hegel and Marx rather than marking a decisive postmodern break from dialectical predecessors.

Conclusion

Empire imagines a postmodern world, superseding previous historical forms. It is a thoroughly socialised world, which harbours global patterns of economic exploitation and imperial sovereignty. It captures aspects of the contemporary situation that are of significance, notably the complexity of contemporary sovereignty in a global

world, in which the nation state is one actor amongst many. Its novelty as a post-Marxist ideology is canvassed on the basis of its mooted nondialectical, immaterial and supra-statist character. In an interview conducted for *Theory and Event* in 2000, Hardt maintains that he and Negri prefer to refer to their orientation as communist rather than Marxist because the latter is more constrictive and would derogate from the substantive criticisms that they have of Marx (see Hardt 2000).

The elasticity of the concept of empire and the conceptual resonances of the notion of the multitude, however, mirror rather than supersede classic Marxist notions of class and proletarian universality. The elasticity of the concept of empire is exhibited in its accommodation of myriad forms of resistance to and mute acquiescence in its hegemony. Empire accommodates a plurality of empirical practices.

Empire's conceptual designation of a contemporary conceptual field dominated by empire is not implausible, but the patterns whereby more specific entities such as the state and local politics are incorporated within the orbit of more general concepts revisits the conceptual world of Marx's *Grundrisse* and Hegel's *Logic* and requires the detailed elaboration of the logic of dialectical conceptual patterns that is displayed in those seminal texts. Marx's methodological credo in the *Grundrisse* interestingly specifies a method and a perception of the world, which are decidedly immaterial, and which at the same time acknowledge dialectical inter-relations between concepts. Marx conceives of the world as thoroughly social, shaped by social relations that can only be captured by concepts (Marx 1974). Hardt and Negri's insistence on the post-Marxist status of their ideological radicalism turns in part upon their postmodern immaterialism, but there is a decided continuity between their notion of postmodern immateriality and Marx's reading of the social, relational character of production. Moreover, Hardt and Negri's identification of the universality of contemporary biopower is predicated upon a general retrospective reading of historical development, which reflects the classical grand narratives of Hegel and Marx. Their identification of the universality of biopower as progressive presupposes a dialectical reading of historical concepts, whereby they are appraised normatively on a common gradational scale.

Empire is the heart of a heartless world, the sigh of oppressed biopower, which serves as a singular yet revealing mirror for the ideological dimensions of globalization theory as well as for the persistence of standard Marxist themes within speculation that advertises its post-Marxist break from its outmoded dialectical provenance. Proponents of a theory of globalization standardly urge that the contemporary world is novel due to the intensity of its global inter-connectedness, even if they differ over their ideological construals of this state of affairs. Theorists of globalization interweave explanatory accounts of globalization with differing normative perspectives on the values and forces that are seen as engendering or modifying the processes of globalization. Ohmae endorses what he takes to be the simplifying logic of global capital, while Held, McGrew and Giddens value the cosmopolitan possibilities for the renewal of the tenets of social democracy that arise out of the circumstances of globalization (see Giddens 2002; Ohmae 1989; Held 1995, 2004; Held et al. 1999). In contrast, Hardt and Negri endorse the revolutionary supersession of prevailing

norms. They embrace the prospect of revolution to be enacted in the multitude's overturning of empire, which is to claim the entirety of the globe for the expression and development of the universality of biopower. As Passavant has observed, the impact of Hardt and Negri's *Empire* testifies to its success in framing a globalist ideology that is in tune with events such as the global impact of 9/11 and demonstrations against the war in Iraq, and with a recognition of the differential identities of diverse movements in the contemporary world (Passavant & Dean 2004).

The success of Hardt and Negri as ideologists resides in their development of a densely theoretical treatise to justify global revolution and anti-capitalism, which harmonises with the contemporary diversity of oppositional movements to capital and current configurations of power. While it purports to order and explain a range of apparently contrary empirical phenomena, though, it is actually entirely vague on how, for instance, the multitude unifies diverse movements and action. As Laclau observes, 'the unity of the multitude results from the spontaneous aggregation of a plurality of actions that do not need to be articulated between themselves' (Laclau 2004: 26). Hardt and Negri's essentialised notion of the multitude also abstracts from the empirical realities of the condition of the poor and oppressed in different parts of the world. As Bull notes, 'It is difficult to see how this analysis [*Empire's*] comprehends the reality of powerlessness' (Bull 2003: 89).

Hardt and Negri's globalist ideology of post-Marxism purports to break with the dialectical teleological style of Hegel and Marx but their deployment of inter-related normatively charged concepts that presume a teleological reading of history. Collingwood in his economical and perceptive defence of dialectical philosophical argument in *An Essay on Philosophical Method* (1933) understood a philosophical appraisal of concepts to consist in their systematic rethinking as an ascending scale of overlapping forms, whereby the constituent concepts are retained but superseded progressively by more inclusive and intensive ones. Hence, for Collingwood, ethical concepts are to be seen as internally related to one another, so that the discharge of duty in a specific deliberated act supersedes regularian and utilitarian standpoints. Likewise, Hardt and Negri's deployment of the concepts of nation-state and empire, material production and immaterial biopower and empire and multitude represents an interweaving of normatively charged concepts that marks their enterprise as dialectical. It is neither innovatory and non-dialectical nor radically post-Marxist. Hardt and Negri's *Empire* is an ideologically charged theory of globalization, which like related but distinct large-scale theories of globalization, is linked to the classic grand narratives of modernity and should be interpreted in the light of the questions and problems that are posed by those grand schemes of thought.

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