

A Note to a Political Understanding of Love in our Global Age

Richard Beardsworth

I call the following reflection a ‘note’ to a political understanding of love in our global age for this reason. My thoughts do not attempt to track or review the field of political philosophy on this topic in the context of our age. Rather, they lay out a basic move of thought and affect with regard to what I consider the actuality of our age after a period of critical thought that has, in large part, put to one side the question of love in the political domain. This exposition is preliminary and broad, but concerns what I consider to be essential to reflective political orientation at the present historical conjuncture. It stands, accordingly, as an incomplete ‘note’, one that senses a possible deep change in political practice within the world and that anticipates important inflection in our terms of reflective cognition to apprehend this change. Towards the end of their *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire*,¹ Toni Negri and Michael Hardt talk of democracy in the Spinozist terms of constituent power and as the “deployment of force that defends the historical progress of emancipation and liberation.”² Intriguingly, they add that this power is ‘an act of love’, that we need to ‘recover the material and political sense of love’, and conclude “when love is conceived politically, then, th[e] creation of a new humanity is the ultimate act of love.”³ That two of the most forceful contemporary radical political theorists should turn in their most recent work to theorizing the political act of love after promoting, following Deleuze, the nomadic, de-territorializing nature of desire is, I believe, a sign of this historical change underway. Both Hardt and Negri would strongly disagree with the way I take up this change in the following. That said, to move from desire to love in the political domain testifies itself, whether it be in an indirect way or not, to a need to reflect again upon how we assume the challenges of the twenty-first century, theoretically and practically. The following argument makes a simple, but strong claim *within* such ongoing theoretical and practical shifts.

Part One: Hegel and our Actuality

Since the third Iraq war in 2003 there has been much talk in the written press and in the media as a whole about the 'Roman' nature of our age. We live, it is often noted, in a new 'Rome' where imperial rule and law predominate over multiplicity, multilateralism, and nation-state and post-nation-state democratic or quasi-democratic formations. In the context of this contemporary fascination with the comparison between Rome and our own age, it is worthwhile returning to the philosophy of history of Georg Hegel and recalling his description of the 'Roman world'. This, for two critical reasons: 1) far from confirming the 'metaphysical', 'teleological' and therefore out-dated Hegel that we have become accustomed to in critical studies over the last thirty years, this description, escaping its ontological framework (the ontology of *Geist*), speaks to us today in ways that both media and academic reflection on our global empire of Rome often falls short of; and 2), more importantly, this description suggests an analogy between the philosophical endeavor of Hegel and that of our own age that needs to be retrieved, but recast in contemporary terms.

In contrast to the immediate ethical life of the Greek *polis*, as *The Philosophy of History* theorizes it,⁴ the Roman world is sunk, for Hegel, in melancholy, in "the prose of life."⁵ Centered on the aristocratic nature of the Roman republic and the consequent move to empire to contain the city's contradictions, Hegel's 'prose of life' describes the over-bearing consciousness of finitude in which the principles of power, legal personality and ritual duties to the gods have displaced any anterior notion of ethical life (*Sittlichkeit*): that is, an active, discriminating unity between universality and particularity. Rome stands for "ethical life torn out of itself (*entsittliche Sittlichkeit*)"⁶ in which all relations (from the familial, through the civic to the political and religious) are ones of duty and force. Hegel describes this 'prosaic world' of Rome in three mutually reinforcing ways: 1) in the abstract universality of power under which all particulars are subsumed; 2) in the abstract universality of personality through which all citizens of the city are granted legal rights under the condition of property; and 3) in the set of ritualistic obligations to the gods of the city (that include deified emperors). Each sphere is, for Hegel, empty of ethical life, of concrete particularity within the movement of the city as a whole. The Roman world is calculated in terms of force, whether it be the force of dominion, the force upholding right and property, or the force of religious obligation. It is important to emphasize, this said, that, while the abstract person of law is empty of life in the context of the other abstractions of Rome, it is Rome that first posits, for Hegel, the principle of the ego, of humanity as self-conscious willing, within law. For Hegel, this invention remains irreducible for human civilization since it accompanies the autonomization of civil society and subjective freedom.⁷

Against this world of three overlapping abstractions, of finitude and force, Hegel opposes, as is well known, the inward life of the Stoics and early Christians. This inward life, alienated from objectification and actuality, prepares, first, for the rich subjective life of Christianity and for the medieval antithesis between two worlds of power (the Church and the State) and, second, for the continuing Enlightenment schism, in Hegel's eyes, between

objective law, on the one hand, and subjective freedom, on the other.⁸ His work in political philosophy will provide us with a constant attempt to try and mend this schism, from the early expositions on love in the *Early Theological Writings* to the late development of the speculative relations between faith and reason, love and law, and 'Church' and 'State' in the *Philosophy of Right*.⁹

Putting aside the metaphysical and teleological Hegel, then, why do I find this description of Rome and of its historical consequences of interest today regarding our own actuality?

Despite the obvious, massive complexities that structure and accompany a later historical epoch of human civilization, there exists a certain resemblance between the Roman world described in terms of the three overlapping and mutually reinforcing abstractions and our own predicament. First, since the end of the Cold War, the abstract universality of the person has come to the fore again both in the increasing promotion of the individual against the state—together with the culture of individualism that flows therefrom—and in the ideological hegemony of economic 'neo-liberalism'.¹⁰ While the promotion of the individual is necessarily ambivalent, the amalgamation of political liberalism with economic neo-liberalism has fostered an abstract culture of finitude, bereft of life for many parts of the world between, and within, the northern and southern hemispheres.¹¹ Second, since the political instrumentalization of the destruction of the World Trade Centre on the 11th September 2001, this seemingly unilateral, abstract universality of the individual, together with his or her rights and property, has been increasingly accompanied by the abstract universality of power in the figure of the present United States government. Not to belabor the obvious, since 9/11 and the third Iraq war, global military power has been concentrated in the hands of a small, but forceful elite in Washington, whose aims, faced with the contradictions and tensions of both a global economy and non-state terrorism, have been to marginalize and/or to instrumentalize other bodies and agencies of governance: other nation-states and, crucially, the United Nations system. The first and second forms of abstract universality (foregrounding of the legal person and power) come together in the increasing suspicion that our age is structured by a strong alliance between the major representatives of capital (oligopoly) and political and military hegemony (oligarchy). If this alliance between oligopoly and oligarchy has been most visible, for many, during the US occupation of Iraq and the external organization of the country's resources after the partial withdrawal from Saudi Arabia, it essentially structures US unilateralism in the domains of non-military and military energy sources, international law and diplomacy, and national global economic policy. It has been sustained by, and has fostered, in turn, the third form of force: duties to prosaic gods. Alongside the seeming rule of abstract personality and power, our age is characterized by the politicization of religion. Outside the question of faith, this politicization may be understood as the reduction of the transcendence of the infinite (however thought and worshipped) to finite power. Such reduction makes any god—whether polytheistic or monotheistic—'prosaic', caught in finitude and finitude's lack of rhythm and relation.¹²

For Hegel, the Roman world was constituted by the finite, calculating reign of force: the force of legality, the force of dominium, the force of religious duty. Along the lines, therefore, of the above comparison, Hegel's philosophical exposition of Rome speaks to us

fairly directly. Members of the human species, we live today in a new Roman world where the ideology of the abstract individual ‘hides’ the monopoly mechanism of the market, where the hegemony of military and political power undermines emergent configurations of international legitimacy and force, and where the doctrinal duties and obligations of the political form of the three monotheisms (radical Islam, religious Zionism, US religious fundamentalism) drastically cheapens the ethical and/or normative horizon of religious spirituality. In this sense, read through Hegel’s development of the ‘prose of life’, above and beyond present concern with political realism, ‘Rome’ describes deeply the present imperial state of the world. The most important point to the comparison between the two ‘cities’ of Rome has yet to be stated, however.

As noted above, the Roman ‘triumvirate’ of force already translates but increasingly nurtures the schism between the inward life of the non-sensuous and the sensuous life of legality and power. Roman *dominium* gives rise to the Christian world, a world both predicated on this schism between spirit and matter and, in the form of the Universal Church, feeding prosaically upon it. Hegel calls this schism a ‘diremption’ (*Entzweiung*, literally, a splitting-into-two). It is the diremption of the *indeterminate* universality of life into separate, abstract forms of life, the relations between which are, in Hegelian terminology, ‘mis-recognized’. Under the city of Rome this diremption is to be found, first, in the undeveloped set of relations between the abstractions of dominium, of private law and the abstraction of a finite form of the infinite. It is to be found, second, in the flight from out of this general undeveloped finitude into the inwardly rich life of the subjectively infinite (procured, for Hegel, by the mediation of Christ). These two forms of diremption in the Roman world and its Christian succession split life into religion, on the one hand, and politics, on the other. It is this split that ultimately reveals the de-spiritualized nature of the Roman world, its *entsittliche Sittlichkeit*. When the relations of life, for Hegel, are mis-recognized in its separated-out instances, the polity collapses on itself. The city of imperial Rome represents in this specific sense the notion of a de-politicized polity in which the essential, but indeterminate continuity of life is separated out into unrelated parts. It is against this diremption of life in its indeterminate universality, it is against the ‘prose’ of life, that the younger Hegel mobilizes the force of love. For Hegel, love is nothing but the sensing, the sensuous recognition, of life again. “In love life finds life once more.”¹³

My broader question is therefore this: given the due comparison between Hegel’s Rome and our actuality, do we find ourselves today also in a new form of the diremption of life, a diremption through which the repetitive pulse of life, its rhythm—indeterminate universality, however conceived—falls between economic and political rationality, on the one hand, and either instrumentalized, communitarian or highly individualistic religion on the other? If this is the case, may our actuality be best apprehended as a new form of diremption between a-moral politics, on the one hand, and either politicized, doctrinal or inward forms of religion on the other? And if so, whatever the complexities of these forms of diremption today, is it not the case that a renewed political understanding of love would stand for both an important secular recognition of the separated forms of present-day life and the consequent vehicle towards moral politics and future polity (however conceived)? In

this specific sense may we not be concerned today with building out of Rome a new ‘city’ of humanity? And, therefore, to conclude: Do not the terms of this contemporary diremption between, ultimately, economics, politics and religion provide us with a major reason why the very idea of a “political act of love”¹⁴ has returned to the critical theoretical table?

If these questions are pertinent, my suggestion would therefore be this. Just as Hegel believed that critical thought (in his terms, speculative thinking) had to embed the newly emergent economic liberalism within new structures of polity all the while affirming the integrity of property and individuality, so we today need to embed planetary capitalism within new structures of polity beyond the nation-state, all the while affirming the independent energies of economic and civic civil societies. While, for Hegel, the answer was the nation-state, for interrelated members of the human species today, the answer lies necessarily beyond the nation-state in regional and global forms of polity. Behind this difference lies however the *same* challenge of political invention and determination for life. Hence the question of love as the promise of relation, rhythm and community returns, in mis-recognized form. And, lastly, hence the initial interest of Hegel’s reflective philosophy to our own assumption of diremption.

For many readers of this journal—especially after the last thirty to forty years of French theory—the above speculation may well go too fast (too much ‘we’, to begin with). Concerned, at this historical juncture, with broad philosophical gesture, I am nevertheless led by this speculation to two hypotheses which I will pursue in the second part of this paper.

First hypothesis: we are presently undergoing a new form of ‘diremption’ between the spiritual and the material dimensions of life. This diremption flows from, at least, three causes: 1) the necessary failure on the part of communism to reduce religion to alienation and the normative role played by the Church in the subsequent demise of communism; 2) the failure of national forms of socialism in the post-1950s decolonized states which led, in the context of continuing aggressive Western power politics, to the radicalization and political instrumentalization of religion (particularly in the Middle East and South East Asia, Islam); 3) the planetarization of financial and commercial capital that began in earnest after the 1970s oil crises, accelerated with the end of the Cold War, and culminated in the neo-liberal structuring of the global economy of the last twenty years. As a result of these three factors, life, *in world terms*, is increasingly split between a-moral political life, on the one hand, and various forms of collective religious life on the other. In response to this split, a new form of secular love that bears the active promise of the community of humanity should be strongly affirmed.

Second hypothesis: French theory has in general avoided the question of love in the political domain due, in large part, to the political, totalitarian consequences of Marxism in the twentieth century. With this totalitarian background, both the thought of community together with the affect which is its vehicle, love and the labour of love, have been directly and/or indirectly considered as dangerous, indeed violent. Community and the political understanding of love are considered to subordinate the difference of sensibility and particularity to abstract oneness and naïve humanism. With the massive change in historical actuality and historical orientation consequent upon the end of the Cold War, this

understanding and/or avoidance, while understandable in the context of state socialism, is not warranted. A re-engagement with a political understanding of love is therefore an important historical and philosophical imperative. I will turn to this second hypothesis first.

Part Two: Theory, Diremption and Love

French critical thought in the last thirty to forty years has either avoided the political dimension to love or implicitly criticized its totalitarian pretensions when placed in the political domain. Hence its series of moves to critique 'ethically', 'deconstruct' or 'genealogize' either the embracing movement of love between self and other and/or the apparent reduction, through the act of love and community, of difference to a common trait of humanity. Hence Emmanuel Lévinas' distinction between infinite justice and Hegelian recognition in *Totality and Infinity* as a result of which the relation to the other is always seen to exceed the act of oneness through which members of a community recognize themselves in each other.¹⁵ This basic distinction, together with focus on the way in which the Freudian death-drive ruptures the associations of Eros, informs Jean-Francois Lyotard's own radical critique of Hegelian and Marxist notions of substantive community in works from *Libidinal Economy* through *The Differend* to *Heidegger and the Jews*, together with his general reflection on the immemorial, the inhuman and the Kantian sublime (the excess of temporalization and community).¹⁶ Hence, also, Jacques Derrida's aporetic understandings of political friendship and community in works like *Glas*, *Politics of Friendship*, and *Specters of Marx* which, while more attentive than Lévinas and Lyotard to the necessary movement of universality in any act of thought or law, at the same time always track the violence of this movement in its exclusions.¹⁷ This violence is registered in the name of a radical justice, a nonphenomenal relation towards the other (human and non-human) that always already exceeds the metaphysical tradition of political friendship, fraternity, or love. If Derrida and Lyotard are both indebted here to the historically critical work of Lévinas on the justice of radical alterity, Jean-Luc Nancy, Giorgio Agamben and Alain Badiou's work on the ellipsis of community and universality in, respectively, *The Inoperative Community*, *The Community to Come* and, more recently, *Saint Paul: The Foundation of Universalism* derive from Heideggerian-inspired aporetics.¹⁸ Whatever their differences (and there are many), each work situates the coming together of any community not in its common trait, procedures of deliberation or normative horizon, but *in the very ellipsis of this trait, procedure or horizon*. This ellipsis either marks the universality of a community to come (Nancy, Agamben) and/or is thought as a punctual event irreducible to immanent forms of time, space and, therefore, law (Badiou). In other words, what is common to humanity is a bond that, as universal, must be rethought in terms of the excess of determinate form. If this bond is analyzed through the tradition, from Jesus of Nazareth, through Paul and Augustine to Hegel and the inversions of Nietzsche and Freud, as that of 'love', with Derrida, Nancy, Agamben and, to a lesser extent, Badiou, this love will not

produce a community except at the risk of domination. The bond is therefore conceived less in terms of what embraces, and more in terms of what *exceeds* embrace. Thought conceptually, it is understood as normative impossibility and universal singularity.

The work of Gilles Deleuze and Michel Foucault represent the more material dimension to French thought. While they have in common with the above an ambivalence towards reason and a critical suspicion of the very concept of community, neither Deleuze nor Foucault, as far as I am aware, affirm a collective understanding of love. Given their own problematic, this is understandable. Both are concerned to work from under the totalizing and dominating forms of modern reason towards concepts, strategies and practices of multiplicity, hybridity and resistance. In the two volumes of Deleuze and Guattari's *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, for example, love is only theorized within the multiple constellations of desiring production.¹⁹ What is always more important than love, in resistance to the homogenizing desire-machine of capital, is the way in which desire moves in constant displacement, reconfiguration and rupture behind all forms of unifying sensibility (of which love would be one form). Equally, for Foucault, it is the force of love, in relation to other forces, that is not theoretically and practically pertinent to an understanding of modernity, since its discursive field is intimately related to that of power and violence in the western Greco-Roman and Judeo-Christian traditions. Rather a genealogical understanding of its discursive mechanisms in a general history of sexuality must predominate for a critical apprehension of our politico-sexual identities to be possible.²⁰ I would therefore contend that, just as for those French thinkers that come out of modern phenomenology and/or modern phenomenology and Marxism, so, for more immediately historical and materialist thinkers like Deleuze and Foucault, the same critical suspicion towards the act of *oneness* of both community and/or love is outstanding. As a result, love is avoided as an affirmative political theme.²¹

The above account is far too brief and generalizing not to be a simplification. Its straightforward simplicity underscores, nevertheless, my contention: in recent French critical thought love is in general eschewed in the political domain because of its understood associations with universality and oneness. The reason for this seems increasingly clear. All of the above authors have worked for most of their intellectual life in the shadow of two major political events of the twentieth century: first, the inversion of the idea of communism into state socialism and, second, the Shoah of the Jews in the Second World War. Following, in part, these two events, the bond of the community is less thought *critically* in terms of what gathers together, *contra* other more divisive forces, than in terms of what *both* gathers *and* dissipates as such. Consequently, critical thought places itself more on the side of dissipation than assembly *in order to remain critical*. The influence of Heidegger's radical ontology and 'Destruktion' of metaphysics has been crucial in determining the parameters of this move—whatever the many disagreements with Heidegger regarding justice and the Shoah. For the fundamental gesture of radical ontology places the procedure and determination of reason within a metaphysics of presence that moves to one side of the empowering historical movement of reason.

My hypothesis regarding recent French thought is, then, that its basic gesture of critical suspicion is not appropriate to our historical age. For, if our age is marked by new forms of

diremption between religion, politics and economics, what is needed is a response to this diremption that *upholds life in its manifold differences in a collective, secular manner*. Without entering here into the critical question of how one determines this response, suffice it to say in this philosophical note that this response, as the recognition of life *as* life in its separated economic, political, and religious forms, embodies love. Love marks, that is, the recognition of the continuum of life from out of its separate(d) parts, constitutes the vehicle of future cognitive determination between the philosophical, the political and the economic, and therefrom, the active promise of future polity.²² I turn here to my first hypothesis.

While it is now something of a cliché to argue that the end of the Cold War ushered in a new historical age, I assume the terms of this cliché in the following sense. Religious practices of life intensified towards the end of the Cold War both in the East and South of the world in response to corrupt forms of governance (state socialist, socialist nationalist, or militarist). These practices were predominantly Catholic, Muslim, and Protestant. With the end of the Cold War, popular normative resistance to either the preceding forms of state socialism and/or, more importantly, the growing incursion of the capitalist market economy into the life-world, together with its individualist and materialist values, increasingly assumed this form of religion.²³ With the obvious hegemony of the United States in the 1990s over global economic, political and military organization, this resistance became also a political force, and fragile distinctions between the religious and the political collapsed, mirrored by a collapse of Enlightenment distinctions between Church and State on the part of the hegemonic power. Whatever the details of this intensification and return of religion and of the accompanying or subsequent collapse between the religious and the political—and these details vary widely in respect of the region of the world, its culture, and history: from the religious fundamentalism in the US, to religious Zionism in Israel, to Evangelism in Latin America, to various tenets of Islam in the Middle East, Central Asia, or Indonesia, etc.—critical philosophy needs, I believe, to make the following remarks:

First, the recent return of religion to the world after the twentieth century negotiations with the secular reflects, ultimately, the failure of the twentieth century to articulate the social relation between human beings. This failure is that of communism and socialism, on the one hand, and, on the other, although less so, with the emergent globalization of capital in the 1970s, that of the nation-state model of social democracy. When, that is, the market economy and its immediate values of economic rationality, competition, and individualism come to the foreground of society, there is a strong likelihood that the blocked social bond will be re-channeled into religious affect and form, *unless* new structures of political association, legitimacy and force assume their position *at the center of society*. Philosophy now needs to think this center.

Second, with the end of the Cold War, one organization of polity has in principle, and increasingly in fact, subsided and waits to be replaced by a new one. Religion returns in this in-between. This is not to say that religion is reducible to social change. It is rather to argue that when the indeterminate universality of life is more restricted than less restricted by specific social forms (together with tensions within and between these forms), both what exceeds

those forms and what flows from out their tensions, will, at a conscious *and* unconscious level, congregate around the form of religion and its deep psychological structures. For this form and its psychology articulate as such, both ethically and doctrinally, the relations between humans *and* between humans and their environment, of which the stuff of life is made. The determinant articulation of this relation *as religious* feeling is what we call religious faith and the accompanying love of the faithful community. Given this, it is incumbent upon a secular culture of political invention to re-assume the excess of life and structure it, as far as is possible within the given historical conjuncture and constellation of force, in ways that are more accountable, transparent and, ultimately, shareable. Secular culture must do this without reducing either the necessity of religious feeling or the necessity of distinguishing between indeterminate humanity—the ever-recurrent possibility of human life—and determinant humanity—a particular conception of humanity *qua*, for example, the ‘created’. The love of indeterminate humanity constitutes one important vehicle of this political invention. It constitutes a conscious and unconscious re-organization of the diremption of life witnessed in the failed social bond.

Third, my hypothesis therefore holds that a strong characteristic of contemporary actuality resides in a new form of diremption between the religious, the political and the economic. In the eighteenth century thinkers like Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Immanuel Kant, and Georg Hegel responded to the modernization of western European life by affirming the freedom of civil society, but embedded it in ethically-motivated conceptions of polity. This embedding required, first, the separation of religious form from its ethical content (love, ethical virtue, reciprocity, etc), and, second, the re-organization of this content with regard to polity. Although, for Hegel, neither Rousseau nor Kant was successful in overcoming diremption, all three are actually concerned with the same problem: the relation of identity and difference between individual and society that the modern form of economic life fails to articulate (or subordinates to the nation). Following Hegel, this problem is then directly addressed by Karl Marx. The question of the social bond becomes the question of how members of society are related to the modes of production through specific forms of property. For Marx, until this question is resolved equitably, the diremption between religion and the state and between the state and civil society will continue. The major Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment thinkers were working, therefore, with new forms of economic life, to which new forms of polity needed to respond. With the failure of the Marxian project of polity in the twentieth century, these forms of economic life have sprung their modernist nation-state parameters and are now beginning to organize economic life at a planetary level. For lack of a viable alternative to the capitalist organization of economic and social life at this moment of history, this process is inevitable throughout the planet: whatever the forthcoming, specific compromises between capital, labour and locality. The intensification or return of religion since the end of the Cold War (a ‘war’ which blocked the globalization of capitalism during the twentieth century) testifies, therefore, to the ongoing absence of political mediation between community and individuality in the context of planetary capitalization. The analogy between Hegel’s understanding of modernity and our own is therefore clear. We must try to move out of the present diremption between religious, political and economic life that follows from

the history of the failure of an alternative to capitalism in the twentieth century and from the consequent massively uneven globalization of the market economy in the twenty-first century. The end to this analogy is also clear. Whereas, for Hegel, the response was at the level of the nation-state, with regard to nascent capitalism, our response must be in terms of the world, given that flows of capital, goods, services and people can only be regulated today in a coordinated set of strategies between the national, regional and global.²⁴ These strategies require, whatever else, the possibility of *world polity* through which the embedding of economic life within a larger practice of humanity can be coordinated, rendered legitimate and enforced. Given the end of progressive violent politics, this radical mending of our present state of diremption will require all the more the vehicle of secular love.

Therefore, fourth and finally, the major secular, critical challenge of the twenty-first century, *contra* the hierarchies of oligopoly and oligarchy, resides in forging the ideological and practical terms through which world political organization can become possible in articulated relation with regional and national organizations. Without such terms, the world could remain stuck with national and regional power-politics. Love of humanity and of the world as a whole constitutes the active promise, therefore, of a concrete universal ‘community’ through which *the differences of life are released*.

In his early writings “The Spirit of Christianity and its Fate” and the small fragment on “Love” that preceded it, Hegel understands love in two senses. First, love accompanies the affective recognition that previously separated spheres of life form part of the same life. The (re-)discovery of life appears, within individual psychology, as the love of life.²⁵ Second, from within this re-discovery of life through the other, love continues to seek out the differences of life, not to subsume them under an embracing whole that denies their singularity, but to recognize them in turn *through* embracing them. Love thus constitutes, for the early Hegel, an experience of intrinsic relations between essentially connected, but different instances of life, the connections and differences of which are often concealed by phenomenal experience. One does not need to deconstruct the Hegelian or Marxian metaphysical framework of essence and appearance to understand that in a global economy, hierarchized by particular relations of economic, political and military force, events in one part of the planet are intrinsically affected by and connected to those in another and that relations between these events are to be recognized (*erkannt*) and transformed for the greater respect of the world as a whole. Increased signs of global critical public opinion, of global activism (institutional or non-institutional) and of intellectual theorization of the world as a whole translate the emergence of this recognition. The above suggests that the affect of love does not simply accompany this recognition as love of humanity above and beyond particular determinations. Rather, it *enacts the very experience of human interrelatedness within material life*. The labour of love (to speak in Hegelian terms) assumes this interrelatedness and delivers unarticulated difference into an articulated relation between particular and universal through which it can be apprehended. Without this work of articulation, difference is lost to the world. The labour of love does not constitute, therefore, the neutralizing assumption of difference under the mastery of

consciousness; out of the experience of human interrelatedness in historical, material life, it constructs a world in which difference can be enjoyed as such. In this precise sense, love affirms the active promise of restorative community between and beyond the diremptions of the ethical, the political and the economic in contemporary forms of global capitalism. This is the reason why we indeed need, in Negri and Hardt's words, to "recover the material and political sense of love."²⁶

To conclude: how should we envisage this community? When the older Hegel differentiates between love and reason in the *Philosophy of Right*, love is either returned to the natural ethical life of the family or held within the speculative relation between the Church and the State (the identity and difference between the ethical content of religious feeling, the subjective, and the ethical content of rational law and governance, the objective).²⁷ Rational law and governance reproduces, for Hegel, the experience of love in objective form. He calls this 'concrete universality' in distinction to the abstract universality of liberal legality and the abstract particularity of an unmediated civil society.²⁸ The attempt to forge concrete universality resides in the differentiation of the whole through its parts and the gathering of the parts *as* parts through the whole. This whole becomes reified in Hegel's idealist political philosophy in the idea of the state as such or in that of absolute spirit. One does not reproduce Hegelian idealism to argue, however, today for a new articulation of the world in its parts and of parts of the world through a whole. For the global planetarization of material life under capitalism requires this articulation. Without the latter, global life could become further distorted in its unrecognized differences, and hard violence will continue under religious and non-religious form. It is therefore incumbent upon progressive forces for life to think and practice again, in coordination with bottom-up democratic movements of social conflict and struggle, the relation between ethical love and the positing of universal law. This relation is of course violent. Any particular determination of an affect (love) or of an experience of humanity is violent. But, again, as Hegel understood in his early work on love, this violence is the very risk of love as it labours out of its material life. This violence cannot be avoided or suspended. New structures of universality must, therefore, be organized this century for difference to be released, but such structures will necessarily engender their own fate given their finite form. They will accordingly have to be critiqued and reformed in turn. The risk of love assumes and affirms this rhythm of life (indeterminacy and determination, determination and indeterminacy, etc.).

For something like concrete universality in world terms to emerge the apprehension of this relation means: short-term, the promotion of the United Nations system as a system of universal reciprocity and inclusion, *contra* continuing attempts to circumvent, instrumentalize or dominate its system and agencies; mid-term, the reform of its division of labour, macro-economic policy, and mechanisms of legitimacy and enforcement; and, long-term, the progressive formulation of world polity in conjunction with, on the one hand, hard economic and political analysis of the world as a whole, and, on the other hand, regional, national and local assembly and policy. In this staggered, difficult perspective—to one side, I believe, of a certain critical endeavor in the last quarter of the twentieth century—the political risk of

ethical love resumes its urgency and mission.²⁹

Richard Beardsworth
American University of Paris

Notes

1. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (London: Penguin, 2004).
2. Hardt and Negri, *Multitude* 351.
3. Hardt and Negri, *Multitude* 351, 356.
4. G.W.F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte*, „Dritter Teil, Die Römische Welt“ (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1986). English trans. J. Sibree, *The Philosophy of History* (New York: Dover, 1956) 278-340. References are to the English.
5. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History* 288.
6. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History* 288.
7. See G.W.F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, trans. T.M. Knox (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1967) Part One “Abstract Right,” esp. §§ 34-80.
8. Hegel, *Philosophy of History* 324-344.
9. G. W. F. Hegel, *Early Theological Writings*, trans. T.M. Knox (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1971); Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*.
10. For a careful account of the emergence of this hegemony, see James Richardson, *Contending Liberalisms in World Politics: Ideology and Power* (London: Lynne Rienner, 2001).
11. On this, see David Held, *Global Covenant: The Social Democratic Alternative to the Washington Consensus* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2004). See, also, Hardt and Negri, *Multitude*; Peter Singer, *One World: The Ethics of Globalization* (New Haven and London: Yale UP, 2004) (second edition); and Heikki Patomäki and Teivo Teivainen, *A Possible World: Democratic Transformations of Global Institutions* (London: Zed Books, 2004). For a polemical, but rigorous challenge to these kinds of reading, see Martin Wolf, *Why Globalization Works: The Case for the Global Market Economy* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2004).
12. On the general relation between religion and society in the post-1989 world, see, particularly, Peter Berger, *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics* (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999); Gilles Kepel, *La Revanche de Dieu. Chrétiens, Juifs et Musulmans à la reconquête du monde* (Paris: Seuil, 1991), Jeff Haynes, *Religion in Global Politics* (London and New York: Longman, 1998); François Thual, *Géopolitique des religions. Le dieu fragmenté* (Paris: Ellipses, 2004). On the relations between Islam and modernity, see Akbar S. Ahmed, *Postmodernism and Islam: Predicament and Promise* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992); Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (John Hopkins UP, 1993); Aziz Al-Azmeh, *Islams and Modernities*, Second edition (London: Verso, 1993); John Esposito and Azzam Tamimi (eds.), *Islam and Secularism in the Middle East* (New York: New York UP, 2000). While all the above are in agreement that the post-1989 world is marked by a return of religion, a number of these authors would strongly disagree with this paper’s secular perspective with regard to it. For the latter, the recent return of religion *closes* modernity, it does not confirm, as I argue here, one of modernity’s major categories: *diremption*.
13. G.W.F. Hegel, “Christianity and its Fate,” *Early Theological Writings* 239.
14. Hardt and Negri, *Multitude* 356.

15. Emmanuel Lévinas, *Totality and Infinity. An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne UP, 1969).
16. Jean-Francois Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, trans. Iain Hamilton Grant (London, Athlone Press, 1993); *The Differend*, trans. Georges Van Den Abbeele (Minnesota: U of Minnesota P, 1988); *Heidegger and "the Jews"*, trans. Lesley A. Boldt (New York: U of New York P, 1988). See also Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Inhuman*, trans. Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowby (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991) and *Lessons on the Analytic of the Sublime*, trans. Elizabeth Rottenberg (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1994).
17. Jacques Derrida, *Glas*, trans. John Leavey and Richard Rand (Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1986); *Politics of Friendship*, trans. George Collins (London: Verso, 1997); *Specters of Marx*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (London: Routledge, 1994).
18. Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*, trans. Peter Connor, et al. (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1991); Giorgio Agamben, *The Coming Community*, trans. Michael Hardt (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1993); Alain Badiou, *Saint Paul: The Foundation of Universalism*, trans. Ray Brassier, (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2003).
19. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem and Helen R. Lane (Minneapolis and London: U of Minnesota P, 1983); *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis and London: U of Minnesota P, 1987). See, particularly, "1914: One or Several Wolves?" *A Thousand Plateaus* 26-38.
20. See Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 3 volumes, trans. Robert Hurley (London: Penguin, 1988-1990).
21. I am grateful to the reviewer of the journal for pointing out the frustrating nature of Luce Irigaray's omission from the above and, therefore, for the rough nature of my conclusion. Suffice it to say the following here on this omission. Irigaray's prolonged interest in a political ethics of love (see, importantly, *I Love to You: Sketch of a Possible Felicity in History*, trans. Alison Martin (New York and London: Routledge, 1996) is predicated on a theory of sexual difference in which men and women love and recognize each other through their irreducible alterity to one another's genders (at least 'two') beyond the unity of (male) consciousness. This recognition provides a living space of sexuated culture that moves beyond the metaphysical (Platonic-Hegelian) distinction between the natural and the universal. Irigaray's political ethics of love is accordingly informed by, and read through, a specific understanding of male and female sexual corporality and identity. To engage with Irigaray on her own understanding of the ethical relation and its political force, one must first discuss, therefore, her reading of Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis, specifically around castration, the Oedipus complex and penis-envy with regard to identity-formation. It would be inappropriate to do this here given my specific problematic. That said, Irigaray's categories of reflection on the politico-historical are Heideggerian and work, with important focus on women's singularity, within the terms of French thought in general as I develop them above.
22. The risk that, however differentiated, the global embedding of capitalism in the name of life can turn into bureaucratic governance of the processes of life is here evident. It is where my argument remains in principle vulnerable to the Foucaultian/Agamben critique of bio-politics: life becomes the object of institutional powers. See Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1998). There is indeed a risk that this may happen. But the only way to prevent it from *not* happening is to assume the risk of determination at the appropriate levels given the matter at hand; it is not to step to one side of it. Assuming the inevitable nature of risk characterizes the risk of love. Compare my "In Memoriam Jacques Derrida: The Power of Reason," *Theory and Event*, 8: 1 (2005), and "Modernity in French Thought: Excess in Derrida, Lévinas and Lyotard," *Telos: A Quarterly Journal of Critical Thought* (forthcoming).
23. See note 9 for general references. On the statistical increase in religious attendance of Catholic and Protestant denominations in Latin America and the United States, I found Berger's *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics* and Haynes, *Religion in Global Politics* particularly useful. On the specificity of 'American' religiosity, see Harold Bloom, *The American Religion: the*

Emergence of the Post-Christian Nation (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992), and, most recently, Manuel Vasquez and Marie Friedmann Marquardt, *Globalizing the Sacred: Religion Across the America* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers UP, 2003).

24. This thesis is most clearly expressed today by the political theory and analysis of David Held. See, especially, his *Global Covenant: the Social Democratic Alternative to the Washington Consensus* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2004), a summary of his last ten years' work on globalization.

25. "Spirit of Christianity" 232.

26. Hardt and Negri, *Multitude* 356.

27. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right* §158 and §270 (Remark and Addition).

28. Hegel, "Introduction," *Philosophy of Right*, §§1-31.

29. An after-word on the evolution of affect in secular culture is called for. The theoretical presupposition throughout this piece is that transformation of affect happens through change of, and negotiation with, fundamental structures of life (of which affect forms a part). Since economic life constitutes a fundamental structure of life, the generally unregulated planetarization of capital together with the broad dissemination of the market economy in the last quarter of the twentieth century have necessarily led, I have argued, to an important re-determination of life in terms of the affect of determinate faith. An increasingly co-ordinated, democratically inspired re-organization of economic life through local, national, regional and global mechanisms presents a huge, perhaps impossible, but *inevitable* project that lies before us. With this re-organization, the channelling of affect in relation to life will necessarily change. I do not wish to pre-empt what shape and intensity new secular forms of affect will take, although it seems clear that they will be holistic in disposition and that the major relation of affect that is emerging is not, à la Schmitt, between friend and enemy, but between civilization and nature, the world as a polity with *internal* borders and an a-political universe. What I do know at present, with many others, is that unless re-organization of the diremptions of life takes place at a suitable macro-level, given the workings of an increasingly integrated and conflictual world economy, hard violence (environmental and human) will remain our fate. My point is simple and has clear institutional repercussions. Hence the move to Hegelian diremption at the beginning of the article and the move to the United Nations at the very end.

Copyright © 2006 Richard Beardsworth, *Contretemps*. All rights reserved.