Working With Ideology in a Post-Ideological Age

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

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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, and this novelty signals 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 underlying this diversity is an 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 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, is often unacknowledged.

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 the differing styles of globalization that are expressly canvassed by theorists, politicians and citizens appraising the world from distinct vantage points, would militate against a tendency to reify the concept of globalization. It is true that the voluminous and increasing literature on globalization shows continual conceptual refinement due to its incorporation of a range of criticisms and responses to criticisms. 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 and McGrew, Goldblatt and Perraton in their discriminating conceptual and empirical study, *Global Transformations*, recognize that globalization has a history of changing past forms as well as a contemporary expression. Nonetheless, they rehearse the novelty of the contemporary situation, by highlighting the intensity of its current phase. (Held and McGrew, Goldblatt and Perraton, 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 and McGrew, Goldblatt and Perraton, 1999) Empirical data, however, are ambiguous. Hirst and Thompson in *Globalization in Question* interpret data on international trade and investment to suggest increasing regionalization rather than progressive internationalization (Hirst and Thompson, 1999)

In *Global Transformations*, Held and McGrew, Goldblatt and Perraton also acknowledge the complexity of global developments and the differing styles and tempos of changes that occur in distinct spheres of activity. Notwithstanding this
concern to recognise and to incorporate plurality into their account, they persist in
seeing this diversity as representing a set of processes that are to encompassed by a
single notion of globalization (Held and McGrew, Goldblatt and Perraton, 1999).

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 aspirations that animate
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
analysis. Its key concept, globalization is highly suggestive and captures undoubted
features of the present and yet it is ambiguous and elusive. Criticisms of the claims
that are made by globalization theorists rehearse critiques that have been levelled
against the 'global' theorising of Hegel and Marx. These include a 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 the theoretical styles and claims of contemporary theorists of
globalization and the classic grand narratives of Hegel and Marx are also evident
within the substance of their respective theories, which disturbs the claim of
globalization theorists to present a significantly new way of conceiving of the world.

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 providing a comprehensive philosophical explanation of reality develops a global history that recognizes the universality of the present conjuncture. Moreover, the character of the contemporary European world for Hegel is paradigmatic for mankind. Hegel presents his reading of the social world to be of normative global significance. Likewise Marx takes capitalism to globalize 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. Given the affinities between Hegel and Marx and theorists of globalization on the form and content of theory, globalization theorists should perhaps attend to, rather than distance themselves from, the questions that are invoked by the theories of their intellectual forbears.

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 undertheorize the relations between levels of analysis that are operative in their schemes, while Hegel and Marx may be said to deploy sophisticated interpretive frameworks even if they may be criticized in the light of one another, and in respect of a range of developments and perspectives that have been developed subsequently. Hardt and Negri are at one with the general run of globalization theorists in
highlighting the globality of the contemporary world, and in recognising this reading of globality to separate their standpoint from the preceding modernist perspectives of Hegel and Marx.

Hardt and Negri's *Empire* is a post-Marxist globalist ideology. The express emphasis of the work, however, is upon postdating of Marxism. It neglects 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 dialectical and ideological of the emancipatory, egalitarian potential of the multitude. Their depiction of the multitude mirrors Marx's reading of the indeterminacy of the proletariat's world-wide revolution. The emancipatory potential of the multitude is shaped by preceding diachronic conditions that have opened up the global possibilities of freedom, while the logic of emancipation preludes determination of the course of revolutionary action.

*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 'It 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, p.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 perspective on contemporary globalism, however, presupposes the intertwining of its key concepts of empire and the 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 global synchronic and diachronic 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* from other accounts of globalization, however, is its reversal of the ideological frameworks that standardly underpin readings of globalization. Walker observes its 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 anticipates and supports the development of cosmopolitan forms of democracy and social democracy, so Hardt
and Negri envisage the multitude overturning imperial rule by enacting global 
revolution.(1)

The projected revolutionary break on the part of the multitude is a token of its global 
conditionality. 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 renders 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) *Empire's* distinctive, ideological reading of global development, 
however, in which the concepts of empire and multitude are dichotomously 
essentialised, is ultimately unconvincing. It is imaginative and forceful, but its 
perverse construal of empire and the multitude as precluding internal dialectical 
conceptual relations is asserted rather than argued. Moreover, its invocation of 
empirical phenomena to support its argument 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 and 
Laffey, 2002, 111)

Hardt and Negri signpost a fundamentally new topography of power, an innovative 
configuration of sovereignty- a political force that is decentralised 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 relatons) 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. Empire is the conceptual counterpart of the multitude. It is endlessly plural but at the same time a unified subject. 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. Certainly the notion of empire, like that of the 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 and Guattari, 1988, 32). But the 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 and its radical opposition to the contemporary orchestration of power highlights the ideological dimension of 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 mirrors the 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 conduct their respective justifications and critiques of modernity by means of independent logical or scientific formulations, 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, their reading of Hegel and Marx plays down the immanence of their dialectical perspectives and, on the other hand, the immanence of their own advertised postmodern perspective depends crucially on their reading of history and the present in terms of a highly generalised dialectical scheme of thought.

Hardt and Negri's 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 and 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 and 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 and Negri, 2000, 25). For Hardt and Negri contemporary global capital directs universal biopower rather than a delineated sphere of production. In preceding works, Negri documented the redundancy of traditional Marxist analysis, which counterposes use value against exchange value, and which opposes the use value of labour power against the capitalist determination of exchange value. Negri denies what he takes to be a non-immanent reading of contradiction. He maintains that by the late twentieth century capital subsumes all production under its network of relations. For instance, 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, 25-6) For Negri and Hardt contemporary empire and contemporary capitalism do not allow for critical perspectives that transcend the actual operations of global capital and imperial sovereignty.
For Hardt and Negri, capital and empire are mutually reinforcing agencies that preclude a critical perspective that is external to their operations. They disavow a supposed critical reading of the present, which orders history and projects the future according to the dynamic of an underlying 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 his determination to avoid formulating a critique that assumes a logic external to the contemporary operations of power in remarking, '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 remark, '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 and Negri, 2000, 59)

The concept of empire emerges out of reflection upon its conceptual, dialectical compatibility 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 and Negri, 2000, 240-260) Their resort to empirical data 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 USA and its faithful ally the United Kingdom in the war against Iraq suggests 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 USA, allow for the privileged position in empire of the USA (Hardt and Negri, 2000, 37) The notion of Empire relies fundamentally upon its indeterminate and yet essential conceptual specification. The meaning of the concept of empire emerges from 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 assimilates a diversity of phenomena without changing its essential form. Hardt and Negri invoke the notion of the ever expanding American frontier in alluding to the character of current Imperial power. (Hardt and Negri, 2000, 160-182) This metaphor of the frontier captures the elasticity of their own intimation of Empire. It trades upon, without authenticating, the tangible and mythic quality of the world encountered and constituted by American pioneers.
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 and Arthur, 1988) 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 and Negri, 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.

Hardt and Negri's postdating of Marxism and the specification of the originality of their own ideological radicalism is 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, and Plamenatz, 1954) Marx's identification of labour power as the key force production, however, 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 and Marx and 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 a 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 teleology that presumes the external end of freedom from the outset of its analysis. They urge, 'We aren't 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- subvert dominant languages, revealing an alternative ontological basis that resides in the multitude; the second is constructive and ethico-political- production of subjectivity to alternative forms.'(Hardt and Negri 2000, 44) 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 and 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 and Negri, 2000, 44) Entering the terrain of empire, however, is taken by them to include an overlapping conceptual recognition of the development of the prospective liberation of the multitude. The upshot is that by the generality of their reading 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 and past and future, is evidenced in the determination of Hardt and Negri to style their approach as incorporating postmodernism's supersession of modernity. Their reading of empire is informed by a highly generalised and normative interpretation of the logic of historical development, whereby the postmodern supersedes the modern and the immateriality of biopower under conditions of new informational and communicative technologies supersedes directly productive practices and images 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 and Negri, 2000, xiii).

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 own 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 world-wide emancipation frames an ideological interpretive scheme whereby the concepts of empire, the multitude, capital, and the postmodern form intersecting 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 allude to disconcerting aspects of their analysis. They recognise that they perceive preceding historical development as providing the conditions for prospective liberation. 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 and 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 and Negri, 2000, 44) To maintain the novelty of their teleology due to its post-festum character, however, is to misconstrue 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 categorisation of historical development that does not foreclose on the openness of historical events. (Marx and Engels, 1976) *Empire*'s claim to be a novel critique of society depends crucially upon the supposed originality of its conceptual
scheme. Its close affinity to the retrospective teleological readings of history practised by Hegel and Marx renders its conceptual style akin to, rather than distinct from, the style of its predecessors. Moreover Hegel and Marx were clearer that their schemes operated as conceptual re-readings of empirical developments, rather causal explanations of a diversity of empirical phenomena.

**Conclusion**

_Empire_ imagines a postmodern world, superseding previous historical forms, which is socialised comprehensively, and which harbours global patterns of economic exploitation and imperial sovereignty. Its novelty and status as a post-Marxist ideology is canvassed on the basis of its mooted nondialectical, immaterial and supra-statist character. Its globalism captures aspects of the contemporary situation that are of significance, notably the complexity of contemporary sovereignty in a world in which the nation state is one actor amongst many. Hardt and Negri's concept of empire, however, is a map of the contemporary world, which is decidedly but unreflectively ideological in its identification of empire as the dichotomy of the emancipatory force of the multitude. Their conceptual identification of empire is governed as much by its conceptual harmony with a vision of postmodern capital and its antagonism to the notion of the multitude as it is by its capacity to order and explain a range of apparently contrary empirical phenomena,

The elasticity of the concept of empire and the empty signification of the notion of the multitude 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. A conceptual reading of how more specific concepts form part of a wider conceptual field is not an implausible undertaking, but the patterns whereby more specific concepts 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 *Grundrisse* interestingly specifies a method and a perception of the world, which is decidedly immaterial in that 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 is challenged by the 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. The identification of the universality of biopower as progressive presupposes a dialectical reading of historical concepts, whereby they are to be appraised normatively on a common 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 1995, Held 1995 and 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.

Hardt and Negri envisage the emancipation of mankind through the global activities of the multitude and, in doing so, they rely upon the deployment of inter-related normatively charged concepts, and a largely unrecognised teleology of the presumed end 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 are to be seen as inter-related and normatively charged concepts that mark
their enterprise as dialectical rather than the innovatory non-dialectical, and radically post-Marxist exercise that they present themselves as undertaking. Hardt and Negri's *Empire* should not be construed as braking radically with the Marxism out of which it is developed. It 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.

**Note**

1. See the interesting article by Smith (2003)' Globalization and Capitalist Property Relations: A Critical Assessment of David Held's Cosmopolitanism', in which he criticizes what he takes to be Held's translation of traditional nation state social democracy into a new cosopolitan context so as to respond to the novel conditions of globalization. See also Held (1995) for a defence of his cosmopolitanism, which aims to secure a universal welfare minimum.

**References**


